



Friendship Evangelism

Six: Follow Me

iFOLLOW

Working with Jesus

The iFollow Discipleship Series

About the iFollow Discipleship Series Pastor's Edition

Categories

The iFollow Discipleship Series is designed to be used in congregations to assist people in their pursuit of God. This assumes that individuals are in unique places in their journey and there is no perfect set of lessons that everyone must complete to become a disciple—in fact discipleship is an eternal journey. Therefore the iFollow curriculum is a menu of milestones that an individual, small group, or even an entire church can choose from. The lessons can be placed in three general categories: **Meeting with Jesus** (does not assume a commitment to Jesus Christ); **Walking with Jesus** (assumes an acceptance of Jesus Christ); and **Working with Jesus** (assumes a desire to serve Jesus Christ).

Components

Each lesson has a presenter's manuscript which can be read word for word, but will be stronger if the presenter puts it in his/her own words and uses personal illustrations. The graphic slides can be played directly from the Pastor's DVD or customized and played from a computer. There are also several group activities and discussion questions to choose from as well as printable student handouts.

Usage

The lessons are designed to be used in small groups, pastor's Bible classes, prayer meetings, seminars, retreats, training sessions, discussion groups, and some lessons may be appropriate sermon outlines.

Credits

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www.ifollowdiscipleship.org

Friendship Evangelism Six: Follow Me

This presentation is designed for people who desire to serve Jesus Christ and help lead others to Him.

Learning Objectives

1. Observe how Jesus did friendly evangelism with the woman at the well
2. Learn when to invite someone to follow Jesus
3. Learn how to make the invitation
4. Learn some steps to take after they accept Jesus

Content Outline

1. Never thirst—a Bible study on John 4
2. Inviting others to follow Jesus
3. Example invitations
4. Bite your tongue
5. Sharing Scripture
6. Follow through

Background Material for the Presenter

Sharing the gospel best happens in an open, trusting relationship, using language relevant to the context and needs of the person with whom you are sharing. In the paradigm for the ministry of Christ from *The Ministry of Healing* page 143, the fifth and last step is an invitation.

After mingling with people, **after** demonstrating compassion for them, **after** meeting their needs, **after** winning their trust, **then** Jesus said, “Follow me.”

Never Thirst

An example of this process is detailed in John 4 in the story of the woman at the well. This seems like an incidental story. It is not one that has big, prophetic themes or major



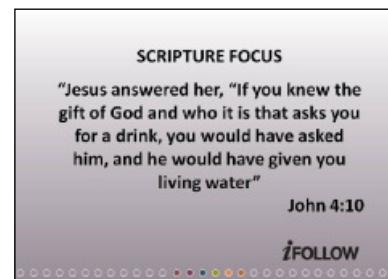
theological issues. It's a little event that provides good insight into the way Christ ministered in everyday contacts.

Jesus is walking through Samaria and sits down at a well which is about a mile outside a town. His disciples go into town to buy food. While He is sitting there, a woman comes from town to draw water. Not unusual, but He evidently notices something right away that is implicit in this story. She hiked a mile out of town to this well when there is a well in the middle of town. This small clue opens up to much more later in the story.

Christ decides to talk to her. He makes that decision in spite of several layers of cultural barriers that He jumps over. First, even in today's world in the Middle East, it is not appropriate in a public place for a man to talk to a woman to whom he's not related. Secondly, Jesus was a Jew and Jews did not talk to a Samaritan. Third, and perhaps most shocking of all, He asked the woman for a drink of water. Observant, conservative Pharisees of the time were so careful not be contaminated by the Samaritans that they would not buy fruit in a market where Samaritans were allowed to walk through because the shadow of a Samaritan might fall on the fruit.

Jesus pushes aside these barriers and seeks to reach out and relate to the woman with a simple request, "Give me a drink of water." She begins to respond to Him in a conversation that opens up.

Notice how Christ observes and hears the needs of this woman. He then takes a practical thing—the water—and turns it into a metaphor to speak to this woman of her deepest needs. He talks to her about living water. "If you knew who it was that's asking you for drink, you would ask him for living water, and you would never thirst again," Jesus says.



At first, the woman doesn't get it—that's the nature of metaphors. But later she does, and by using this practical term as a metaphor for the gospel, she begins to talk about religious things. She says, "I notice you're a Jewish rabbi, and your people say you have to worship God on the mountain in Jerusalem. But our forefathers say it's OK to worship on this mountain. Which is right?" This was a major theological argument of the time.

Christ's response is that it doesn't make any difference which mountain you worship on. Yet He was the one who set aside Mount Zion in Jerusalem for His temple. Throughout the Old Testament He called it "my holy hill" and said that was where people should come to make their sacrifices. Yet it had never been the place that mattered. That wasn't what was important. One wonders how many great



theological issues He would say that about today. The important thing is, “Do you worship God in spirit and truth?”

This intrigues the woman so much that she ramps up the spiritual focus of the conversation and brings up the greatest hope of anyone any time: “I know the Messiah is coming, and he’ll explain everything.”

Jesus then says something to this woman that He never said to anyone else in such clear, simple language. **“I who speak to you am he.”**

Amazing! Why did He say so much? Why did He get so point-blank? **He followed her lead.**

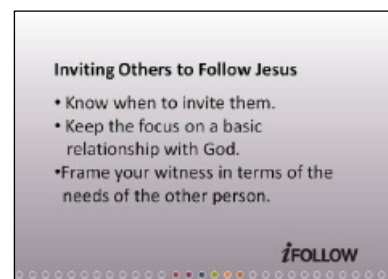
She believes him. The fearful and untrusting woman, who has been through five marriages—and isn’t married to the man she’s with now, therefore susceptible to ridicule or shunning on the part of her neighbors—goes back to the village and fearlessly tells everybody to come see this man. And they listen! Also amazing, considering her situation. A whole village is turned around because of the impact that Jesus has on her life. Not only this woman, but many in the village are converted and become followers of the Messiah. It’s interesting to note that Jesus does not just go on His way after the woman accepts Him. He interrupts whatever plans He had. (Remember, He was supposedly just passing through Samaria to Galilee, according to verses three and four.)

Throughout the entire story Christ kept a simple focus on thirst. He’s talking about an emotional, spiritual thirst down inside this woman. She’s thirsty. She’s been through failed relationships and doesn’t know who to trust. She wants to be loved and valued, something she has never really experienced. Jesus focuses on her thirst, and it becomes the key for turning her life around. This story captures the essence of what it means to hear people’s needs and share the gospel in a simple, practical way.

Inviting Others to Follow Jesus

In your circle of acquaintances and friends, where you work and in the neighborhood where you live, there are a number of people who do not follow Jesus. How do we invite them to choose Jesus? First, we need to know **when** to invite them. We know it’s the right time because we’ve listened, heard the door open, and used the readiness question.

If people open up to us, we need to keep the focus on a basic relationship with God. Don’t get off on doctrinal issues. Until an individual has accepted Christ and committed themselves to following Him, arguing about doctrine and getting into in-depth Bible study is dangerous. They may get the idea they can work their way into heaven. It



doesn't matter how much education you have in the Scripture, you're not going to work your way into heaven. You'll get there because of your relationship with Christ. Keep the focus there. Share small pieces. Don't feed too much, too quickly.

Frame your witness in terms of the needs of the **other** person. They've shared with you some deep inner needs. Shape your sharing of the gospel in terms of **their** needs, but don't be afraid to ask for a definite decision about what you share.

Example Invitations

It might sound like this: a person shares with you some deep inner concern, and you ask the readiness question. "Do you have any spiritual resources to help you deal with this?" They open the door. Perhaps they say, "No, I don't," or "Not really," or better yet, "I wish I did."

You then say something like, "Have you ever thought about having an intentional relationship with God?"

If they are open, describe how faith in Christ would make a difference in terms of this deep, inner need, they've shared with you. Don't tell them He will take it away, or make it all better, or miraculously change their circumstance. Tell them He will be there with them through it, and that they can learn to be aware of His presence and will feel safer no matter what happens.

Here's a more specific example. Let's say you're talking with a friend who's been fired from the job he's been at for 20 years. He feels angry and depressed. He talks about the unfairness and how much he's been used.

You ask him if he has any spiritual resources to help with this. He says that he really doesn't. He hasn't been to church for years and doesn't know where to turn.

You might respond by asking, "Have you ever thought about making a serious commitment of your life to God? If you did that, God would give you a sense of purpose in life, which is larger than any job or organization. God would also give you a clear frame of reference for the type of work you should look for next."

Having said that, bite your tongue and wait for his response. You've given him a little piece of the gospel in the framework he has suggested.

Here's another example. Let's say there's a woman that



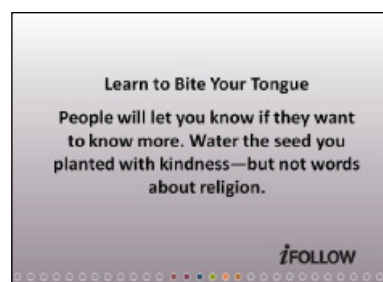
works in an organization that you visit regularly. One day you come in and find her with her head down at her desk, crying. When you greet her, she says that after being married for 15 years, this morning she found a note from her husband saying that he's tired of the marriage and is moving out. She's devastated.

She starts telling you about that, and at an appropriate point you ask if she has any spiritual resources. She says she doesn't. She grew up in a home where they never talked about religion, and she doesn't know what to believe in. Ask, "Have you ever thought about making a commitment to learn more about faith? If you were to do that, you would have a relationship with God that would give you the dignity and strength to deal with whatever difficult thing happens to you." Then leave it at that.

Use a flexible framework to share Christ. Use the context they have created by describing a particular need that's in their heart. Suggest that faith in Christ provides answers, resources, and strength to help us with our needs. Use the same frame that Christ used. Try metaphors the way He used them in order for others to understand. If you're dealing with an unchurched person, stay away from church language. They probably will not understand. If they grew up in a church, they may understand.

Bite Your Tongue

Once you've made this kind of introduction to Christ, bite your tongue and listen. The person will tell you if they want to know more. They'll ask a question and keep the conversation on the topic. If they don't want to know more, they'll change the subject. If they change the subject, don't say any more. You've planted a seed. It may be a long time before it sprouts. Some seeds never sprout—but you've planted it. Keep watering it with compassion and kindness, **but not with more words about religion.**



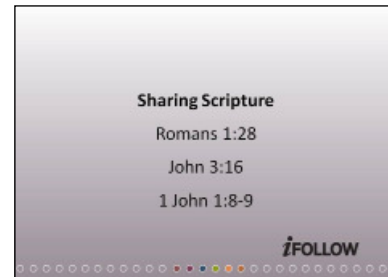
A certain percentage of people will want to know more. They will ask questions like, "How do you have that kind of relationship with God? How do you find God in your life? How do you come to really know what God and life are all about? How can you know that it is really true?"

The questions will tell you that they are open. You need to be prepared at that point to share a simple, basic Bible study that introduces them to the notion that the most important thing in Christian faith is the personal, living relationship with Christ. If they don't accept that simple thing, we're not ready for any other Bible topics.

Sharing Scripture

If you don't have a Bible with you, don't worry about it—just share in your own terms. But, if you do have a Bible, it helps to show it to them because the basis of our Christian faith is in Scripture.

Don't start by trying to sell that idea. That's way too sophisticated. Start by demonstrating it. Explain that human beings are born separated from God with basic natural tendencies to go in the wrong direction (Romans 1:28). If you leave humans to themselves without any education or relationship with God, things go bad. But God says in John 3:16 that He is willing to bridge the gap. He came in the person of Jesus to die for sinners. God is willing to pay the price and make things right. God reaches out to build a bridge and repair the problem we are born with.



Tell them that if we ask, God is quick to forgive us. In 1 John 1:8-9 it says God is quick to forgive those who come and ask for forgiveness. "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves." We all know we have evil in our hearts. "If we confess our sins, God will forgive us our sins." All we have to do is reach out and ask for forgiveness, and God provides it. God takes away that barrier. We can have a direct relationship with God.

Do not share more than two or three texts. It doesn't matter which texts you use, but they should concentrate on the love of God, the One who takes the initiative and comes after us. It should be something you are comfortable with and something that you can easily share with another person. Point out that we are born separated from God. It is natural for us to not know how to relate to God, but God takes the initiative and builds a bridge. All we have to do is reach across and say we want to know God and want forgiveness. God is quick to put His arms around us and accept us. It's that simple.

Having shared that, they may have some questions. You may need to clarify some things. You may need to take a little time but don't add more concepts. Just help them understand what you have already said. Ask them if there's any reason why they can't tell God right now that they want that kind of relationship with Him. Be prepared to pray with them. If the person is ready to accept Christ and you don't give them the opportunity to do it then, they will be frustrated. They will think they were not good enough to do it, or they are not wanted.

If they're not ready to accept Christ, they will be frustrated if you pushing them, so don't push. But ask if there's any reason why they can't accept God right now. If they say they can't think of any reason not to then offer to pray with them so they can tell God right now. It may be a simple prayer. You may feed them one word at a time, but they need to say the words to God. Having prayed that prayer, Christ accepts them as a believer, and

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the Holy Spirit is able to relate to them in a new way that was not possible before. The Holy Spirit will not ever trick or manipulate people. Once a person opens the door to their heart, then he or she has new access to the Spirit.

Follow Through

Don't leave the person there. It is important that he or she immediately take some next steps in following Jesus. That's what a "disciple" means. A disciple is an old word that means "a follower." Literally, in the time of Christ, teachers walked around, and a disciple followed them around and listened to them. A person who was a follower was somebody who stayed around, heard, and learned from the teacher. Individuals who have newly accepted Christ need to learn to follow Jesus.

There are some important things that need to begin immediately in order to follow Jesus and understand what it means to be a Christian:

Begin some basic devotional habits—prayer, Bible study, meditation.

Connect with Christian fellowship—not necessarily joining the church because they may not be ready. Invite them to meet a couple of times a week, or invite them to a small group. They need support and encouragement as they grow because they will make mistakes and get discouraged. Or run into people who will try to twist them one way or another with false information either against faith or manipulating them toward particular beliefs. This may cause confusion and lead them to give up because "it's too complicated" or "how can you know the truth?"

Unfortunately, there are a lot of people in the church who never really decided to follow Jesus. They're in the church doing other things. When you bring a person to church for the first time, you need to inoculate them a little bit so they know they'll find people who are religious though not following Jesus well. But we accept everyone. People will understand. The Christian life begins with the simple decision: I want to follow Jesus.

Handouts in this Package

1. Following Jesus in our Evangelism
2. Inviting People to Follow Jesus



Additional Resources

Burley-Allen, Madelyn (1995). *Listening: The Forgotten Skill*. Boston: Wiley, John & Sons, Inc.

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Nouwen, Henri, Douglas A. Morrison, and Donald P. McNeill (2006). *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*. New York: Random House.

Peterson, James C. (2007). *Why Don't We Listen Better?* Orlando, FL: New Life Publications

Sahlin, Monte (1991). *Friendship Evangelism Seminar*. Siloam Springs, AR: Concerned Communications.

Sahlin, Monte (2003). *One Minute Witness*. Lincoln, NE: Center for Creative Ministry.

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Discussion Questions

1. This lesson makes it clear that, just as we are asking others to follow Christ, so we are also asked to follow Him in our evangelism or witnessing. Is this a new concept for you? What are some ways you try to intentionally follow Jesus as you reach out to people?
2. Besides giving your life to Christ, what big decisions have you ever made in your life? Share about one and explain what helped you make that decision.
3. What have you learned by listening to others share their stories today?
4. What do you believe is the most important action step God wants you to take?
5. What do you believe God is saying to you right now about friendship evangelism?

Group Activity

Purpose: To practice inviting people to follow Jesus.

Preparation: Print out the script below and pass it out to participants. You will need space for groups of three individuals each.

Assignment:

1. Ask each individual, “What would you say to someone you want to introduce to Jesus? Write some ideas on scratch paper first. When you have just the wording you like, write it on a clean sheet.” Allow willing participants to share their invitations with the group and receive feedback.
2. Divide the group into working groups of three. They may use the invitations they have written, or the script you have passed out. Have them switch roles every three minutes so that each has a turn to invite, be invited, and observe. Then give them some time for feedback.

Debrief: Share reactions, insights, and suggestions.

Time: Allow five minutes for the first exercise, and then 10 for sharing. Allow five minutes for each turn in the groups—15 minutes total. Allow 15 to 20 for sharing afterwards.

Sample Script

Unchurched friend (UP): [Make up or share a difficult situation you are facing. Share it briefly.]

Christian (CH): “Do you have any spiritual resources to help you?”

UF: “I really don’t.”

CH: “Have you ever thought about making a serious commitment of your life to God? If you did that then_____.”

[Fill in the blank with a response that matches the situation they are facing. Then bite your tongue. Just listen.]

UF [Respond with interest]: “How do you have that kind of relationship with God?”

or “What can I do to have God in my life?” or “How do you really know what God is all about or that he’s really interested in me?”

CH: [Share a couple of Scripture texts that would be meaningful to this scenario.]
Text: _____ [Examples: Isaiah 64:6; I John 1:9; Ephesians 2:8, 9] Then ask, “Would you like to give your life to Christ right now?” or “Would you like to ask Christ to take over your life/situation you are facing right now?”

UF: “Yes, I would; but I don’t know what to do or say.”

CH: “I’ll help you. Just pray the words that I pray. Repeat them after me.” [Go through a short, simple prayer.]

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Group
Activities

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Handout 1

Following Jesus in our Evangelism

“Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.’” (John 4:10)

A five-step paradigm for sharing your faith:

- Mingle with others.
- Show compassion.
- Minister to their needs.
- Win their confidence.
- Invite people to follow Jesus.

Sharing Your Personal Pilgrimage

Prepare to share your own personal pilgrimage in coming to Christ. Some label this a “personal testimony.” It is simply telling your story as you would in personal conversation. Before writing down some basic notes on your story, consider these suggestions

1. Avoid sharing a “canned speech” or giving a memorized talk.
2. Don’t focus on past mistakes. At the same time, avoid sharing your story in such a perfect or unreal way that people cannot relate to your experience.
3. Consider relevant language that would be understandable to a secular person. Avoid religious jargon.
4. Share important points, don’t unload all the details.
5. Let God be your guide while sharing. Listen to the Holy Spirit’s promptings.
6. Focus on the grace of Christ.

Reflection

Before I met Christ my life was...

I first felt my need for Jesus when...

God began breaking through to me...

I first let the Lord become the sole focus of my life...

Right now my life in Christ is...

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Handout 2

Inviting Others to Follow Jesus

When is the right time to invite a person to follow Jesus?

1. Listening
2. The readiness question

Example Invitations

1. A person shares with you some deep inner concern.

The readiness question: “Do you have any spiritual resources to help you deal with this?”

Response: “No, I don’t.” or “Not really.” or “I wish I did.”

Invitation: “Have you ever thought about having an intentional relationship with God? ... If you were to do so God would be there with you through it all and that would help you learn to be aware of His presence and you would feel safer no matter what happens.”

2. A friend who’s been fired from the job he’s had for 20 years tells you he feels angry and depressed. He talks about the unfairness and how much he’s been used.

Readiness question: “Do you have any spiritual resources to help you deal with this?”

His response: “No, not really. I have not been to church for years and I don’t know where to turn.”

Invitation: “Have you ever thought about making a serious commitment of your life to God?”
... If you did that, God would give you a sense of purpose in life which is larger than any job or organization. God would also give you a clear frame of reference for the type of work you should look for next.”

3. You find a woman, that works in an organization that you visit regularly, with her head down at her desk, crying. In the conversation she tells you that after being married for 15 years, this morning she found a note from her husband saying that he’s tired of the marriage and is moving out. She’s devastated.

Readiness question: “Do you have any spiritual resources to help you deal with this?”

Her response: “No. I grew up in a home where my parents never talked about religion and I don’t know what to believe. I’ve never faced anything like this”

Invitation: “Have you ever thought about making a commitment to faith and learning more about it? ... If you were to do that, you would have a relationship with God that would give you dignity and strength to deal with whatever difficult thing happens to you.”

There is a pattern in these examples: a flexible framework to share Christ that uses the context the other person has created by describing a particular need that’s in their heart.

Bite Your Tongue

1. Listen some more
2. Do they ask questions?

The questions will tell you that they are open. You need to be prepared at that point to share a simple, basic Bible study that introduces them to a personal, living relationship with Christ.

Sharing Scripture

1. If you don't have a Bible with you, just share in your own terms.
2. Only share two or three texts.
3. Concentrate on the love of God who takes the initiative and comes after us. It is natural for us to not know how to relate to God, but God takes the initiative and builds a bridge. All we have to do is reach across and say we want to know God.
4. Clarify if they have questions, but don't add more concepts.
5. Ask: "Is there any reason why you can't tell God right now that you want a personal relationship with Him?"
6. If he or she is not ready, don't push.
7. Be prepared to pray with the person. If he or she is ready to accept Christ and you don't give them the opportunity to do it, they will be frustrated. They may think they were not god enough.
8. If they say they can't think of any reason not to, offer to pray with them so they can tell God right now.

Follow through

Key steps for a new follower of Jesus:

1. Begin some basic devotional habits--prayer, Bible study, etc.
2. Connection with Christian fellowship, not necessarily joining the church, but a small group or weekly one-on-one meeting for discipleship.

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