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Where Are YOU Going?

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When I was just a little kid, we used to play follow the leader. There was a kid in our neighborhood who was a bully. He ordered all us kids around, and we generally did whatever he wanted us to do. Once in a while he would mount his bike and round up all the kids in the area for a game of follow the leader. You played, whether you wanted to or not. You didn't dare refuse or you'd be in trouble. So we'd get on our bikes and take out behind our leader.

Now, our leader was a harsh taskmaster. Sometimes he would take us out behind Butler's garage and we'd follow him through the maze of old wrecks and junked cars on the lot. At other times we would go around and around in circles at Lindsey's Feed Store until we could hardly keep the bikes from spinning out of control. We weren't supposed to go around Strickland's Lake, but if DeWayne went around it, we didn't question, we went without hesitation. After all, we'd rather face Mom's wrath than DeWayne's. You didn't wait. You didn't you complain. He led. You followed.

Now we don't follow Christ for the same reasons, but we do follow with a similar dedication. We follow Christ because we want to. He is our Leader and we want to go wherever He leads. We follow.

In Matthew's gospel (16:24), Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

Any man can follow Jesus Christ. All we need do is decide to do so—deliberately decide to do so. The Lord said, "if any man will come after me..." That means the pathway to glory is open to any man who decides to follow Him.

You don't have to have some sort of degree to follow Him. You don't have to participate in some special sort of complicated apprentice program. You don't have to be especially bright, nor have some special family lineage, or a measure of immense wealth. All you need to follow Jesus is an inalterable faith in Him, and a dedicated determination to obey His will no matter what gets in the way. You make up your mind, then fall in line. He leads. We follow.

Now that's not as easy as it might seem. In order to follow Him, you have to deny yourself. That means you surrender your complete control to Him—not because you are forced to do so, but because you have deliberately decided to give Him the complete management of your life. Just as we no longer acknowledged our will, but became submissive to the will of the bully, just so—but for a much higher reason—we submit to His complete control and leadership. He leads. We follow.

Admittedly, there is difficulty in going after Him. We must take up our own cross and follow Him. Cross-bearing is hard work. It means we have to bear whatever burdens might be involved in following His lead. He never said it would be easy. In fact, it requires total dedication to Him as our leader, total submission to His guidance no matter what that takes. That means we entertain no doubt about who His is and where His taking us. And it means we have total confidence in His ability to get us where we want to. He leads. We follow.

Here are some things we will need if we are to follow Him.

We must submit to what He says because we know who He is. He has been along the path. He has been there. We don't know the way, but He does. He only is "the way, the truth and the life," and no man can go where he needs to go but by Him (John 14:6). He leads. We follow.

And part-time submission is no submission at all. You have to turn your life over to the Leader, give Him total control of your path of pursuit. Total often means crossing some terrain that is uncomfortable—sometimes even hurtful. It may mean blisters on your hands, dirty feet. But if—by faith in Him—you know where He's going, it's worth it. After all, He's been there and He knows how to get back there. He leads. We follow.

Finally, to follow Him means to keep a firm focus on the goal. Heaven is our place of citizenship (Philippians 3:20-21). It's where we're going. John 14:2, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." He will lead us home. He leads. We follow. All the way to heaven.

Where are you going?

Misbehaving Team Members

- by Greg Gwin

It is a common news story involving big-time sports stars: late at night, in a questionable location, with disreputable companions, they are engaged in unseemly activities. The matter is publicized widely throughout the media, and another "black eye" results for professional athletes.

It sure seems that these individuals ought to think more seriously and behave more respectably. After all:

1. Their related teams have paid huge sums of money to bring them on board.
2. They have an incredible ability to influence others. In fact, they are often referred to as "role models."
3. And, any misconduct on their part reflects badly on their team and co-players.

All things considered, it just doesn't make sense for them to act in such irresponsible ways. They need to THINK!

There is a parallel to this situation that strikes much closer to home than one might imagine. It is this: a church member gets involved in a questionable activity, with unwholesome companions, and in a compromising situation. The matter is ultimately revealed, and another "black eye" results for the local congregation.

It sure seems that these Christians ought to think more soberly and conduct themselves more carefully, because:

- A. They were redeemed with the purchase price of Jesus' own precious blood. (*"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God . . ." 1 Corinthians 6:20*)
- B. They have a strong influence – for good or bad – on others. (*"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:13-16*)
- C. What they do reflects on the Lord and His church. (*". . . by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." 2 Peter 2:2*)

With all these things in mind, it doesn't make sense for a member of the Lord's body to act in sinful ways. THINK!