

# The Call To Follow

## The Problems We Face Today

One of the biggest challenges facing believers is the ability to hear the call of Jesus to follow Him.

- We know that God's will for us is to follow Jesus, but we have not heard His call to us.
- We are so busy that we do not take the time to hear the call of Jesus to follow him and so we struggle spiritually.
- We tend to follow Jesus on our own terms because we do not know how to follow Him.
- We do not realize that following Jesus is a conscious choice and that we must choose to follow Him.

These problems are common to most believers; you are by no means alone in your struggle.

## Lesson Truth

Jesus is calling you to follow Him and be His disciple. In order to hear His call you must have a desire to follow Him. You must also learn to listen for His voice with your spiritual ears by tuning out the world and tuning in the Holy Spirit.

## Lesson Goal

The goal of this lesson is for you to clearly hear the call of Jesus to you personally to follow Him.

## Lesson Discussion



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Matthew 4:19 "Come follow me" Jesus said, 'and I will make you fishers of men.'"

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Jesus called people and they followed Him. Often it was just a simple "Follow Me" and someone would leave everything behind and go with Jesus. Each person who was called by Jesus Christ had to make a choice.



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Luke 18:22-23 "When Jesus heard this, he said to him, 'You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.' When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth."

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There were some that Jesus called to follow Him, but they did not go with Him because of what it would cost them. Instead they made excuses as to why they could not follow Him just now.



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John 6:60-66 "On hearing it, many of his disciples said, 'This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?' Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, 'does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe.' For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, 'This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.' From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him."

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There were some who followed Jesus for a while, but soon stopped because they could not accept some things He taught. They did not really believe that He was who He said He was.

Those who follow Jesus as His disciples are called Christians. We cannot follow Him unless we have been born again and have received the

Holy Spirit. If you have not been born again and have not received the Holy Spirit, you will want to start with the first series that teaches those important truths.

Many believe that what Jesus taught was true. Many accept that what Jesus did on the cross was for them. But not many will respond to His call to follow Him as Lord. Discipleship is the journey that allows Jesus to truly be Lord in your life.

It is easy to ignore the call of Jesus. We can find any number of excuses as to why we cannot follow Him just now. Whatever the excuse, when we reject His calling, we are rejecting Him.

There are those who think they are following Jesus, but when you look at how they live compared to the standard that Jesus taught, a big gap is evident. They are often just following their own idea of following Him.



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John 10:27 “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”

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You can do many Christian-like activities and not be following Jesus. You can attend church and Bible studies, pray and teach the Bible, or even go to the mission field and still not follow Him.

To follow Jesus means we follow Him on His terms, not our own. We must allow Him to become captain of our ship and take the ship in the direction He wants, not where we want.

Since Jesus is not with us physically like He was with the original disciples, how does He call us today and how do we hear His voice?



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Romans 8:28 “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

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Once you are born again and have received the Holy Spirit, you have the spiritual ears to be able to hear the Holy Spirit. However, just because you now have spiritual ears does not guarantee you will hear the Holy Spirit’s call to you to follow Jesus.

Often the noise of the world and the cares of this life drown out His voice. You need two important things to help:

- We must understand how the Holy Spirit calls to us.
- We must silence the noisy distractions of life that drown out our ability to hear Him.

### How the Holy Spirit Speaks to Us

The first thing we must learn is how the Holy Spirit communicates with us.

Just before Jesus was crucified, He told His disciples He would be leaving them soon, but He would send another like Himself, the “Spirit of Truth” who would teach them and guide them in truth.



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John 14:15-17 “If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”

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John 16:13 “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.”...

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The voice of the Holy Spirit is seldom audible, although He does speak to us audibly at times. The most common way the Holy Spirit speaks to us is through our conscience by conviction. The Holy Spirit is quiet and gentle. He will not beat you over the head to get your attention.

The call to follow Jesus comes through the Holy Spirit to your spiritual ears if you are listening. The problem most often is that we are not listening.



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Romans 1:6 “And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.”

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As you make time to listen to the Holy Spirit with your spiritual ears, you will sense a gentle pressure and conviction to follow Jesus.

There will be times when you hear the call and you truly want to follow Him and you know you should follow Him, but something is there pressuring you against doing so just now.

Remember, the goal of this lesson is to hear the call to follow Jesus. If you cannot hear the call, you must identify and remove the barrier that is keeping you from hearing His call.

The Holy Spirit is persistent in the lives of those who have received Him, and His calling to you will come through clearly when the barriers have been removed.

### **What Keeps Us From Hearing Him?**

People are distracted by various things and in different ways, depending on their personality and interests.

The biggest distraction is simply life itself. We often get too busy being workers for God and doing our own thing. We think because we go to Church, attend Bible studies, pray and do Christian work, that we are following Jesus.

There are some who are not listening for His call because they think they are already following Him. Many assume because they are saved that they are followers of Jesus.

We are so busy with so many interests that we are unable to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. We are often following Jesus on our own terms and have chosen for ourselves or have been

influenced by others how we will serve and where we will serve.

Our work, personal desires, wants, hobbies, pleasures, entertainment, and service to God fill our lives so much that we have no time to quiet our minds and spirits so we can hear His call.

We must come back to the place where we can hear the voice of Jesus to follow Him. We must make the time and take the time to come to Jesus, sit with Him for awhile so we can hear His call to follow Him.



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Matthew 13:22 “What was sown among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.”

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Jesus told a parable about a farmer sowing seeds. Some of the seeds that sprouted were choked by weeds. The seeds represent the Word of God. The weeds are the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches.

The weeds choke our desire for God and our ability to hear Him. The cares of this life entangle us, making us soon forget whose we are.

The only way you will ever hear the call of Jesus to follow Him is to spend time with Him, clear your mind of all the clutter of life, and listen for His call.

The call will come as a simple conviction in your mind and in your heart so that you will know that you must follow Him.



## ACTION STEP

**Read the Scriptures in this lesson at least once a day and spend at least twenty minutes each day concentrating on God and God only.**

**If you have no desire to follow Jesus, ask the Holy Spirit to show you why during you quiet time with Him.**

**Remember that this quiet time is for you to concentrate on hearing the call of Jesus to follow Him. Keep your mind focused on this one thing.**

**The call to follow Jesus will come as a gentle conviction in your mind. Your conscience will affirm that you must follow Jesus.**

**You will have completed this lesson when you know you have heard the call to follow Jesus.**

As you spend time with God you can talk to Him like you would a friend for whom you have a lot of respect and reverence.

Continue to read at least one chapter a day in the Gospels. As you review this lesson it is helpful to quote the Scriptures verbally and concentrate on them.

The key to mastering this step is to be persistent and not let anything rob you of this time with God. God loves you and desires to have time with you each day to show you how much He wants to be a part of your life.

Use a journal to write down things you discover during your time with God. As you continue to spend time with Him every day, your relationship with Him and your desire to follow Him will grow.

When you find thoughts that are not God-focused trying to press in, thrust them out of your mind immediately.



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2 Corinthians 10:4-5 “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

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If you suddenly remember something you need to do later in the day, have a pen and paper handy to write it down. Then immediately let it go and get back to concentrating on God.

If your mind seems to be overwhelmed with non-God focused thinking and nothing seems to be working, a little trick that works well for me is to constantly say “In the name of Jesus” over and over until your mind is free to concentrate on God and God only.

There is tremendous power in the name of Jesus Christ and just saying it can be very powerful in helping you get free from troublesome thinking, even if you have to do that for the entire twenty minutes. Eventually you will begin to have greater control over your thinking.

Learning to live this truth is just another step in a wonderful journey. Step by step you will learn how to follow Jesus Christ and let Him be Lord of your life.

## Illustrations For Living This Truth

Bob accepted Christ when he was twelve. He attended church and Sunday school regularly with his family. When Bob was nineteen, a visiting evangelist preached a message on what it means to follow Jesus. He had never been taught how to follow Jesus and he was convicted by the Holy Spirit that as a Christian

he should follow Christ. No one, not even the pastor, was able help him know what to do. His pastor advised him to get more involved in the church and to read his Bible more and pray. But Bob felt there was more to following Jesus than just doing Christian activities.

Fortunately for Bob, he met a Christian man who explained what discipleship was all about. He began to disciple Bob and taught him how to follow Jesus by giving the right to himself completely over to Jesus. Bob began to spend dedicated time praying and concentrating on God. He was soon able to hear the call of Jesus clearly to follow Him. Bob eventually received the specific calling to the mission field in Africa.

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Janet was a new Christian. A friend had shared the good news of salvation with her and she had prayed to receive Christ. Janet was in her forties and her children were out on their own, so she had time to get actively involved in the church.

She was happy to volunteer for everything that was asked of her. She believed the more she did, the more Jesus would be pleased. Yet her relationship with Christ was shallow and she really did not know Him on a personal level.

Janet was burdened by all her responsibilities, and she became unsure of what God really wanted her to do. She began to seek God and to spend time with Him. She stopped accepting more responsibilities until she knew what it was that God wanted her to do—what the calling on her life really was. As she read the Gospels she began to realize that Jesus taught we must follow Him. Soon she was able to hear His voice. She knew if she was going to follow Him, she needed to put Him first above all things. As she let go of the things of this life in favor of her Lord, the calling came to her very clearly to go and make disciples. Janet began to search the Scriptures and learn from Jesus what it means to be a disciple and follower. As she stepped out in obedience, she was able to help others learn how to be His disciples.

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Mike had been a Christian for twenty-five years, had attended many different denominations, and had studied the Bible for years. Mike taught Bible studies, led people to the Lord, and even had the opportunity to preach on occasion. Yet there were things in his life that he knew were not pleasing to the Lord. His life was very pagan in some areas and he experienced a lot of guilt and problems because he knew he was not living the godly and holy life that God requires. Mike had never given his complete loyalty and devotion to Jesus Christ. Doing so had not been a primary focus in any of the churches he had attended. Most focused on getting people saved and getting them active in the church.

After a few significant setbacks in his job and family, Mike began to seek a deeper relationship with God and began reading about Jesus Christ in the Gospels. He knew in his heart that he was missing something and if Christianity was limited only to what he was currently experiencing, he was ready to discard it and find something else.

As Mike spent time concentrating on God and reading the Bible, he soon began to hear again the calling of Jesus to follow Him. He had heard the call initially when he was a new

Christian, but had made excuses. Mike finally realized that the missing dynamic in his life was the lordship of Jesus over his life. He realized that apart from following Jesus he would never be able to live the standard Jesus taught. So Mike made the choice to become a true disciple. He realized he must give up the right to himself completely to Jesus Christ. Over time his relationship with Christ became passionate and he was able to begin experiencing the holy and godly life that he had longed for. He realized that only Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, could make him holy and godly as he daily chose to follow Him in faith and obedience.



## Additional Scripture Verses

1 Corinthians 1:9 “God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.”

2 Peter 1:3 “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.”

2 Peter 1:10-11 “Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

2 Thessalonians 1:11 “With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith.”

Ephesians 4:1 “...I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”

Matthew 7:7 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”