

Week #: 17 Text: _____ Title: Follow the Rabbi #6/7

Songs: Heat of Worship

Audio: Ray Vander Laan – Follow the Rabbi teaching

Can be found online at: <https://oneinjesus.info/2008/10/ray-vander-laans-follow-the-rabbi-lectures/>

Talmidim:

- (Talmud: the Hebrew word for the Bible)
- Talmid (add -im for plural): we translate the word to DISCIPLE, but it is much more than that.
 - A student is someone who wants to know what the teacher knows for several various reasons:
 - because they like the information
 - because they like the teacher and want to please him/her
 - because it is necessary for the grade (for a test, etc) or for passing
 - A talmid is someone who wants to BE what the teacher IS.
 - If you come to God wanting to *know what God knows*, you are not a disciple – you are a student.
 - If you come saying, *“I want more than anything else in the world to be just like Jesus,”* now you have become a disciple.
- Torah Teachers did not have disciples; only Rabbis with Schmeha had talmidim.
- Jesus was not the only rabbi with talmidim.
- Question: Would everyone have called a torah teacher rabbi, or just a rabbi with schmeha?
 - A: There is no difference in title – they are both called “Rabbi.” (*Rabbi* means honored one.)
 - You would have to see their teaching method to see which one they were, or see if they had talmidim, or see if they healed.
- “Bless God”
 - Christians often say you can’t bless God. Instead they say God blesses you.
 - In the Old Testament, it says more than 90 times, “Bless the Lord,” but we translate it to say “Praise the Lord.”
 - Jesus did a miracle, and it says, *“...all the people praised God.”* – when it should say they BLESSED God. They said:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu, Adonai echad et lechem motzi min haaretz

Blessed are you Lord our God, King of everything [or King of the universe], for giving this man the power to heal.

- That’s how you bless God – that’s how you praise.

- “After supper Jesus took the bread, and when He had blessed _____...” *Blessed it* is not in the original – it should read, “...when He had *blessed God*...”
- The Bible nowhere says to bless food – it says to bless God for providing the food.
 - The Jew doesn’t say, “bless this food,” – instead they say, “Bless you God for this food.”
- Even Jesus pointed the blessings to God for his [Jesus’] good works.

“Yoke”

- Each schmehad rabbi had his own way of coming up with new teachings, and that method of interpretation is called their yoke.
- The yoke of Torah:
 - Torah is the first five books of the Bible.
 - The yoke is the way you take the burden (or delight) of keeping the Torah.
- Every rabbi had a different yoke.
- It was easy to find out what a rabbi’s yoke was: ask of him, “What is the greatest commandment?”
 - His answer will tell you what his yoke is.
- When asked this question, Jesus answered:

“Hear o Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might...and love your neighbor as you love yourself.”

- Jesus said the whole Torah hangs on this. This was Jesus’ yoke
- Other rabbis had other yokes.
- Every rabbi with talmidim wanted to have the best talmidim [students], so there’s a competition between yokes.
- In a rabbinical school, they test the rabbi’s yoke.
 - Talmid to rabbi: “Rabbi, when we die and go to heaven, who will we be married to?”
 - Rabbi asks his talmidim what they think, and they discuss and debate the scriptures to find the answer.
 - The rabbi would then give the answer (in question form or in answer form). Then he would say: “Rabbi _____’s yoke destroys the Torah on this point.” (in other words, he’s got it wrong.) Then the rabbi would send the talmid to test that rabbi’s yoke.
 - When they questioned Jesus, sometimes they didn’t like him, sometimes they wanted to kill him, but sometimes they just wanted to know if his interpretation fit the Torah.
- Jesus said: “All who are weary and burdened with all this, come with me, because my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

- Christians often take this to be towards sinners burdened down with sin. That's not what he is saying – it's written to those who are driven nuts by theological hair splitting.
- What is Jesus' yoke?
 - Love God – is that easy?
 - Love your neighbor – is that easy?
 - It doesn't take brains to understand Jesus' yoke – it takes heart.
 - It's also an incredibly difficult yoke, because in its simplicity it demands action.
- The picture:
 - an animal with a yoke drawing a burden.
 - What is the burden – keeping the Word of God.
 - The yoke is the particular way of interpreting the Torah in order to carry the burden of God's will.
- "Unequally yoked" is when you put two people in a yoke, and one of them ends up, because of size or ability, unable to be at the same level as the other person.

Hebrew School:

- In Galilee, boys and girls went to school.
- 1st Level: Bet Sefer
 - It was called *bet sefer* – it means *place of reading*.
 - Age range of about 4 to 12 – elementary school ages.
 - Boys:
 - The boys memorized the Torah – first five books of the tanach (Old Testament).
 - The goal was by age 12 to know the first five books by memory.
 - If they knew it by age 12, then you were allowed to go to Jerusalem to for your first Passover – the first one you would be allowed to offer the sacrifice for your family, because you are now an adult.
 - Jesus did this in Jerusalem at age 12 – this tells you Jesus had the Torah (first five books) memorized.
 - To be a talmid you want more than anything to be just like Jesus – how much time have you spent in the text?
 - Girls:
 - Memorized Psalms, Proverbs, and Deuteronomy.
 - Jesus quotes scripture three times to what is referred to as "women" – men were there too, but he was mostly talking to the women. In each instance he quotes from Psalms. He was quoting scriptures they knew.

- If you didn't learn the Torah by age 12, it wasn't a disgrace – not everyone had those talents – but then you were finished and you would go and learn a trade.
- A few did memorize and moved on.
- 2nd Level: Bet Midrash
 - It was called *bet midrash* – *midrash* means *to explain*.
 - Now you move beyond memory and into explanation.
 - The girls marry when they reach menstruation, so this level is only boys.
 - Ages 12-15
 - While doing this, you are also learning a trade with your dad.
 - They would study the Torah (first five books) and the Haftorah (the rest), memorizing parts of the haftorah as well as what they already memorized.
 - By this age, it was clear most boys would not be able to go to the next level – they would go to learning a trade from their father.
 - At this level they are students, not talmidim. They study with Torah Teachers, not Rabbis with Schmecha, and they're not studying to become like, they're just studying to understand.
 - Some men in this group would marry.
- 3rd Level:
 - Boys ages 15-30
 - They would study the entire Tanach to interpret it – not just to understand or explain as in the previous levels.
 - (*Talmud* means *to interpret*.)
 - They would study to age 30, and if at age 30 they were unusually brilliant, they would then become Torah Teachers.
 - These were the ones who studied with the Rabbis with Schmecha – they are called *Talmidim*.
 - Their goal is to become just like their rabbi.
 - You follow your rabbi 24 hours a day – sleep in the room where he sleeps, eat in the room where he eats, even to the bathroom together – because when the rabbi comes out, he may pray (blessing God for whatever the situation). They want to see their rabbi 24 hours a day because they want to end up being JUST LIKE HIM.
 - The phrase is *to sit at his feet* – or, *to be covered with his dust*. You are so close to the rabbi that when he walks on the dusty paths, you get covered with his dust.
 - A talmidim wants to be *just like the rabbi* – and the only way to do so is to know him as intimately as you know your closest friend, or even more.
 - Discipleship:

- Western thinking has absolutely destroyed the truth about discipleship. We are not disciples an hour on Sunday, ten minutes before we go to bed, and a Bible study a week. That is not a disciple.
- A disciple is 24 hours a day, and it's every fiber of your body. There never is a moment that passes without you thinking, "How could I be [as a person; as an athlete; as a student; as an artist; as anything] more like Jesus at this moment?"
- If you and I are not consumed with a passion to know Jesus so well that we become like him more and more and more, we're not talmidim. Almost all of his disciples died as martyrs – were they like the rabbi or not?

Jesus' Disciples:

- How old were Jesus' disciples?
 - You joined a Rabbi with Schmecha at age 15.
 - Some were already learning life's occupation, so they could have been under 15. Maybe they didn't get into Bet Midrash.
 - The disciples are far more likely high school sophomores or younger, than they are older people.
 - The only disciple that the Bible moves in the direction of suggesting he is older is Peter.
 - He's married. That suggests 20-25.
 - There's a commandment in Leviticus given that every Jewish male 20 and older is to pay ½ shekel temple tax each year.
 - Peter asked Jesus, "How will we pay our tax?"
 - Jesus told him to go fishing. Peter caught a fish with one shekel in its mouth.
 - Jesus told him it was for Peter's temple tax and for his – where's the tax for the other disciples? They were more than likely not old enough to have to pay it yet.
 - The word referring to John as a *young man* (if he is referring to himself), means a pre-adolescent. He could be as young as 8. No wonder he was Jesus' favorite - he's just a little kid.
 - What made them so special? Because a kid of 12 or 14 is far more likely to become like his or her teacher than someone older.
 - Peter and Andrew were fishing when Jesus called them, but you start learning a trade at age 12.
 - Matthew – a tax collector. His trade was not an accountant like we would have today. He would count someone's fish, determine the tax owed to Rome, collect the

fish for that fee, and sell them, then send the proceeds to Rome. You don't have to be very old to count fish. To be a tax collector, you could have been 60, or you could have been 10. It's not a CPA.

- How did you become a talmid?
 - You were able to enter into Bet Midrash.
- Jesus was walking along and saw two guys fishing.
 - What does it tell you about those two guys, regardless of what age they were? They didn't get into anybody else's school.
 - These aren't the valedictorians or merit scholars or those with high IQ's – these were the ones who failed and didn't get into the class.
 - Jesus walked up to them and said, "Come follow me."
 - What is he saying? *"I think you can be like me."*
 - What does that say to a C student who's been turned down and rejected?
 - Do you understand what it does to a person to tell them that he believes in you?
 - If you are a talmid of Jesus, he really believes you can be like him! He picked you!
 - Akiva said the worst sin is to teach a student to believe in god, and not to teach him that God believes in him.
 - God really believes that if you will passionately become like him, you could be what those 11 were.
 - It doesn't take IQ to be a talmid – it takes the passion to want to be like him.
- Walking on water:
 - Jesus was sitting up in the hills – and they rowed all night against the storm. Next time you think you're rowing against the storm, just remember – Jesus is watching!
 - At the third watch of the night – 3 am – Jesus came walking out to them on the water, and the funny part is it says he was going to walk on by.
 - They shouted, "A ghost! Ahhhh!!" – why a ghost? Because the water is the abyss.
 - Peter says to him, "Rabbi, if it's you, let me walk to you."
 - We turn Peter into this super hero type of disciple. He was a fisherman – he probably couldn't even swim. He thinks the water is hell – the abyss. Do you think Peter thought for one second that he could walk on water?
 - Why would Peter try? He wanted more than anything else in the world to be just like his rabbi.
 - If you're going to be like the rabbi, you're going to have to get out of the boat.
 - So Peter gets out of the boat, and when he heard the wind and saw the waves, he became afraid and he started to sink.
 - Jesus reached his hand out and pulled him up, saying, "Oh you of little hutzpah..." [In other words, "Why do you give up so easily?"] "... why did you doubt ____?" We

tend to say he doubted Jesus – he didn't Jesus is still standing there. He doubted that he himself could be like Jesus.

- The way you start to be like Jesus is with the text.
 - How often do we read the gospels?
- Peter's denial:
 - Jesus was being interrogated for his life, and his (probably oldest) disciple denies being his talmidim three times. And Jesus turned and looked at Peter... just looked at him.
 - Peter knew immediately that it was all over. There wasn't a rabbi in the world who would keep a disciple who swore in public that he never met the rabbi.
 - Peter hung around for the death and resurrection, and then the next place we see him is he is out on a boat fishing. He has returned to his trade, because he's all done and he knows it. He knows that he threw it all away in an instant.
- But this isn't an ordinary rabbi. Jesus sought him out and said, "My son, do you love me? Then feed my sheep." – 3 times!
 - Put that into the picture of the culture:
 - Who is the shepherd? Jesus.
 - Who feeds sheep? Jesus.
 - When Jesus said to Peter, "feed my sheep... feed my sheep... feed my lambs," What did Jesus say to him?
 - "Be like me... be like me... be like me!"
- This is an amazing rabbi, and when you deny him outwardly and actively, or inwardly and silently, if you go to him, and say, "Rabbi, I still want to be like you." Then he will take you back.