

Text: Luke 2.41-52
St Stephen's

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Sat PM/Sun AM

Early Lessons in LIFE

There is no invitation that fell so often from the lips of Jesus as this simple two word phrase...

"Follow me..." Luke 5:27

What did he mean by that? What **does** he mean by that? Well, it would unfold as the months went on.

Following Jesus Means Acting Like Him

There is no question he meant that. It meant doing what he did, responding to his directions, and obeying his commands.

"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"

Luke 6:46 (RSV)

But lots of us have started off after Jesus, only to find that **doing what he says isn't so easy**. We find out that people get in our faces about it, and we're not so happy about it ourselves... turning the other cheek, or going the extra mile, or forgiving 70X7, or loving our enemies.

But I have come to believe that Jesus knows more about life than I do, and I want to obey him. I really do. So I wonder if 'following him' might mean something more that will help me past the difficulties. And it does. I find that...

Following Jesus Means Becoming Like Him

I have discovered that I will never be able to consistently act like Jesus on the outside unless I become like Jesus on the inside. Jesus had **a favorite illustration** of this that he used again and again in his teaching. He said,

"For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit..." Luke 6:43 (RSV)

The only way to get good fruit from a bad tree is to **change the nature of the tree**. In other words, unless my heart/ mind/ emotions/ will – all become like his, I will never be able to live consistently and faithfully and graciously like he lived.

How does this change happen? **Normally** it happens through a **partnership** between God and us. And God does all the **heavy lifting** in the partnership. But we have **our part**. I have discovered that...

Following Jesus Means Living With Him

When Jesus called his 12 disciples, he called them to a full time apprenticeship. It wasn't a part time internship, not a weekend seminar – it was full time, 24/7 as we like to say. Here's how Mark puts it in his gospel...

He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him...

Mark 3:14 (NIV)

Why would he do that? Because following Jesus means **living with him in order to learn to live like him**. That is essential if transformation is going to become real.

Let me give you **an example**. Wasn't it great to watch the **Steelers** this year! How many times did you see Hines Ward or Big Ben or the Bus do something awesome and have a fleeting thought – '**I would love to do that...**' So you know **what we do?** We **buy their jerseys**. We put up their posters. We wear their hats. We eat at their restaurants.

But here's the **question** – if Coach Cower by some quirk of fate spotted you dressed up like that and put you in the lineup for one key third down play at the turning point on the Super Bowl, and the ball was coming to you – here's your chance! – how would you do?

Not so well! They would have to **carry me off** the field! Why? Because playing for the Steelers takes more than a uniform. It takes high skill. But something more. It takes **hard training**. So they would carry me off. Now that is true if you want to play the piano like Robert Manuel, play golf like Tiger Woods, or do anything beyond your capacity. **'Life takes training.'** Say it...

If you are going **to live a life beyond your natural capacities, you must be willing to train**. That principle is not just true for the athletic field or the concert hall or the corporate workplace – it is true of the **gymnasium of the heart** and the **arena of the soul**. **'Life takes training.'** **Our mistake** is believing that we can follow Jesus and obey Jesus in the crises and challenges of our lives – while living all the normal days of our lives just like everyone else does.

But what the Bible tells us is that **Jesus** used the **normal days** and years of Jesus' life as **the training field** for the public events, the crises and challenges yet to come. And that if we are going to meet those crises and challenges in our lives like he met them in his life – it means **living like him in the normal days of our lives**, which are the training fields of our lives.

Jesus knew this. In the 4 Gospels, we have about **180 different incidents from the life of Jesus**. That's all. 180 **snapshots** of his life, most of which took an hour or so. Some less. A few took a day or two. 180 snapshots of a life that spanned 33 years. **What do you think he did with the rest of his time?** (Cate - 'He slept...!') I will tell you what he did. **He trained**. What he did in the quiet days prepared him for the famous events. What he did in private prepared him to live in public.

Today we start a **New Message Series...** **"Living the LIFE-style of Jesus"** - we are going to look at the **'in-between times'** of Jesus' life, the months and years in between the snapshots, looking for evidence of his lifestyle, the way he spent

his private hours and days. We start with a moment from his years at home... **Luke 2**

Video of Kids (“Was Jesus ever your age? What did he like to do?”)

Well, what did he do during those years? What kind of training did God arrange for his Son? What was the ‘life-style’ – the kind of life Jesus lived during the years he was growing up?

We only have **one snapshot** of Jesus during his growing up years. But in this one event, I want to note **three notes** about his style of life...

At Home He Learned to Worship God

Worship prepares you for what life brings, and Jesus was prepared well, because his folks made worship a habit of their household. We are told that every year they would make the journey to Jerusalem to attend the Passover.

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom...

Luke 2:41-42 (RSV)

That would be a **spiritual pilgrimage**, a celebration, a high point of their year. Ever had a spiritual pilgrimage in your own home?

Not only would annual pilgrimages be a part of their life style, but **weekly worship** in the synagogue was their habit as well. We turn **forward 18 years** in Jesus’ life and read in Luke 4...

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day...

Luke 4:16 (RSV)

Say the phrase, ‘*as his custom was*’... **Your customs matter.** Over the years your weekly choices become your customs and

habits. And your customs and habits become your character. This is how Jesus became a worshipper of God.

You thought it happened automatically! That he came that way out of the box! He didn't! And neither do we. You grow that way by choices that grow into customs that grow into character.

"Follow me", Jesus said. 'Live like I live...'

At Home He Learned to Study God's Word

Luke tells us that at home Jesus' wisdom increased. That is because at synagogue, they read the Bible. At home they studied the bible. It was the **duty of every Jewish home** to teach the scriptures to the children, and they did. So...

Jesus increased in wisdom... Luke 2:52 (RSV)

When Jesus went to the Temple for Passover at the age of 12, he was **left behind**. They thought he was with his relatives in the caravan – but he was not. He was still back in Jerusalem...

After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. Luke 2:46-47 (RSV)

Where did he get that wisdom? He got it in his training – in a **Bible-reading home**. This was the habit of Jesus and the heart of Jesus, and it showed up at an early age.

Think of the difference it made... **When he was tempted by Satan** in Luke 4: every temptation was met with scripture. And the temptation to give his allegiance to Satan was met with "You shall worship the Lord your God and serve him only" (Luke 4.8)

Where was he trained to meet that temptation? I know - you thought he came that way out of the box! But He didn't! And

neither do we. He was trained in a home where study of God's word and worship of God were **part of his style of life**. His preparation for life. It was **essential preparation** for him. Don't you think it is **for us** as well?

"Follow me", Jesus said. 'Live like I live...'

At Home He Learned to Say 'Yes!' to God's Will

The **first words** of Jesus in the Bible are in this incident at the age of 12. When his parents finally found him...

he said to them, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

Luke 2:49 (RSV)

Look at the word, '*must*'. When he says, '*I must*' he is saying that he has a sense of **obligation, purpose** that is driving him. He has **discovered his identity**; he knows by the age of 12 that he is God's son.. He is saying, 'I know what my life is about – it is about my Father's house and my Father's business.' 'I must!'

Now **look what happens...**

And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them... Luke 2:51 (RSV)

He goes home and is **obedient to his parents**. And that phrase is the last we hear of him for **18 more years**. Why?

even though Jesus was God's Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered. Heb 5:8 (NLT)

He had to 'learn obedience'! Wow! **Life takes training**, even for God's Son. His home was **his training ground**. This is why the scriptures are so strong on children obeying their parents.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."

Eph 6:1-2 (RSV)

When you learn to **obey your parents**, you are training to **obey God**. Why? Because you are **learning to set your will**

aside, to yield, to submit. And you will never be able to do that with God until you are able to do that with people. You are learning to **let go of controlling the world** and everything around you, to let go of your little kingdom in order to say 'yes' to God's great Kingdom and plan. That is why so many **circumstances** of our normal lives are **God-designed and God-used as training grounds in the school of faith** – an overbearing co-worker or an unreasonable boss or a cranky mate or a difficult friend. In places like these you are often faced with the opportunity to **hand in your resignation** as 'Manager the Universe', and yield in trust to what God will work out. It is very real, very important training.

Jesus' training at home during his 30 years was **an essential part of his preparation** to lay his life down all the way.

Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave... And... obediently humbled himself... by dying a criminal's death on a cross.

Phil 2:5-8 (NLT)

Life takes training. You can't get where you want by wearing jerseys and hats and eating at the right restaurants. You have to go into training with Jesus, and **let him teach you how to live.** Will you let Jesus be the coach of your life, all your life, including the normal days of your life?

"Follow me", Jesus said. 'Live like I live...'