

FOLLOW THE LEADER

[Jesus said,] "Come, follow me."

—Mark 1:17

INTRODUCTION

If you want to be good at a sport, you have to learn the strategies that will help you win the game. In every sport, there are secrets you need to know that will give you an advantage and help you achieve victory. According to the apostle Paul, being a Christian is a lot like competing in a sport. He compared being a Christian to running in a race—and he encouraged people to do their best to win the race so they will get the prize! What he meant was that we should live our lives well as Christians so that we will get all the rewards God wants to give us. In this race, as in any sport, there are things you can do to increase your chances of winning. The most important strategy is the one we're going to focus on today.

Our devotion this time is based on Mark 1:17, in which Jesus told Simon and Andrew, "Come, follow me." The devotion is called "Follow the Leader."

DEVOTION

At the NASCAR race, Corbin watched the cars roar past. They were traveling in a tight pack as they headed into the curve. "Why do they follow each other so close?" Corbin asked.

"That's called drafting," said his dad. "The lead cars have to cut through the air as they go around the track. By staying right behind the lead cars, the other cars have it easier. A lot of the air goes around them. Their drivers are trying to save fuel, so they won't have to make many pit stops."

As the cars thundered past again, Corbin said, "Wow, Dad. You should drive like that! We'd save money on gas."

His dad laughed. "If I did, I'd get a ticket. The police have another word for that kind of driving. They call it tailgating."

A NASCAR driver follows the car ahead of him closely to save fuel. In Jesus' time, a disciple followed his teacher closely to learn from him. The disciple would follow his teacher everywhere. He'd listen to his teacher's words, watch his actions, and try to be like him. Are you following Jesus that closely?

LIFE IN BIBLE TIMES

An old Jewish proverb said, “Follow the rabbi, drink in his words, and be covered with the dust of his feet.” Faithful disciples followed their rabbi, or teacher, very closely. They walked in the cloud of dust he kicked up!

QUESTIONS

1. When Jesus was here on earth, his disciples literally followed him as he walked around. How can we follow Jesus today?

Answer: we can follow what he says and does as we read about him in the Bible; we can follow his commands, such as “Do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12); we can follow Jesus’ voice as we live our lives, listening carefully for him to speak to us through his Spirit.

2. If you’ve been following Jesus for a while, how can you begin to follow him more closely?

Some answers: spend more time reading your Bible every day; spend more time praying; make more of an effort to follow Jesus’ commands; be more involved at church; serve people and minister to them, because that’s what Jesus would do (in fact, that’s what he *is* doing today, through Christians like you!).

3. Do you think that by following Jesus more closely, people can become more like him? Why or why not?

For a clue, either have children look up Luke 6:40, which says, “The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher,” or read this verse to them.

4. Do you have a little brother or sister who follows *you* around, trying to be like you? What kind of example do you think you should set for them, and how can you do it?

Answer: You should set a good example for them by doing your best to follow Jesus and be like him. That way, you’ll be helping them follow Jesus too!

5. Are you aware that many other people, such as your classmates, teammates, and neighborhood friends, are closely watching your behavior and carefully listening to your words? Often Jesus’ followers become leaders themselves. They influence others to say and do the right things, and they lead them toward Jesus. Do you think this is the way Jesus meant for it to be?