

"COME, FOLLOW ME"

Exploring five Biblical analogies of what it means to live out your faith

Schedule

Lesson 1 -	Who Are You Following?	
Lesson 2 -	Put On Your Running Shoes and Follow Me	An Athlete
Lesson 3 -	Put On Your Helmet and Follow Me	A Soldier
Lesson 4 -	Turn Up Your Hearing Aids and Follow Me	A Counselor
Lesson 5 -	Put On Your ID Badge and Follow Me	A Representative
Lesson 6 -	Pick Up Your Broom and Follow Me	A Servant

Study Time Suggestions for this Series:

Reflect -

This is an important part of your study time. As you quiet yourself in the presence of the Lord, He will make Himself known to you. It is a time to be still and to wait upon Him. Let the "hurry and worry" of your daily life diminish for these minutes and let the reality of God's love and mercy and grace and forgiveness come into focus for you.

Read- This is a great time to read the Scripture verses in several translations so that the ideas begin to fill your mind and your thinking. Have your paper and pencil ready so that you can mark down the phrases and ideas that seem to be important or interesting or even disturbing to you. What are your observations?

Receive -

God has promised that He will be your teacher. You really don't need anything else but the Word of God, an open mind, and a willing heart. As the Holy Spirit reveals His truth to you and opens the "eyes of your understanding", let Him speak quietly into your spirit.

Respond -

Studying the Word of God is always more than an intellectual exercise. The value of each lesson will become apparent to you as you wait quietly for the Spirit of God to bring to your mind the ideas which He would like you to remember. As His thoughts come into your mind and heart, you have the opportunity to respond. What are your desires? What is your prayer? Let Him reassure you that it is not through your effort or determination but through the gift of His resurrection power that your life will bring glory and joy to Him.

"COME, FOLLOW ME"

Lesson 1 - Who Are You Following?

"Come, follow Me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men.
At once they left their nets and followed Him." Matthew 4: 19 - 20

Throughout His earthly ministry Jesus again and again invited individuals to "follow Him". Beginning with Simon Peter and his brother, Andrew, He said, "Come, Follow Me." He extended the possibility of a new way of life and adventures which they had never even dreamed about to a wide variety of people. From fishermen to rich men and rulers, from tax collectors to foreigners, the invitation was extended to leave their present aspirations, their family ties and to begin to live the life which He alone could offer to them. It's an open invitation to you and me today, isn't it? It's a choice we get to voluntarily make – both initially and daily.

REFLECT – Take some time, as you quiet your mind and your heart and put away the distractions and concerns you have, to consider what it means to you at this time in your life to be a follower of Jesus. Is it the desire of your heart or are you still undecided? How seriously would you say you want to do life His way day by day? Take some time to ponder His love and mercy and to talk with Him about the desires of your heart as you begin this study.

READ - If possible, read these passages in more than one version of the Bible. To whom is Jesus extending the invitation? What are the circumstances? What does He include in the invitation? What is the response?

Matthew 4: 18 - 20 (Mark 1: 16 - 18)

Mark 2: 13 - 14 and John 1: 43

Matthew 8: 18 - 22 (Luke 9: 57 - 62)

Matthew 9: 9

Matthew 10: 37 - 39

Matthew 16: 24 – 25 (Mark 8: 34 - 38, Luke 9: 23 - 26)

Matthew 19: 16 - 22 (Mark 10: 17 - 22, Luke 18: 18 - 24)

John 10: 25 - 27

John 12: 20 - 26

John 21: 19 - 22

RECEIVE - What are the truths, the insights, that the Holy Spirit would like you to consider today?

1. What made those early disciples willing to leave their responsibilities and home to follow Jesus? What did this mean for them? Because you know the end of the story, why was it the right choice?
2. As you look at the verses in which Jesus explains the cost of following Him, what did He tell His disciples and other inquirers? How would you explain the same concept to someone who would ask you?
3. Relationships and wealth were 2 of the deterrents to individuals who talked with Jesus about His invitation to them. What still keeps people from choosing to respond to Jesus wholeheartedly? How about you?

RESPOND – It's serious business! It's life changing! It's your decision! It opens the door to joy and peace and direction. Spend some thoughtful and quiet moments listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit right now. What is the invitation that He is extending to you? Tell Him what your hesitations are. Ask Him your questions. Then let Him embrace you and reassure you that You are loved, chosen, and precious in His sight – for eternity!

"COME, FOLLOW ME"

Lesson 2 - Put On Your Running Shoes and Follow Me

"Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles,
and let us run with perseverance **the race marked out for us.**
Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith." Heb. 12: 1-2

In a race the prize is always a big incentive, isn't it? It may be a blue ribbon, a trophy, or a significant amount of cash. It might be the internal satisfaction of overcoming a fear, an obstacle, or simply improving your own skill, strength or time. Sometimes it is simply the joy of accepting a challenge or the possibility of winning that drives the athlete to participate in a certain sport. No matter where the motivation comes from, there are certain characteristics that real athletes share. For each of them, their reward is greater than the effort! In your mind, what characterizes an athlete?

REFLECT – Take some time, as you quiet your mind and your heart, to consider what characteristics of an athlete and a race that might help you grasp what it means to live out your faith. In ways do you think Jesus modeled for you these ideas and values? What are your questions and concerns? Bring them to the One who waits to hear from you and wants to supply your every need.

READ - If possible, read these passages in more than one version of the Bible. Take notice of who is talking and the ideas and characteristics of an athlete, the race, and/or the prize which might be helpful to you.

Acts 20: 22 – 24

I Corinthians 9: 24 – 27

Galatians 5: 6 - 7

Philippians 2: 14 – 18

II Timothy 2: 5

II Timothy 4: 7 – 8

Hebrews 12: 1 - 3

RECEIVE - What are the truths, the insights, that the Holy Spirit would like you to consider today?

1. Why do you think the athlete makes a good illustration for you as follower of Jesus?
2. In what ways was Jesus a model "athlete" during His years of ministry and in His mission?
3. Looking back over these passages of Scripture, what are some of the lessons to be learned?
4. Why was Paul so anxious to finish his race well? What enabled him to be so dedicated?

RESPOND –

As you consider the characteristics of an athlete and the race that is before you, listen quietly to the Holy Spirit's gentle voice. What do you think He wants you to change, to accept, to understand? What do you want Him to do for you so that you can run your race well – following Jesus all the way?

"COME, FOLLOW ME"

Lesson 3 - Put On Your Helmet and Follow Me

"Be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus.
Endure suffering **as a good soldier** of Christ Jesus." II Tim. 2: 1 & 3 (NLT)

One of the characteristics of a good soldier is that he/she is willing to take orders from those who are in charge of the training or the battle. From the lowest enlisted soldier right up to the top general, each person knows his position and his responsibility, and cannot deviate from the orders given. Why is this necessary for success in a battle? Why doesn't "the committee system" work? What other attributes best describe a good soldier?

REFLECT – As you quiet your mind and heart, take some time to consider what characteristics of a soldier and of a battle which might help you grasp what it means to live out your faith. In ways do you think Jesus modeled for you these ideas and values? What are your questions or your concerns? Bring them to your loving heavenly Father. He is eager and waiting to meet with you.

READ – If possible, read these passages in more than one version of the Bible. Take notice of the ideas and characteristics of a soldier, his armor and his enemy. How do these verses help you grasp what it means for the follower of Christ to live out the reality of his/her faith?

Romans 13: 12- 14

I Corinthians 16: 13- 14

II Corinthians 10: 3 – 5

Ephesians 6: 10 – 18

I Timothy 1: 18 - 19

I Timothy 6: 11 - 12

II Timothy 2: 1 – 4

II Timothy 4: 6 - 8

I Peter 5: 8 - 10

I John 5: 3 - 5

RECEIVE – What are the truths, the insights, that the Holy Spirit would like you to consider today?

1. Why do you think the soldier makes a good illustration for us as followers of Jesus?
2. Who or what are "the enemies" in these passages?
3. Sometimes a soldier is in a defensive position and at other times on the offense?
Can you find illustrations of both of these situations?
4. Why is the armor of a soldier important for his safety and his mission? How is it described in these passages?

RESPOND – As you consider the characteristics of a soldier, of the battle that we face, of the enemy, listen quietly for the things that the Holy Spirit would like you to consider more carefully. What are the verses that you should take to heart? What would He like you to remember? How is victory possible for you – I Corinthians 15: 57 – 58?

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Lesson 4 - Turn Up Your Hearing Aids and Follow Me

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."
I Thessalonians 5: 11

People make appointments to see a counselor for many different reasons, don't they? It might be for information or wisdom. It might be for advice or insight. It might be for encouragement or confidence. It could be for guidance or correction. It is important to find a counselor who can be trusted, is competent, and who is eager to listen carefully and speak the truth. It is no doubt more important for a counselor to ask good questions than to give the answers. In your mind and experience, what would characterize a counselor to whom you would go?

REFLECT – Take some time to sit quietly and focus on the Great Counselor. In what ways was Jesus a Counselor when he on this earth? Remember the words of comfort that He spoke to His disciples before His crucifixion – John 14: 16–17. Bring your questions, your concerns and your thanksgiving to Him. He is eager to listen and to respond to you.

READ – If possible, read these Bible verses in more than one translation. What are the characteristics of a counselor? Is it really possible that God would like to enable you to be this kind of person as you respond to the Holy Spirit?

Romans 15: 1 - 6

Ephesians 4: 15 – 16

I Thessalonians 4: 18

I Thessalonians 5: 11

II Timothy 2: 1 - 2

II Timothy 4: 2

Titus 2: 3 – 5

Hebrews 3: 13 - 14

Hebrews 10: 24 - 25

RECEIVE – What are the truths or the insights that the Holy Spirit would like you to think about?

1. Who has God used in your life as a "counselor"? What are the reasons that you see that person in that role or would give them that title?
2. Does God use only trained and/or gifted people to be counselors or does He want to use everyone?
3. Look again at the verses in Titus. Do you see yourself in these verses? What are the possibilities?
4. Where are your strengths as a counselor? Where are your weaknesses?

RESPOND – As you consider the characteristics of a counselor, what is God pointing out to you? Who needs your comfort, your listening ear, your encouragement, your blessing, your insight at the present time? Are you willing to step out in faith? Keep on listening quietly for the prompting of THE COUNSELOR, Who lives within you!

"COME, FOLLOW ME"

Lesson 5 - Put On Your ID Badge and Follow Me

"Whatever you do or say, do it as a REPRESENTATIVE of the Lord Jesus." Col. 3: 17 - NLT

Being a "representative" can mean a wide variety of responsibilities, can't it? There are representatives in the capitol of our country and our state. They are sent there to reflect and carry out the will of the people in their geographical area politically. In foreign countries, ambassadors are sent to represent the United States. At conventions and conferences, organizations send a few people to reflect their choices and products, their opinions and convictions. As a "representative" of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are given some clear instructions about "what to wear" and "how to act". Did you know that there is a "new wardrobe" waiting for you through the gift of the Holy Spirit in your life?

REFLECT – Are you interested in exchanging your own comfortable habits and attitudes for new ones – ones that reflect Jesus more clearly and beautifully? Think about it and tell your heavenly Father what you are thinking and feeling. Though He already knows, it brings Him joy for you to talk with Him about your desires and hopes as well as your concerns and doubts.

READ – If possible, read these Scripture verses in more than one translation of the Bible. What are the traits or characteristics of a faithful and true representative of Jesus that these verses point out to you?

John 13: 34 – 35

Romans 13:14

Ephesians 4: 22 – 32

Philippians 2: 5

Colossians 3: 7 - 10,

Colossians 3: 12 -17

I Thessalonians 2: 4 - 5

I Peter 5: 5 – 7

II Peter 1: - 11

RECEIVE – What are the truths or the insights that the Holy Spirit would like you to consider more thoughtfully today?

1. Do you think that a representative is a helpful illustration for us as believers? Why?
2. What are some of the things that keep us from being a "good representative"?
3. What are some of the reasons that make consistency so difficult for us?
4. Compare the "new wardrobe" with the fruits of the Spirit – Galatians 5: 22 – 26
What does this passage help you to understand about your old and new nature?

RESPOND – Perhaps you would like to make the words of this song your prayer to the One who is able to transform you.
"Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me – all His wonderful passion and purity.
O, my Savior, divine, all my being refine, 'til the beauty of Jesus be seen in me."

"May God Himself sanctify you through and through. The One Who calls you is faithful and He will do it. I Thess. 5: 23 – 24

"COME, FOLLOW ME"

Lesson 6 - Pick Up Your Broom and Follow Me

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve,
and to give His life as a ransom for many. Mark 10: 45

What would you say are the three predominant characteristics of someone who is known for their willingness to put others first, to serve people, and to be the first to offer assistance and help whenever they can do so? Perhaps you might include humility or unselfishness. What about the person who quietly serves others in such a way that very few people even know about the consistent ways in which they make life better, easier or happier for others?

REFLECT – As you quiet your mind and put away your distractions and lists of things to do, consider the ways in which Jesus served people. What made Him, the Most High Son of God, willing and eager to respond to others in the way that He did? From His own testimony in Mark 10: 43 – 45, what does Jesus teach His disciples about His view of greatness?

READ – If possible, read these Bible verses in more than one translation. What does Scripture teach about the role of a servant? How is this attitude a reflection of Jesus?

Mark 10: 43 – 45

Romans 12: 9 - 16

Galatians 5: 13

Philippians 2: 3 – 8

Colossians 3: 12 – 17

James 3: 13 - 18

I Peter 4: 7 – 11

RECEIVE – What are the truths or the insights that the Holy Spirit would like you to think about?

1. Do you believe that the "gift of serving" is given to only some people or are all believers called to be a servant?
2. How would you explain the vital connection between loving others and serving them?
3. For some people, it is very difficult to accept the kindness and ways in which others want to serve them. Why is this and how can it be genuinely changed?
4. Here is a list of some obstacles that can keep people from being willing to serve their family, friends, neighbors, or church. Are they obstacles for you? Why or why not?
 - Limited time
 - Energy
 - Unaware of needs
 - Affluence (able to pay someone else to do it)
 - Pride
 - Lack of confidence
 - Anything else?

RESPOND – As you consider the characteristics of a servant, what is God pointing out to you? As you read Romans 12: 1 -2, what comes to your mind and heart? Listen quietly and let God's Spirit show you how you might be able to "offer your body as a living sacrifice" and in doing so you would be discovering new ways to worship God through serving others.