

Gospel of John – Following Directions

12/28/25

How good are you in following directions? When you stop to ask for directions while traveling by vehicle, how good are you in remembering what the person told you? If the person gives me more than two traffic directions, I'm done. That's why I usually don't ask for directions when I'm lost. Why ask if I'm going to forget before I press my foot on the gas pedal. How about putting things together. Do you usually have a piece or two left over and have no idea where they go and then you go to the direction sheet? How about following a cooking recipe? I'd be more like the Three Stooges when they try to follow cooking recipes – nothing comes out right. Some of us need total quiet to be able to follow directions. I can't listen to music and try to follow directions – it doesn't work for me. Some people don't like to have children around when trying to make something because it causes distractions. Plus, I think it's harder today to follow directions because we have so much noise and distractions around us. Last month, I was watching a lady trying to photograph a family. The family contained the parents, two children and a dog. When she was given directions to one part of the family, the other family members lost focus and started to move around. That poor lady was trying to give directions and no body was really listening. When I left the park, she was still trying to get the family to follow directions for a picture. I think the dog did a better job in following directions. We have to understand as followers of Jesus Christ; we must learn to be good direction followers. At the same time, we must admit it is very difficult at times to follow Jesus and His directions. We can narrow this down to how hard it is to just follow period. It's hard to follow directions at times and it's hard to follow Jesus at times, but we can't throw this problem to the side because it could mean our destruction or losing our faith because of focusing on everything else around us.

Let's look at some Scripture as we finish the Gospel of John sermon series that will help to paint a better picture for us. So, turn to John 21: 17 – 22 where we read this from John, ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you

love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep.¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go."¹⁹ (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me."²⁰ Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?"²¹ When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?"²² Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!" (ESV – www.biblegateway.com)

The disciples had a hard time staying focused on Jesus while He was their Rabbi. Peter and the disciples wanted Jesus to be a human ruler that would break the rule of Roman. They saw all the miracles that Jesus did and they knew that Jesus was more than capable to crush Rome. Jesus would remind them over and over again about His real mission that His Father had sent Him for – not to fight against Rome, but to go to the cross for humankind so they could turn from sin and have forgiveness for sin. Peter was picked by the Lord to lead the Church after Pentecost. This conversation that Jesus has with Peter is after the cross event and before Jesus ascends into Heaven. Jesus is trying to get Peter focused on the mission that Peter is to take in leading the Church after Jesus physically leaves this earth. Jesus tries to get Peter focused on love because that is the bread and butter of the Church – agape love of God, not human love. So, Jesus tells Peter in verse 19 that he is to "follow Me". For Peter to love correctly, following Jesus would be needed. In fact, Jesus tells Peter that he will die because of his faith in Jesus. Then, Peter questions Jesus about John and how he is going to die. Peter wanted to know if John was going to have the same kind of death. We want people to suffer like we suffer at times. Again, Peter is having a hard time following Jesus. Let's remember, Peter is the one who denied Jesus while Jesus was making His way to the cross. Peter didn't want to go to the cross with Jesus. Even at Jesus' grave, John outran Peter to the grave – John 20. When Peter

tried to walk on water to get to Jesus, he couldn't follow Jesus. So, Jesus tells Peter again after this death question, "Follow Me". Two times, Jesus tells Peter to follow Him. This must be important if Jesus states it twice. I believe John wants us to understand how important it is to follow Jesus. Peter had failed at times because he lost focus on following Jesus. In the time we are living in, it is critical that we understand this command has not changed, but it's becoming more and more challenged. Those who work in emergency services know people are getting more defiant against law and order. They don't want to follow directions. Try directing traffic once and you'll find out really quick how people don't want to follow directions. The same thing is happening within the American Church as well. People want to be called Christians, but they ignore the command, "Follow Me". Let's look at three items that kept people from following Jesus and these three things caused Peter to have a hard time following Jesus as well.

First, let's look into John 12: 25 – 26 where we read this, "Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who despise their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. All those who want to be my disciples must come and follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And if they follow me, the Father will honor them. (NLT)" Here we have Jesus telling His disciples again to follow Him. Jesus tells them the only way they can follow Him. They must despise their life in this world if they are to keep eternal life. When we allow Jesus into our hearts we become anew and this means we are no longer of this world. We're in it, but not of it. Peter was all in on Jesus being a human king that would destroy Rome rule over the Jews. Peter was more involved in following the world than following Jesus. I'm not saying we have nothing to do with the world. We're no longer as interested in the world because now our main focus is to please Jesus in the way we live according to the Word of God. People today are trying to please both and that does not work and we see evidence of that. Denominations that have embraced the sins of this world and say they are doing it for Jesus have destroyed the righteousness of God. They are not following Jesus; they are following this world and its teachings. There is a great separation from this world and Jesus and that is caused by sin. The only way to repair that separation is through Jesus, not

by doing good works alone. To overcome sin means rejecting this world and follow Jesus with all the strength we have.

The second thing we must do to be able to follow Jesus can be found in Matthew 16: 24 – 27, “²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. ²⁵ If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. ²⁶ And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?^[a] Is anything worth more than your soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father and will judge all people according to their deeds. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)” Jesus tells us that to be a follower of Him, we must give up our own way. Not only do we give up the world’s way, but we must give up our own way as well. Peter wanted Jesus to fill in what he wanted Jesus to be. Jesus was tempted in the desert by satan to follow the world and to follow what satan wanted Him to do. Jesus followed the mission of His Father and didn’t lose focus of the cross and how thankful we should be for that. Jesus is telling us to give up our way and pick up our cross which means we have given our whole life over to Jesus. When that happens, we can live in this world but at the same time not be of this world. This is so hard for us at times because humans can be so selfish – pride that comes from our human nature. When we follow Jesus, we allow the Holy Spirit to keep that selfishness in check. Part of the human nature is to try to gain the world. We can’t serve two masters at the same time. What is great about following Jesus is that when we do, His Spirit helps us to get the right mindset for this world and for the things of this world. When Peter had the dream about eating all kinds of food that was wrong to eat for the Jewish people, God was showing Peter a bigger picture which was Peter to start reaching out to the Gentiles with the Gospel message as well. As your faith grows, you’ll see that Jesus only wants the best for you. This world could care less for you. Our human nature at times wants us to do bad things, while a human nature that is controlled by the Holy Spirit will only want good things. Following Jesus puts everything else in the right perspective.

The final item that hinders us from following Jesus and His directions can be found in Luke 9: 23-25 where we read this, “²³ Then he said to the crowd, “If any

of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me.²⁴ If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.²⁵ And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed? (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

Not only do we need to stop following ourselves and the world, we must give up our own way to the point where we are able to give up even our own life for Jesus. This statement from Jesus we don't pay much attention to because in America, we haven't yet had to give up our life for Jesus. We say that Charlie Kirk from Turning Point gave up his life some months ago, but the Church in America has not had to suffer to the point of death like the early Church did in the New Testament where great numbers died because of their faith in Jesus. If things suddenly turn for the worst for the American Church or for those who really do follow Jesus through righteous and holy living, would they be willing to lose their life for Jesus? That would be the true test for a follower of Jesus. Peter was willing to die for Jesus to a certain point. Peter would have been willing to die for Jesus if Jesus was going to overthrow the Roman Military. Following a Jesus that had humbled Himself to the cross was a different matter and Peter rejected that three times. If we can't follow Jesus in the small things, we'll not follow Him when things get tough for true followers of Jesus. When denominations turn to the world, we must listen to the words of Jesus, "You follow Me!" Each and every one of us must take this calling seriously. If not, we will buckle under the pressure as Peter did. The good news for Peter was there was forgiveness found at the cross. Peter became a true follower of Jesus and he was executed for his faith in Jesus. Who are you going to follow this year? Are you going to follow the world or follow your own ambitions or will you follow Jesus? I like what Jesus tells us in verse 24 that if we give up our life for Him, we will save it. In other words, we will save our spiritual life and we will see Heaven. Let's follow Jesus at all costs! Let's ask the Holy Spirit to help us to be good followers of Jesus in 2026.