



## **FOLLOWING JESUS - LESSON 1**

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## **FOLLOWING JESUS**

Lesson 1: Go...Make Disciples...Baptize...Teach

Bible: John 20:30-31; Matthew 28:18-20; Deuteronomy 6:4-7

Bottom Line: Read the Bible to know and follow Jesus.

Question: Are you ready for the adventure of obeying Jesus command?

## **SUPPLIES**

- Index cards
- Pens

### **Notes:**

Notes on this lesson are based on the New Living Translation unless otherwise noted. On a side note, this is a great translation to use with students, especially due to its readability and accuracy.

Before starting your meeting, talk to a student or students about reading **John 20:30-31** for the group. Give them a chance to read it over and ask for any pronunciation issues they may have.

## OPENING GAME: SIMON SAYS RANDOMLY

Most students have played *Simon Says* as a child. It's time to dig into that old toy box and bring out a childhood game, putting it to good use...with a twist.

Before you begin, have students grab an index card and a pen. They are to write down one instruction, action, or command that would be funny to see the group do together.

Then, have everyone fold the cards in half and put them in a bowl or other container.

Now, pick your "Simon."

He or she stands in front of the group and gives them instructions.

Just like the childhood game, the group should only do the instruction if "Simon" begins with the phrase: "Simon says..." If they do the action and that phrase was not spoken, they are out.

Today, to make it easier or harder, instead of "Simon" coming up with the instructions, he or she will draw each time from the set of index cards. Only "Simon" gets to decide if they want to see the crowd do the instruction or use it as a trick to get people out.

Have fun!

Play until only one person is left, you run out of cards, or your time is up for this activity.

## TEACH

We just played a children's game, with a twist that revolves around listening to and following instructions! Today, we're going to begin an eight-week adventure focused on following Jesus. It only makes sense we would start by looking at the biographies of Jesus, also known as the Gospels (another word for Good News). Grab your Bible and open it to John chapter 20.

*Have students open their Bibles to **John 20**. Ask your student reader(s) to read **John 20:30-31** as everyone follows along.*

After this first verse, does your imagination begin to go crazy? Mine does.

John just wrote that basically there was a whole lot more stuff that Jesus did, even miracles, in addition to what we have in the Bible.

Two words come to mind: "Like what?!"

What kind of things did He do for these miracles?

Did He heal anyone or bring someone back from the dead?

What did the disciples get to see that we don't get to know about?

But we don't get any answers to those questions. That's not John's point. He just reminds us that what we have isn't everything that Jesus did. But there is a reason for what we do have. Look at verse 31.

**John 20:31 - But these are written so that you may continue to *believe* that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in Him you will have *life* by the power of His name.**

What John and the other authors did write about Jesus, they wrote so that we would learn enough about Jesus to believe in Him and be able to make the choice to follow Him in our lives, much like those early disciples followed Him with their lives!

Now, to be honest, I'm still a little curious about all the stuff they didn't write about. But reading this verse makes me even more curious to go back and look at what they did write and see what it teaches me about Jesus and how I should live as I follow Him.

Now, have you ever been watching a movie that shows you a scene and then suddenly there are words on the screen along the lines of “Three Years Earlier...”? Do you know what I’m talking about?

This is called a flashback. Sometimes the rest of the movie takes you from that flashback, that point in history, up to the scene you started with and then ends. Other times, the flashback continues on past that original scene.

This is what we are going to do today and throughout this series. We started by checking out John’s words at the end of his book about Jesus. Now today, we’re going to go back to some of the last words Jesus spoke to His disciples before going to heaven.

And after today, we’re going to go back into different points in Jesus’ three years of ministry to learn about Jesus and His followers. Then to end the series, we’ll spend a few weeks in the book of Acts, a history book about the church, to learn what it looked like to follow Jesus for some of His earliest followers.

Let’s get started! If you are still in John, go back just a few books earlier to the book of Matthew. We’ll be in the last verses of the last chapter, chapter 28.

***Read Matthew 28:18-20.***

Jesus starts by reminding us that He is in charge. He reminds us that God has given Him authority over everything. Since He’s in charge and the disciples, His followers, are under His authority, if He gives a command it should be carried out, correct?

So, what’s the command?

***“Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you.”***

Wow! This is HUGE! Jesus just said that all of His followers are to go help other people become followers! This isn’t a job just for missionaries or pastors. This isn’t a task just for adults or parents. This is a task for all followers - including followers who happen to be junior high students!!!

We’ll get really specific with this in our small groups, but let me explain some of the key principles here so you understand the mission Jesus has given you when you follow Him.

He said, “Go”. For some people, this might mean moving to a different state or country to do ministry or mission work. But, if you look back at the Old Testament, we see that there is a larger group of people involved.

*Read **Deuteronomy 6:4-7**.*

In this passage, Moses is giving instructions to God’s people. He basically says that everywhere they go during their normal, everyday life should be an opportunity to obey God and talk about Him. In other words, following God isn’t limited to special days or places. It is mixed into all parts of our lives. What does that mean for us?

## **GO**

It means that “going” in obeying Jesus is about making sure the people in our everyday lives know about Jesus because they see how we live as we follow Him and they hear about Him in our natural, everyday conversations.

So, instead of “going” to some distant land, that might mean you go to your living room to talk with your family about Jesus. It might mean going next door to talk with the neighbor who is a friend of yours and who asked where you go every Sunday. It might mean going to that student at lunch to pray for him and ask him how things are going. It might mean going into your social media account and making your comments and posts about Jesus as natural as anything else you say or do.

It can mean a variety of things. But it means one thing: EVERYONE who follows Jesus is commanded to GO!

## **MAKE DISCIPLES**

When we go, Jesus tells us what to do: make disciples. Basically, help other people follow Jesus just like you are doing. That might be as simple as inviting them to church or youth group. Other times, it might mean giving them a ride or having them sit with you during church.

It could mean having a Bible study where you teach what you know to students who don’t know about Jesus very much. You don’t have to be an expert. Just share with others what you have learned so that they can get to know Jesus that way too.

Again, this can mean a variety of different things which we can discuss in our groups. But it doesn’t mean you have to be a pastor, small group leader, or Sunday school teacher. It means that if you are a follower of Jesus, this is an EXPECTATION of you - all of you!

## **BAPTIZE**

*Realizing different denominations have a variety of practices when it comes to baptism and salvation, adapt this as it fits your context best or use as is!*

One of the greatest moments in a person's life is when they make the decision to follow Jesus for themselves. And in the Bible, one of the greatest ceremonies is baptism. This plunging of a person under water is a symbol of burying their old life. Raising them up out of the water is a symbol of them being washed clean and raised into a new life with Jesus, just like God raised Him from the dead.

And one of the coolest things is that this act is not limited in the Bible to pastors or adults. Jesus specifically tells his disciples to go make more disciples and to baptize them.

Imagine if we started seeing all kinds of junior high students start following Jesus. And when they make that decision and get baptized, it is another junior high student who baptizes them! You would be showing others how you are obeying Jesus command and setting an example that you don't have to be a certain age or have a Bible college degree to baptize someone as they begin to follow Jesus! What an amazing privilege and responsibility!

## **TEACH**

When someone becomes a follower of Jesus that is not the end! It is just the beginning! They need help learning how to follow Jesus which may include helping them get a Bible or Bible app, teaching them how to use it, and getting them plugged into a church and small group where they can continue to grow and serve.

That is also part of our responsibility Jesus' commands. Don't just stop at the decision. Help that person take their first steps in following Jesus!

## **IMPORTANT REMINDER**

At the very end of this verse, Jesus reminds us with some words that should both calm us and encourage us. He says, **"I will be with you always."** So, we are not doing all of this on our own. Not only do we have other people from our church helping us out; we have the Son of God going with us and helping us every step of the way!!!

Now, let's get into our small groups and talk specifically about what your next step should be when it comes to Jesus.

## SMALL GROUPS

Look back at **John 20:30-31**. What else do you wish the authors had written so that we would know more about Jesus? What would you like to know?

Can a few of you give us examples of some things they did write about that help us to learn important truths about who Jesus is and what He did.

Let's make an important point. There are probably some of you in this group who have not become Christians yet. Tonight, the most important thing we want you to know and be both encouraged and challenged by is that God has given us the Bible to know Him better, specifically His son Jesus.

The biggest task ahead of you is reading Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and deciding if this Jesus is someone you want to follow for the rest of your life. That's a big task! But it's one that other junior highers like you have made and are working on today.

If that describes you, you can share with us right now or we can wait and talk one-on-one if the group makes you nervous. Whether you talk with the whole group, small group leader, or a friend, we want you to know that we are here to help you learn more about Jesus. We want you to know Him well so you can decide if following Jesus is the life you want to live.

- Does anyone have any questions about that or want to talk about that night now?

*Allow some awkward silence time for students to speak up. After a few minutes, move on.*

You might be in this group wanting to know what would be expected of you if you do follow Jesus. Or you might be here already following Jesus and need some specific steps to take to obey Jesus' command from Matthew 28. So, let's talk through those.

- Look back at **Deuteronomy 6:4-7**. What are some ways your faith and following Jesus could become natural parts of your everyday life and conversation? Do you see anyone already doing this? How could you begin to live this way?
- Look at **Matthew 28:19-20**. Let's focus on each of those key words and get specific for our group. Does the fact that all followers of Jesus are commanded to "Go" make you nervous or excited? Why?



- Does anyone want to share an example of who they are going to “go” talk with or where they are going to “go” to obey Jesus’ command? Remember, we’re talking about family, friends, neighbors and classmates, not just strangers on a trip somewhere.
- Did any of you realize before today that it is every follower of Jesus’ job to “make disciples”? How many of you thought that was just what pastors were supposed to do?
- What would it look like if you were to “go” and talk with a friend and help them become a disciple? What would you want to talk with them about? What would be the most important things you would want to explain to them about following Jesus?
- Does it make you nervous or excited to think about getting to baptize someone else? You may have done this for fun by dunking someone in a pool. It is kind of crazy to realize that God wants all of His followers, not just adults or pastors, to be baptizing those they help become disciples! What questions do you have about baptism that you would want answered before you could do that?
- Not many junior high students volunteer to teach. However, all of you are smart about different things. Think about it. If an adult wants to know how to use any cell phone, app, game system or technology, you are some of the first people we come to! What are some examples of how you have gotten to “teach” something you knew to someone else even though, at the time, you didn’t think about it as “teaching”?
- Teaching isn’t about being an expert or having all the answers. Teaching is about helping someone else learn what you have learned. When it comes to being a follower of Jesus who teaches, it means that you help others who become followers to follow Jesus. You teach them what you know, and one day they’ll have something to teach others and maybe even you! What is one thing you know about following Jesus that you would be able to teach someone who is a new Christian?
- Last thought for today. Jesus made sure to remind us that He is always with us. How is that helpful or encouraging?

*Close in prayer.*