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anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.



FOLLOWER

LIVING AN AUTHENTIC FAITH

★ ★ ★ This Book Belongs To

★ ★ ★ Date

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then Jesus said to him, 'Whoever would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.'

Follower: Living An Authentic Faith, Follow Up Journal
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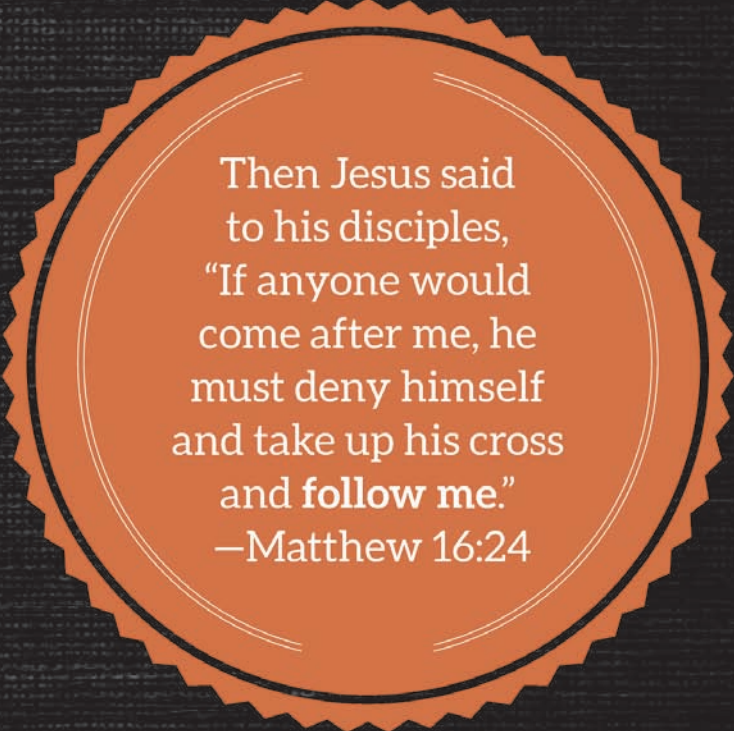
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Then Jesus said
to his disciples,
“If anyone would
come after me, he
must deny himself
and take up his cross
and **follow me.**”
—Matthew 16:24

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Getting Started . . .

SO HERE YOU ARE . . .

You're holding an interactive journal that will serve as your guide for an in-depth look at what it means to be a FOLLOWER. This means at some point in the not-so-distant past you probably spent some time going through the *Follower* study with your youth group.*

Maybe you thought you were done talking about the concept of following. Maybe you thought you had learned all there was to learn.

The truth? You're just getting started.

You see, there is a lot to consider when we think of our lives as followers, so much that we could never have covered it all in a four session study at a weekend event or retreat. So, you're about to get the opportunity to go even deeper into this look at what it means to truly live an authentic faith.

So, embrace it. Give it your best. Commit to sticking with this book until the end. It will only take a few minutes each day.

You'll be happy you did.

LET'S GET STARTED. LOOK AT THE NEXT PAGE TO LEARN HOW THIS BOOK WORKS.

**You definitely don't have to have gone through the FOLLOWER study with your group to get a ton out of this journal. But, it might help some to have already been introduced to it.*

HOW THIS BOOK WORKS

Here are a few things you need to know to put this book to good use.

START WITH THIS ADVICE

Whether you're super-committed and read your Bible each day or struggle to read a few verses a couple of times a week, the key to sticking with this through four weeks is a routine. Try and work through this book at the same time each day, whether that's in the morning, after lunch, or before you go to bed. Block out a time each day to spend in this book, and then commit to sticking to it. **You'll find it's a lot easier to stay consistent that way.**

HAVE YOUR BIBLE OPEN

Resist the urge to ignore the spots where this book will tell you to read a passage of Scripture. This book is only a guide for *the Book*. **The close relationship with God that you want only happens by reading and doing what's in the Bible.** Have it open as you go through this book.

EACH WEEK IS STRUCTURED THE SAME, BUT IS REALLY DIFFERENT

Each week's content works in similar ways. **But, each day is different. And, there are a lot of different kinds of activities.** Some will take 3-5 minutes, some 10-15. Some will ask you to look at two or three passages of Scripture; some will just ask you to think about a concept. The variety will make it easier to stick with and help you learn in different ways that are suited to you.

WHAT IF I MISS A DAY OF READING? OR THREE?

Don't give up! Take this at your pace! The goal is for you to grow closer to God and to have a faith-life that's more "real"! If you miss a day or two . . . or four . . . don't throw in the towel. Pick this book back up and start where you left off. **You can do this!** And by doing it, you'll show the world that God makes an incredible difference in the lives of His followers. So, hang in there! You've got this!

Well, that's what you need to know to get started! **Turn the page to read the introduction to Week 1.**

WEEK 1 INTRO

Before starting Week 1, read this short introduction

Chances are you have this book in your hands because sometime in the recent past you spent some time with your youth group studying through *Follower*. Maybe it was a few days ago. Maybe it was a few weeks ago. Either way, it's a safe bet that you're reading this because you want to learn more about what it means to follow God.

Good for you. The pursuit of a more authentic faith is a sign that you're really searching for God. That's awesome. The Bible says God comes close to us when we come close to Him. Take God up on this promise. Expect to see Him more as you become more of a follower.

Even if you just wrapped up your time with your group in *Follower*, we're going to take this first week and take one more look at the concepts you studied with your group. Why? Because life happens. You're busy. And your mind and heart have probably been distracted some since you last thought about these concepts. Take this first week to remind yourself what you learned.

And if you didn't already go through the study of *Follower* with a group, then here's your chance to get a fresh start.

So, let's get started! Turn to page 5 for Week 1, Day 1.



WEEK 1: DAY 1

Read the passages below and follow the prompts to interact with them on page 6.

The idea behind *Follower* is to ask one question: What does it look like to live out an authentic faith? While this question is fleshed out in depth throughout Scripture, we can look to Jesus' first words to His disciples and learn a lot about the foundation of a faith that's real.

Read these following passages:

From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."¹⁸ As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him. ²¹ Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, ²² and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. — Matthew 4:17-22

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.—Matthew 9:9

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me."—John 1:43

NOW, TAKE A MOMENT AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. What does it take to be a Christian?

If you answered “faith,” or “belief,” you’re correct. We are saved from the penalty of our sins through faith in Jesus’ words and work. The Bible says that when we believe that Jesus is who He said He was, namely the Son of God come to take away our sins, we’re saved by the grace of God. Got it? Now, next question.

2. What impact should your faith have on your life? In other words, in what ways should your faith in God change you? Think in terms of big picture stuff as well as day-to-day, practical things.

Our faith should change our lives. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians that when we come to believe in Jesus, we’re transformed into new creations. Our old sinful selves die. In their place is a new, transformed life.

3. Look at what Jesus called the disciples to in those verses on page 5. What did He ask them to do?

Following Jesus is the foundation of living an authentic faith. Following Jesus means not following you. It is belief in action. It’s a faith that says, “Jesus, my life will not be all it can be unless I faithfully let you set my course.” We’ll be talking more about this, but for now think about this:

4. What comes to mind when you think of when you think about following someone?

Stay tuned for tomorrow’s devotion on Page 7 and 8. You’re going to love it.

WEEK 1: DAY 2

How did Jesus define what it meant to follow Him? Let's take a closer look.

First, read Matthew 16:24 then answer the questions that follow:

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.—Matthew 16:24

- Underline the places where Jesus defines what it means to follow Him.
- What areas in your life are the hardest to surrender to Jesus?
- Why do you think Jesus told us that in order to follow Him we have to deny our own plan and leadership of our life's direction?

Next, read John 12:25-26. Then answer the question below.

²⁵ The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.—John 12:25-26

In the space provided, think of one place where Jesus is calling you to join Him. This can be a group of people, a neighborhood in your city, even a team or club. Where does Jesus want you to go join Him as He works?

WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR YOU TO GO JOIN HIM?

Finally, read Matthew 10:37-39 and answer the following prompts.

³⁷ “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸ and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”—Matthew 10:37

Let’s remember that Jesus isn’t saying there’s anything wrong with loving our families. He’s making a point by using an extreme example. He’s saying that we’re supposed to be so dedicated to loving and following Him, that it’s wrong when something as good as our love for our families gets in the way.

List three things that sometimes come in the way of your dedication to following God.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Which one of these is the easiest to address?

What will it take to put Christ above this particular thing?

Which one of these is the hardest to change?

Write a short prayer to God asking Him to show you how to fix this priority problem, and to give you the strength to let nothing come between you and your commitment to follow Him.



WEEK 1: DAY 3

Take the chance today to spend some time thinking about your relationship with God. Let the following verse guide you.

**CREATE IN ME A PURE
HEART, O GOD, AND RENEW
A STEADFAST SPIRIT
WITHIN ME. DO NOT
CAST ME FROM YOUR
PRESENCE OR TAKE
YOUR HOLY SPIRIT
FROM ME.—PSALMS 51:10**

TAKE SOME TIME TODAY TO PRAY TO GOD. ASK HIM TO
CLEANSE YOUR HEART SO THAT YOU SEE NOTHING BUT HIM.
LISTEN TO WHAT HE SAYS TO YOU. LOOK AROUND YOUR
WORLD FOR HOW HE MIGHT SPEAK TO YOU TODAY.

WEEK 1: DAY 4

The Bible provides direction and encouragement for us as we follow Christ. Look at the phrases below and choose one that has a message you need right now. Then, follow the arrow from the phrase to the box on page 12. Follow the instructions there.

**BE INTENTIONAL
ON YOUR JOURNEY**

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

**BE STRONG WHEN
IT GETS TOUGH**

2 Corinthians 4:7-9

**BE ENCOURAGED
THAT THE SPIRIT
GOES WITH YOU**

John 14:25-27

**BE MOTIVATED
BY CHRIST**

Hebrews 12:1-3





YOUR JOURNEY WITH GOD TAKES FOCUS AND INTENTIONALITY. PRAY TODAY AND ASK GOD TO REMIND YOU TO FOCUS ON HIM.



LIFE IS HARD, BUT GOD GOES WITH YOU. PRAY AND ASK GOD TO REMIND YOU TODAY OF HIS PRESENCE.



YOU AREN'T ON THIS JOURNEY ALONE. PRAY AND THANK GOD FOR SENDING HIS SPIRIT TO BE WITH YOU.



JESUS IS YOUR MOTIVATION. CHRIST-LIKENESS IS YOUR GOAL. PRAY AND ASK GOD TO HELP YOU SEE JESUS AS YOUR GOAL AND AS THE ENERGY THAT DRIVES YOU.

WEEK 1: DAY 5

Read today's devotional and spend some time journaling. *Seriously, even if you don't love to write, you'll be surprised how helpful it is.*

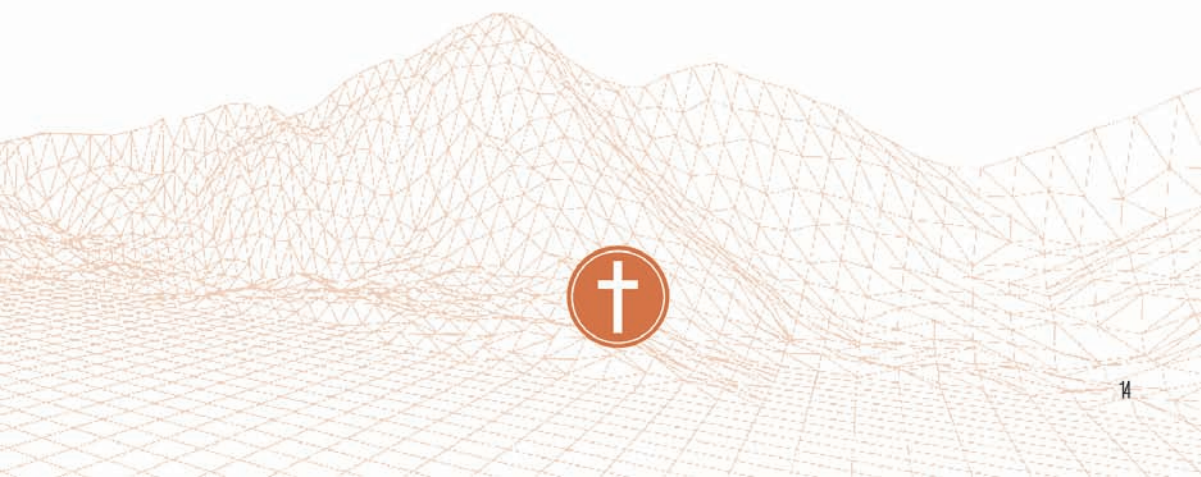
You're first week of focusing on what it means to be a follower is almost over.

Take a moment and journal some thoughts. Yeah, yeah, yeah . . . you don't like to journal. Here's the deal: You don't have to write a novel, just a few thoughts. The goal is to both think about your thoughts (something you probably don't do a ton of considering how fast paced your life is), and to have them down on paper so you can look back on them.

So, see all that blank space over there on page 14? Put some words in that space.

Think About This . . .

- How do you feel about your current life as a follower? How is it going? Are you happy with where you are (of course, knowing you will always be growing closer to Christ)? Or do you know you're not where you'd like to be?
- How important is your faith to you right now? Are you willing to do what it takes to get it back on track?
- Where is God leading you? What are you passionate about? How could God use you to pursue your passion in His name?



WEEK 1: DAY 6

Read this and reflect on it through the day.

Hopefully this week you learned something about what it means to live out your faith.

Living out your faith means following God, not anyone else. Being a Christian is so much less about what you say or don't say, wear or don't wear, where you go or don't go, and what you listen or don't listen to.

Being a Christian is not about us vs. them. It's not just about being a rule follower or a "good" person. And it's not as simple as just believing.

Now let's be clear on something: salvation is a belief thing. You believe and you're saved. End of story. But here's the deal: the Bible never separates salvation from life change. When the Bible talks about belief, it's a belief that motivates action.

Your new life is proof of your saving faith. And a life of action-fueled faith looks a lot like following Jesus.

Following Christ is what it looks like to live as a new creation.

Will you accept the challenge to daily follow Jesus?



WEEK 1: DAY 7

Take today off...
**YOU'VE
EARNED IT.**



But let your mind dwell on the things you've been learning. Listen to God. Think about what your life would be like if you followed Him so closely you wouldn't even have to think about where He was leading you . . . you'd just know. That can be a reality for you, you know. Let that sink in today.