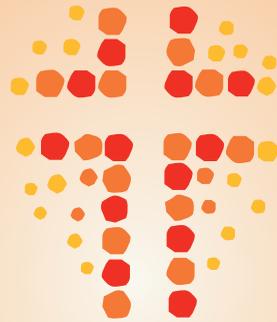


PRETEEN BIBLE STUDY

FOLLOW ME



DAVID
PLATT

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C O N T E N T S

THE AUTHOR	4
INTRODUCTION	5
1 FOLLOW ME!	7
2 TRANSFORMING	25
3 MY LIFE IN GOD'S FAMILY	41
4 GOD'S WILL FOR MY LIFE	59
5 THE CHURCH	77
6 OUR MISSION	93
TEACHING PLANS	109



THE AUTHOR

Dr. David Platt, Pastor at The Church at Brook Hills, is deeply devoted to Christ and His Word. David's first love in ministry is disciple-making—the simple, biblical model of teaching God's Word, mentoring others, and sharing faith. He has traveled extensively to teach the Bible alongside church leaders throughout the United States and around the world. He has authored several books, *Radical*, *Radical Together*, and his most recent book, *Follow Me*. He is the founder of Radical (Radical.net), a resource ministry dedicated to serving the church in making disciples of all nations. David and his wife, Heather, have four children—Caleb, Joshua, Mara Ruth, and Isaiah.

INTRODUCTION

"Follow Me." Jesus spoke those words two thousand years ago to a group of fishermen, and they answered. They followed, and they changed the world. Today, Jesus is still speaking those words to us. Will we answer? Will we follow?

This call to follow Jesus is inevitably a call to die. That's been clear since the beginning of Christianity. In the footsteps of Jesus, the first disciples found a path worth giving their lives to follow. Two thousand years later, I wonder how far we have wandered from that path.

Somewhere along the way, it seems we have lost the meaning of following Jesus. Churches are filled with supposed Christians who seem content to have a casual relationship with Jesus and to give little thought to being a true follower of His. Many men, women, and children have been told that becoming a follower of Jesus simply involves believing certain truths or saying certain words.

This is not true. The call to follow Jesus is not simply an invitation to pray a prayer; it's a summons to die to yourself and allow Jesus to live in you.

That's why I wrote this study. The purpose of this Bible study is to help you learn to be a fully committed follower of Jesus. I want to challenge you to examine your relationship with Jesus and understand what it means to follow Him.

Are you ready to answer the call?

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS STUDY

1. Attend and participate in each group study time.
2. Complete the questions and activities in this study guide.
 - Read the daily lessons and complete the learning activities.
 - Be honest with yourself and others about your thoughts, your questions, and your experiences as you study the material.
 - Ask God to show you His truth about each topic so that you can be confident about the path you are currently following.

WEEK 1

FOLLOW ME!

Imagine hanging out with your best friend, when someone you do not know says, "Follow me."

- **What would you do?**
- **Would you follow the person?**
- **Would you call the police?**
- **Would you call your parents and ask them what to do?**
- **Would you run away?**
- **Would you wonder, *Why does this person want me to follow him? Is it safe for me to follow him? What will my friends think if I follow him?***

Think about today's world. You know it is not safe to follow someone you do not know. So what would you do?

Picture two brothers fishing, when a Man approaches them and says, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men!" The brothers immediately put down their fishing nets and follow Him. A short time later, the men see two more brothers in a boat with their father, fixing their nets. The Stranger calls out to them, "Follow Me," and immediately the brothers leave their father and follow.

Replay the scene in your head. Why were these four men so willing to immediately leave their fishing businesses and follow this Man? Who was this Man that His invitation was so life-changing that four men were willing to leave everything behind?

If you have not already guessed, the Stranger was Jesus. The four men were Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John—the first four disciples Jesus invited to follow Him. Read Matthew 4:18-22. Eventually, Jesus selected 12 men to be His disciples.

Locate Matthew 10:2-4 in your Bible. List the disciples' names.

A DISCIPLE OF JESUS

disciple

a learner or pupil

- What does it mean to be a *disciple of Jesus*?
- What does it cost to follow Jesus?
- What does it mean to *leave everything behind* to follow Jesus?
- Do you consider yourself to be a *disciple of Jesus*? Why or why not?

The rest of this study will help you answer these questions. Are you ready to get started? Are you ready for God to do an amazing work in your life? If so, tell Him. In the space below, write a prayer to God. Ask Him to help you discover what it means to truly follow Jesus. Ask God to help you be willing to do whatever is needed to be fully committed to following Him.

Day 1: What Does It Mean to Follow Jesus?

Read "Ayan's Story."

Ayan's Story

Ayan is part of a people who pride themselves on being 100% Muslim. To belong to Ayan's tribe is to be Muslim. Ayan's personal identity, family honor, relational standing, and social position are all important parts of Islam. Simply put, if Ayan ever leaves her faith, she will immediately lose her life. If Ayan's family ever finds out she is no longer a Muslim, they will kill her without question or hesitation.

- **What would you say to Ayan about following Jesus?**
- **How would you respond if Ayan asked, "How do I become a Christian?"**

Would you say, "Ayan, it is easy to become a Christian. All you have to do is repeat some words after me. That's all it takes"? Or would you tell Ayan, "To become a Christian means to die to yourself, your life, your family, your friends, and your future"?

To *die to yourself* means you allow Jesus to live in you (to take control of your life). You do not want your own way. You want Jesus to tell you what to do, how to act, how to treat other people, and direct EVERY part of your life. *Dying to yourself* means letting Jesus control everything you think, do, and say. You will live as a member of a family that includes people from every part of the world. Let me clarify—dying to yourself does not mean you die a physical death (that will happen one day). Dying to yourself is putting your wants, thoughts, hopes, and desires aside and following Jesus' wants, thoughts, hopes, and desires.

Ayan is not imaginary. She is a real woman who made a real choice to become a Christian. Because of her decision, she was forced to leave her family and friends. She now lives to tell other people in the Muslim world about Jesus. Each day, Ayan puts her life at risk in order to live in Jesus. Ayan has committed to die to herself so Jesus can live through her.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Read the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus recorded in John 3:1-21.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a religious ruler of the Jews. He was a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling group, who helped people understand the Hebrew Scriptures (what we call the Old Testament).

- **What did Nicodemus ask Jesus?**
- **How did Jesus respond?**

- **What does it mean to be *born again*?**

Nicodemus knew the religious world. However, he noticed something different about Jesus. He wanted to know what it meant to be a follower of Jesus.

- **Why are you interested in becoming a follower of Jesus?**



THINK ABOUT THIS

Many people have been taught that becoming a follower of Jesus only requires believing certain truths or saying specific words. This is not true. Jesus is worth more than intellectual belief (things that you believe in your head, but do not live out in your life). Following Jesus means more than repeating a prayer after someone. Becoming a Christian is more than a feeling. Following Jesus means giving up yourself so Jesus can live in and through you—all the time. Reread that last sentence. Now underline it. Did you get the message? Being a Christian means Jesus lives in YOU.

You may be wondering, *How does a person become a Christian?* Read these three statements. Circle the statement(s) that are in the Bible.

Ask Jesus into your heart.

Invite Jesus into your life.

Pray this prayer after me, and you will be saved.

Which one(s) did you circle? Would it surprise you to know NONE of these statements is in the Bible? Nowhere in the Bible is anyone ever told to ask Jesus into his life. That may surprise you and make you wonder, *Then how does a person become a Christian?* I will address this, but before I do, respond to this question.

- **Can a person know about Jesus yet not know Jesus? Why or why not?**

Think about your answer. Let me ask you some more questions to help you better understand.

- **Who is your favorite television star, athlete, or singer?**
- **What do you know about the person?**
- **How did you learn this information?**

- **If this person walked into a restaurant where you were eating, would you recognize him? Would he know you?**
- **When was the last time you really spent time getting to know him, learning what he likes and does not like?**

The truth is most of us know a lot about people, but we do not personally know them. We can have head knowledge of a person without having a close friendship. The same thing happens with many people and Jesus. Read Jesus' words recorded in Matthew 7:21-23.

deny
to disown

- **What did Jesus say would happen to people who are not His followers?**

Jesus calls His followers to the "narrow way." Throughout His life, Jesus taught the way His followers should live. He warned them of things that would happen to them because they were His followers. Read what Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 16:24-25.

- **What does it mean to *deny yourself*?**
- **In what ways do you deny yourself?**
- **What does it mean to *take up your cross and follow Jesus*?**
- **What does it mean to *leave everything behind*?**

Shortly before Jesus was crucified, He told His disciples they would be persecuted (to be treated in a cruel way) and put to death, hated by all the people because of Him. (At the end of this week, you will learn what tradition says happened to several of Jesus' followers.) These men were willing to leave everything behind and follow Jesus. Leaving everything behind means the disciples were willing to leave their homes, families, friends, jobs, and everything they owned to follow Jesus.

Throughout the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), Jesus' message is clear. To follow Jesus means to die—to die to self. Does this scare you? Are you willing to do this? Following Jesus involves losing your life ... and finding new life in Him. Take a few minutes and pray. Tell God how you feel about what you just read. Be honest! (He already knows.)

Day 2: Becoming a Follower of Jesus

Yesterday we started a discussion about becoming a follower of Jesus. Let's continue our discussion today.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Read Matthew 7:21.

- **What did Jesus say about the people who would enter heaven?**
- **What does it mean to *do the will of the Father*?**

THINK ABOUT THIS

Some people would say doing the will of the Father means doing good things and working to earn salvation. That is not what Matthew 7:21 says. Jesus was not saying that a person's works are what allows him to receive salvation. God's grace is the only basis for salvation. Jesus taught that only people who are obedient to God will enter heaven. When a person becomes a Christian, her life should reflect her relationship of following Jesus. God is calling us to follow Jesus—to do more than just know about Him. God wants us to be different because of the difference Jesus makes in our lives.

Let's examine how a person becomes a Christian. Read "God's Plan" (pages 23-24).

Are you a Christian? Take a few minutes to thank God for the gift of salvation He provided you. Ask God to help you become a completely sold-out, follower of Jesus.

If you are not a Christian, take a few minutes and talk with your pastor, Bible study leader, or parent about Jesus. Jesus wants to be your Savior and Lord, but only He can do the work of changing your life through His Holy Spirit.

REPENTANCE

If you had to write down one word to summarize everything Jesus taught, what word would you write?

The word that best describes Jesus' teaching is REPENT. Read the definition of *repent*. When people repent, they turn from one direction to the opposite. From that point forward, they think differently, believe differently, feel differently, love differently, and live differently.

repent

to feel sorry for your sins and make up your mind to do what is right; to change

Jesus' call to repentance is a call for people to turn away from their sin and dependence on themselves for salvation. We can only be saved by turning from our sin and ourself, and turning toward Jesus.

When you become a follower of Jesus, everything changes.

You realize who God is, what Jesus has done, and how much you need Him.

Your desires change.

You love the same things God loves.

You want the same things He wants.

Your will changes.

You go wherever God says go.

You do whatever He says do.

Your reason for living changes.

You live to honor and glorify God.

Jesus will do some amazing things in your life if you are willing and obedient to Him. Are you willing to be a follower of Jesus? Be careful how you respond.