



What – Follow Me?

It sounds very presumptuous of us to think that any one would want to follow us. Jesus was the son of God so it was only right that the disciples should copy him. How could we possibly ask any one to follow our example when we are so aware of our faults and shortcomings?

We see Jesus calling his disciples to follow him "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4 v 19). Many of us would think that this is fine for Jesus but not something that we would want to say about ourselves. However we see that it was exactly Jesus' intention that others would not only follow him but his disciples too. Why else would he be saying 'I will make you fishers of men?'

If you are still uncomfortable with the idea of people emulating you, let's look at how Paul deals with this. He holds out his life as a model (tupeos) for others to follow. In 1 Corinthians 11:1 he says quite simply 'Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ'. We can see that he is quite clear that he expects others to emulate him. Was he just special and able to do this? Did he assume that he would be the only model that people followed? As we read 1 Thessalonians 1:6 and 7 we see that not only did he see himself as a model, but he also expected those who followed him to be imitated by others. 'You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word with much tribulation, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.' Although it is an expected outcome of our discipleship that others will imitate us often our inbuilt reserve hinders our potential in this area.

The People Potential

One of the things that is most thrilling is seeing people reach their potential. I meet people who are on 'tick over' who I can see are designed to be a racing car but have settled for being a taxi. There is nothing wrong with the taxi work they do, but it somehow just doesn't add up for them. Have you had these types of conversations? Jesus' words from John 10:10 come to mind. 'I came that they might have life and have it abundantly'. It appears for many that the earlier part of the verse is truer, that 'the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy'. I want to see the plans of the enemy thwarted and the abundant life that Jesus offers rise up and bring the person to fulfill all that God has in mind for them. Seeking God, asking him to reveal the person's hidden potential and then working with them to see this dynamic life released is a great privilege. Many of those who we disciple in this way will out run us! We cannot be in this for our own glory but simply to see them flourish. Once again we need to follow Paul's encouragement to 'regard one another as more important than yourself.'

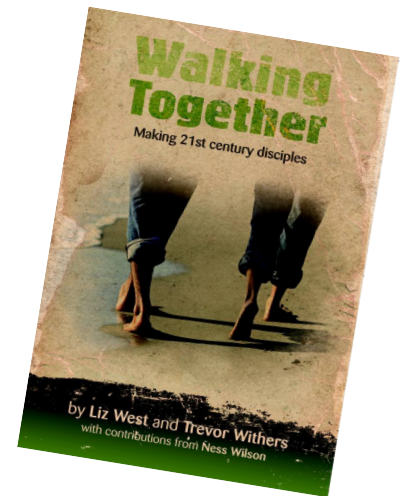
The Impact

Our British culture largely determines that faith is a private matter and should be kept that way. From this premise we have put our faith in a separate box to the rest of our lives and it is not expected that the fact that we are a Christian will make a significant difference to the way we live. It will probably affect what we do on a Sunday morning and possibly one evening in the week but will not generally be evident in many other areas. We have separated our faith from our lives. James has something to say about this; 'faith if it has no works is dead, being by itself.' James 2:17. It would appear he encountered a similar problem. Most of us need the support of a relationship of accountability to encourage and enable our faith to bear fruit and make a difference to the way we live. In my experience this has been essential to enable and encourage growth. So just take a moment to reflect. Are we serious about living lives that will encourage others to follow us and in so doing become more like Jesus?

Yours for His Kingdom

Trevor Withers

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