**Lesson Three – “Following In Faith”**

**Biblical Framework:**

**Matthew 4:18-20 (ESV) “**While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.

**19**And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

**20**Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

**Mark 8:34 (ESV) “**And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

Jesus **invites all men to follow Him** (Matthew 4:19); and **commands all who choose to follow Him to live sacrificially (Mark 8:34).** Jesus makes it clear – that He expects all who believe in Him to follow Him. John 10:27 “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

The New Testament also continues this idea: (**[1 Peter 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet%202.21)**, [**Ephesians 5:1-2**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph%205.1-2), [**1 Corinthians 11:1-2**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%2011.1-2)). Believers are defined, not only by what they believe, but who they follow.

* People who don’t know Jesus watch people who say they do…
* As followers of Jesus, we represent Him to those around us.
* This means that we should love how Jesus loved; we should go where Jesus went, and do what Jesus did.
* We should teach what Jesus taught. We should hang out with who Jesus hung out with. We should be following in Jesus’ footsteps.

To follow Jesus – we must know where to find Him:

1. Alone (often praying/resting)
2. With His closest friends (community)
3. With the opposed/forgotten (the sick, sinners, and culturally insignificant people)

Spending time w/friends (community) is very common among Christians; however prayer & rest, are often neglected. We may downplay the need for rest and spending time with God, but **Jesus prioritized it.**

**#1: Spending Time With God:**

Before Jesus began His ministry (Matthew 4) – He fasted and prayed for 40 days. As He began His ministry and taught the principles of God’s Kingdom, or after He would pray for the sick, or heal the masses, He spent time alone, in the presence of God. (John 6:15; Matthew 14:13)

After Jesus performed miracles, or spent time among the people – He would go to a private place – to rest His body and mind, and recharge His soul.

**#2: Connect with people who were oppressed and forgotten.**

* It’s messy, it’s dirty, and it can be a little dangerous.
* People in dark places; the rejected, isolated, and unwanted…
* To be the hands and feet of Jesus, **we have to go** to the people He went to. Even if that makes us a little uncomfortable.

**#3: Give people what they need!** Not always want they wanted, but what they ultimately needed.

* He would heal the sick, then fellowship with them.
* Jesus included the ignored.
* Jesus helped the poor, and gave purpose to the hopeless.
* Forgave the past, and pointed toward the future.
* He showed love to everyone He came in contact with.

Maybe the most applicable story for us today is found in [**John 8:1-11**](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%208.1-11). The story of the woman caught in the act of adultery. What does Jesus do? He steps in and defends her. Why? He stood with her - not because she was innocent but because **she was in dire need** of a friend, an advocate, a savior.

Following Jesus:

1. An invitation from Jesus
2. An instruction from Jesus
3. A command to live sacrificially
4. All of the above
5. None of the above.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the most challenging part of following Jesus for you?
2. Based on today’s discussion, how do you feel about following Jesus?