

Volume

9

DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING

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Following in His Steps

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Introduction

“And He said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Lk 9:23)

Following Jesus is an important requirement in being the Lord’s disciple. You are a disciple of him you obey and follow. If we are to become what God saved us to be , we are commanded to follow in His steps.

So far we have tried to understand why God instructed us to follow Jesus, and the preconditions and steps unto following Him. Here we shall look carefully into certain dimensions in which we are expected to follow Jesus.

1. What does the word 'steps' mean? (Lk 9:23)

What a man does, the path he treads, his way of life, his manner of doing things all form his steps.

2. Discuss what it means to 'follow in His steps' and the implications of that instruction (Mt 17:5).

"...conform wholly to my example in living, and if need be, in dying also".

Jesus Christ is the visual aid, the Specimen, the Pattern Man that God has given us to show what the 'man' He created at the beginning in His image looks like. God spoke to the fathers in times past through prophets who preached to show them how to live and how to please God, but this was inadequate. Then He decided to send Jesus to come and not only preach to us but live the life. Now we have a template to follow.

Therefore we must be diligent and make a careful study of His lifestyle, His ways of doing things so that we can follow him precisely. We must be ready to make prompt changes in our lives the moment we notice it running contrary to the way Jesus would do things.

3. Outline some of His 'footsteps', His way of life', His way of doing things, that we are commanded to follow and conform to wholly.

His prayer lifestyle, eating habits, leadership style, sleeping habits, the way He related with women, with government rules, the way He related with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, etc, are all part

of His footsteps we are commanded to follow. There is a lot to study about the life of Jesus and it is necessary to face it squarely if we must indeed follow His steps.

(a) **His prayer lifestyle**

- (i) Discover His attitude to prayer (Lk 11:1,2; Mt 6:5,6; Jn 11:41,42)

For our Lord Jesus Christ prayer is a must in life. It is the connecting wire between the Father and the Son, through which worship, requests, blessings and answers to life's needs flow. That's why he instructed his disciples by saying, "when you pray" and not "if you pray".

In John 11:41,42, Jesus thanks His Father for always answering His prayers, which is an indication that prayer was a regular part of His life. At times prayer was more important to Jesus than food.

- (ii) Jesus prayed more in private than in public (Mk 1:35; Lk 5:15,16; Mt 6:6-8). As busy as he was Jesus would sometimes withdraw from his disciples and the crowds to go and pray.

What can you learn from this, and what changes must you make now in order for your prayer life to be conformed to His?

- (iii) He prayed at any time of the day (Mk 1:35; Lk 6:12; Jn 12:25-29; Jn 11:41,42). Jesus prayed very early in the morning, He prayed all night, He prayed during the day. There was no time of the day He couldn't pray.

Discussion Point

Is there a time of day when you could not pray?

For everyone who desire to follow Jesus, every manner of life contrary to that of the Lord must give way in order for proper learning to follow His steps can take place.

- (iv) He prayed in all situations (Lk 6:12-15; Mt 14:23; 26:36-39; 27:46; John 12:25-29) Nothing too small or too big for Jesus to pray about. He knew His limitations as a man, so He prayed all night to God who knows all men before He chose His disciples. He prayed after performing miracles. He did not allow success to enter His head and hinder Him from depending on God through prayer. He taught us to pray for everything and in every situation.

There are some people who believe in their common sense and wisdom so much that they don't see why they should pray for little things which they can use their common sense to deal with. But do not forget that our common sense

has been corrupted by Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit.

“As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God”.

How much do you measure on the scale of Jesus’ prayer life?

- (v) He prayed for His disciples and He prayed for His enemies (Jn 17:1-3; Lk 23:34).
Your children, wife/husband, colleagues, neighbours, disciples and all the people we relate with must be the objects of your prayer. This include those who oppose you, or are supposed to be your enemies.

- (vi) He taught men to pray (Mt 6:5-8; Lk 11:1,2).
Apart from praying Jesus taught us to pray. We too must not only pray but find a way of teaching people to pray, and so follow Jesus’ footsteps.

(b) **His attitude towards food**

- (i) Jesus knew the right use and value of food (Mk 6:31; Jn 21:9-13; 1Cor 6:13). Food is important for the body and Jesus arranged often times for His disciples to eat when there is time and opportunity, but not at the expense of fulfilling God's call on His life.

He used food but never allowed food to use Him. He was not controlled by food (Jn 4:31-34; Mt 4:4; Rom 14:17; Eccl 10:17).

Though hungry and tired He suspended food in order to save the woman of Samaria. To Him food was secondary. Food is eaten for strength and not for pleasure.

What place do you give food in your life? Are you addicted to any particular type of food that you find difficult to resist? Do you eat for pleasure? Do you find you put priority on food when there is work of the kingdom to be done?

- (ii) He knew and followed divine timing for eating (Lk 5:33-35). There is time to eat and there is time to fast. Jesus followed divine timing for food, and so should we.
- (iii) He ate with different kinds of people: the rich, the poor, sinners and saints (Lk 7:36; Mk 2:15,16; Jn

12:1,2). Are you class conscious in selecting the people you eat with? Some people will not eat with poor, dirty village people, while others are too timid to eat with the rich. Jesus could eat any class of people, especially for the sake of the Gospel.

- (iv) He used invitations to eat as opportunities to preach (Lk 7:34-37, 40-43; Mk 2:15-17).
- (v) He used food to restore fellowship and foster relationships (Lk 24:36-43; Jn12:1,2)
- (vi) He never laboured to look for food to eat. Rather He laboured to fulfill His call and He never lacked food to eat (Mt 16:6-11; Lk 10:7, 12:23; Jn 6:27, 21:5,9).

We've looked at some of the ways Jesus handled the issue of food. He knew how precious He is to God, and so He did not spend his precious time looking for food to eat. He knew God will always provide for Him. We, too, can walk in His footsteps by getting our priorities right.

(c) **His sleeping habit**

- (i) Jesus slept whenever there was time and opportunity in order to refresh the body (Mk 1:35,4:35-38). Jesus slept inside the boat while travelling across the sea; He slept after a hard day's work.
- (ii) However, He gave no priority to sleep. To Him sleep is secondary even in the face of tiredness, if there was something to be done for God. He was not controlled by sleep; He controlled it. (Mk 1:32-35; Prov 20:13). When there was a burden to pray or a service to render to God Jesus put off sleep.
- (iii) Jesus recognize divine timing even for sleep: a time to sleep and a time to wake up and work (Mk 14:37-41; 1Thes 5:7; Prov 10:5). Anyone who desires to follow Jesus and fulfill God's purpose for his life must recognize divine timing for sleep and work. Peter slept when he was supposed to pray, and he fell into temptation.

When Jesus said, "and follow Me", it means putting your feet where He put His, treading the path He trod. Even if you do not fully understand what the Christian life is all about, if you simply pattern your life after His and imitate his lifestyle, you will not go wrong at all. He is the way and the right way of life

Personal Assessment Questions

1. *This study helped us to explore and examine the “**foot steps**” of Jesus in different aspects of life.*

In what aspects of your life are your own steps in life not ‘in His steps’?

Discuss these as honestly as possible. Outline it one by one.

2

(a) *What definite actions have you taken to retrace your own steps since this study, and in which areas of your life?*

(b) *What are the difficulties you have encountered in actually following in His footsteps?*