

# FOLLOW ME

Week of November 1

It's interesting how children are often more willing to connect than we adults. Little ones are generous with their love and their smiles. One of the first things babies learn to do is wave hello and "bye-bye." It is no wonder Jesus said we must become like little children in order to enter His Kingdom (Mark 10:14b-15). With little children, there are no walls of prejudice built up, no guards raised due to feelings of inferiority, no pride over superficial things like material possessions or social standing—just a genuine desire (and amazing ability) to connect.

It is true that in time, children learn the ways of the world around them. Walls of prejudice do begin to form, guards are put up to protect when there has been hurt or disappointment, and arrogance and pride do begin to seep into the deep crevices of our psyche. We quickly learn it could be dangerous to connect with some people and unwise to associate with persons who would influence us to do wrong—and rightly so, for "bad company corrupts good character" (1 Corinthians 15:33). But too often it seems these fears keep us from connecting with people altogether. And yet, throughout the Gospel narrative, this is exactly what Jesus did.

## Read Matthew 9:35-38

Here is an overview of Matthew 9:1-34, leading up to the Scripture we just read—

vv 1-7 – Jesus has just crossed back over the Sea of Galilee (Capernaum) from the region of the Gadarenes. Some people bring to Jesus a paralyzed man on a mat. Jesus tells the man his sins are forgiven. And to prove to the religious teachers He has authority on earth to forgive sin, Jesus heals the man.

vv 9-13 – Jesus calls Matthew (a tax collector) to be a disciple. Later, Jesus eats with Matthew and his friends (sinners), upsetting the religious leaders again.

vv 14-17 – the disciples of John the Baptist ask Jesus, "Why don't your disciples fast like we do and the Pharisees do?" Jesus describes how His very presence warrants celebration, not mourning, and then talks about how "No one puts new wine into old wineskins... New wine is stored in new wineskins so that both are preserved."

vv 18-26 – Jairus' daughter who is 12 years old had just died. Interestingly, on His way to Jairus' home, a woman who has hemorrhaged for that same amount of time (12 years) was healed of her infirmity. When Jesus arrives at Jairus' home, after telling everyone to leave, Jesus speaks to the little girl and raises her to life!

vv 27-31 – Two blind men call out, "Son of David, have mercy on us" – though blind these men recognize Jesus' Davidic reign. Jesus heals them and instructs them, "Don't tell anyone about this." But instead, they spread His fame all over that area.

vv 32-34 – Jesus heals a man of demonic possession. He casts out the demon that has kept the man from speaking. The crowds say, "Nothing like this has ever happened in Israel!" But the Pharisees scoff: "He can cast out demons because He is empowered by the prince of demons."

1. Upon overviewing these first 34 verses, what strikes you most as you re-read v35 and v36?

Outside of your immediate circle (family, close friends, your Life Group), with whom are you intentionally connecting? Write their names (or initials) in the space below. If no one comes to mind, in the space below write down *why* no one comes to mind.

At times the Lord may put someone on your heart and prompt you to pray for that person before you begin really connecting. Other times, you may make immediate connections with different persons throughout your day. The important thing is to be open to *where* the Holy Spirit is leading you, and to *whom* the Holy Spirit is leading you. Paul said, "Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone" (Colossians 4:5-6).

Jesus is our role model when it comes to connecting, because He initiated relationships all across the spectrum. Jesus didn't allow prejudice, or the legalistic mindset of the day, or tradition to affect where He connected or with whom He connected. He looked beyond the outward appearance and saw their heart, their need. The Lord was never embarrassed or afraid of what the skeptics would say about Him. He loved people and "had compassion on them." Truly, Jesus was a friend of sinners – and thankfully, He still is!

2. Jesus' last words should be our first: "Go and make disciples!" **Read Matthew 28:18-20.** Keep in mind, these are not the last words of Jesus upon the cross, these are resurrection words!—commissioning the disciples with their new assignment:

"I have been given \_\_\_\_\_ in heaven and earth."

There on the Mount of Olives as Jesus ascends to heaven (10 days before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost) what are the three imperatives?

- 1) Go and make \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_ them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_ these new disciples to obey all the command I have given you.

When the Lord Jesus Christ says He has been given "all authority in heaven and on earth," He means *all* authority. You see, Jesus didn't send out the twelve and say, "Good Luck." The Son of God "gave them authority to cast out evil spirits and to heal every kind of disease and illness" (Matthew 10:1). Jesus showed the disciples how to begin connecting with people. And as they "went out to teach and preach in towns throughout the region" (Matthew 11:1) they were armed with the authority of Jesus and the healing power of His name. Still today, Jesus sends out His disciples (you and me!) armed with His authority and the healing power of His name.

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**Text: Matthew 9:27-38**

3. The Lord has gifted you in connecting others to His Kingdom, His Church! How are you using that gift (your area of service and other opportunities) to advance His Great Commission?

The Plain Truth states: "To follow Jesus is to connect with people instead of condemning them." Think about your own life—how have you seen a difference between connecting with people and condemning people?

Which is more effective for lasting discipleship (and friendship) and why?

Jesus didn't say go when you feel like it—there are times you won't *feel* like being about this mandate to "Go and Make Disciples." The Lord understands you and I are human (Psalm 103: 14) and we need time away for rest and prayer (Mark 6:31). But in your waking, productive hours of most days are you mindful of the people around you? Do you want to be about leading people to Christ? Are you intentional about putting yourself in places where you can initiate relationships?

Life is all about relationships and Jesus was all about people. In fact, at one point the Bible says there were so many people coming to Jesus they "were milling about and stepping on each other" (Luke 12:1). Can you see that picture? Oh that we were the salt and light Jesus calls us to be—winsome and attractive in our love for others—a sweet-smelling fragrance that draws others to Christ instead of repelling them!

4. Who has the Lord put on your heart? In the space below, write down one way you can find common ground with that person and build a friendship. As Christ-followers, the Lord is calling us to partner with His Holy Spirit and connect with people. Ask Him, and He will open your eyes to the spiritual need of those in your world. Close in some prayer time, because the more we talk to God about people, the more we will talk to people about God.

**Here is what we can learn from Jesus to "Connect with Others"**

1. He showed \_\_\_\_\_ in relationships.
2. He confirmed that relationships are more important than \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. He developed \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ places with \_\_\_\_\_ people.

**Look at how Jesus connects here:**

1. Jesus went – He connected \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Jesus saw – He connected \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Jesus felt – He connected \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Jesus prayed – He connected \_\_\_\_\_.

## The Plain Truth:

To follow Jesus is to \_\_\_\_\_ with people  
instead of \_\_\_\_\_ them.

### One Year Bible Reading

Nov. 1: Ezekiel 1:1-3:15, Hebrews 3:1-19, Psalm 104:1-23, Proverbs 26:24-26  
Nov. 2: Ezekiel 3:16-6:14, Hebrews 4:1-16, Psalm 104:24-35, Proverbs 26:27  
Nov. 3: Ezekiel 7:1-9:11, Hebrews 5:1-14, Psalm 105:1-15, Proverbs 26:28  
Nov. 4: Ezekiel 10:1-11:25, Hebrews 6:1-20, Psalm 105:16-36, Proverbs 27:1-2  
Nov. 5: Ezekiel 12:1-14:11, Hebrews 7:1-17, Psalm 105:37-45, Proverbs 27:3  
Nov. 6: Ezekiel 14:12-16:41, Hebrews 7:18-28, Psalm 106:1-12, Proverbs 27:4-6  
Nov. 7: Ezekiel 16:42-17:24, Hebrews 8:1-13, Psalm 106:13-31, Proverbs 27:7-9

**October 31 & November 1, 2015**