

Have you ever gotten lost? Of course you have. I'm not sure there is a more terrifying experience especially to a child, unless, of course, you are the parent of that child. I'll never forget the day when Jana and I went to a store with our five-year-old twins. We used the "divide and conquer" approach to parenting twins with Jana taking our daughter while I took our son to the toy section. He was preoccupied with all the toys as I slipped around the end cap of the aisle, out of his sight, for just a brief moment. When I turned to rejoin my son, he was gone. I looked through that store, my heart beating faster with each step. I found Jana and asked that question that no man ever wants to ask his wife, "Have you seen Jordan?" "No. He is with you!!!" After a thorough search, we found him.

All of us have been lost and done time in the wilderness. In fact, Mark's gospel begins with reference to Israel's wilderness experiences. John is introduced as one crying out and telling the lost people of God, "Help is on the way." That help comes in the form of Jesus who was sent to rescue us and show us the way to a place where everything is the way it is supposed to be. All we have to do is follow. It is a major theme in Mark – follow-ship.

What we call discipleship could also be called follow-ship. Mark begins by declaring who it is who calls us. "Jesus is our stunning Savior, the Son of God He is greater than all powers, principalities, and prophets. He is Heaven's gift." In a very economical way Mark tells us the long-awaited Messiah, the deliverer, the Savior of the world has come. Having addressed the identity of Jesus, he then describes what it means to follow Him.

**I. A follower of Jesus trusts the map and not the scenery.** The Bible is a detailed map showing us how to get out of this present wilderness to a place where everything is the way it is supposed to be. But when we are disoriented, it is very tempting to rely on our own senses to find our way out. Our senses play tricks on us. I'm sure many have died of thirst in the wilderness trying desperately to reach that lake in the distance that turned out to be a mirage. The good news is that we have a map and a trustworthy guide, who came to lead us out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light...Take a look at vv. 14-15.

“Now after John was arrested.” This is Mark’s way of signaling that there is opposition to God’s plan. It is also a foreshadowing of what Jesus will experience. He too will be “delivered up.” Jesus’ opening words are weighty, “The time has come, the kingdom is at hand.” When you hear “the time has come,” you should pay attention...at a wedding, in a hospital room before surgery, at an execution. “The time has come” conveys urgency.

Notice the first subject Jesus addresses as He begins His public ministry - the kingdom. Jesus was obsessed with the subject. The phrase is found over 80 times in the gospels. “It is like” a hidden treasure, a pearl of great price, yeast, a mustard seed, a fishing net. The kingdom was not only the first subject in His curriculum, it was also the last. Acts 1:3 recounts, **“He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.”** Furthermore, Jesus’ first command was the same as His last – “Follow Me.” In Mk. 1:17 He tells Peter (and Andrew), “Follow Me.” In John 21:19 and again in 21:22 Jesus reminds Peter, “Follow Me.”

Jesus calls us to be followers not fans. There is a big difference. The word “fan” is short for fanatic. A fan is “an enthusiastic admirer.” Jesus has a lot of fans but not nearly as many followers. Fans want to be close enough to benefit from the association but not so close that it requires sacrifice. Those who are merely fans of Jesus enjoy the message of Heaven. It helps them sleep at night to think there is a paradise “somewhere over the rainbow. *“Someday I'll wish upon a star and wake up where the clouds are far behind me. Where trouble melts like lemon drops high above the chimney tops, that's where you'll find me.”* But Jesus was never interested in admirers. It’s not fans He is looking for but followers. A true follower of Jesus understands that the "gospel of the kingdom" is not a tonic to help us sleep but a trumpet call to wake us up.

“The gospel is not a tranquilizer for worried weaklings to help them sleep at night. It is not a mass of dead dogmas, deep-frozen in some ancient cathedral to be carried as a burden through life and thawed out five minutes before death. The gospel is not a list of religious rules and regulations to be strung

around the soul like a lucky charm in case of accidents. No, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is a message – and what a message! It is a living message from the living God for living people, just like us, for people with sins just like us, for people with sorrows and heartaches just like us. It is the only message on the face of the earth with concrete promises and absolute assurances of an eternal inheritance that will withstand the impact of death and the collapse of the universe.” J. Boyd Nicholson

**II. A follower of Jesus follows Jesus upward, inward, and outward...vv. 16-20.** Here is a concise description of true discipleship. “Follow me” is an invitation to a relationship. Jesus chose twelve men and did life with them. It is easy to forget that Jesus had other options. He could have started a school and taught anyone who came. He could have traveled alone and cut down on expenses. He could have joined a religious sect and become a beloved leader. But His plan was to choose, prepare and use men as His method.

The second part of Jesus’ job description is, “I will make you.” God said to Abraham, “I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great. And so you shall be a blessing.” God said to Moses, “I will make you *as* God to Pharaoh.” God said to David, “I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name.” Jesus comes along and says, “Follow me, and I will make you (I will change you).” If you are a follower of Jesus, everything that happens to you is part of the curriculum. Jesus’ invitation leads to spiritual transformation, a new life and a change of heart. Jesus had no interest in starting a society of slightly modified behavior. His plan was to form a society of transformed hearts. He invites us to follow just as we are. But know this; He loves us too much to leave us that way. If you allow Him, He will make you what you were created to be.

Finally, Jesus says, “I will make you fishers of men.” This imagery conveys an important point - people are worth catching because if they are not plucked from this fallen world they are headed for eternal death. We are invited to participate in the mission of Jesus. That is a high call and a high privilege. We are called to engage the world not hide from it.

“Some religions teach people that this material world is unimportant or illusory. Christianity, however, teaches that God hates the suffering and oppression of this material world so much, he was willing to get involved in it and to fight against it. Properly understood, Christianity is by no means the opiate of the people. It’s more like smelling salts.” Tim Keller, *The Prodigal God*

What are we to do with this information? Do what Jesus says to do in v. 15 – repent and believe. Repentance is the word “metanoia” which literally means to change your mind. You will never be a true follower of Jesus until you are willing to leave one kingdom behind to pursue another. “Repentance is “a change of mind of a very deep and practical character, which makes the man love what once he hated, and hate what once he loved.” Spurgeon. Fans don’t feel the need to repent. They don’t feel it is necessary. After all, everyone makes mistakes. Followers of Jesus recognize their condition and agonize over their own sin. Martin Luther once said, “All of life is repentance.” What did he mean? All through life we are making mid-course corrections. John Crotty, “we are off course over 90% of the time!”

Repent and believe. To believe is to trust that our loving Father will find us and lead us home. Just like I did in that store many years ago. When I got to the front of the store, I saw a man walking through the door holding my son’s hand. It seems that when he lost sight of me, Jordan had run out into the parking lot and stood by the car so we wouldn’t abandon him. I got down on one knee and said, “Son, if you ever get lost, stay right where you are because your daddy loves you and I will find you.”



# FOLLOW

JESUS THROUGH THE BOOK OF MARK

PART 1: FOLLOW THE PERSON OF JESUS





A FOLLOWER OF JESUS TRUSTS THE MAP AND NOT THE SCENERY.

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

MARK 1:14-15

“He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs,  
appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.”

ACTS 1:3



“The gospel is not a tranquilizer for worried weaklings to help them sleep at night. It is not a mass of dead dogmas, deep-frozen in some ancient cathedral to be carried as a burden through life and thawed out five minutes before death. The gospel is not a list of religious rules and regulations to be strung around the soul like a lucky charm in case of accidents. No, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is a message – and what a message! It is a living message from the living God for living people, just like us, for people with sins just like us, for people with sorrows and heartaches just like us. It is the only message on the face of the earth with concrete promises and absolute assurances of an eternal inheritance that will withstand the impact of death and the collapse of the universe.”

J. BOYD NICHOLSON

A FOLLOWER OF JESUS FOLLOWS JESUS.



16 Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19 And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20 And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

MARK 1:16-20