

# FIVE FORKS BRETHERN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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**SERMON:** *Following Jesus*  
**SERIES:** *Knowing, Loving & Following Jesus*  
**SCRIPTURES:** *Matthew 4:23-5:1; Acts 9:1-2; Galatians 2:20*  
**SPEAKER:** *Shaun Kipe*  
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*\*Credit to Dallas Willard, Gary Moon, Ron Sider, John Ortberg*

Well good morning, it is so great to worship with you.

Today we are in the third and final week of our series called “Knowing, Loving, and Following Jesus.” (Series Title Slide)

Our Anabaptist roots remind us that at the center of our faith is Jesus. So easy to get distracted and begin making other things the center. Our family, sports, job, health, education...So we're just trying to get back to the basics. That our core identity, the thing that makes us tick is “knowing, loving and following Jesus.” And so we've been taking these three weeks to just talk about what that looks like at Five Forks.

We want to close out our series this morning by talking about what we mean when we say “following Jesus.” We are a church “following Jesus.”

Menno Simons, one of the original Anabaptist leaders during the reformation of the 1500's, says this...

**All the Scriptures, both the Old and the New Testaments, on every hand, point us to Christ Jesus that we are to follow him.**

Notice the emphasis of Menno's statement...that we are too follow him. (Not just think about him, acknowledge him, know him, not just love him. We are to follow him. In fact what you will find, time and time again, as you read through the Gospels, is Jesus inviting people to follow him.

- **Jesus says, “Come follow me.”**

Let me just give you some examples...

**Matthew 4:18** – Jesus tells two fisherman brothers, “Come, follow me.”

**Luke 5** – Jesus tells a tax collector – “Follow me.”

**Mark 10** – Jesus tells a young rich man – “Follow me.”

**Matthew 19** – “Whoever wants to be my disciple, must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.”

Now the reason we need to talk about this is because the idea of following Jesus, has kind of been hijacked in our day. Sometimes words or phrases (what they mean) can evolve or change over time.

For example the word **NICE**...just turn to the person beside you and say, “*You are such a nice person.*” Isn’t that encouraging, everyone in here speaking that way to one another? Now, what’s interesting, is that actually the word NICE is derived from the Latin word nescius...which means **ignorant**. No, joke initially the term nice was a negative term meaning ignorant, was used as a synonym for words like stupid or foolish. Now you should all apologize to the person sitting next to you.

The point is, it’s important to know what we mean when we say following Jesus, because over time, people have taken that phrase and changed its meaning. We want to understand following Jesus in the way Jesus intended this.

So help us to do that I want to go to passage of scripture in Matthew 4, that talks about two groups of people.

- **Crowds and Disciples.**

**Matthew 4:23 – 5:1 - <sup>23</sup> Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. <sup>24</sup> News about him spread all over Syria...<sup>25</sup> Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, [g] Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him. Now when Jesus saw the crowds he went up on a mountainside and sat. His disciples came to him and he began to teach them.**

There are two groups of people in this passage...there are crowds and there are disciples. So many times, when people today think about following Jesus, they think about crowd following.

Think about the crowds for a minute. The crowd came because they heard news about Jesus and they’ve come to see the show. They want to see some miracles. The crowd is impressed. The crowd even applauds. But the crowds stand at a distance. They don’t want to get too close.

Crowd following turns Jesus into a benefit package or a convenience or a fad. Once the crowd has seen the show or gets what they want, they head for home. There are a lot of people in our world today who have turned following Jesus into “being part of the crowd.”

Be part of the church crowd. Say a prayer. Get your ticket into heaven. Admire Jesus from a distance. But don’t get too close.

There is another group of people represented in this passage. They are referred to as **disciples**. Matthew distinguishes the crowds from the disciples. Disciples follow in a way that is different than the crowds. Disciples want to get a little bit closer. Disciples want to listen a little more intently. When they hear and see Jesus...they know this what they want build their lives around.

Let me give you a really helpful illustration...I was reading this story about a man named Charles

Blondin. He lived about 150 years ago. He was one of these dare devil, tightrope walkers.

*He came to the United States from overseas and was fascinated, obsessed actually, with Niagara Falls. He wanted to cross Niagara Falls on a rope (PIC OF BLONDIN WALKING THE ROPE). He actually strung a cord 1100 feet across and 160 feet above Niagara Falls, and he said he was going to cross from one side to the other.*

*He was quite a showman. A crowd of 100,000 people gathered to watch Charles Blondin walk a tightrope across Niagara Falls inch by inch, step by step. Can you imagine the drama of that moment? Life or death. He had no safety net. He crossed all the way over. It was quite a show. And tons of people, crowds, of course, were taking pictures of him, so he did it again. He crossed over with a camera and took a picture of the crowd while they were taking pictures of him.*

*He went another time and took a chair with him, balanced the chair on the rope, and stood on the chair. He went back another time and fixed an omelet. He actually did this and lowered it to passengers on the Maid of the Mist so one of them could have it for breakfast.*

*He went another time and took a wheelbarrow. The crowd went crazy. He really played it up.*

*He turned to the crowd and asked them, "Would you like to watch me walk this wheelbarrow across? How many of you think I can do this? Of course, the crowds went nuts. Then he paused. And he turned to the crowds again, "Now, who will get into the wheelbarrow?" It got real quiet. The crowd, all 100,000 people were silent.*

*There was one man named Harry Colcord, he knew Blondin. He had worked with him. He had seen him do it 100 times. So he stepped out from the crowd. He volunteered. He got into the wheelbarrow and they went inch by inch, step by step. Can you imagine that ride? In a wheelbarrow over Niagara Falls? They make it to the other side. Of course, the crowd went crazy again!*

*But, you know what, the crowd didn't get in the wheelbarrow. Everybody applauded Charles Blondin, but only one man trusted, only one man got in the wheelbarrow. And the walk they went on together, neither one of them would ever forget.*

*Large crowds gathered round to listen to Jesus but Jesus was not interested in amazing the crowd. Jesus never went up to people and said, "Come join the crowd." Instead, he said, "Whoever wants to be my*

*disciple, let them deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me." Get in the wheelbarrow. (Ortberg)*

See the crowds merely want forgiveness of sin. But Disciples also want to name their sin and brokenness and hand it over to Jesus so he can deal with it. Disciples want to get serious about the pull that money or materialism has on their lives. Disciples humble themselves and get help with their crumbling marriage or their anger problem or that unhealthy bad habit that keeps coming up. Crowds are only interested in Jesus for that ticket to heaven, but Disciples aren't just interested in a ticket to heaven, but they are giving their lives, time, energy, finances to participate in bringing heaven to earth.

Jesus invites us to be Disciples...those who are ready to lean in, get closer. That's what we mean when we say following Jesus at Five Forks. We are getting in the wheelbarrow of Jesus.

Now let me just talk specifically, two things this means for following Jesus.

- **Do what Jesus did.**

It is our goal in life to imitate the life of Jesus, our actions mimic his.

**1 John 2:5-6 - This is how we know we are in him: <sup>6</sup> Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.**

**1 Corinthians 11:1 - "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."**

A few years ago I given a book that was really helpful for me in thinking about this concept. The book was called Apprenticeship with Jesus: "Learning to live Like the Master." (**BOOK COVER ON SLIDE**) The basic premise of the book is learning to understand or define following Jesus as an "apprenticeship."

Someone learning a trade or skill by watching and then imitating. Some of you likely remember my grandfather (Pic of grandpap). After he retired he opened up a sharpening business on the farm. Sharpened all kinds of blades for people. Still have people to this day that tell me about the blades grandpap sharpened for them. Many people confounded by the sharpness of the blades he returned to them. For one summer I was an apprentice to Grandpap. He always wore bibs, so he got me bibs. He always wore a hat, so he gave me a hat. And then we would sit out in that shop and he would show me the process for precision sharpening. He would do it first. I would watch. He would explain as he loosened each blade, set them cleaning solutions, what to look for, how run the equipment. I watched and then imitated.

We learn so many things in life this way. Many of you learned to baked Grandma's special cookie recipe, by standing by the counter, watching Grandma and then imitating. You learn the change the oil in your car, by watching then doing. Our daughter Ady, she's 6 years old she can put make up on and do hair...she watched mommy do it and then she does it.

Following Jesus means, seeing Jesus as the Master of life. We are the apprentices.

**“Discipleship is learning from Jesus, how to live my life as He would live it, if He were me.”** (Willard)

The problem is our definition of following Jesus has been hijacked. Many people don't see their faith this way.

In the last 20 years or so, Gallup and Barna have done extensive research on this concept and it is staggering the results they have found. Let me just give you one example...this is from a book called “UnChristian”.

**84%** of young people today (35 and under), who don't attend church, claim they know someone who does. But only **15%** believe that “Christians” lives any different from them. You know what that means, there are a lot of crowds...far fewer disciples.

Dallas Willard calls this “**vampire Christianity.**” A lot of people in churches saying, *“I'd like a little of your blood to cover my sins, enough to get me eternal life. But not a total transfusion of Jesus' life and character.”*

But there's no such concept in the Bible. In fact in the book of Acts followers of Jesus are referred to as “**followers of the Way**”.

**Acts 9:1-2 - ...Saul was breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest <sup>2</sup> and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.**

Followers of the way...this term is also for a path, a road...it means a way of life. It's a term that has its roots in the Old Testament.

**“In the Bible, wisdom is rarely presented as a single decision, or rule but rather as a way or path, that the sojourner must continually discern...wisdom is a way of life.”** (Held Evans)

Jesus even says in John 14:6 “I am the way...” Many times people take this to simply mean, make a decision to believe in Jesus and secure your ticket to heaven. We affirm that Jesus is the way to eternal life and access to the Father. But too often we have stopped short of the full essence of what Jesus means. It includes this Jewish wisdom theology of “the way of life, the path of true life.

That's what we mean when we talk about following Jesus, walking the path of Jesus.

So doing what Jesus did, doesn't mean I quit my day job and become a Jewish rabbi. It doesn't mean I wear a toga, sandals, and grow long hair.

It means that whatever I do, I do it like Jesus would. If I'm an accountant, I do it like Jesus would. If I'm a stay-at-home dad or mom, I do it like Jesus would. If I'm playing sports, driving a car, hammering a nail, bailing hay...

Watch the Master and then do what he did.

Jesus washes feet. I wash feet.  
Jesus eats with tax collectors. I eat with tax collectors.  
Jesus tells the truth. I tell the truth.  
Jesus feeds the hungry. I feed the hungry.  
Jesus forgives his enemies. I forgive my enemies.  
Jesus prays. I pray.  
Jesus rests. I rest.  
Jesus never rooted for the Patriots. So I won't do that either.

Doing what Jesus did. But following Jesus then moves from my actions to my character.

- **I become like Jesus.**

Following Jesus is not just about what I do, but it is about who I am becoming.

One time Jesus said these words...**how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.** <sup>35</sup> **A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.** (Matthew 12)

Paul writes,

**Galatians 2:20 – “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.”**  
**Philippians - “Each of you, should have the same mind as Christ Jesus”**

Following Jesus isn't just behavior modification, but it's a total transfusion of your character. It's that pretty soon the desires, intentions, attitudes that drive and fuel my behavior actually begin to change.

Have you heard of the phrase **default response**? Your default response has a lot to do with your character.

Like imagine you just cleaned your house. You're having a party. So you did the serious clean. Shampooed the carpet. Vacuumed, under the couch, and between the cushions. You even used that little corner attachment that never gets used. You dusted on top of the ceiling fan. You're house is spic and span. You stand back and admire you're work. Never has this house been so clean. You hear the door opening, only to look and your four year old son comes running through the front door, from rolling around in the sand box, holding the mud pie he has just created and he trips on the rug flinging sand and mud in every direction. What is your response? I read this to Jenny the other day. Her immediate response was “AHHHH” She said, I don't even like hearing about this scenario...let alone what I would do if it ever happened.”

Character change is when my default responses begin to look like the responses of Jesus...when my attitudes, desires, intentions begin to mimic his. Many people don't actually believe this is possible and so never even try. We just redefine what it means to follow instead. That would be easier than character transfusion.

Fruits of the spirit...I live as a person of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

gentleness, self-control.  
(Practical applications...)

So following Jesus means I do what Jesus did. And following Jesus means I start to become like Jesus. Total transfusion. Get in the wheelbarrow.

In closing this message I just want to mention how this can happen for you, for us.

- **Your part.**

Your life in many ways is a series of choices. Who you become is a result of the choices you make. One of the ways you can help yourself to do this, is to **order** and arrange your days. Ordering your days has everything to do with your choices and will power. Let me just give you an example of how practical this is.

When we don't order our lives, our lives take control of us.

Imagine the Kipe family, 5 of us trying to get Awana on Wednesday evening. We need to leave the house at 6:20pm. We start getting ready to leave at 6:15pm. We have ordered or chosen this patten. So what happens? We end up hurrying. **Hurry** has a way of getting in the way, of following Jesus... because hurry often leads to rushing around, heightened emotions, anger, frustration, yelling.

All of a sudden, everything must happen in 5 minutes, where are your coats, everyone put shoes on. Keagan (4 yrs old), what do you mean you need help? I have to put my own shoes. Make sure you have your Awana bags, vests, Bibles. Oh no, it's crazy hair night. Quick jenny give everyone crazy hair. Now get in the car, get buckled. Ady what do you mean you can't buckle on your own. Stop talking, everyone be quiet. I'm sick and tired of doing everything around here. You guys really need to grow up.

And then, of course, on the way we practice our Awana verses, "Love is patient, love is kind..."

Can you picture this? What just happened? Do you know why all of that followed? I didn't do my part. We should have started getting ready to leave at 5:45pm. Then no hurry. No hurry, no frustration, no angry words. By my choices, I can order my life in such a way, that it helps me to follow Jesus...with my actions, in my heart.

Some of us, just too lazy, just not making good choices, not ordering our worlds well.

But, and this is also really important, your will power alone is not sufficient to transform your life. That's called self-help. We are Jesus followers, not self-helpers.

Following Jesus is a partnership!

- **God's part**

Often the forgotten member of the Trinity is that God promises His Spirit to come and live in us. We need God's Spirit living in us, transforming us. This is kind of like living with an outside source of

power. Someone helping us do what we can't on our own.

John 14 – Jesus stands there looking at his rag-tag group of disciples. **16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth.**

**Galatians - 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control... 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.**

A few years ago, myself and Adam Meredith, were on a work project. We were helping Dad and Pastor Buck cut down some trees. We always leave the stump for last (**PIC OF STUMP**). It was a huge tree. The stump was massive. Adam and I, were young. We had egos. We looked at that stump. I said to Adam, *"Think we can push that stump over."* We pushed. Stump didn't budge. I began to wonder if Dad had actually cut the stump completely off at the base. Dad and Buck were watching. Dad and Buck were old, even back then. Dad said, *"Buck I bet we can push it over."* I said, *"No way."* Dad said, *"We have an extra source of power, its called man-strength. You guys don't have it yet."* We laughed. Dad and Buck started pushing on that stump...well I'm getting way off track, you don't want to hear the rest of that story...

My point is, there is a kind of strength that happens to you and in you as you mature. It's like power outside of you...

Part of your transformation, is outside of you (you may not always be aware of it)...but its God's part, he gives you strength you didn't know existed. It's the part he does for you, to you, in you. It's why when your will power is giving up, you're not actually at the end of your rope. If you're following Jesus you find out, He's holding the rope with you. Isn't that encouraging to know? Following Jesus is learning how to be aware of, recognize and rely on His help.

Finally, following Jesus must involve the...

- **Community of faith.**

Culture has a tendency to make following Jesus an individual endeavor. You make Jesus your personal savior...and that means you're a follower.

But in the Bible it's never just about making Jesus your personal savior. Rather in choosing to follow Jesus, you are committing yourself to His people, the church.

**"All the believers were together and had everything in common...and continued to meet together..."**

We support each other, we pray, encourage each other. And we hold each other accountable. We come to the community seeking wisdom and advice.

I'll be the first to say this...that's what this hour is about on Sunday. Why are you here? Why I am

here? We need each other, all of us following Jesus together.

I'm glad you're all here with me. It'd be awfully lonely sitting in this big room, walking out those doors into that world, all by myself. I wouldn't be here, I wouldn't be who I am, I wouldn't be growing into the person I am growing into without you. I'm glad you're with me.

Knowing, loving, following the Master. That's what we are about. That's who we are at Five Forks.

Next week we're starting this series on the Sermon on the Mount. Engross yourself in it, read it, think about it, meditate on it...better yet start memorizing it. So that it starts to flow out of you. I can't wait, I can't wait to do this with you. The Words of the Master.