

Jesus' call to follow him is demanding. We are caught in a web of commitments and some of them conflict with Jesus' call to come and be part of his kingdom. We ought not make discipleship appear easier than it really is. Yet if we will commit ourselves to him, if we will dare to follow, it is great grace to have our little lives caught up in the adventure called the kingdom of God.

Luke 9:51-62 — As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went to another village. As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

Reflections

Life can be like the game, "Follow the Leader". We can be the leaders or the followers. As Christians, we should be the followers, and God the leader. However, sometimes we step out and try to take over as leader.

Growing up as a teenager in this day and age is not an easy thing. Being surrounded by so much peer pressure in drugs, alcohol, sex, and so on, it's easy to lose focus on the prize--following God. Being such a strong Christian in a culture where Christianity is not a mainstream makes this challenge even harder. When I'm alone its easy for me to be able to set all my goals, wishes, wants, and needs out there to God. Let's face it, hiding them from Him is impossible. But as far as my friends, it is a totally different scenario. They can judge me, make me question the morals and val-

ues I have, and make me want to change them.

I know right from wrong, and I know smart ideas from dumb ones. But I won't lie, it's hard to make the right decisions all the time and not let the peer pressure over take me. I fol-

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low God the best I can, knowing what He wants from me and how He wants me to get it done. God empowers me to be a leader and I like being a leader, not following everyone around me. I like the power I have to say "no" when I don't want to do something; and I like the feeling I get when I say "no," knowing that it was the right thing to do.

Being a follower of Christ is the best decision I have ever made. It has kept me from making choices that could harm me, and has kept me away from friends who could have very possibly changed me into someone I never want to be. I do not need to hide my faith. I am not afraid of having God as my leader.

"Follow the Leader" is an easy game to play. Choosing the leader is where the challenge lies.

— Kayleigh McQuaid

It's summer —

Why not try something new.? See page 2 to try our daily readings & reflection questions and check out . . .

"Let's Serve & Invite."

Readings

Sunday, July 1

Luke 9:51-62

When farmers used a hand plow to prepare for planting, they needed to constantly keep their eyes on where they were going. If they looked back even for a moment, the shift in their body would send the plow completely off course. In what areas of your life are you vulnerable to veer off course? What keeps you on course?

Monday, July 2

Genesis 12:1-4

Abraham faithfully followed God into an unknown place. What unknown places has God called you to? What did you learn in the process? Where is God calling you to now?

Tuesday, July 3

Joshua 1:1-9

It was Joshua who God wanted to lead the Israelites out of the wilderness and into the Promised Land. What instructions did God ask him to follow? What did God assure him (v. 5 & 9)? What do you face today that will benefit from God's instructions and promises?

Wednesday, July 4

1 Chronicles 14:8-17

King David faced an enemy who wanted to stop him in his tracks. What was David's strategy? How are you able to know what God' would have as your next move?

Thursday, July 5

Psalms 31

King David wrote this psalm or song. In the midst of this mighty warrior's feelings of persecution, unfairness, and fear, what does he say about God? What phrases in this psalm speak to you?

Friday, July 6

Matthew 4:18-22

Note how quickly the first disciples followed Jesus. Why do you think this was so? When are you most able to faithfully follow Jesus? When is it difficult?

Saturday, July 7

John 8:12

Jesus invites us to follow him and no longer walk in darkness. How does this encourage you to follow Him today?

Let's Serve & Invite!

This summer check out this spot for simple ideas about how to extend hope into our surrounding community. We'll share practical tips you can use at work and at play, on your own and with your family, to encourage others in the name of Christ.

Drive to serve: Driving in holiday traffic, purposefully look for people you can allow to let in ahead of you. Look for someone in a tight spot to help. Let serving others replace your fatigue and frustration.

Contagious smiles: On the road or out in the community, give away smiles to other people. Make a special effort. See how many frowns you can convert to smiles. Let the kids join in and make a game of it. Jesus makes us happy, so spread it around!

Got a tip? Email Serve&Invite@StJohnMD.org