

“Follow Me”  
– the words in red

ICFG Retreat Jan 2015

# Biblical Command – Follow Me

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Mat 10:37-39 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. (38) **And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.** (39) He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

Mat 16:24-26 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. (25) For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (26) For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Reward and Punishment according to willingness to priority obedience to Jesus above all else

# Biblical Example – Follow Me

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Mat 4:18-22 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. (19) And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. (20) And they straightway left *their* nets, and followed him. (21) And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son of* Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. (22) And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

Mat 9:9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

Response was to leave livelihood, possessions, family and follow without knowing the details of where and how, but just who.

# Applicable Teachings of Jesus

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Mat 13:44-46 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. (45) Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: (46) Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

This is a treasure that we consider ourselves fortunate to have to opportunity to acquire Imagine finding the amazing person that you love and who loves you, would you leave your job, your home, your family to be united with them?

# Biblical Counter Examples

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Luk 9:57-58 ... a certain *man* said unto him, Lord, **I will follow** thee whithersoever thou goest. (58) And Jesus said unto him, **Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.**

- Following Jesus will require sacrificing material comfort

Luk 9:59-60 And he said unto another, **Follow me**. But he said, Lord, **suffer me first** to go and bury my father. (60) Jesus said unto him, **Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.**

- Following Jesus has to take precedence even over family obligations

Luk 9:61-62 And another also said, Lord, **I will follow** thee; **but let me first** go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. (62) And Jesus said unto him, **No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.**

- He who hesitates is not worthy

# Biblical Counter-Examples

## Rich Young Ruler

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Mar 10:17-22 And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? (18) And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God.* (19) Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. (20) And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. (21) Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, **One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.** (22) And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: **for he had great possessions.**

# Rich Young Ruler - contd

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Mar 10:23-31 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, **How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!** (24) And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, **Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!** (25) **It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.** (26) And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, **Who then can be saved?** (27) And Jesus looking upon them saith, **With men *it is* impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.** (28) Then Peter began to say unto him, **Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.** (29) And Jesus answered and said, **Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,** (30) **But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.** (31) **But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last first.**

# Conclusions

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- Following Jesus means
  - Trusting in Him for:
    - Guidance
    - Provision
    - Protection
  - Willing to give up everything for Jesus
    - Possessions
    - Relationships
    - Occupations and Social Status
  - To be faithful to Jesus' character and directives for your attitude and actions.
  - To do so with joy

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*“Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.”*

*- Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

# Principles for Following Jesus

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- Love the Lord your God with all your Heart...
  - Get to know the Lord (read, pray)
  - Fall in love with Him
  - Worship Him
  - Surrender your will (baptism)
  - Follow the Spirit
- Love your neighbour as yourself
  - Lost (Mat 28 – Go ye)
  - Orphans (Mat 25, James 1)
  - Poor
  - In trouble (in prison)

# Follow a **Person** not a **Plan**

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- When Jesus called his disciples to follow,
  - he did not give specifics
  - No 5 year plan, or even where they were going to eat that day
- When Jesus left us to fulfill the great commission, he did not give a detailed plan
  - Act 1:8 But you will receive power when the **Holy Spirit** has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and *to the end of the earth.*"

# Superficial Religion vs Spiritual Regeneration

Follow	Religion
10 Gurus	Sikh
8-fold path	Buddhism
5 pillars	Islam

OR  
Follow **Jesus** the only Son of God

Not sufficient just to



- Get baptized
- Attend Church
- Read the Bible
- Pray
- Give

Rather need to be regenerated and led  
daily by the Holy Spirit

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The sum of the  
commandments: to live  
in fellowship with Christ

# Christ's Call, Our Obedience

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- “The response of the disciples is **an act of obedience, not a confession of faith.**”
- “The cause behind the immediate following of call by response is Jesus Christ himself. **It is Jesus who calls**, and because it is Jesus, Levi follows at once.”
- “[following Christ] gives us no intelligible programme for a way of life, no goal or ideal to strive for... **It is nothing else than bondage to Jesus Christ alone**, completely breaking through every programme, every ideal, every set of laws. No other significance is possible, since **Jesus is the only significance.**”

# Becoming a Disciple

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- We cannot volunteer; we must be called (gift)
  - Luke 9:57-62 – the first, enthusiastic man
  - John 15:16 – “You did not choose me, but I chose you”
  - Matt 14:22-33 – Peter asks to be called
- We come on Jesus’ terms, not ours
  - Luke 9:57-62 – the third, would-be follower
  - Conditional discipleship is not discipleship

# Becoming a Disciple

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- Faith & obedience are inseparable
  - Obedience brings the disciple to a place where faith is possible
  - Only he who believes is obedient, & only he who is obedient believes
- Discipleship is death:
  - a complete break with the old life, plunging into absolute insecurity
  - Renouncing our sinful passions, bitterness, ourselves
  - Do not think of discipleship as an addition/clarification/completion of your old life, or as a “moral adventure”

# Becoming a Disciple

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- Discipleship is life:
  - a new creation; Christ regenerating us, transforming us
  - Learning the demand and gift of Christ
- The “first step” of obedience is essential, but can never of itself bring someone to Christ
  - The drunkard who gives up booze has freed himself from slavery to alcohol
  - The rich man who gives his money away has freed himself from the slavery of money
  - BUT NOT from their bondage to themselves
  - We take this step aright by focusing not on the **work** we do, but on the **word and call** of Christ.

# Becoming a Disciple

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- The first step of obedience is only the link between the old life and new; it is not the new life itself
  - For the rich young ruler, discipleship is the end, voluntary poverty the means
- The call of Jesus is a pure gift to us, and once it is spoken, we are at a point of no return

# Becoming a Disciple

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- If you are having a hard time believing, perhaps it is because you have resisted the call of Jesus in disobedience.
  - “If you believe, take the first step, it leads to Jesus Christ. If you don’t believe, take the first step all the same, for you are bidden to take it.”
- The dangers of “cheap grace” and “salvation through works”: both lead to damnation
- You can only learn what obedience is by obeying

# Making space for Christ

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- We are “Thirsting in Thornsburg”
- Spiritual Disciplines are useful in creating the space in our lives to pursue a relationship with Christ
- Inward
  - Meditation
  - Prayer
  - Fasting
  - Study
- Outward
  - Simplicity
  - Solitude
  - Submission
  - Service
- Corporate
  - Confession
  - Worship
  - Guidance
  - Celebration

# Following Together: in Community

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- The example of our Nazarene forbearers:

“But it is, perhaps, in their Christian practice even more than in their doctrine and worship that the Nazarenes, who seek to restore the original purity of Christianity, shed forth amid the darkness of Europe the light of simple Gospel truth. In their friendliness to one another they seem, to the outsider, to share all things in common, as did the early Christians; but they are careful never to encourage laziness or shiftlessness.”

- Anonymous Quaker traveler, 1889.

# The Nazarenes: Discipleship Community

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“While our nuclear families are torn apart by disputes and even our strongest extended families broken up, impoverished and dilapidated, among the Nazarenes unrelated people get together and in their community they till the soil, buy common meadows and engage in common haymaking. The Nazarenes keep joint melon patches, houses for smoking meat, wind, water and even steam mills. In community they grow apples and other fruits, distill plums for brandy, feed pigs and cattle all just to become better off. While among us brother pits himself against brother and sons rebel against their fathers, the Nazarenes as complete foreigners join together and live and work as brothers sincerely, openly and full of confidence...”

- Serbian Orthodox priest, 1900

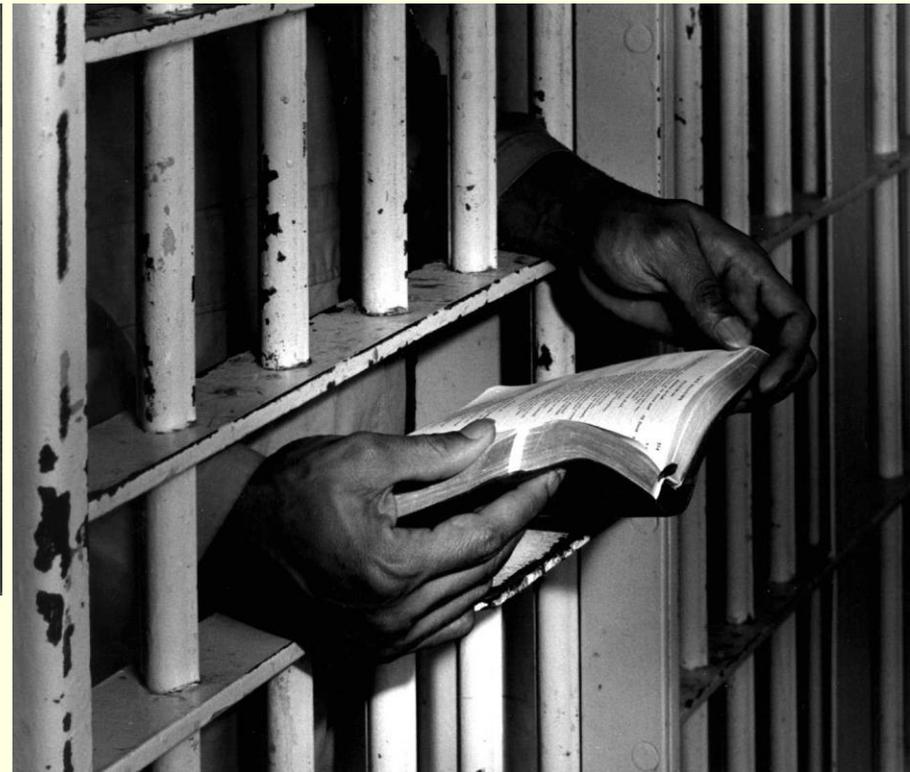
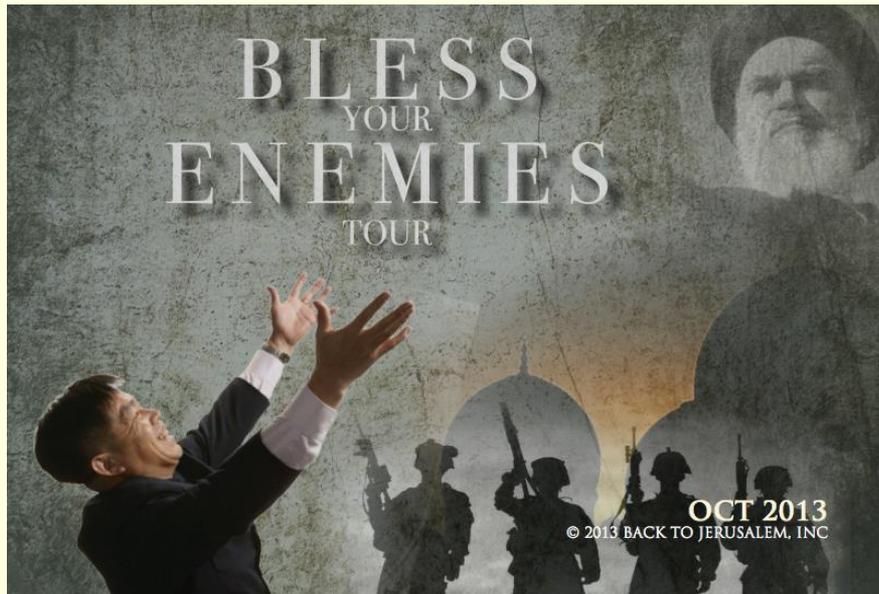
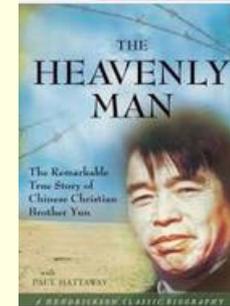
# Christian Contemporary Example

## ■ Example in Iran



# Contemporary Examples

- Yun – Heavenly Man
- Bob Fu – God's Double Agent



# Historical Examples

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- Hudson Taylor
- Gladys Aylward
- Eric Liddel
- George Mueller

# Contemporary Examples - NA

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- Dennis Delic
- Josh and Shelly
- Fostering couples
- Redemption Ranch
  
- Francis Chan
- David Platt

# CS Lewis – want pleasure too little

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- “If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that **our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. ...**

# CS Lewis – far too easily pleased

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- ... We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. **We are far too easily pleased.**”

# Resources

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- ACC Church History Conference
  - <http://new.livestream.com/Acc-Live/Kitchener-CHC>
- The Cost of Discipleship – Bonhoeffer
- Follow Me – David Platt
- Radical – David Platt
- Radical Together – David Platt
- Crazy Love – Francis Chan
- Kisses from Katie: A Story of Relentless Love and Redemption – Katie J Davis

# Breakout Session

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- You have the provoking comparison of the radical Muslims
- You have the Biblical command and examples

Get together in small groups and come up with a vision. What would it look like to answer Jesus' call in today's world?