

**Title: Lesson 12: Be a Good Follower!**

**Text: 2 Timothy 3:10–13**

You can be a leader in the eyes of people and a follower of nobody.

Or you can quietly follow Jesus so faithfully that your humble service becomes the very thing God uses to lead others.

Our world says, “Be a great leader.”

Paul says, “Be a good follower.” Because in God’s kingdom, Christlike leadership is never produced by chasing a title.

It’s produced by following a godly pattern for a long time.

In [2 Timothy 3:10–13](#) Paul looks at Timothy and says, “*You have followed...*”

Timothy didn’t just learn facts from Paul, he followed his life.

And Paul is honest about where that road goes: if you want to live godly in Christ Jesus, persecution will come (v. 12).

But if you follow the wrong voices, the drift is deception, “deceiving and being deceived” (v. 13).

So, here’s the question that frames the whole message: Who are you following, and where is it taking you?

Paul writes as a seasoned apostle nearing the end of his life, and Timothy is pastoring a church under pressure from false teachers and growing opposition.

So, Paul does not tell him to chase a bigger platform, he calls him to follow a proven, godly pattern, even when it costs him.

**Main Idea: Follow Someone Who Loves Jesus!**

Listen, you will never follow well by accident, you become like the voices and patterns you stay closest to.

Paul tells Timothy, you know my life, my suffering, and my rescue, follow someone who truly loves Jesus and let that shape your whole life.

So, let me ask you, who are you following right now, and is that person helping you love Jesus more, or love the world more?

Verse 10 opens with a pattern: “*You, however, have followed...*,” and Paul lists the marks of a life worth imitating.

Let's begin there, what does a good follower actually follow, because the first mark is right here in verse 10.

### **1. Follow The Whole Person (vs. 10–11)**

Remember, this sermon series is titled, “*Finishing Well: Eighteen Life Lessons from the Apostle Paul to Timothy.*”

And there certainly is a beautiful lesson to be learned in this first verse.

Paul commends Timothy in the first part of this verse.

#### **2 Timothy 3:10 ESV**

*You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness,*

Paul is an amazing mentor to Timothy. And Timothy is a hungry student.

Great lesson here for you and me - find someone worth following and follow them.

Also, live in such a way that you are worth following.

Timothy followed Paul as Paul followed Christ ([1 Corinthians 11:1](#)).

Timothy followed ALL of Paul. He followed...

**His Teaching** - Paul taught sound doctrine centered on Christ, and Timothy learned it, embraced it, and passed it on the same way.

#### **2 Timothy 2:2 ESV**

*<sup>2</sup> and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.*

**His Conduct** - Paul's daily life matched his message, and Timothy patterned his lifestyle after that integrity.

#### **1 Timothy 4:12 ESV**

*<sup>12</sup> Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.*

**His Aim in Life (Purpose)** - Paul lived with a single gospel-driven purpose, and Timothy adopted that same mission as his life direction.

#### **Acts 20:24 ESV**

*But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*

**His Faith** - Paul trusted God steadily through pressure and uncertainty, and Timothy learned to depend on God with the same confidence.

**2 Timothy 1:12 ESV**

*which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.*

**His Patience** - Paul endured difficult people and slow progress without bitterness, and Timothy practiced that same long-suffering steadiness.

**2 Timothy 4:2 ESV**

*preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.*

**His Love** - Paul served people with sacrificial, Christlike affection, and Timothy learned to shepherd with that same self-giving care.

**1 Thessalonians 2:8 ESV**

*So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.*

**His Steadfastness** - Paul kept obeying and preaching when it was costly, and Timothy followed his example of endurance to the end.

**2 Timothy 4:7 ESV**

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

Paul is telling his disciple and son in the faith, that he has done an excellent job following him.

He has emulated the life of Paul, not in superfluous ways, but in the ways that are important, and pleasing to Christ.

However, verse 11 includes even more ways that Timothy had followed in the footsteps of Paul.

**2 Timothy 3:11 ESV**

*my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me.*

- Timothy, you didn't only learn my ministry philosophy, you watched my scars. You followed me into real gospel conflict, and you stayed with it ([2 Timothy 3:11](#)).
- You learned that faithful ministry includes both pressure and pain. Persecution is what comes at you, suffering is what it costs you, and endurance is how you keep going anyway ([2 Timothy 3:12](#); [2 Timothy 2:3](#)).

- You also learned the most stabilizing truth of all, the Lord is able to preserve His servants and keep the mission moving forward, even when the hits are heavy ([2 Timothy 4:17-18](#)).

### **Antioch (Acts 13:14-52)**

- Key Roman colony and strategic hub in Galatia.
- Paul preached in the synagogue, many Gentiles believed, and the word spread.
- Jewish leaders stirred opposition, and Paul and Barnabas were expelled.
- Result: the gospel advanced, disciples were strengthened, and they moved on.

### **Iconium (Acts 14:1-6)**

- Influential crossroads city, ideal for gospel expansion.
- Many believed, but the city split sharply over the message.
- A plot formed to mistreat and stone them, so they left to continue the mission.

### **Lystra (Acts 14:8-20; 16:1-2)**

- More rural and pagan, with less Jewish influence.
- Paul healed a crippled man, and the crowd tried to worship him as a god.
- Opponents turned the crowd, Paul was stoned and left for dead, but the Lord preserved him.
- This was personal for Timothy, he was from that region, so he knew the cost and followed anyway.

But notice the last part of this verse.

*“...yet from them all the Lord rescued me.”*

One of the reasons Paul followed Jesus so closely is that Jesus watched over him so faithfully.

God delivered Paul from each challenge.

We have a faithful God, do we not?

Paul is facing the reality of the end of his life.

History teaches us that Paul died by beheading for preaching and teaching the Gospel.

Who knew words could be so divisive and deadly. But the gospel brings a black and white reality.

We are either for Jesus or against Him. There is no middle ground.

Paul was unequivocally dedicated to Jesus and followed Him with all of his heart, soul, mind, and strength.

If there ever was a life wholly dedicated to our Savior, Jesus Christ, it was the Apostle Paul.

**Philippians 3:10 ESV**

*that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,*

This passage captures Paul's deepest aspiration—not merely intellectual knowledge about Jesus, but intimate, experiential communion with him.

**Philippians 3:7–8 ESV**

*But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ...*

These verses represent the heart of Paul. Nothing mattered to him more than being with and being like His Savior.

He followed Jesus with his whole self.

And Timothy followed Paul, who followed Christ.

As Christians we must certainly follow Christ, but it is profoundly helpful to have someone in your life that you can emulate, learn from, be encouraged by.

Someone who will challenge you and stretch you out of your spiritual comfort zone.

We all need a Paul in our lives. We all need a tangible example of Christ for us to follow.

*Example is the most powerful rhetoric; the highest and noblest example should be very quickening and provoking. - Thomas Brooks*

Find a Paul.

**Review:**

Follow Someone Who Loves Jesus!

- Follow the Whole Person

As with follow someone who loves Jesus, we must understand an unchanging reality.

**2. Follow Them Knowing Persecution Will Come (v. 12)**

Paul writes these sobering words to his disciple and friend, Timothy.

**2 Timothy 3:12 ESV**

*<sup>12</sup> Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*

**“Indeed”** - “and”, “also”, “Indeed” are all words that promise what Paul says in this verse is true.

It is a conjunction that has an emphatic emphasis.

The idea is **“of course this is the case.”**

What is the case?

Followers of Christ WILL be persecuted.

Notice again, the text.

**2 Timothy 3:12 ESV**

*<sup>12</sup> Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*

**“ALL”** - not just apostles - all who desire to live a **“godly life.”**

What is a **“godly”** life?

A life, as the text says, that is **rooted** in Christ Jesus.

A life that is **focused** on God.

A life that is **Christocentric**.

A life that is an outward **conformance** to Jesus.

In other words, your love for Christ is seen clearly in the way you live your life.

Your visible life is affected by your internal love for Christ.

This is what it means to live a godly life in Christ Jesus.

If this is the desire of your heart, then the promise from God through the Apostle Paul is this.

**YOU WILL BE PERSECUTED!**

Paul doesn't mince words. He is not unclear.

Persecution is something that will take place in the lives of those who pursue godliness.

Imagine that! Someone lives their lives dedicated to the Lord, and they get persecution in return.

That hardly seems fair.

It isn't fair. But this life isn't about being fair.

It is about glorifying God with the life He has entrusted to us.

Suffering persecution is a powerful way to Glorify God.

Persecution glorifies God through multiple interconnected dimensions that transform suffering into spiritual purpose: Five ways...

### **It Demonstrates God's Unshakeable Love and Presence**

Persecution doesn't mean God has left you, it often means He is closer than you can see. In the fire, He proves His unshakeable love by sustaining you with His Spirit and making His faithfulness visible.

### **It Produces Authentic Spiritual Character**

Hardship produces real spiritual grit, growing your patience, expanding your love, and driving you to depend on God. Over time, it makes you look more like Christ and proves His power to change a life.

### **It Advances the Gospel's Spread**

Persecution doesn't stop the gospel, it spreads it. When believers are pressured and scattered, the message goes with them into new places and new hearts. Opposition becomes an unexpected vehicle for God's kingdom expansion.

### **It Identifies Believers with Christ Himself**

When you're persecuted for Christ, you're not suffering alone, you're sharing in His sufferings, and Jesus takes it personally. What looks like tragedy becomes a living reminder that you belong to Him and are participating in His work.

### **It Validates Authentic Faith and Promises Future Glory**

Persecution for righteousness doesn't prove you've lost, it often proves you belong to God's kingdom. And it reminds you that present suffering is not the final word, future glory with Christ is.

So, suffering persecution is not meaningless, it is in fact, purposeful.

But the main point that I want you to understand this morning is this.

Persecution for the believer, who lives a godly life, will come.

It is not a might; it is a will.

Paul doesn't say it will be indicative of the whole life of the Christ-pursuing believer, but there will certainly be episodes throughout their life.

What can this look like?

**Pressure** (Social Opposition) Christians can be mocked, dismissed, or treated like a problem because they openly follow Jesus.

This can look like being laughed at for biblical beliefs, labeled as “intolerant,” or pushed to keep faith private.

Sometimes it is subtle, like exclusion, cold shoulders, or being quietly shut out of conversations and groups.

**Penalties** (Personal and Professional Cost) Following Christ can cost people something tangible.

A believer may lose friendships, experience tension in the family, or be passed over at work because they will not join in what violates their conscience.

Some Christians feel constant pressure to compromise, to stop speaking about Christ, or to celebrate what Scripture calls sin.

**Pain** (Legal and Physical Harm) Around the world, persecution becomes far more severe.

Churches can be monitored or shut down.

Believers may be threatened, arrested, beaten, driven from their homes, or even killed because they belong to Jesus.

For many of our brothers and sisters, faithfulness is not just unpopular, it is dangerous.

**So, Persecution is inevitable.**

**John 15:18–20 ESV**

*“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. <sup>20</sup> Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.*

**But, Persecution is a Blessing and a Privilege**

**Philippians 1:29 ESV**

*For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,*

**And remember, God Protects and Strengthens Through Suffering**

**Romans 8:35–37 ESV**

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?<sup>36</sup> As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*

### **2 Corinthians 4:8–9 ESV**

*We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair;<sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;*

### **John 16:33 ESV**

*I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”*

### **In light of This, How do Genuine Believers Respond to Persecution?**

#### **Matthew 5:44 ESV**

*But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, Persecution is coming in your life. Be prepared to glorify God through it!*

*The weight of glory makes persecution light. - Thomas Watson*

#### **1 Corinthians 2:9 ESV**

*But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—*

Celebrate the fact that you will suffer persecution. Don't recoil from it, embrace it because not only is it a confirmation of your salvation, but you are also suffering on behalf of the one who suffered for you!

#### **Review:**

Follow Someone Who Loves Jesus!

- Follow the Whole Person
- Follow them Knowing Persecution Will Come

It is not always easy to press ahead and follow Christ and our Paul when it seems hopeless...

### **3. Follow Them Even When There is Little Hope (v. 13)**

Paul has just told Timothy something sobering: all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (v. 12).

Then, in verse 13, he turns the focus to those who are anti God.

Faithful believers will suffer opposition, but those who refuse Christ's rule do not stay neutral. They drift. They are hardened. They are deceived.

**2 Timothy 3:13 ESV**

*while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

This is not only a warning about what is happening “out there.”

It is a warning about what happens to any soul when it rejects truth.

**Who they are: “evil people and impostors”**

When Paul says “*evil people and impostors,*” he is not changing topics.

These are the same kind of false teachers he has been exposing through this whole section, men who present themselves as spiritual guides but operate as agents of deception.

They do not merely misunderstand truth. They weaponize religion. (Arichea and Hatton, 231)

And that word “*impostors*” is striking.

The Greek term (*goēs*) carried the idea of a charlatan, even being used as a derogatory label for magicians or swindlers, the kind of person who manipulates an audience for influence and gain.

That matters, because it tells you what false teaching often is. It is not just wrong information. It is spiritual manipulation. (Arnold, 582)

*They look like guides, but they are con men for the soul.*

**Where they are going: “from bad to worse”**

Paul says they “*will go on from bad to worse.*”

This phrase describes trajectory.

Sin has momentum.

Deception is never a stable condition.

This is not saying every corner of history will always be uniformly worse than the one before it.

Paul's emphasis is on what happens to these kinds of people.

When someone builds a life on lies, the lies must multiply to survive.

When someone resists conviction, the heart does not soften over time. It calcifies.

*Nobody stays parked in rebellion. You either move toward the light, or you sink deeper into the dark.*

And notice how this fits the flow: persecution continues because evil continues.

Wickedness does not politely step aside for godliness. It pushes back.

**What they do, and what it does to them: “deceiving and being deceived”**

Paul ends with a chilling description. They are *“deceiving and being deceived.”*

That is the spiral.

They deceive others. That is active. Intentional.

They lead people away from Christ, away from Scripture, away from repentance, away from truth.

But they are also being deceived. That is the judgment inside the sin.

They become trapped in their own distortions.

They start believing their own propaganda.

They lose touch with the truth.

*Sin never only blinds the victim. It blinds the perpetrator too.*

And yet Paul does not present evil as unstoppable.

Just a few verses earlier, he says these men *“will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all”* (v. 9).

In other words, deception has a shelf life. Lies eventually collide with reality. Falsehood eventually exposes itself.

So, the warning is severe, but it is not hopeless.

The message is: reject truth, and you will unravel. Cling to truth, and you will endure.

This verse prepares Timothy for the reality that opposition will not diminish as the church age progresses.

Rather than depicting inevitable historical decline, Paul frames mounting opposition as a sign of the gospel’s effectiveness: the world’s resistance strengthens precisely because truth advances.

Timothy should expect intensifying hostility from those who reject Christ.

*“Know this! They (false prophets) are the judgement of God upon a wicked defiled people who although they have a knowledge of God they do not want him. And so God sends them teachers that they themselves desire.” - Paul Washer*

### **Steven Furtick**

**Who:** Lead pastor and founder of Elevation Church

**Why:** Teaches modalism (even if unintentional/misunderstanding)

**Associates with known false teachers:** TD Jakes (who definitively teaches//believes in Modalism ["Oneness Theology"]) Joyce Meyer who he has referred to as, "The greatest Bible teacher alive today."

**Teaches "little gods" heresy**

**Does not demonstrate a handle or understanding of Scripture**

"Following Jesus doesn't change you into something else, it reveals who you've been all along."

### **Rick Warren**

**Who:** Founder of Saddleback Church in California, Author of "A Purpose Driven Life"

**Why:**

**Poorly/incorrectly handles scripture:** He misuses passages such as [Job 22:21](#) and argues directly in contradiction to the surrounding context, recommending the advice of Eliphaz that God condemned.

**Ecumenism:** He purports that the Reformation splits that occurred were a negative thing and that all denominations and views (including Orthodox and Roman Catholicism) can really just come together in spite of "differences."

**Focus on Pleasing Men:** Emergent Church movement and Church Growth movement focused on seeker sensitive attractions. He focuses on the "social gospel" and is more concerned with social reform than spiritual.

*"I have known many people who believe in the Messiah of Jesus, regardless of what religion they are, because they believe in him. It's about a relationship, not a religion. You've heard this many times."*

### **William Lane Craig**

**Who:** Philosopher, Apologist, Author

**Why:**

**Holds heretical views:**

**Denies the necessity of Jesus' virgin birth** - Claims that Christ did not need to be born of a virgin, having a human father would not have had any impact on passing on inherited sin.

**Prioritizes blending of Philosophy and Science in an attempt to "rationalize" the Bible based on scientific information, leading to errant beliefs** - Examples include claiming that Adam and Eve were likely neanderthals that lived 750,000 years ago, that they were possibly hominids with brain mutations to allow for the capacity to reason.

**Asserts that abortion is a great good to babies as it allows them to be with God.**

**Believes that God as an Omniscient Being can "learn new things"**

He rejects the historic Christian teaching that Jesus has both a fully human will and a fully divine will and instead teaches a view that reduces or replaces Christ's truly human will.

**Andy Stanley**

**Who:** Pastor, Author, Charles Stanley's son

**Why:**

**Rejection of the authority/importance of Scripture** - "Unhinging from the Old Testament" is borderline Marcionism. (Marcion of Sinope's teaching, often called **Marcionism**, is the belief that the God of the Old Testament is different (and inferior) to the God revealed by Jesus, so the Old Testament should be rejected or treated as non-Christian.)

**Argues moving away from relying on the authority and inerrancy of Scripture** - Stanley posits that the foundation of the Christian faith is the historical event of the resurrection, not the inerrancy of the Bible.

**Believes that we do not need the Bible in church to worship**

**Affirms the sin of sodomy, supporting those participating in the "LGBTQ+ lifestyle."**

**Claims there is no conflict between evolution and theism.**

*"Appealing to post-Christian people on the basis of the authority of Scripture has essentially the same effect as a Muslim imam appealing to you on the basis of the authority of the Quran. You may or may not already know what it says. But it doesn't matter. The Quran doesn't carry any weight with you. You don't view the Quran as authoritative."*

**Priscilla Shirer**

**Who:** Author, Motivational Speaker, Actress, Tony Evan's daughter

**Why: Promotes "Contemplative Prayer"** - she encourages believers to "listen" for God's personal, specific guidance—Shirer teaches that mature Christians can/should expect direct, personal "words" from God (sometimes audible or specific directions) outside Scripture, including in decision-making or daily life.

**Associates with known false teachers** - TD Jakes, Joel Osteen, Joyce Meyer

The point?

Please, please, please be careful who you receive spiritual counsel from. We live in an age of endless voices, endless podcasts, endless clips, and the danger is not only obvious heresy. The greater danger is the teacher who is one or two degrees off. Because one or two degrees off at the beginning does not keep you near the truth, it eventually puts you hundreds of miles from the destination.

That is why the Bereans were commended. They did not receive even the Apostle Paul blindly. They searched the Scriptures to see if what he preached was true ([Acts 17:11](#)). So do not

outsource your discernment. Do not let a platform replace proof. Do not let charisma replace clarity. Put every voice under the authority of the Word.

**Practical checks:**

- Does this teacher open the text and explain what it means, or do they use verses as slogans?
- Do they magnify Christ, or magnify you?
- Do they treat Scripture as sufficient, or do they add impressions, experiences, and “God told me” as guidance?
- Do they produce humility and holiness, or pride and self-confidence?

Follow someone who loves Jesus enough to submit to Scripture, loves Jesus enough to suffer for truth, and loves Jesus enough to live what they teach.

- Follow the Whole Person
- Follow them Knowing Persecution Will Come
- Follow them Even When There is Little Hope

**Conclusion**

Church, decide today about your inputs. Audit the voices discipling you. If a voice consistently moves you away from Scripture, away from holiness, and away from Christ, cut it off. Replace it with better voices, but more importantly, replace it with more Bible. Follow Christ first, and then follow faithful people only insofar as they follow Him.

Imagine a church full of good followers, men and women who stay close to Jesus and gladly imitate godly patterns. A church where young believers learn faithfulness before influence, character before platform, endurance before comfort.

A church where our followership is so steady and so Christ-centered that, over time, it produces leaders who look like Jesus.

So find someone who loves and follows Jesus well.