

DON'T JUST FOLLOW

Pastor Jerry Lewis | Sunday 4.12.2026

Summary: This powerful message challenges us to examine the difference between merely following Jesus and truly serving Him. Drawing from Matthew 4:18-19 and Matthew 26:58, we're confronted with a sobering reality: Peter followed Jesus, witnessed countless miracles, and walked alongside the Savior, yet when the moment of testing came, he denied Christ three times. The distinction is critical—we can follow someone on social media, know all about them, yet never have a real relationship with them. Similarly, we can attend church, know the stories, even witness God's power, and still keep our flesh in control rather than surrendering fully. The message calls us beyond casual Christianity into genuine discipleship that requires faith AND faithfulness—the ability to trust married with the willingness to submit. This generation doesn't need more religious know-it-alls; they need authentic examples of people who have truly surrendered their lives to Christ. The call is urgent: Jesus is coming back, and many are still not ready, going through religious motions while their hearts remain distant. True conversion isn't instantaneous—it's a journey from initial calling through moments of failure to complete surrender, just as Peter experienced when the rooster crowed and he wept bitterly, finally getting real with God.

Scripture References:

- Matthew 4:18-19 - Jesus calling Peter and Andrew to follow Him and become fishers of men
- Matthew 26:58 - Peter following Jesus from a distance
- 1 John 3:16-18 - Laying down our lives for others and loving in deed and truth, not just words
- Matthew 7:13-14 - The narrow and broad roads
- Luke 22:54-62 - Peter's denial and the rooster crowing
- Matthew 14 - Peter walking on water

Key Points:

- Following Jesus and serving Jesus are two fundamentally different things
- Actions speak louder than words - response reveals true character and commitment
- This generation needs authentic, spirit-fed, word-led examples rather than religious hypocrisy
- We won't miss activities for anything, but we'll miss church for everything
- True discipleship requires three elements: discipline, demonstration, and dedication
- Everything begins with a burden, continues because of a burden, and concludes as a result of the burden
- Faith is the ability to trust; faithfulness is the willingness to submit - both are necessary
- If you don't sell out completely to God, you'll drift spiritually
- Peter followed Jesus and witnessed miracles, but wasn't truly converted until he wept bitterly and got real with God
- The church must wake up and prioritize God above careers, convenience, and comfort
- We must show Jesus and shine Jesus, not perform religiosity
- Getting defensive when challenged reveals guilt
- Everyone has a specific mandate and purpose on their life

Quotes

"It's one thing to follow him. It's another thing to know him. And there's a great deception that people say they're following Jesus. But my question is, are you serving him?"

"This generation doesn't need a bunch of religious know-it-alls. This generation needs real, authentic, spirit-fed, and word-led direction and guidance."

"Following Jesus and serving Jesus are two different things. You have people that you follow on Twitter, Facebook, social media. You don't know them, but you follow them. You know all about them. And you've never had one conversation with them."

"Faith is one thing. Faithfulness is another. Faith is the ability to trust. Faithfulness is a willingness to submit."

"If you don't sell out, you'll drift. Anytime you take your eyes off of Jesus, you're going to drift. You're going to sink."

5-Day Devotional: From Following to Serving

Day 1: The Call to Discipleship

Reading: Matthew 4:18-22

Devotional: When Jesus called Peter and Andrew, He didn't just invite them to follow—He invited them into transformation. "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" reveals a divine process. Discipleship isn't instant; it's a journey from calling to maturity. Today, examine your relationship with Christ. Are you merely following from a distance, observing His work in others' lives? Or are you actively engaged in the transformation He offers? True discipleship requires leaving our nets—whatever holds us back—and stepping into purposeful pursuit of Christ. Faith begins with a response, but faithfulness sustains the journey. Don't settle for being a spectator in God's kingdom when He's calling you to partnership.

Day 2: Faith Versus Faithfulness

Reading: Matthew 14:22-33

Devotional: Peter walked on water through faith, yet sank when he lost focus. This powerful moment illustrates a critical truth: faith is the ability to trust, but faithfulness is the willingness to submit. You can have mountain-moving faith yet lack the consistency of faithfulness. Peter had moments of tremendous faith—stepping out of the boat, confessing Jesus as Christ—but his journey reveals that supernatural experiences don't automatically produce spiritual maturity. Examine your spiritual life today. Do you pursue God only when it's convenient or comfortable? Faithfulness means keeping your eyes on Jesus through the storms, not just during the miracles. True transformation happens when faith and faithfulness marry together in complete surrender.

Day 3: The Danger of Distance

Reading: Luke 22:54-62

Devotional: Peter's denial reveals what happens when we follow from a distance. Despite witnessing countless miracles and hearing Jesus' teachings, Peter's uncommitted heart led to his greatest failure. Distance creates space for compromise. When we don't fully surrender, we drift—attending church when convenient, praying when desperate, serving when it doesn't conflict with our plans. The enemy doesn't need to pull you completely away; he just needs to create distance. Notice that Peter didn't plan to deny Christ—distance made denial possible. Today, honestly assess your proximity to Jesus. Are you close enough to hear His voice clearly? Close enough that your life reflects His character? Close enough that when tested, you'll stand firm? Eliminate the distance before the rooster crows in your life.

Day 4: Authentic Transformation

Reading: 1 John 3:16-18

Devotional: John challenges us to move beyond words to authentic demonstration. This generation doesn't need more religious talk; they need real examples of Christ's love in action. Laying down our lives means sacrificing time, comfort, convenience, and personal ambitions for others' good. It's easy to say we love Jesus while living self-centered lives. True transformation shows itself through service, compassion, and genuine care for others. The Greek word for "deed" means hands-on action—getting involved, not just observing needs. When John wrote about Chad's Hope, he illustrated this principle perfectly. Those men didn't need another religious lecture; they needed someone real who would invest in their lives. Who needs you to demonstrate Christ's love today? Don't just follow—serve.

Day 5: Bitter Repentance, Beautiful Restoration

Reading: John 21:15-19

Devotional: After Peter's bitter weeping came beautiful restoration. His tears weren't just regret—they were genuine repentance that led to transformation. Notice Jesus didn't reject Peter; He restored him with purpose. Three times Peter denied; three times Jesus asked, "Do you love me?" Each affirmation rebuilt what denial destroyed. This is grace in action. Your failures don't disqualify you from God's purpose—they can become the foundation for deeper commitment. Peter's journey from following to serving culminated at Pentecost, where the denier became the declarer, preaching with power that brought three thousand to salvation. What areas of your life need bitter repentance today? Where have you drifted, denied, or compromised? God stands ready to restore you, not just to forgive, but to recommission you for kingdom purpose. Don't stay in the place of failure—run to restoration.