

**"TO FOLLOW!"**

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**Speaker:** Danny Clinton



**Jesus was always asking people to follow Him...**

Roughly 22 different times within the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Jesus is recorded either asking or reminding people To Follow...

**Some He asked or reminded in a General since...**

*(Vs) John 8:12 – Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”*

*(Vs) Luke 9:23 – And He said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”*

*(Vs) John 10:27 – “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”*

**The Universal call to follow Jesus is for all believers everywhere.**

•**Side Note:** Christians that flame out quickly are often those who refuse to accept that they have an overall part to play and a call to respond.

**Some He asked or reminded in a very Specific sense...**

*(Vs) Mark 10:17-20 – And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” <sup>18</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. <sup>19</sup> You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’” <sup>20</sup> And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.”*

•This man first responds confidently in the things Jesus mentions... The General. **This is his “I got this!” moment!** He feels as though he is good to go.

*(Vs) Mark 10:21a – “And Jesus, looking at him, loved him...”*

•Jesus will never weigh in lightly when sharing with you about your path.

*(Vs) Mark 10:21b – ...and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” <sup>22</sup> Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.”*

- This is not a verse about wealth or prosperity... It's a verse about "Following!"

**To be exact, "This specific man's call to follow." A call that looks a bit different than the others who had been called up to that point...**

- ... A call to follow that was custom built to address exactly what it was supposed to: His love of "Money and Possessions."
- In a greater sense, this is highlighting that people are often called to very specific paths and even projects...
- **Side Note:** From my experience, the most discouraged Christians are often those walking down specific paths they weren't called to.

**Now, if we are all called "To follow," both generally and specifically, then of course how we execute that following would seem to matter a great deal!**

- A very famous verse addresses this... (Vs) Matthew 7:13,14 – "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. <sup>14</sup> But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."
- This is such a great picture of what it means to follow Jesus...

**The Narrow Road Life...** Means Jesus remains in the lead, determining all the starts and stops. Lefts and rights. Ups and Downs... etc.

**The Wide Road Life...** Doesn't mean that Jesus isn't present... It just means you can choose to go around Him when you don't like the direction that He's leading...

- The Wide Road is an easier path than the Narrow Road, not profitable in the end, but certainly more convenient and self-gratifying.
- So, the question then becomes, "How do we hear both the 'Universal' and 'Specific' calls to follow God and stay on the narrow path under His life-giving guidance and leadership?"
- We train! Using this book right here!

*(Vs) 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16-17 – "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man (Or Woman) of God may be competent, equipped for every good work."*

*(Vs) Romans 15:4 – "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."*

**"We use Scripture and Spirit to define and design lives that are full of 'following.'"**

- This is where this New Series "That's Not Helpful" begins to reveal its true purpose...
- **Bold Statement: "Most Christians are either poorly trained or untrained all together."**
- This is most apparent not in just their lifestyles, but especially when they are asked advice, council, or for support during someone else's struggle.

- The worst advice in my life has been almost entirely offered from fellow Christians. – And always freely given!
- It's as if we think... "Well, I know Jesus calls us all 'Universally,' and that He called me to this thing, 'Specifically'..."
- "... So, clearly, I'm now qualified to speak into anything and everything I want to..."
- **In other words...**

**"Now that I'm a follower of Jesus, everyone should feel free to follow ME as often as they can!"**

- This almost always leads to us "Feeling Led" to boldly speak out against some things, while graciously giving allowances for others. Most of us know this is true!
- We Christians are famous for all our "Yes" and "No," "Black" and "White," polarizing rhetoric.
- This is the entire reason why training is incredibly important for followers of Christ because...

**"Very little in a human being's life plays itself out in Black-or-White, Yes-and-No scenarios."**

- This is also why the Bible is so perfectly built to face this everyday human conundrum...

*(Vs) Hebrews 12: 1-2 ESV – "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us..."*

**This is another great verse on training...** "Let us run with endurance..." But, look a little closer... (Vs) Hebrews 12:1b – "... lay aside every weight, and sin"

*(Vs) Hebrews 12:1b NIV – "let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles."*

- It appears that some of the things we are called to "Lay Aside" or "Throw Off" aren't actually sinful...
- Instead, we might say about these things... "They are not helpful!"
- This also infers that, when we follow Jesus, sometimes what may be 'Sin' for one person may just be 'Not helpful' for another... And maybe even permissible for yet another...
- You see, the Bible is writing to remind us we are supposed to be people who are able, through training, to know the difference, ultimately reminding all of us that just...

**"Just following Jesus doesn't qualify you to be followed by others."**

- It's not that it's an evil or broken desire to want this, but "You've got to be trained to be followed."

**Paul pushes this thought to its highest level...**

*(Vs) 1st Corinthians 4:14-16 – "I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. <sup>15</sup> For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. <sup>16</sup> I urge you, then, be imitators of me."*

- This is because Paul knows that He has both the Calling (Spirit) and the Training (Scripture) to step confidently into this space...

**So again, that's exactly what we're going to do inside this series ... We're going to train ourselves...**

- ... Both for our General Calling and so that we can be Specifically Qualified to be the people others follow to see the person of Jesus!
- Allow me to make one closing promise...

**"You are not going to enjoy it."**

- Training can be painful! – It's awkward and foundation tearing work that can often feel more like discipline than encouragement...and that's OK!

*(Vs) Hebrews 12:11 – "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."*

- *"Painful rather than pleasant..."* This is why so many people avoid it and waste their lives meandering out into the void, but they don't have to...
- It all begins with deciding how you want to respond to the question that Jesus has never stopped asking... **"Will you follow me?"**