



## **WOW: Word Of the Week**

### **FOLLOW**

**January 18, 2023**

The basic meaning of the word “disciple” is a learner. In the first century, disciples of a rabbi received teachings and were able to pass those teachings on. A disciple was one who lived according to the teachings and one who shared the teachings. Following meant adjusting or changing one’s life and advancing the mission.

During his ministry, Jesus clearly connects discipleship with following. In fact, one synonym of the word “disciple” is “follower.”

Listen afresh to Jesus’ words.

→When Jesus first began to call disciples, he said, “If you follow me, I will send you out to fish for people” (Matthew 4:19). Jesus calls disciples who will follow and participate in his mission.

→“Whoever does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:38), coupled with “to be my disciple, one must deny self, take up the cross, and follow” (Matthew 16:24). Seeing and following Jesus is life-changing – self-denial, sacrificial changed lives. Jesus again and again connects fellowship and discipleship.

→“Except one take up one’s cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple” (Mark 8). No wiggle room. The blind received their sight and followed (Matthew 20:34). It would not be bold to say that people whose lives are genuinely changed automatically follow. Have we experienced radical, dynamic change? Or have we simply forgotten?

→The Gospel of John uses two well known illustrations to help us understand. Jesus said, “My sheep follow me” (John 10). Again, Jesus said, “Those that follow me will not walk in darkness but will have light of life” (John 8:12).

→Perhaps among the saddest verses in Scripture is Matthew 26:58: “Peter followed at a distance.” But there is hope. Peter resumed following, was changed, actively and aggressively advanced the mission of Jesus during his life.

Disciples are followers. Disciples follow. “Following Jesus, changed by Jesus, committed to the mission of Jesus.” What is the evidence in your life that you are following, applying Jesus’ teachings, sharing with others? How have you have been changed? What is different?

And, what evidence is there that you are committed to, actively involved in, pursuing, advancing the eternal mission of Jesus in this world? We follow one who came to seek and save the lost. For Jesus-followers, his mission defines the central purpose of our lives!

Follow! Easy to say, but harder to accomplish if one takes seriously the words of Jesus – people-fishers, putting self last, sacrifice, cross-bearing (or at least enduring difficulties). May we follow more closely in 2023, walking the path of discipleship, constantly transformed, always seeking first the kingdom mission of the one we claim to follow.