

Bay City Wesleyan Church  
January 1, 2017

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Sunday Morning 01-01-2017

Launch a new year and a new series of messages with us as we hear Jesus' invitation, "Follow me."

<http://bible.com/events/147645>  
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Our theme for 2017

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Our theme for 2017 is Jesus' invitation, "Follow me."

These two simple words will transform every person that accepts the challenge. I pray that in the next 12 months all of us in this place, as well as those who join us, will see Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Luke 9:23 NET

Then he said to them all, "If anyone wants to become my follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.

I was born in a hospital but I was raised in the church. When I was in Junior High and High School, I had the impression that Christianity was all about doing what Jesus says.

There were two problems:

1. Guilt
2. Pride

Listening to Christians talk the last forty years leads me to believe the most vocal ones are focused on the rules. We long for the good old days when most of our society played "Jesus Says" with us. We point fingers and call people out for not doing what Jesus says.

Many young adults are bailing out of the church because they don't want to play games. They want to meet with God but they aren't impressed with all the self-appointed referees.

Matthew 9:9-13 NLT

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me and be my disciple," Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him. Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with such scum?" When Jesus heard this, he said, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do." Then he added, "Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: 'I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.' For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners."

Tax collectors like Matthew were on everyone's least likely to be religious list.

Jesus was comfortable with people poles apart from him.

People poles apart from Jesus were comfortable with him.

The Pharisees said, "Change and you can join us."

Jesus said, "Join us and you will change."

Sermon in a Sentence:

Jesus calls us to follow him, not a list of rules.

God's grace values relationships over rules. So, Jesus can invite anyone to follow no matter what they believe about him or how they behave.

1. Being a sinner does not disqualify you. It's a requirement.

2. Being an unbeliever does not disqualify you. None of Jesus' earliest followers believed at first.

3. Jesus' call to follow is an invitation to relationship.

4. The more conscious I am of the work God has yet to do in me, the less critical I am of what God yet to do in you.

How can you start following Jesus?

Start asking this key question: "Am I following?"

Don't ask if you're obeying all the rules. Don't ask if all your doubts are satisfied. Don't ask if you've prayed a prayer or done some other religious ritual.

Simply tell Jesus you want to follow him one step at a time. Then ask him our key question: "Am I following?"