

Lesson 1

Follow Me

Group Icebreaker:

What picture comes to mind when you hear the words “Follow Me”?

Introduction:

Becoming a disciple of Jesus is essentially the same process that a child goes through in learning to follow his parents. The first three words that a child usually learns are: mommy, daddy and no. The words mommy and daddy identify the people to whom the child has bonded. The use of the word “no” by the parents establishes their authority and issues a command to the child that requires his obedience. It is by the use of this word that a child’s training commences. The first lesson he must learn is obedience.

After a person is “born again” the first two words he learns are usually, Church and God. They assist him in identifying those with whom he has bonded. The next words he should be taught are “Follow Me”. Jesus issues this command to His disciples at the start of their training. Those words establish His authority and issue a command that requires their obedience. And like a child it also provides the first opportunity for a disciple to use the word “no”!

Reading the Scripture:

John 1:35-51, Luke 5:1-11, 27-28, Matthew 4:18-22, 9:9, Mark 1:16-20, 2:14

The First Disciples

John 1:35-51

Scripture excerpts from “Follow Me: A Message from God”

Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked upon Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turned, and beheld them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" And they said to Him, "Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?" He said to them, "Come, and you will see." They came therefore and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He found first his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which translated means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter). The next day He purposed to go forth into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow Me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." And Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel." Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater

things than these." And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

"Follow Me"

Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:16-20, Luke 5:1-11

Scripture excerpts from "Follow Me: A Message from God"

And walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Now it came about that while the multitude were pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; and He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the multitudes from the boat. And when He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but at Your bidding I will let down the nets." And when they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish; and their nets began to break; and they signaled to their partners in the other boat, for them to come and help them. And they came, and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." And when they had brought their boats to land, He said to them, "Follow Me," and I will make you fishers of men." And going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. And immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.

Matthew Becomes a Disciple

Matthew 9:9, Mark 2:14, Luke 5:27-28

Scripture excerpts from "Follow Me: A Message from God"

And after that He went out, and noticed a tax-gatherer named Levi,¹ sitting in the tax office, and He said to him, "Follow Me." And he left everything behind, and rose and began to follow Him.

The Command:

- ❖ Follow Me.

The Lesson:

The lesson of obedience is a difficult one to learn. It requires that a person recognize authority over him and then submit his will to that authority. This isn't always easy, especially when the authority is telling you to do something you don't want to do. Jesus wants your obedience. Without it, you cannot be His disciple.

¹ **Levi** – is a Hebrew name meaning, "Joined." He is commonly known as Matthew . . . the English form of the Hebrew name, Matityahu, meaning "Gift from God." Matthew was the chief tax collector in Capernaum. He undoubtedly collected the taxes from the fishermen, including James, John, Peter and Andrew, when they brought in their catches to be sold at market. He may also have been the royal official from Capernaum, whose son Jesus healed. He is also the author of the Gospel of Matthew.

When Jesus called the original disciples to follow Him, they could see, touch, taste, smell and hear the Messiah. He was physically present among them and they followed His physical presence everywhere. But that wasn't the lesson He was teaching them.

Jesus taught His disciples to follow by issuing voice commands that they were expected to obey². He also led them by example, demonstrating His obedience to His Father's commands that were written in the Old Testament portion of the Bible. He practiced what He preached.

Parents teach their children to follow voice commands as well. Children perceive the authority in their parent's voice and follow the example set by their parents. However, when the parents don't practice what they preach, the child tends to emulate what the parents' do, not what they say.

The **first disciples**³ learned to obey Jesus. When He had finished teaching them, Jesus told them to go and make more disciples by teaching them what He had commanded them to do. They were to lead by example, by actually doing what He had told them to do. The results were astounding! The book of Acts clearly shows that miracles followed the obedience of these disciples and the growth of the Church exploded.

Jesus still holds these expectations for the Church today and His method has not changed. He still calls people to follow Him and miracles still follow obedience to the Word of God. In fact, the miracle of rebirth occurs in a person's life the same way. They hear the Word of God preached concerning Jesus, believe it, confess Him as Lord and are baptized. The way people follow Jesus is to hear and do His word. The Apostle Paul said, "*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ*".⁴ Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hear the Word of God, and observe it". And God, Himself, spoke from heaven to the disciples declaring, "*This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, listen to Him*".⁵

Group Discussion Worksheet:

A. There are three major components of a command:

1. Giving the command.

² **obey**. '*shema*' in Hebrew, a command, meaning to "listen" and "follow". Just as we see in Jesus' first commandment, "**Follow Me**", we originally find that exact same commandment at Mount Sinai, as read in Exodus 19:5-6, just before God gave His "*Teaching and Instruction*" for living, the **Torah**, which came with an unanimous "Yes" from all those God had "*Delivered out of Egypt*", to the "**wilderness**", a command here to "listen" and "follow" Him, "Yahweh", as their Lord, their Master and King: "*Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.*" (Ex 19:5-6) Once again, reiterating Jesus' proclamation in John 10:27, "*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*" See article on page 5 ("What does the Hebrew term 'Shema' mean?") for a full explanation.

Follow Me – simply meaning to "commit without any delay" to following in one's footsteps, teachings, and instructions; in word and action; obey.

Torah – simply defined as the ordained **walk with God** in His way, His truth, and His life, for our way, our truth and our life; also known as, hitting the mark – whereas sin/lawlessness is defined as missing the mark.

wilderness – simply meaning, "where God speaks", where God gave His teaching and instruction for living to His people; a place where no one could make claim to (neither Egypt nor Israel (the Promised Land)).

obey my voice – *shema* in Hebrew – listen and follow.

³ **first disciples**. What was Jesus Relationship to His Disciples? The understanding of these unique relationships is a model for all future Disciple Makers, as Jesus' commissions His disciples in the Great Commission, "*Go . . . make disciples . . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you,*" Matthew 28:19-20 – see article on page 7 ("Overview of Jesus' Relationship to His Disciples").

⁴ Luke 11:28

⁵ Matthew 17:5

2. Hearing the command.
3. Obeying the command.

B. Four elements are required in hearing a command, before it can be obeyed.

1. You must physically hear it.
2. You must know what it means.
3. You must know that it is directed toward you.
4. You must know that it is from your leader.

C. Three elements are required in actually **obeying** a command.

1. You must be willing to obey.
2. You must stop what you are presently doing.
3. You must actually do it.

D. From the story of Jesus and Peter found in Luke 5:1-11; let's identify the various elements of hearing and obeying a command.

1. We know Peter heard the command because he responded to it.
2. Peter knew what the command meant because he was a fisherman.
3. Peter knew it was directed at him because it was his boat.
4. Peter knew it was from someone who had authority because he called Jesus, Master.
5. Though somewhat disgruntled at the command he willingly submitted.
6. Peter stopped what he was doing, talking.
7. He set out to deep water.

E. When did the miracle occur? (The miracle occurred after Peter obeyed.)

F. Reasons why Christians stumble in their walk of following Jesus Christ.

1. Ignorance – Not knowing what the Scriptures say.
2. Apathy – Not applying what the Scriptures say.
3. Confusion – More concerned about current events in their lives.
4. False information – Listening to others instead of their Lord.

The Point of the Lesson:

To hear and obey what Jesus, The Word of God says.

Application:

1. Memorize John 10:27 – “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”
2. Ask the Lord to give you a personal command to be obeyed, write down the results and share it with the group.

What does the Hebrew term ‘Shema’ mean?

*“I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because Abraham **obeyed** (**shema**) my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.” Genesis 26:4-5*

The English word “**obey**” is nasty and polluted by our preconceived cultural connections to fundamentalism. Beneath this construction is our shameless scoffing towards authority. We hate to be told what to do, but even more, we hate to be told we *have to do* anything. “**Obey**” is not the *most accepted* word for *human consumption as a whole*.

We will often say we hate authoritarianism and totalitarian leaders who lord over us telling us to “**obey**”. But the truth is, we don’t hate authority at all, we love it all too much – we worship it. You see, we hate being told what to do, unless we’re the ones telling ourselves to do it. We don’t hate authority; we just love it so much we want it all for ourselves. This is why the word “**obey**” isn’t the cleanest English word. We don’t like it alone.

*“¹⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as **obedient** slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you **obey**, either of sin, which leads to death, or of **obedience**, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become **obedient** from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.” Romans 6:16-18*

But the Hebrew word for “**obey**” isn’t as nasty as the English – it’s way cleaner in the Old Testament. In fact, the Hebrew is easier than English because, well, *there is no Hebrew word for “obey”*. That’s right, they actually do not have a word for it.

The *humanity* in me loves this, until I realize that (depending on your translation) the word “**obey**” shows up around 130 times in *our English translation of the Old Testament*. How can we put in a word in the Old Testament over 130 times that’s never even there in the original manuscript’s language?

Because the word in Hebrew we translate as “**obey**” is usually the term *shema*. This Hebrew word here is actually kind of famous and you may have heard it before. The term *shema* is actually more accurately translated as “**listen**” or “**hear**”. The famous “**Shema**” from **Deuteronomy 6** gets its name from this beautiful Hebrew word. The **Shema** begins, “**Hear**, O Israel, the LORD your God, the LORD, is one!” That, “**Hear**”, is the Hebrew term *shema*, and would be more accurately translated in English as ‘hear’, ‘listen’, ‘heed’, or ‘pay attention’.

But hearing isn’t obeying – so how did we get from “listen” to “obey”?

This is the beauty of an ancient culture and the gift of the Scriptures. The Jewish tradition and particularly the Old Testament culture, did not differentiate between “**hearing**” and “**doing**” or between “**listening**” and “**obeying**”. We came up with that.

We started to realize that you could hear and not do, that you could listen to words and not put them into action. We probably did this as human beings because we love finding shortcuts, taking the easy way out.

But God asks us to *shema*. God wants a heart where the listening is indistinguishably linked to the obeying.

And this goes deeper than just a Hebrew word study. When He walked the earth, the Lord Jesus closed his most famous sermon with these words:

*“Everyone then who **hears** these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who **hears** these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it”*

Matthew 7:24–27

To Jesus⁶, listening without obedience is foolish. His brother, James, would tell us later:

*“**But be doers of the word, and not hearers only**, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a **hearer** of the word and **not a doer**, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. **But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing”***

James 1:22–25

The inspired writers of the Scriptures seem to be trying to explain to us the deep connection between **listening** and **obeying**. Maybe, then, **we are only truly listening to God when we are obeying Him**. This seems to be what it means to *Shema* (*Listen or Hear*). And anyways, isn't that a better word?

*– Adapted from a teaching of a Judean Rabbi
(New Testament references and commentary not in original teaching)*

⁶ See **Lesson 1** for a full explanation.

Overview of Jesus' Relationship to His Disciples

1. **James*** (“**Jacob**”): brother of Jesus. Authored the New Testament epistle: “James”. (Matthew 13:55, Mark 6:3)
2. **Judas*** (“**Jude**”): brother of Jesus. Authored the New Testament epistle: “Jude”. (Matthew 13:55, Mark 6:3)
3. **James, son of Zebedee*** (“**Jacob**”): cousin of Jesus, son of The Virgin Mary’s sister, Salome (Mark 15:40, 16:1). Also known as “Boanerges” or one of the “sons of thunder”. (Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:14-20; Luke 5:1-11, Mark 3:17)
4. **John*** (“**Jehohanan**”): cousin of Jesus, son of The Virgin Mary’s sister, Salome (Mark 15:40, 16:1). Also known as “Boanerges”, one of the “sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17), “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23, 19:26, 21:7, 21:20), and former disciple of John the Baptist. Authored the New Testament “Gospel of John”, “1 John”, “2 John”, “3 John”, and “Revelation”. (Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:14-20; Luke 5:1-11, Mark 3:17)
5. **James, son of Alphaeus*** (“**Jacob**”): cousin of Jesus, son of Joseph’s brother, Cleopas (Luke 24:13-35). (Cleopas’ wife was Mary (“**Mariam**”). She is also known as “the other Mary” at Jesus crucifixion and at the open tomb. – Matthew 27:61, 28:1, Luke 24:9-10). Also known as James the less or James son of Alphaeus (“**Cleopas**”). (Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:14-20; Luke 5:1-11)
6. **Thaddeus***: cousin of Jesus, son of Joseph’s brother, Cleopas (Luke 24:13-35). (Cleopas’ wife was Mary (“**Mariam**”). She is also known as “the other Mary” at Jesus crucifixion and at the open tomb. – Matthew 27:61, 28:1, Luke 24:9-10). Also known as Judas the son of James or Judas not Iscariot.
7. **Simon***: cousin of Jesus, son of Joseph’s brother, Cleopas (Luke 24:13-35). (Cleopas’ wife was Mary (“**Mariam**”). She is also known as “the other Mary” at Jesus crucifixion and at the open tomb. – Matthew 27:61, 28:1, Luke 24:9-10). Also known as the Zealot.
8. **Simon*** (renamed by Jesus to “**Peter**”/“**Petros**”/“**Rock**”): partners in a fishing business with Jesus’ two cousins James and John, sons of The Virgin Mary’s sister Salome, and brother to Andrew. Also known as Simon bar Jonah (Matthew 6:17). Authored the New Testament epistles: “1 Peter” and “2 Peter”. (Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:14-20; Luke 5:1-11)
9. **Andrew***: partners in a fishing business with Jesus’ two cousins James and John, sons of The Virgin Mary’s sister Salome, brother to Simon (“**Peter**”), and former disciple of John the Baptist. (Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:14-20; Luke 5:1-11)
10. **Matthew***: was the chief tax collector in Capernaum. He undoubtedly collected the taxes from the fishermen, including James, John, Peter and Andrew, when they brought in their catches to be sold at market. He may also have been the royal official from Capernaum, whose son Jesus healed. Also known as “**Levi**”. Authored the New Testament “Gospel of Matthew”. (Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:27-32)

The remaining Disciples have no immediate recorded relationship to Jesus: Philip*, Bartholomew, son of Talemai*, Thomas*, and Judas Iscariot*.

* Matthew 10:1-4, Mark 3:13-19, Luke 6:12-16

Discipleship Lessons by Verse

Book 1

“Fishers of Men”

John 1:35-51, Luke 5:1-11, 27-28, Matthew 4:18-22, 9:9, Mark 1:16-20, 2:14

Lesson 1

John 4:1-42

Lesson 2

Matthew 5:1-12, Luke 6:20-26

Lesson 3

Matthew 5:13-16

Lesson 4

Mathew 5:17-20

Lesson 5

Matthew 5:21-26

Lesson 6

Matthew 5:27-32

Lesson 7

Matthew 5:33-37

Lesson 8

Matthew 5:38-42, Luke 6:29-30

Lesson 9

Matthew 5:43-48, Luke 6:27-28, 31-35

Lesson 10

Matthew 6:1-18

Lesson 11

Matthew 6:9-15

Lesson 12

Matthew 6:19-23

Lesson 13

Matthew 7:1-5, Luke 6:36-42

Lesson 14

Matthew 7:6

Lesson 15

Matthew 7:7-14

Lesson 16

Matthew 7:15-29, Luke 6:43-49

Lesson 17

Learn what Jesus teaches us to do, what it means and how it is applied to our lives today as we walk by the Spirit!

Fishers of Men . . . introduces Christians to the subject of becoming disciples of Jesus Christ and covers the first 17 lessons He taught His disciples. Beginning with His command to “Follow Me,” Jesus lays a solid foundation of instructions for developing the character of Christ within individuals.

- *Jesus’ teachings have completely transformed my life. (M.M.)*
- *Jesus invites you to walk with Him and learn from Him. (J.G.)*
- *I have been going to church for over 30 years and have never heard anything like this before. Why don’t churches teach this? (J.R.)*

Upon coming to faith in Jesus Christ at age 33, Michael Gibson earnestly wanted someone to disciple him in the faith. Finding no one . . . he became a student, and then teacher of God’s word.

One statement in particular captured his attention, “Go . . . make disciples . . . baptizing them . . . teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20) From that he wrote his first book, “Follow Me” (1996), a compilation of the four gospels into one account while highlighting each of the 263 instructions Jesus commanded His disciples to do and teach. Subsequently, he has written the three-part teaching series, “A Journey with Jesus” and many other books which help equip believers to do the work of the ministry.

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