



simply follow



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All Bible quotations are from the NIV or TNIV versions of the Bible
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Introduction

Imagine if you were to simply follow Jesus. What would that look like? How would you do it? Who else would you want to take that journey with?

What if you could follow Jesus and not get bogged down or burdened with human-made religion? What if there were other people who wanted to explore with you what it means to follow Jesus?

This book is an introduction to what the Bible says about following Jesus. It is also a work in progress on how we can follow Jesus together, as the people in the New Testament did.

“The Short Version” is simple, functional and lists key concepts on one page. “The Expanded Version” provides sections from the Bible that relate to those key concepts.

Please read “Simply Follow” with an open mind and an open heart. Feel free to send comments, suggestions and real-life experiences that can make this book better.

think

believe

do

For the individual: The principles in this book – taken straight from the Bible – are essential elements for following Jesus. Asking God to show us what he wants us to “think, believe and do”, then living it, will produce spiritual health and growth.

For groups: Envision hungry people, interested people, the convinced and the curious, all of whom wonder what it would mean to simply follow Jesus... period. The principles on the following pages are intended to help interested people pursue Jesus’ mission for us to make disciples. When we come together we look to the Bible and the Holy Spirit to guide our interaction. In that process, we will discover how God wants us to live life together.

Enjoy the journey...

• Part 1: The Short Version •

The Mission

We want to discover what it means to simply follow Jesus, right here – right now, together. The foundational idea is to ask what God wants us to **think, believe** and **do** according to the Bible, then live it. Spiritual growth happens best when we are on a shared quest - seeking and learning together about being & making disciples.

Core Values

- Mutual Respect
- Integrity
- Love for God
- Love for people
- Progress, not perfection

Guiding Principles

Move forward. Here. Now.

For yourself

- Follow Jesus
- Walk, then talk
- Spiritual Disciplines
- Principles, not laws
- Truth above all

For interaction with others

- Go
- Make disciples
- Stay focused
- Travel light
- Stay connected

The Gathering

When the New Testament disciples met, they would:

Typically gather in someone's house	(Colossians 4.15; Romans 16.5)
Learn the apostles' teaching	(Acts 2.42; John 8.31,32)
Share a meal (with "communion")	(Acts 2.42; 1Corinthians 11.17-32)
Fellowship	(Acts 2.42; 1John 1.3)
Pray	(Acts 2.42; Acts 1.14)
Sing, teach, prophesy, etc. as the Holy Spirit led them	(1Corinthians 14.26,40; 1Corinthians 12.7-10)

The early disciples of Jesus made a real difference in their time. We would do well to learn how they lived for Jesus and do the same in our time.

Following Jesus is the **way of life** seen in the New Testament. It's not just meetings, it's how we live life together, as a spiritual extended family. (Acts 5.20; 1Peter 1.18; Ephesians 4.17-24)

• Part 2: The Expanded Version •

with Bible verses for each section

The Mission

We want to discover what it means to simply follow Jesus, right here – right now, together. The foundational idea is to ask what God wants us to **think, believe** and **do** according to the Bible, then live it. Spiritual growth happens best when we are on a shared quest - seeking and learning together about being & making disciples.

... follow Jesus ...

Matthew 4.19

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

Luke 9.23

Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

John 10.27

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

... together...

1 Corinthians 1.10

I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

Galatians 5.13

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

Ephesians 5.21

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Colossians 3.16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

1 Thessalonians 5.11

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Hebrews 10.24

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

... think...

Rom 12.2

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Rom 8.5-7

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

Acts 4.32

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.

1 Corinthians 2.16

"For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

... believe ...

1 John 5.13

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

James 2.14-19

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

Mark 16.17-18

And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.

Rom 4.23-24

The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness-for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

1 Thess 2.13-14

And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

Luke 8.13

Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.

Luke 8.50

Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."

Mark 11.22-24

"Have faith in God," Jesus answered. "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

John 6.29

Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

1 Thess 4.14

We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

Heb 11.6

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

1 John 3.23

And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

... do ...

James 1.22

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

Titus 1.10

For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group.

1 John 5.3

This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,

Rom 1.5

Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.

2 Cor 9.13

Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.

Core Values

Mutual Respect

Extend respect to other people, expect respect in return.

Disrespect is not tolerated.

Rom 13.7

Give everyone what you owe him. If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

1 Thess 5.12

Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you.

1 Tim 6.1-2

All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered. Those who have believing masters are not to show less respect for them because they are brothers. Instead, they are to serve them even better, because those who benefit from their service are believers, and dear to them. These are the things you are to teach and urge on them.

1 Peter 2.17

Show proper respect to everyone. Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

1 Peter 3.15

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

2 Tim 4.2

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-with great patience and careful instruction.

Luke 17.3

So watch yourselves. "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him."

Titus 2.15

These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

Integrity

We want to be unmixed in our commitment to follow Jesus.

We want to become more consistent, as we endeavor to live truth-centered at all times.

Luke 12.1

Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

Gal 2.13

The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

1 Peter 2.1

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

Matt 7.5

You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Prov 10.9

The man of integrity walks securely,
but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.

Prov 11.3

The integrity of the upright guides them,
but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.

Titus 2.7

In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness...

2 Cor 11.3

But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

Love for God

God has forever moved toward us, in love, for our good.

Jesus is the ultimate expression of God's love toward us.

We love Him because he first loved us.

1 John 5.3

This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,

John 15.10

If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

2 John 6

And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

Mark 12.33

To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.

John 14.21

Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.

John 14.23-24

Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me."

1 Cor 2.9-10

However, as it is written.

"No eye has seen,
no ear has heard,
no mind has conceived
what God has prepared for those who love him"-

but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.

1 Peter 1.8

Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,

John 15.14

You are my friends if you do what I command.

1 John 4.19

We love because he first loved us.

Love for people

We are loved by God, always. This love we have from God enables us to love others as Jesus loves.

His love in us overflows to others.

John 13.34-35

A new command I give you. Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Rom 13.8

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

1 Peter 1.22

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

1 John 3.11

This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.

1 John 3.23

And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

1 John 4.7

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

1 John 4.11

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

1 John 4.20-21

If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Progress, not perfection

Growth as a follower of Jesus is progressive, not instantaneous.

Phil 1.25

Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith,

1 Tim 4.15

Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.

2 Cor 10.15

Neither do we go beyond our limits by boasting of work done by others. Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand,

Eph 4.15

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

1 Peter 2.2

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,

2 Peter 3.18

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

Phil 2.12-13

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed-not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence-continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Phil 3.12

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Guiding Principles

Our hands are used to illustrate these principles and make them easier to remember.

Move forward. Here. Now. (open hand – open to God, receptive to his lead)

That's all you ever can do.

Begin seeking truth, asking God to guide you.

Don't sit and wait for a vision or some other custom-made provision for you.

Seek and you will find.

Luke 9.59-62

He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

John 8.9-11

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Colossians 2.6

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him,

For yourself (first hand)

Follow Jesus (index finger – pointing the way)

Follow Jesus –

... and others as they follow Jesus.

No human should be given absolute authority in all areas of your life.

Only Jesus is Lord; humans are brothers, sisters... even mentors or teachers.
They are not Lord.

Follow Jesus –

Following entails action; the Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk only.

Jesus leads us; his Word and Spirit guide our lives every day.

We gladly invest our lives each day according to God's priorities, not our own best thinking.

Matthew 4.19

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

Luke 9.23

Then he said to them all. "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

John 10.27

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

Walk, then talk (middle finger – the longest one; action, not just words)

Living the truth is part of understanding the truth.

Theological discussion should never be a substitute for obeying God's directions.

Remember: we are focused on what we are to think, believe and do as we simply follow.

James 2.17

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

James 1.22

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

James 1.26

If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.

Titus 1.10

For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group.

Spiritual Disciplines (ring finger – most important relationship; cultivating it)

Spiritual disciplines are vital to growing in our relationship with the Lord.

- Study • Meditation
- Prayer • Action
- Serving others

(other disciplines are learned as well)

Mark 12.24

Jesus replied, "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God?"

Acts 17.11

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Rom 15.4

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

2 Peter 3.16

He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Ps 19.14

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be pleasing in your sight,
O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Josh 1.8

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Rom 12.2

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

John 17.9

I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.

2 Thess 3.1

Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.

James 5.16

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Rom 8.26

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

James 1.22

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

Principles, not laws (little finger – may seem small, but it's important)

For example, God wants us to pray. The amount of time, time of day, etc. are not mandated in Scripture.

We avoid comparing ourselves with others to see if they measure up, and vice versa.

Rom 3.20

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

Gal 2.19-21

For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!

1 Sam 16.7

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Gal 5.18

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

1 Cor 2.13

This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

2 Cor 10.12

We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.

Truth above all (thumb – allows us to grasp and hold what matters)

Remember there is a big, thick black line between truth and opinion.

There is a lot of very clear scripture; focus there. See the less clear in light of the more clear.

Understand that you will be learning and growing for your entire life.

Being “vague” or “confused” are sometimes ways to hide fear or laziness.

Rom 14.1-4

Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Prov 23.23

Buy the truth and do not sell it; get wisdom, discipline and understanding.

John 3.21

But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.

John 14.6

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

John 17.17

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

Acts 20.30

Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.

Rom 2.8

But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.

2 Cor 4.2

Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

For interaction with others (second hand)

Go (index finger – pointing out to the world)

Jesus said "Go into all the world".

Everyone has a sphere of influence to "go into" and take the gospel to people.

Acts 1.8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 8.1,4

... On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. ... Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

1 Peter 3.15

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ...

Make disciples (index & middle fingers held together - interactive growth)

This is **the** mission that Jesus gave his followers - to make disciples.

He sent them out two by two, not alone. Being and making disciples is not a solo effort.

Where 2 or 3 gather in Jesus' name, he is there.

Matt 28.18-20

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey

everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Mark 9.30-31

They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples.

John 8.31-32

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Acts 2.42

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Acts 18.11

So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.

Mark 1.17

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

1 Corinthians 11.1

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

1 Peter 2.21

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

1 Tim 4.1

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

Luke 10.1

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.

Matt 18.20

For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.

Stay focused (ring finger – stay true to Jesus and his mission for us)

Jesus committed his life to us, we have committed ours to him.

Stay mindful of our relationship with him and of the mission he has given us.

1 Cor 15.2

By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

Titus 1.9

He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

Heb 3.14

We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.

Heb 10.23

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

2 Tim 2.8

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel,

2 Peter 1.15

And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.

Rev 2.4-5

Yet I hold this against you. You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

Travel light (little finger – can't carry a lot with it through life)

Don't carry grudges, bitterness or other relational baggage.

Don't love money or things. Don't be consumed with things that will one day burn.

Life is a vapor. Invest it, don't just spend it.

Matt 6.14

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Heb 12.1

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Acts 20.24

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me - the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

1 Cor 9.24

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.

Matt 6.24

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

Luke 16.13-15

"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight."

1 Tim 6.10

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

James 4.14

Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

Stay connected (thumb – touches all the other fingers; we need each other)

God calls us to join his family, army, body... all of which have interconnected parts working together.

We need each other to grow up healthy and strong as disciples of Jesus.

Gal 6.10

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Heb 2.11

Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.

1 Peter 4.17

For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

Phil 2.25

But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.

Philem 1-2

To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker, to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church that meets in your home.

1 Cor 12.27

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Rom 12.3-5

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you. Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Eph 4.14-16

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

The Gathering

What we do at the gathering

The bottom line for any gathering is: prayerfully make plans and be led by the Holy Spirit. "Plans" includes any ideas we have about what is going to happen when we meet. All of our time together is yielded to God for whatever he wants us to do.

In these gatherings you will find that we:

Typically gather in someone's house (Col 4.15; Rom 16.5)

You don't have to meet in a house (or apartment), but it's how the early disciples typically did it, it's free, feels like real life, includes a kitchen and refrigerator, and enables new gatherings to start easily.

Learn the apostles' teaching (Ac 2.42; John 8.31,32)

It's what the first believers embraced, believed and used to revolutionize the world around them!

Share a meal, with communion (Ac 2.42; 1Co 11.17-32)

We keep the meal simple and easily reproducible. The bread and wine or "communion" aspect keeps us connected to the body and blood of Jesus, which are central to the gospel.

Fellowship (Ac 2.42; 1John 1.3)

We share a common relationship with God, and each other. That is the basis of fellowship.

Pray (Ac 2.42; Acts 1.14)

We pray for each other and with each other.

Sing, teach, prophesy, etc. as the Holy Spirit leads us (1Co 14.26,40; 1Co 12.7-10)

The gathering is an important part of growing and developing spiritually. We welcome all the various ways the Holy Spirit has gifted people and ministers through us all at those times. However, following Jesus is the **way of life** seen in the New Testament. It's not just meetings, it's how we live life together, as a spiritual extended family. (Acts 5.20; 1Peter 1.18; Eph 4.17-24)

Some final thoughts...

On living life together – As important as the gatherings are, continuing to interact with one another outside of the gatherings is essential for integrating what we learn into our daily lives. So, in addition to the gathering already described - meet for coffee, work on a car, go camping, pray for each other, play music, etc. Life together is not just about receiving, it is about giving to others, being there for others and them being there for you. Being part of a focused gathering/meeting once, twice or even five times a week is valuable, but it's what we think, believe and do day by day that truly shapes us.

Some people have a group of friends they already live life with. They know each other well and are close. When someone in that group of friends begins to follow Jesus, or even to explore what it would mean to follow Jesus, their friends will probably know about it soon. Their conversations need to have the true gospel in them, not extraneous religious clutter! It is vital that people seeking truth hear and see the true gospel with no human-made distractions attached.

In our day it seems a lot of people do not have many close friends. As followers of Jesus pray for others and look for ways to be kind and friendly, the Lord will provide opportunities to get to know some isolated, lonely people. When they learn that there is a group of people who are truly interested in authentic life together they may be drawn to that community, then to Jesus.

On leadership – In the New Testament, leadership is not imposed on people by force. Leadership is done by living as a disciple of Jesus, maturing and becoming willing to serve others by helping them grow. The words "elder", "overseer" and "shepherd" are used to describe leaders among the disciples of Jesus. In the Bible, there are specific qualifications for being an elder and most deal with what you do, not just what you know.

On service or ministry – People who are following Jesus should seek to share time, energy and money to take care of each others' needs. They can also work together to serve others who are not connected with them or may not be following Jesus. Some options include: painting a widow's house, helping a single mom or dad (with time to themselves, car and home maintenance), taking groceries to a family in need, collecting clothes for redistribution, prison/hospital/nursing home visitation... and the like.

Expending time, energy and even money to benefit someone else is service or ministry. Jesus and his followers in the New Testament loved God and loved the people they were around. They looked for opportunities to speak the truth, to care for widows and orphans, to feed the poor, to love each other, to be good citizens, to

live at peace with others, to heal, to set captives free, to embrace the social outcast, to lead by living, to make the most of life every single day... all borne out of a real, vibrant relationship with Jesus. I'll take that any day.

On gatherings - Being led by the Holy Spirit is key to having your gatherings be full of truth and life. You have to learn to be led as you go - together. As with other aspects of life in Christ, everyone serving, learning and growing is encouraged and important.

For the entire time you are gathered, practice the Guiding Principles and Core Values. They apply in all of life, including gatherings.

Learning the "apostles teaching" - The following are recommended as general principles for the "apostles' teaching" portion of a gathering.

- The author is a strong proponent of verse-by-verse study through books of the Bible (especially the New Testament). This approach yields both understanding of the book, and of the verses in context. Try this approach for 1/2 of your gatherings for 6 months, then tell me what you think. Galatians is a good book to begin with.
- The Holy Spirit may lead the group into a multi-week, verse-by-verse study through a book of the New Testament or a topical study. Either approach allows people to bring related questions and comments to each gathering. Reading the same Scripture ahead of time aids discovery.
- The Holy Spirit may lead you to show up with no particular plan at times. It's good to have variety.
- Go around the room for final thoughts, so everyone has an opportunity to speak or to pass.
- No trying to show up other people's ignorance or otherwise disrespecting someone's attempt to learn.
- No deliberately distracting from the topic or text at hand. If you think God may want the conversation to go in another direction, submit that idea to the group.
- No convoluted discussions about Bible minutia; do those in another setting if you must do them at all.
- No comparative religion arguments (we aren't here to debate world religions).
- No rambling on and on about what this person or that book says. It's fine to briefly reference others, but please share your thoughts.
- How much teaching or discussion is enough? It all depends on whether life and truth are being spoken and absorbed, or not. Learn together when it's time to stop.
- Remember we are focused on making disciples, not just philosophers or Bible scholars.
- Always ask, "What are we to **think, believe** and **do** based on the scripture we have read?" This will help keep your interaction substantive, meaningful and relevant to life here and now.

Prayer for one another, personal ministry, singing, etc. – We seek to follow the Holy Spirit’s leading whether in prayer, singing, words of wisdom, healing or other gifts of God’s Spirit as he wills. These times help us understand the reality of Christ living in us and through us.

Please, no:

- Putting anyone on the spot. All are welcome to speak, but never called on or required to.
- Using the gathering to recruit for this event or that cause.
- Using the gathering to recruit for business ventures.

These activities make people feel “pounced on” and reluctant to return. They don’t reflect why we come together.

On bigger groups – From time to time, it’s fine to have a lot of people involved in various communities come together. You could meet others from around your area, sing, eat, talk, play, etc. This ‘cross pollination’ can be helpful for meeting new people and getting insight into what God is doing in their lives. These events would be supplemental to all the other life activity that you share.

"Go and make disciples"

We must always grow those among us and go look for the spiritually hungry and interested who want to seek and find what it means to simply follow Jesus.

We are ever reaching and expanding, for them...

think

believe

do

Simply Follow is a book, a set of concepts, and a starting place for how to live as followers of Jesus.

Simply Follow is not a nonprofit organization and therefore cannot receive donations.

You are welcome to contact the author at Livewick@cox.net or via LivewickMedia.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'S'.

v2p.07