

# Follow Me

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[ 0 : 00 ] Before I look to the Scriptures with you, I want to take just a moment and encourage you! to be in prayer for me this next Sunday, and then the Sunday after that as I will be in Jamaica! with Caleb and Charity, and while I will not be preaching here, Pastor Shear will be doing that, I will be preaching there. And so remember to pray for me. It's kind of a pray for two pastors at the same time. I think you can handle that. And ask that God gives me a productive and fruitful ministry there. Part of the objective is to go down and visit with Caleb and Charity, get to know the ministry a little better, and also to be involved in kind of preparing him for the ordination council that we look forward to next summer. And also an opportunity to visit the churches and ministry and be involved in ministry there. So I want you to turn in your Bible, if you would, this morning to John chapter 21. John chapter 21. Let's take a minute and come to the Lord in prayer before we look to the scriptures. This morning, Father, our hearts are knit together because of the Lord Jesus Christ, because of the redemption that we have in him, the forgiveness of sins, and we are knit together in prayer asking that this morning your spirit would work both in the preaching of your word and in the reception of your word. We're thankful that you have given to us the scriptures, clear, accurate, convicting. And this morning we ask that this word that you have given to us would leave an indelible impression upon our lives and hearts and that our behavior and lives that we live would show the mark of the ministry of the Spirit of God and the ministry of your word.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Let me have you look with me just for a moment, beginning there in John chapter 21, verse 15, and I'll read that portion to you. It says, When they'd finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? He said to him, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, Feed my lambs. He said to him a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love me? He said to him, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.

He said to him, He said to him, He said to him, He said to him a third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me? Peter was grieved because he said to him a third time, Do you love me? And he said to him, Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you. Jesus said to him, Feed my sheep. I wonder this morning whether or not you are struck by the way in which John ends his gospel. It's really different from the way that Matthew, Mark, Luke, end theirs. It is different from the way in which Acts concludes. It is different from the way in which the pastoral epistles conclude. And conclusions are important because they tell us important things against the backdrop of the teaching that we have found in the Word of God.

I want you to stop with me just for a moment and think over the broad scope of the book of John. Beginning in John chapter 1, we are reminded, And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory.

John opens up with the declaration of the supremacy and the significance of Christ, and draws our hearts to recognize that the one this book is going to focus on is the Lord of glory, the creator of the universe, and the one who has come to be the Lamb of God.

[ 4 : 51 ] And we work our way through the book. John actually taking very little time to explain to us some of the particulars and the historical events that made up the years of Christ's public ministry, actually picking up on only seven.

The flow is focused predominantly upon who the Lord Jesus Christ is as the Son of God. And if you were listening in pastor's prayer, you heard him reference the fact that these things are written, that you might know that Jesus is the Christ, and that knowing these things you might believe and have life.

So you have to ask yourself the question as we look here, why does God allow or instruct John to write his gospel in such a fashion and end up with someone as flawed and as frail as Peter in the

last chapter?

I hope that sticks, because it has bearing and is significant. I speak to the majority of you here this morning, who I am fully persuaded know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior.

And what we find in John chapter 21 has bearing upon the way in which you, who know Christ, are to live.

[ 6 : 30 ] And so as we take up this portion, let me remind you just for a moment again and keep your finger there in John chapter 21, but go back just for a second and touch on John chapter 20, verse 31, and mark what it says, these things are written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by believing, you may have life in his name.

Question, what does that life involve? What does that life in Christ involve?

And what we're going to find in the passage, I believe, is a very clear indication of what life in Christ really comes down to.

Last week, Pastor, as he was preaching in John chapter 21, the first portion of John chapter 21, he kind of reminded us of the reality of the fact that when we are living in Christ, we are living a life of productivity by daily dependence on his instruction and his counsel.

Hey, throw your net on the right side of the boat. We can spend a lot of energy in a frustrating and ineffective way of living when we're relying upon our own wisdom rather than relying upon the leading and the instruction of Christ.

[ 7 : 56 ] So last week, hey, when you live your life in Christ, you live it productively when you are allowing the Word of God and the Word of Christ to minister, instruct, and govern the way in which you live.

This morning, we are going to see that living the life in Christ will lead us to service, to sacrifice, and to submission. You look there in John chapter 21, verse 15, and mark the repetition of the things that we find here.

We want to draw attention without getting into all the nuanced details because the overarching issue is the matter of what we do when we are living in Christ. But let's take just a second and understand that here the night had passed of work.

They had finished breakfast, and after it was all over, you can kind of imagine that here is Jesus speaking in a very poignant and personal way to Peter, and he asks him a question.

He says, Do you love me more than these? Bible scholars go back and forth about what these refers to, and I think that it refers predominantly to the issues of things that are around there, the boat and the life and other things that Peter had for a moment really enjoyed.

[ 9 : 20 ] What Jesus is reminding Peter of is the reality of this is that our faith brings us into a very personal and relational bond with the Savior that is the Lord of our lives.

And when Jesus asked him this question, I cannot help but imagine that when Peter heard this question, it kind of stung a little bit. Why? What had Peter done not too long ago?

He denied the Lord how many times? Three times. And so here is Jesus asking Peter, Do you love me?

I do think it's appropriate for us to recognize that faith in Christ brings us, not just brings Peter or brought Peter, but brings us into a very personal and loving relationship with the Lord Jesus.

And so it's a fair question for you to ask yourselves this morning, and let me tell you this, whether you do or not, whether it resonates in your heart or not, if you know Christ, the operating principle of your life is going to be this, do I love him?

[ 10 : 29 ] And does my life indicate the authenticity of my love for him? He has a right to be loved by you because he is the lover of your soul.

and you are obligated to love him. So here is Jesus saying to Peter, Do you love me?

Now when Peter heard this question, as a good Jewish man, he knew what the Scriptures commanded. Isn't that right? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, with all thy soul, with all your strength.

Appreciate the song we sang this morning or listened to in relationship to that. We are to love the Lord, and here is Jesus asking Peter three times. How do you think that affected Peter to have him ask three times?

We know in the passage what it says there. If you look down just for a moment in verse 16, he says, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. And then in 17, it says Peter was grieved.

[ 11 : 45 ] I don't think that Jesus pulled Peter over to the side and whispered in his ear, Hey, do you love me? I would imagine that what happened was right there in the context because we know John heard it.

Right in the context of the breakfast and all that was going on, Jesus speaks to Peter and says, Hey, do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me? And so here, as Peter responds in each instance, we find that there is a ratcheted up attention to this issue in Peter's conscience. And so you ask yourself the question, Why did Jesus ask Peter three times, Do you love me? Why? We do know in the Scripture that using something threefold times is a way of emphasizing of amplifying, of drawing attention to it.

And if you remember back from when you were in school or now that you are in school, either way, when the teacher repeats something three times in a row, what's the significance of that?

This will be on the test. Jesus says to him, Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?

[ 12 : 59 ] Do you love me? Do you love me? And as you read here in the Gospel, you recognize that what Jesus is making very, very clear is that there is a significance and a sobriety to this issue of loving Christ that should not be missed by any of us today.

Mark what Jesus has to say as Peter responds and says, Yes, I love you. He says there, first of all, he says in 15, Feed my lambs.

He asks them again, Tend my sheep. Verse 17, Feed my sheep. And so I want you to kind of recognize that in this relationship that you have with the Lord Jesus Christ who is the lover of your soul, your response to him in loving him and the life that you live in relationship to that love is one that will draw you into serving other people.

How contrary to the world we live in. Remember when the disciples were having their little tiffs on more than one occasion about who was going to be the most significant and Jesus' response and his instruction was this, is that those who are most significant in the body of Christ are those that are actually engaged in serving.

And here, at the very end of this book, as John lays out for us what life in Christ is, he drives this point home. If you love me, you will serve my sheep.

[ 14 : 42 ] I want you to recognize that Jesus put it first of all as loving me will bring you to feed my lambs.

And he was calling Peter as well as everyone who is here and says, you know what, I love Jesus to care for those who are struggling and a little uncertain and a little unstable and not always as mature as we would like them to be.

And here is Jesus saying, I want you to feed my lambs. One of the things that I remember from my grandfather, he was a sheep farmer of sorts, and one of the things I learned very quickly is that sheep are a very labor-intensive responsibility.

They're close to brain dead. If there's anything that you wish that sheep did not do, they will do it and they will complicate your life in any way conceivable. If sheep are bad, lambs are worse.

And here is Jesus saying that you, Peter, because you love me, are to care for those that are going to be a challenge to you. I love what we read about the Lord Jesus in Isaiah chapter 40, verse 11.

[ 16 : 07 ] It says this about our great shepherd. It says, he will lead his flock like a shepherd. He will gather the lambs in his arms. He will carry them in his bosom and gently lead those that are with young.

And I got to tell you, if you're here this morning and you are called by him in his grace and given salvation, you who have that responsibility of loving him in response to what he's done for you, you are to be engaged in meeting the needs of others.

That's what you're about. That's what you're about. I think about the passage over in Philippians chapter 2, verse 20 and 21, and you don't need to look at it this morning, but here is Paul talking about Timothy, and he says this, I have no man who is like-minded who will naturally care for your estate, for all seek their own.

Everybody's interested in what they're getting out of it. Not Timothy. Timothy. He naturally cares for the things that belong to Jesus Christ. There's something else that needs to be said here.

Loving him and life with him is a life that engages you with the body of Christ. I think one of the things that is a gross deficiency today in professing believers is that as a general rule, there are a lot of people that don't mind showing up occasionally, but when it comes to really investing deeply

in the bride of Christ, in the body of Christ, in those who belong to him, there's a level of hesitancy. [17:43] And Jesus uses a phraseology that in Scripture is undeniably connected to the relationship that he has with those that are his own, namely the church of the living God.

Who are his sheep? I'm reminded just for a moment of what it says over in Galatians. It says that we are to do good to all. How many remember that passage? You are to do good to all, but what's the remainder of it?

Especially those who are of the household of faith. And here's Jesus speaking to Peter. He says, Peter, I want you to invest your life in taking care of those who belong to me.

Does that mean that we are to have nothing to do with those outside the body of Christ? Yes, categorically not. But if I'm going to be responsible for feeding and caring and encouraging and nurturing and serving, the first place it should be seen is in the family of God.

I want to make that point clear. And I don't make that point on the basis of my preference, but I make it on the basis of the Scriptures. Let me have you think with me of a couple different passages in relationship to this.

[18:56] Turn over in your Bible to Acts chapter 20, verse 28. Here is Paul wrapping up his ministry to the elders of Ephesus and in his last statements to them, he says this, pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to care for the church of God which he obtained with his own blood.

1 Peter chapter 5, verse 2 and 3. Peter, as he writes to the elders, he says, shepherd the flock of God that is among you exercising oversight not under compulsion but willingly as God would have you not for shameful game but eagerly not domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock.

I got to tell you something. Listen carefully. The Scriptures make it undeniably clear that loving Christ will put you into ongoing and lasting relationship with the bride of Christ.

That's Bible truth. No substitute. Interestingly, this week as I was thinking about the application of this passage, one of the logical questions that came to mind is, okay, so Jesus makes it clear that if I love him, I'm going to be engaged in serving the body of Christ and I ask myself, do we here see illustrations of this?

I began to make a list and it got long enough that I had to stop and scratch it out and say, you know what, there's probably, I'm going to miss somebody.

[20:55] But I want to tell you, it's encouraging to me when I think about how servanthood in this fellowship is modeled to the point that it encourages me to see the way in which the bride of Christ is served.

I was walking around this morning peeking in on Sunday school classes. How many of you know that I get emotional?

Did you know that? And I was tearing up looking in the windows. What a blessing. But the truth of the matter is there are some of you sitting out here that I know you know Christ and you've chosen to live on the edges without much investment in the people that Jesus loves and has called you to bless and serve.

And if you love him, you'll serve him. There's a second thing that you find there in the passage. Mark it clearly. Verse 18 says, Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted.

But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go. Life in Christ is going to lead you to suffering and to sacrifice.

[22:23] Life in Christ is going to give you opportunities to suffer and to sacrifice. In Peter's case, it meant that he died a martyr's death and at least according to church history or rumor, when it came time for him to be martyred and to be executed, he chose to be crucified upside down because he would prefer not to be hung in the manner in which his Savior was.

But Jesus made it clear that, Peter, you're going to suffer for your faith. And if you were to read 1 Peter and 2 Peter, you can see in both of those books that he wrote that he understood what was coming and it wasn't least bit off-putting for him.

And I want to make it clear to you that loving Christ and living the life that he calls a believer to will be one that involves your suffering and your sacrifice.

One of the things I appreciate about the Word of God is that it is so up front about the cost of faith. Isn't that right? It tells you, if you're going to follow me, there's going to be some hardship and some

heartache and there are going to be some disappointments, there's going to be difficulty, and you might as well face it going into it.

When Jesus wrote what he did, it's clear that Peter understood that. And he accepted it. Do I love you?

[ 23 : 55 ] Yes. Serve. Do you love me? Yes. Then be prepared to endure the hardship and heartaches that come with serving me and being a representative in the world that he's placed us in.

You know, we live in America, in a country that for the present time is enjoying a relative amount of freedom in our faith. Isn't that right? I don't think it's going to last.

But you know what? When hardship and difficulty come, we have to realize that it comes because of his purposes and his grace and it will give us opportunity to represent him faithfully in the world in which he's placed us.

So how should we respond when hardship and difficulties come? Let me have you reference two different passages in relationship to that. Turn over in your Bible to Romans chapter 5 and let me just read for you verse 3 through 5.

Then, more than that, we rejoice in our sufferings knowing that suffering produces endurance. What do you think about that?

[ 25 : 12 ] Let me read it again. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings knowing that suffering produces endurance. endurance. And endurance produces character and character produces hope.

And hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Let me have you look at another passage over in James chapter 1.

James chapter 1. Verse 2, Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness and let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

You're not going to grow apart from challenge. You're not going to mature in the absence of difficulty.

And when we think about the reality of what our relationship with Christ calls us to, it is an undeniable fact that we are going to continue on an upward journey that is going to be marked by hardship and difficulty.

[ 26 : 33 ] And in the midst of all of that, we need to remember the promise that Jesus made to us. I will never, what? I'll never leave you or forsake you. Lo, I am with you always. But if we are going to live life in Christ, we are going to face hardship.

I got to tell you, we sometimes get so wrapped up with things that we're anxious about because they reflect our lack of confidence that He is in control of the moment and He knows what He's doing and it's good for us.

So I want you to understand that faith, the life that you live in Christ, is going to be marked by hardship. Be real about it. Understand it's not an accident, but it's something that He is allowing and it's there for a purpose.

It is there to encourage and strengthen us and help us grow in grace. We'll come to one more part there in verse 20 through 23 and here is Jesus speaking again and as He's clarified, you find Peter a little concerned.

Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who'd been reclining at the table close to Him and had said, Lord, who is it that is going to betray You? When Peter saw Him, he said to Jesus, Lord, what about this man?

[ 28 : 04 ] Faith leads to humility. It leads to submission. If you ever find yourself a little frustrated with your journey of faith, remind yourself that Peter was out in front of you.

Here is the close of the book. Here is Jesus with His last words to Peter and He's at the, Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me? Will you serve me?

Will you serve me? Will you follow? Will you die for me? And when it's all the smoke and dust is cleared, Peter says, Yeah, but what about him? I was like, What?

How many of you ever had kids that did that to you? You know, it's like, Peter. What a gift. There he is.

Yeah? What about him? What about him? We get caught up in that, don't we? Thinking that, you know, Lord, is it really fair?

[ 29 : 08 ] I mean, honestly, is it really fair that I haven't done better musically? I mean, you know, I watch these instrumentalists up here and it's like, Oh, well, Jesus really loved me.

He'd give me a better voice. I had a friend who was obsessed by the fact that he couldn't sing well. Just, I mean, if you ever ask him about his disappointments in life, he would tell you he couldn't sing well. It was just, it was, it worked him up. And here is Peter.

Jesus is giving him this great commission. Love me. Serve. Suffer. Yeah.

You know that, John, you really do like him. I think you like him more than me. Yeah, you play favorites. there's a passage that my children heard so often.

[ 30 : 19 ] I can give it to you in the King James because that's the way I learned it and then had them memorize it. It was, what is that to thee? Follow thou me. My kids, there's two of them here this morning and on more than one occasion they would come to me to lament, complain, whine.

That's the generic. They would let me know just how unreasonable it was that I was expecting one of them to carry out the garbage instead of all four. You know, or, my kids were, I seriously thought at one point they were going to all become attorneys.

Every point was contested. And so eventually as I began to dive into the scriptures a little bit more I realized there was a perfect Bible verse. It was this one. What is that to thee? Follow thou me.

Suck it up. Do what I ask. Do you know what life in Christ is going to mean for you?

It means doing what he's put in front of you and that's the end of the story. I respect, I respect people who stay at it and keep on serving year after year after year quietly because they are submitting to the call of God and nothing else.

[ 31 : 46 ] I respect the way in which those who are actively engaged in ministry here can be counted on to do what needs to be done without fanfare, without coddling because they understand that is God's call in their lives.

And so this morning as we think about how John ends, we see the glory of Christ, the Savior of the world who came to save you and to connect into your life in a very personal and real way.

And he says three pointed truths. you who love me be engaged in serving. You who love me endure hardship and don't spend the majority of your time whining about how hard it is.

the finish line is not that far in front. You who love me accept the call and the responsibilities that I've given to you and serve with faithfulness.

So how do we close the book of John? It is by understanding that he who is your Savior has a high call in your life and I challenge you to fix your eyes on Jesus.

[ 33 : 50 ] Let's close. Father God, this morning we rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ who is our Savior.

We who know you as our God and Savior thank you for salvation. We thank you that you lifted us out of death and darkness and you have made us to be servants of the living God.

I pray this morning that those who are here that do not know Christ would be drawn to the cross and those that are here this morning that have been kind of drifting around uncertain would have it clearly etched into their mind that following Jesus and knowing him involves a life that is undeniably clear in the scriptures.

and Lord, I recognize that for some this may be a day of rededication it may be a day of recommitting themselves to being what you've called them to be as your children and as your disciples.

Help what we do to reflect what we know. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.