

# “Follow Me!”

## Doing Life with Indiana Jesus

How can we get even a little handle on what it means to “follow Jesus?” Maybe a look at Jesus with His disciples will help.

The story of Jesus and the disciples is like an Indiana Jones movie – non-stop action. They “followed Him.”<sup>1</sup> And what an adventure it was! The disciples were off-balance and in over heads most of the time; the learning curve was steep. Their classroom was life. The situations and circumstances of each new day challenged them; they found themselves continually learning and growing as they tried to follow after this radical Person Jesus; and He used every situation as an opportunity to reveal Himself and to teach them. Just to be with Jesus was an ongoing real-life discipleship training school.

They were hardly prepared for where He led them. Remember that these were untrained and uneducated men by the professional standards of their day.<sup>2</sup> They, with the exception of Judas Iscariot, were backward “hillbilly” Galileans. They lacked the life experience and perspective of the more “cosmopolitan” Jerusalem Jews. Not that it would have helped all that much! Their response to His imperative to follow was the end of life as they had known it. They stepped onto a path never traveled, no map, no compass, no blueprint, just Jesus as a Guide.

Each left occupation, family, home and settled lifestyle. They were constantly on the road,<sup>3</sup> slept in whatever accommodations they could find<sup>4</sup> and ate what was put before them. Then there were the crowds. There were constant masses of desperate and needy people following after Him.<sup>5</sup> At times the crowds were so great Jesus had to find unique and innovative means to even speak to them; once he used a fishing boat as a platform.<sup>6</sup> The people didn’t come to just sightsee, hoping to get a look at the new rabbi in town. They brought with them great pain and suffering, “all who were ill and taken with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, paralytics, epileptics, lepers, lame, crippled, blind, dumb and many others...”<sup>7</sup>

In desperate hope, the masses flocked to Him. They abandoned all etiquette, didn’t keep a respectful distance. They surrounded Jesus and His disciples, pressed in on them, crowded them.<sup>8</sup> For the disciples there was no private moment, no quiet place, their time was never their own. People sought them out in hopes of gaining access to Jesus<sup>9</sup> and when He wasn’t available, they expected the disciples to be able to deal with their issue. The disciples often were not prepared to do so.<sup>10</sup>

They found themselves for the first time in their lives interacting with many different kinds of people. There were religious leaders, the Pharisees, scribes and synagogue officials, the masses and crowds, demon possessed people, “unclean” Gentiles calling out after them, a soldier of the occupying army looking for the healing of his sick servant.<sup>11</sup> One can only imagine how

ill prepared these backward Galileans were to confront this confusing menagerie of people with their many problems and situations.

They were constantly in the middle of some disturbance or confusion. Jesus created disturbances wherever He went! He did startling and unconventional things, like disrupt funerals in progress by raising the dead person.<sup>12</sup> Once He tossed the weeping mourners out of a house, raised to life a little dead girl and then told everybody to keep quiet about it.<sup>13</sup> When He set free from demons the local uncontrollable wild man, it so terrified the local residents that they asked Him to leave the neighborhood.<sup>14</sup>

He was intolerant and uncompromising of what was considered the religious norm. Once He went uninvited into the most holy place in all the land and physically threw the money-changers out into the street. They were doing what was officially sanctioned according to the temple rules, but in Jesus eyes it was a gross violation of His Father’s heart and purpose.<sup>15</sup>

Jesus and his followers would find themselves in trouble in the politically correct environment of today. He once sent demons into pigs and they ran down a hill to their destruction. Another time he cursed a fig tree and it died. He was clearly not as sensitive to animals and to the environment as some might expect.

By following Jesus, the disciples found themselves at odds with the status quo. Consider the religious establishment of the day. Jesus made audacious claims - like having the authority to forgive sins and then healing a paralytic to prove it.<sup>16</sup> He violated the religious traditions and rules, seemingly with pleasure and with impunity. When the religious leaders protested, He had the audacity to claim to be above the rules, calling Himself the “Lord of the Sabbath.”<sup>17</sup>

He turned on these same leaders and confronted them. He called them hypocrites, challenging their rule keeping as simply self-serving.<sup>18</sup> And He went further. He called them “a brood of snakes,” “an evil and adulterous lot,” “hypocrites,” “fools,” “blind men.” To these same religious leaders of Israel, He said, “how shall you escape the sentence of hell.”<sup>19</sup> All this must have been more than a little disturbing to the disciples, who no doubt grew up respecting the place of these leaders. The disciples questioned Jesus, “Don’t you know they were offended?” Jesus responded, “Let them alone, blind leading the blind.”<sup>20</sup>

And what about the company they kept? Isn’t a person known by those with whom he associates? Jesus associated with less than the “rich and famous” of His day. He chose to be with the least acceptable, the despised, in His society - tax collectors like Matthew and Zaccheus, prostitutes, lepers. He ate the food of these

“sinners,” attended their parties held in His honor and even drank their wine! The non-religious and non-churched of the day loved Him.<sup>21</sup>

Every action, every situation, presented an opportunity for the disciples to learn and to be trained. He gave to them responsibilities, jobs to do. Sometimes these were ordinary tasks, even somewhat menial, like fetching a donkey. But other responsibilities were real challenges, like risk-taking mission trips which He sent them out on. On one of these trips, they confronted demons and sicknesses. When they ministered in His name, they saw the same incredible power working through themselves which they saw at work in Him. Upon their return, excited about this power and authority, Jesus simply reminded them of the reason *why* they were doing all these things – and they came back down to earth.<sup>22</sup>

When the multitudes needed to be fed, He first gave the disciples the opportunity to solve the problem. When they didn’t know what to do, He opened the “Jesus fish and chips restaurant” and made more than enough food out of a few fish and loaves; the disciples picked up the leftovers.

Jesus did out of the ordinary things like walking on water and calming raging storms with a word. He seemed to expect that His disciples would do the same and when they didn’t rise to the occasion, He affectionately chided them. *After* Peter actually had walked on water, but began to sink in doubt, Jesus called him a name, “little-faith.” “Little-faiths” He called them all when they failed to understand the lesson of the miracle of the feeding of the thousands and when they didn’t have the faith to calm a raging storm by themselves.<sup>23</sup>

He constantly perplexed them with the way in which He did things. He handled ordinary situations in extraordinary ways, finding money for the temple tax in the mouth of a fish<sup>24</sup> and providing wine for a wedding by changing the chemical make-up of water.<sup>25</sup> But when they brought what seemed extraordinary and impossible things to Him, He took care of them in a quite calm and relaxed

way, often with only a word. To a storm, a command, “Hush, be still.”<sup>26</sup>

And He taught them. He gave them revelation that was completely beyond their ability to get their heads around,<sup>27</sup> revelation they could only understand after great struggle,<sup>28</sup> revelation that went beyond their wildest hopes,<sup>29</sup> revelation so shocking they were afraid to ask Him further questions about it.<sup>30</sup>

His teaching blindsided them. The way He dealt with the rich young ruler left them grasping, “Who then can be saved?”<sup>31</sup> He told stories and gave them truth in parables. And even though they had been with Him the whole time, they couldn’t get it. They had to continually ask Him what He meant.<sup>32</sup> Near the end, when after three years with Him they thought finally they had a handle on things, He bluntly showed that they really did NOT.<sup>33</sup>

His words and actions shattered all their assumptions. They were sure greatness was being upwardly mobile, only to discover that it is being the servant of all.<sup>34</sup> They understood the pecking order of society - first Jewish men, then in no particular order women, dogs, children, Samaritans and Gentiles. He rudely awakened them to God’s value of persons, “unless you become like this child, you can’t enter the kingdom!”<sup>35</sup> He touched the prostitute and the leper, forgave the adulterous woman, treated with utmost respect the despised Samaritan woman and answered the prayer of a soldier of the occupying Roman army - and in doing so exposed the hatred and contempt in their hearts. When they stood in the shadow of Herod’s temple and expressed how impressed they were with what so impressed others of their generation, “look Jesus at all these marvelous temple buildings!” He responded, “Not one stone will be left upon another.”<sup>36</sup>

And near the end of their training, when they let Him know how much they had sacrificed to follow Him, He turned and challenged them to the depth of their being and issued *the imperative of discipleship* – “Take up *your* cross and follow Me!” And they did, each took up a personalized cross and followed Him to the end.<sup>37</sup>

1. Luke 5:27-28. Mk. 1:14-20. John 1:43.

2. Acts 4:13.

3. Lk. 5:43.

4. “No place to lay His head.” Mt 8:20.

5. Mt 8:1.

6. Lk. 5.

7. Mt 4:25, 8:2, 15:29.

8. Mk 5:21-24.

9. John 12:20-26.

10. Mark 9:14-29.

11. Syro-Phoenician woman. Centurion, Mt 8:5f.

12. Lk. 7:11f.

13. Mt 9

14. Mt 8:28

15. Mt 21:12f

16. Mt 9:1-8

17. Mt 12:1f

18. Ceremonial washing, Mt 15; the Sabbath, Mt. 12:13.

19. Mt 15:7; 23:17, 19; 23:33.

20. Mt. 16:12-14.

21. Mt. 9:9f. Lk. 19:1f. Luke 15.

22. Lk. 10.

23. “Leaven” of the S & P, Mt 16:8. Mk 8:1-21.

24. Mt. 17:24.

25. Jn. 2.

26. Mk. 4:39.

27. Transfiguration, Mt 17. They were overwhelmed at the site of Moses and Elijah and dumbstruck at the Father’s affirmation of His Son. Why would you want to set up a tent at such a moment!?

28. The loaves, Mt. 16.

29. That He was the Messiah, Mt 16:13f.

30. His death and resurrection, Mt 16:21, 20:17-19.

31. Mt 19:25.

32. Mt. 13:10, 36.

33. The perfume, Mt. 26:6f.

34. Mt. 18:1f, 20:20f, Jn. 13.

35. Mt. 19:13-14.

36. Mt. 24:1f. See Luke 16:15.

37. Mt. 16:24.