

LET JESUS DISCIPLE YOU

Follow Me

“Follow Me” — the oldest invitation in the Bible

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, August 30, 2026
PASSAGES	Mark 1; Mark 8; John 10; Deuteronomy 13; 1 Kings 18; Colossians 1
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:15:14 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

When Jesus says “*Follow me*,” he is not recruiting students and he is not handing out chores. He is speaking the same words God has been speaking to his people since Deuteronomy — and what he is asking for is your heart’s loyalty.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Obedience to Christ isn’t what happens *after* grace runs out. It *is* more grace — the ongoing transfer out of a kingdom of darkness that only ever advertised freedom while handing out chains.
- ◆ Jesus said “follow me” to individuals, to crowds, and to everyone — and he never framed it the same way twice. The constant isn’t the task; it’s him.
- ◆ Following him leads to a cross — but not only to a cross. He didn’t stay dead, and he doesn’t intend for us to follow him partway.
- ◆ The Old Testament is saturated with “follow” language, and it stacks overlapping verbs: fear him, obey his voice, keep his commands, serve him, *cling* to him. Caleb was commended not for his coordinates but for his heart.
- ◆ Israel begged for a king who would be perfectly just, perfectly kind, and unfailingly loyal. Jesus is that King — and he’s better at leading than we are at following.

- ◆ The project is *us*. This is not a chore list heading toward a heavenly work detail — it's a bride being made ready for a wedding.

► 1:15:05

We are three weeks into a series on the commands of Jesus — or, as Matt has been calling it, *Let Jesus Disciple You*. He admitted he still isn't sure what to call it — “the commands of Jesus” works, so does “let Jesus disciple you” — and then noted, correctly, that nobody in the room was losing sleep over the title. What matters is the sentence he has bookended every message with.

Where the series has been

► 1:15:38

Walking in obedience to Christ is not what you do *after* grace, and it is not the place where grace starts to thin out. It is simply *more grace* — because we are being carried out of one kingdom into another.

“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.”

COLOSSIANS 1:13 ↗

“The kingdom of darkness is all about false advertising and propaganda,” Matt said — “you feel free, but it's just chains. Subjecting ourselves to Christ actually frees us. He's a good shepherd. Anything he asks you to let go of or die to is just going to poison you anyway.”

► 1:16:11

He tipped his hat to the two weeks in between. Karen Goldapp's message on fasting went, as he put it, straight for the jugular on the whole premise — if any discipline seems like pure loss with nothing in it for us, surely it's the one where you get hungry on purpose. And yet it turns out to be good for the body and good for humility. Her point stuck with him: God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble, and it is a genuinely humbling thing to feel weak. Matt confessed he doesn't care for feeling weak — and that Karen got him with the line about what it might mean if you always feel strong. Then Keith Atkinson took the following week on Matthew 28:19 — make disciples of all nations — and made the case that discipleship happens person to person, not through tweets and campaigns.

That is the road that leads to this week, where the focus was broad, and deliberately so: two words Jesus says over and over again.

1. One invitation, four very different audiences

► 1:17:46

Start where most people start — with the fishermen.

“Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, ‘**Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.**’ And immediately they left their nets and followed him.”

MARK 1:16–18 ↗

That is the association most of us carry: follow Jesus, and he will send you out to do something evangelistic. But notice that was said to two specific men. To Levi — a tax collector, not a fisherman — Jesus says the same two words with no job description attached at all ([Mark 2:14](#)).

► 1:19:23

Then the audience widens to a crowd:

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.”

MARK 8:34–35 ↗

► 1:19:56

Then wider still — beyond any crowd standing in any one spot on any one day:

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

JOHN 10:27–28 ↗

► 1:20:27

And finally to anyone at all who would serve him: [John 12:26](#) — “If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also.”

Four audiences, widening each time. Same two words. Which raises the obvious question.

2. Follow him *where?*

► 1:21:34

Not to a spot on a map. Not “meet me at Chuy’s.” The clearest answer Jesus gives is the cross — and that is not a metaphor he was holding at arm’s length, because he really did die on a real one.

But dying to self is not the grim part. “To die to self is to die to the flesh — our vanity, our pride,” Matt said. “It’s a death to our old identity, which doesn’t serve us well anyway. It’s a death to our addictions and corruptions. Even this is God’s goodness, to call us to death.”

► 1:22:06

And the invitation doesn’t stop at the cross, because Jesus didn’t.

“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

ROMANS 6:4 ↗

Take up your cross and follow Jesus — and death is not the destination. It is part of the invitation to walk in his resurrection life.

“He’s not just trying to assert his dominance by flexing and making us do stuff that’s menial and pointless. That’s not how God is.”

3. The Old Testament has been saying this the whole time

► 1:23:43

Here the message took a tour, and it is the part worth re-reading. There is a rich tradition of “follow me” language long before the Gospels.

“You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him.”

DEUTERONOMY 10:1 ↗

The NIV and the NASB both render “walk after” as *follow*, and they are right to. Look at how the verbs pile up and overlap: obeying his voice, serving him, keeping his commands, fearing him, holding fast

to him. These are not separate boxes to tick. They are the same thing said five ways — the way Hebrew poetry repeats an idea in a slightly different key for emphasis. All of it sits under one heading: *following after the Lord*.

► 1:25:21

The same cluster shows up when Israel demands a king. Samuel warns them it will not go the way they hope, but he still holds out the dream:

“If you will fear the LORD and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well.”

1 SAMUEL 12:14 ↗

► 1:28:03

Then Mount Carmel, where the choice is put as starkly as it is ever put. Elijah has been Israel’s most-wanted man through a drought; Ahab has gathered the nation and the prophets of Baal and Asherah for a showdown:

“How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” And the people did not answer him a word.

1 KINGS 18:21 ↗

Following Baal was never about walking to a location. Neither was following God. It meant fearing him, keeping his commands, obeying his voice, serving him, holding fast to him.

► 1:29:08

If you wanted to settle the “is it a map?” question once and for all, Matt argued, go to the wilderness. Ten spies came back afraid; Caleb and Joshua came back believing. And when God swore that generation would not see the land, he made one exception:

“...except Caleb the son of Jephunneh. He shall see it, and to him and to his children I will give the land on which he has trodden, **because he has wholly followed the LORD.**”

DEUTERONOMY 1:36 ↗

“It wasn’t about where they were, because they were all wandering the same path,” Matt pointed out. “It wasn’t like Caleb and Joshua were on the inside NASCAR lane. It was about the condition of the heart. It was about trust and allegiance and loyalty — and a willingness to obey God even if it’s awkward, weird, or scary.”

► 1:31:12

One more, when the eastern tribes are finally released to go home:

“Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

JOSHUA 22:5 ↗

“I really like this chain of overlapping commandments,” Matt said. “To walk in his ways is clearly similar to following him, keeping his commands — but then not by rote or at a distance. *Cling* to him. Just think about how emotional that language is.”

Even the word *ways* carries more than a route. In Hebrew it describes the manner of a life — justice, mercy, covenant loyalty. Which is why Moses can pray “show me now your ways, that I may know you” and mean something relational, not procedural. We follow him as master, and we come to know him as Father. We fear him as God, and we come to know him as friend.

4. So who, exactly, is saying it?

► 1:34:36

Most students of Torah sought out a rabbi and asked permission to study under him — and were usually told no. Jesus flips that script, which is arresting on its own. But when he stands in front of devout Jews who have this whole tradition in their bones and says *follow me*, it is deeper than “study the scriptures with me.” There is an echo of an identity larger than the man they can see.

“To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, **who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.**”

ROMANS 9:5 ↗

► 1:36:13

Matt told the story of being invited into a university philosophy class by a professor whose students flatly did not believe him that Christians think Jesus is God. That verse was the first one he showed them. “And then I asked them — who do you think died for you? Some guy? How does that save you?”

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth... all things were created through him and for him... that in everything he might be preeminent.”

COLOSSIANS 1:15-18 ↗

“Firstborn” is not “created.” If he were a created thing, then not everything that was made was made by him — and [John 1:3](#) closes that door: “All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” Animals, the earth, the moon, the periodic table. There are only two categories — things that were made, and the God who made everything.

▶ 1:40:04

“So when Jesus stands before them and says ‘Follow me’ — that’s a lot deeper than ‘I’m just going to teach you to do some stuff.’”

5. The king they had been asking for all along

▶ 1:41:12

Go back to Samuel. What Israel actually needed was not a king like the other nations. It was someone who would govern them well — firm in all the right ways, kind in all the right ways, always loyal, perfectly just. Every so often you catch a glimpse of it in a faithful ruler, and then it fades. If the people were faithful and their ruler was faithful, there would be abundant blessing. Who could possibly be that perfect?

“Jesus is that king who’s perfect in every way,” Matt said. “This isn’t a plot twist three-quarters of the way through the Bible. It’s the same thing. God has been saying ‘Follow me’ this whole time. This is just the great I AM in the flesh saying it again — but this time touchable, huggable, and bleedable.”

And if you ever got the impression the call was *keep up or quit* — it isn’t. “He’s not saying, ‘If you can’t do it like I do it, quit now, because we’re the elites.’ No. *He’s* the elite. We are sheep. And the thing about our shepherd is that he’s very good. He already knows there will be strays, and he’s already committed.”

“He’s better at leading than we are at following.”

6. The project is us

► 1:44:37

So where is all of this heading? Not to some cosmic payback scheme where we work off our debt in heaven. The destination is a wedding — the marriage supper of the Lamb — and we are not the caterers. We are the bride. Singular, not plural: one bride, because we are all hidden in Christ by grace.

“The project is us,” Matt said. “Which is why, when he says ‘follow me,’ it’s not primarily task-task, chore-chore. It’s your heart. That’s where he’s going with all of this. That’s why he pries out the darkness and the addictions and the death. He’s ransoming his bride.

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.”

7. Which is exactly why we do this together

► 1:47:17

The message ended with a turn toward community life, and the logic of the turn is worth keeping. Following after God, growing in allegiance and loyalty and affection, is best done as a group — precisely because there is one bride, not many. It is not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). God sets the lonely in families (Psalms 68:6). We walk after him as a body, not as an archipelago of individuals.

“If you’ve been more like an island — subscribing to Jesus from afar, but you want more grace and you want help following after him — then I invite you into community.” Lee Adams, our Community Life Director, followed with Hope Group leaders and the options open this fall.

Next Sunday

Matt goes granular on what may be the single most-quoted verse in the English-speaking world: “*Judge not*” (Matthew 7:1). What does it actually mean?

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- Colossians 1:13
- Mark 1:16–18
- Mark 2:14
- Mark 8:34–35
- John 10:27–28
- John 12:26
- Romans 6:4
- Deuteronomy 13:4
- 1 Samuel 12:14
- 1 Kings 18:21
- Deuteronomy 1:36
- Joshua 22:5
- Exodus 33:13
- Romans 9:5
- Colossians 1:15–18
- John 1:3
- Revelation 19:9
- Galatians 5:1
- Genesis 2:18
- Psalm 68:6

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Which “follow me” did you grow up hearing — the call to a task, or the call to loyalty? How has that shaped you?
2. Caleb “wholly followed” God on the same road as everyone else. What made the difference, and where is that difference being asked of you?
3. Joshua 22:5 says cling. What would clinging look like this week, as opposed to obeying at a distance?
4. If the project is your heart and not your task list, what changes on Monday?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus.

THE SERIES

Let Jesus Disciple You — working through the commands of Jesus.

- Aug 9 — Repent and Believe
- Aug 16 — Fasting
- Aug 23 — Make Disciples ([Matthew 28:19](#))
- Aug 30 — Follow Me
- Sep 6 — "Judge not" ([Matthew 7:1](#))

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOtIMq7t1SE&t=4514s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.