

Following Jesus

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Study given by W. D. Frazee—November 2, 1961

"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" John 8:12.

When Jesus was here, He traveled by walking. He went from Nazareth where He had been brought up down to Jordan to be baptized. He went out in the wilderness, back to Jordan, and up to Galilee. He went back and forth between Galilee and Judea several times, and on to Jerusalem for the final crisis. And the only time we have record of His riding in all that experience was the few moments He spent on that colt going from Bethany to Jerusalem. It was a fulfillment of prophecy.

If I were to ask how many of you want to follow Jesus, I suppose every hand would go up. I trust so. That is what we desire. I want to share some thoughts this evening that have been a great help to me in recent days in this matter of following Jesus. It has simplified the matter for me, and I trust it will for you.

The promise of this text is beautiful. I like the way the New English Bible translates it:

"No follower of Mine shall wander in the dark" John 8:12

Wandering and darkness are not our portion, brothers and sisters. A straight ahead march with Jesus in the light is heaven's purpose for us, and it is Christ's promise to us. But you notice the promise has, as all promises of the Bible do, a condition. What is the condition? Following Him. "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness." "No follower of Mine shall wander in the dark." If we don't follow Him, we will wander, and we will be in the dark. To follow Him means to walk in the light with confidence.

How can we do that? It basically means to do what His Word says. We read in Proverbs 6:23 that the commandment is a lamp and the law is light. When we walk in obedience to the commandments of God, we are walking in the light. If we depart from the law, we are walking in darkness.

We are told:

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place" 2 Peter 1:19.

The reason the law is light is because it is the law of Christ. The reason prophecy is light is because it is the testimony of Christ. Jesus is the source from which has come every ray of light all down through the history of this world. His law is light, and His testimony is light. This takes in the ten commandments. It takes in all the Bible, for it came through the testimony of Jesus. And it takes in these precious instructions which we have through the gift of prophecy in these latter days.

We have a flood of light. But we are told that many are going directly contrary to the light which God has so graciously given because they do not read the books which contain the reproofs and warnings. If we are to walk in the light, we must follow Jesus. And to follow Him in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy means to study what He says and then do it. If we do that we will walk in the light.

Isaiah tells us that outside the law and the testimony there is no light (Isaiah 8:20). If we really believe that we will not wait for so called authorities in this world to catch up in their research and agree with the statements in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy in order to believe them and to follow them. Will we? We will note with interest when they do catch up with those findings, but their findings will find us already walking in that light which we got from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

The case in point is an interesting article in the *Readers Digest* not too long ago about the case of the wise abstainers. The wise abstainers the Readers Digest wrote about were Seventh-day Adventist. They were said to be wise abstainers because they hadn't been smoking cigarettes, and as a result didn't have lung cancer.

They had to hunt quite a while to find a Seventh-day Adventist with lung cancer, and when they found him they found that before he became a Seventh-day Adventist he had smoked for twenty-five years.

Well, there is light for us friends, but we got it nearly a hundred years ago. We didn't have to wait until the American Cancer Society or the British Medical society came out and said, Be careful. There is cancer, at least the liability to have lung cancer, from smoking cigarettes. We had that in light from heaven long ago. So if we are doing what it said, and are walking in the light, then we are included in the case of the wise abstainers.

Do you suppose there is anything else in the Spirit of Prophecy that is just as important and helpful, and as outstanding as that? Yes, there are hundreds of things.

Jesus said to Thomas:

"Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" John 20:29.

It is a wonderful thing to believe beforehand just because Jesus says so.

"I am the light of the world: He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" John 8:12.

I come now to another area. We all recognize there are hundreds of things from day to day that have to be decided for which we can find no specific, explicit statement in either the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy. All day we are confronted with the decision, What shall I do next? Suppose we happen to have a leisure hour in the evening. The question is, Shall I write a letter home, or shall I go out on a missionary visit, or shall I give a little extra study to my lesson, or shall I catch up on a little sleep, or shall I read that book I have been wishing I had time to read, or shall I work on my dress, or shall I fix my typewriter. What shall I do?

There are times it makes a great deal of difference what we decide. If we could roll back the curtain and see things as Heaven sees them, we would understand there are no unimportant decisions.

Did you ever find yourself at a place where it was evident you were at the right place at the right time? Did you ever thank God you were not five minute later or you would have missed the whole providence? How many of you have ever had that experience? Thank God. Everyone who will watch for providence and follow the leading of God will have experiences like that over and over again.

But there are hundreds of other experiences that don't show up at all that are just as important as those we know. And one of the great joys in the world to come will be when Jesus takes us down to the river of life and opens the pages of the book of life, and leads us back over the history of our experience in this world. He will show us how over and over again He led us to be at the right place at the right time, and what followed because of it. Won't it be wonderful friends? And we are going to see as we look over the record that even the things that bitterly disappointed us were among the amazing providence which worked out God's will for us.

The life of the trusting disciple is like that of his Master, a series of uninterrupted victories. It's true it is not seen to be such here, but seen to be such in the great hereafter. But how can such a life be lived when there are a dozen different good things to do, and perhaps a dozen voices inviting us, urging us, perhaps even demanding? How can we know what to do for certain?

Someone says, That's the thing that almost drives me to distraction.

Well, I hope you will never be driven anymore, for our promise says, "No follower of Mine shall wander in the dark."

Is that for you? Do you believe it? Do you believe it even if you can't see how it can be done? If you do, that is faith. And that is the thing that gives me great cheer and courage tonight.

I want to give you some very simple rules for making that work in your life. The first is, of course, to do what this says. Follow Him. Surrender to Him.

"Until you have the resolution to obey God's will you cannot have His guidance" *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, page 511.

You can't play a game with God on this matter. You can't run to God and say, Lord what would you like me to do next? And when He tells you say, Well, if that's it I guess I won't do it.

No. The surrender of the soul must be complete in order for God's guidance to be effectual. That's were many people miss the thing entirely. They would like to know what God suggests so they can have it for their reference, but they want to hold control.

Now in a sense God does give you control. You can withdraw from Him anytime you want to. But I repeat friends, you cannot play a game with God on this matter. And until you have the resolution to obey God's will, you cannot have His guidance.

"If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" John 7:17.

Full surrender. Willing to do anything, or nothing. Willing to go. Willing to stay. Willing to be anything or nothing if only God's will may be carried out. We are told Christ was so emptied of self He made no plans for Himself. He accepted the Father's plans, and day by day the Father unfolded those plans. "My meat," He said, "is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work."

Even at the age of twelve He had already entered into that experience. He said to Joseph and Mary as He pointed heavenward, "Did you not know I must be about My Father's business?" He told the people in the temple, "I do always those things that pleases Him."

The first thing is full surrender; the decision of the soul that moment by moment nothing but God's will shall be done. When that is settled, the only question left to settle is what is His will?

Somebody says that's where the problem is.

You would be surprised how getting that first question settled helps to settle the second one. Once you have settled the question that the only thing you desire is God's will, that the only thing that counts is just what God wants you to do, that opens the way for God to give you His guidance.

I am not going into an extensive study on guidance, but I would like to focus on the thing to do after having surrendered to God, and are faced with the decision, What do I do next? It is very simple. Just do what you think will please Him. Ah, you say, But how can I be sure? Well, how sure do you want to be? You say, I want to be infallible.

There is a man over in Rome who says he is infallible. Do you believe it? Well, if you can't admit his being infallible, how do you expect to be infallible? To be infallible, of course, means to be beyond the possibility of making a mistake. You are not there yet. You never will be in this life.

I am talking about matters of judgment. Some people's idea of God's guidance is that if God is going to guide, He ought to guide in some supernatural way so that you know what He wants you to do, and your mind is not entered into the transaction at all. That is not heaven's usual plan.

It is true that God does sometimes guide that way. He sent His angel to the prophet. That is supernatural. The prophet's mind is guided far above and beyond the ordinary working of the Holy Spirit in guiding individuals. I am glad we have the gift in the Spirit of Prophecy. Aren't you? It gives us a confidence in the genuine spirit of prophecy we never can have in human beings, no matter how good they are, and no matter how much they love the Lord.

To state it in another way. We cannot expect, and we must not expect to have the same degree of certainty regarding the leading of the Lord in our individual judgment as we do in the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy. Apparently then, God is able and willing to guide us without our having that measure of certainty. We may as well settle down to it friends, for those are the facts of life.

God wishes to guide us in judgment. He wishes to guide our minds in arriving at decisions. He says, "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." I repeat. Having made use of the channels of guidance which God uses --His Word, His providence, the impressions of His Spirit, and the counsel of others--just do the thing you think will please Him.

What does Ecclesiastes say? Whatsoever thy mind imagines to do? Whatsoever thine eyes see looking over the fence? No.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" Ecclesiastes 9:10.

Now I suppose the longest armed man here can't reach very far. God says do the next thing, and do it with your might. If you will do that, You are carrying out the Lord's orders.

You say, "I don't know about that, because what will I do next?"

Right there is where I want to help you. You may not be able to figure that out. Our text says that the one that walks in light is following Jesus.

Let's make that very real and literal. Suppose you are walking along a narrow path, and you are following a big man. I say reverently, friends, Jesus is a big man. He is a mighty Savior. You and I are trotting along behind Him. The trail is narrow. I want to ask you, could it be that you couldn't see very far ahead on the trail?

Who does see ahead? Jesus does. How far does He see? All the way. How far do you see if you are following Him? You just see Him and the step He just took. He says, "Follow Me."

You say, "But Lord, suppose I take that step. What about the next one and the next one and the next one?"

He says, Never mind.

You say, But I want to know. I think I could take this step better if I knew what the next step and the next one and the next one would be.

He says, No. You couldn't take it as well if you knew what the next one and the next one would be. Your job is not to follow the trail. It is to follow Me. Your job is not to know the end from the beginning and figure out what would be the best way to get where you are going. Your job is to follow Me. "And he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness." "No follower of Mine shall wander in the dark."

Let me share with you something on this that thrilled my soul:

"Into the daily life are found many perplexing problems that we cannot solve. There are those who wish to adjust every difficulty and to settle every question before they begin to work. Such will surely fail. In the end, the future will be just as indistinct and the problems just as perplexing as when they began to speculate about them. It is in following light given that we receive greater light"

Review and Herald, November 29, 1910.

How are we going to get light on future problems? Walking in the light right now.

Ah, but somebody says, There are so many things that I don't know.

Do you know even one thing? If you don't, stop right where you are. God never asks you to leap in the dark. He never asks you to step into the darkness. That is dangerous; that is perilous. Although there may be a wall of darkness ahead, if you see the footstep of Jesus and light enough for just that one step, take it even if everything ahead of you looks like a black wall. And bless the Lord, as you do it the way will open and you will see one more step. That is heaven's way of leading. We had just as well get used to it.

That is the way we are going through the time of trouble ahead. It is the only way we are going through. And we need to put out of our hearts the foolish idea that if we were only good enough and close enough to the Lord we wouldn't have that kind of problem. It is not true.

The prophet of God, though often illuminated by supernatural revelations for the benefit of the church, was herself often in the same kind of uncertainty that you and I are in day after day. She had to do the thing that in her mind she believed was God's will for her, a step at a time. That's the way all the saints have done down through the ages. That is the way you and I must learn to walk.

"Those who go forward in faith will find the solution of the problem that perplex them. Light will shine on the pathway of the workers who go forward without questioning. God will go before them giving them skill and understanding to do that which needs to be done. Having committed themselves to the work, and having asked wisdom of God, let them trust in Him. They cannot carry the burden of the responsibility alone. This Christ does not ask them to do. He will carry, not a part, but the whole of the weight of their burden, for He is a mighty Saviour. Move forward at the call of God. When He points out a work to be done, in His name and with full faith take up that work. You may not see the end from the beginning. Perplexities may surround you. Others may tell you of the lions in the way. But nevertheless go forward saying the Lord wants this work done, and I will act my part faithfully. I will not fail nor be discouraged" *Ibid.*

I know that God is stirring our hearts to respond to that as we read these inspired words. In the book, *Steps to Christ* are two sentences that echo this same thought:

"Give heed to the light that already shines upon you, and you will receive greater light. By the grace of Christ perform every duty that has been made plain to your understanding and you will be enabled to understand and perform those in which you are now in doubt" *Steps to Christ*, page 111.

If you have an hour to do something, and it is your decision as to what you do, dart a prayer to heaven and say, "Lord, what do you want me to do next?" If you think of half a dozen or a dozen things you might do, ask God to help you decide which is really the most urgent, which is really the most important. If you will do that, and leave with Him the five or ten things you don't get done, and keep doing next the thing you think is most important, you have the assurance that Jesus will guide you by His providence.

As you follow that program you will get into trouble. You will anyway whether you follow that program or not, but if you follow that program you will get into trouble. Then what do you do?

"Difficulties will arise. You will meet with obstacles. Look constantly to Jesus. When an emergency arises ask, 'Lord, what shall I do now?' If you refuse to storm or fret or scold, the Lord will show you the way through" *Manuscript 67*, 1901.

Isn't that nice? I believe that is very practical. As I read that a memory floats to me from something that happened years ago.

I was in evangelistic work in the Oklahoma Conference. My wife and I and her sister had gone for a short vacation out in New Mexico.

On our way home we took a cutoff road from one highway to another. We were driving along a dirt road way out in the desert. Night came on. We continued down that dry desert road. All of a sudden we found ourselves in mud. There had been one of those cloudbursts somewhere up the watershed, and without our knowing anything about it we were right there where that cloudburst had come down. Other cars had apparently gone before us. We kept churning our way through the mud and presently found ourselves stuck. Desert sands were all around us, but we were in the mud.

I tried to back up, but that proved as impossible as trying to go ahead. What should we do? All we could do was what this says. We prayed about it. As the providence of God would have it, presently we saw lights. A traveling salesman came in behind us. He knew the country. He got some barbed wire off a fence, attached it from his front bumper to our rear bumper and pulled us out. He took us around another road he knew, and we were on our way. We thanked the Lord.

Somebody says, Suppose he hadn't come along?

Well, that is an interesting question. Suppose he hadn't. I can't tell you the answer to that one because I read:

"Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us of which we know nothing" *Ministry of Healing*, page 481.

If I could tell you all the things God would have done if that fellow hadn't come, this statement wouldn't be true, would it? God had how many ways to get us out of there? A thousand ways beside the one we saw. Oh friends, what a margin of safety.

But you know how many ways a human mind works, and our minds are in some ways pretty much alike. When having done the best we know when we get into a situation like that, our tendency is to look around for somebody to blame. And if not, we blame ourselves. Why in the world did we have to come this way? Of course, if we had just been following our own selfish way, we may well raise question. Our text says, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Ah friends, when we do the best we know to follow His will, let's believe He is right there helping us and guiding us. What do you say?

That doesn't mean we are infallible. We are told that mistakes will often be made, but each error lies close beside the truth. Wisdom will be learned by failures. There are blessings that come as we meet disappointments and problems that we bring upon ourselves by poor judgment, but even those are part of God's leading through the great school of life.

Being a Christian doesn't make it impossible for a person to misspell a word, does it? Do all Christians get all their mathematical problems a hundred percent correct? Life is a school. To do the best we know and give the best answer we know to every question is to follow Jesus. That means God is right there helping us. If this is so, shouldn't life be a lot simpler and sweeter than some find it to be? The

test of our faith in this whole thing is when we are stuck in the mud. Right there it can be the sweetest possible.

There is another principle that bears on this in two sentences from a letter Sister White wrote:

"Do that which presents itself in its time demanding the first attention. Do not pass by the first duty to do the second"
Letter #5, 1902.

Ah, what a principle that is. As I look ahead on the trail there seem to be several things to be done. If I start selecting the one I like the most, may I miss the leading? What am I to do first? That which demands the first attention.

Again somebody says, How will I know what it is?

Ask Jesus. Do what He impresses your mind as the most important thing.

Mothers in the home, do you sometimes have more things calling for attention than there are hours in the day to do? How much wisdom is needed to select from that chaos the thing you are to do? Ask Jesus for wisdom and then do the next thing you believe He wants you to do, and leave with Him all the things you don't get done. I read this wonderful promise:

"Christ is ever sending messages to those who listen for His voice" *Ministry of Healing, page 509.*

On the battlefields today many soldiers are carrying what is called a walkie-talkie. Even though they may be some distance from the commander, coming through the air are those invisible waves which translated by the little mechanism they carry furnishes them guidance and orders moment by moment.

I remember the first time I saw that functioning. I was up in Washington D.C. several years ago attending a seminary. I went up to Takoma Park to visit a man. I was looking for a certain street and I couldn't find it. I saw a policeman in his car, so I went over and asked him if he could tell me where the street is. He told me to wait a minute. He had in his car what was at that time a new contraption. It has since become quite commonplace. He called headquarters and asked them where the street was. Back over the waves came the answer. He had gotten it from headquarters just like that.

My dear friends, such communication is possible between you and your Lord moment by moment to the extent you need it, if you will make yourself open for it.

Did you ever see someone trying to tune in on a certain station but was drowned out by others that were closer or louder? Today I was looking at a letter Sister White wrote to a Conference president in Europe back in 1884. In that letter I read this interesting statement:

"Christ is ever sending messages to those who listen for His voice, but too often His voice is drowned by our voices. So it is written, 'Be still and know that I am God.' Psalms 46:10. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. This is the effectual preparation for all labor for God" *Letter 10*, May 3, 1884 par. 17.

Let's enter into it. What do you say? And remember, however weak or faltering may be your steps, however limited may be your vision, just make two decisions:

First, I am going to follow Jesus. I am going to give my whole life to Him. My only question is going to be, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Then, as I look at that great Man on the trail who fills the pathway as I follow Him, I may not see around Him or over Him, but I can see that one step He has just taken, and I follow Him.

Some of you have heard me tell about the little boy walking with his father in the Loop in Chicago, one of those busy places with hundreds, yes thousands of people milling up and down.

Father thought he would test the little fellow:

He said, "Sonny, where are we going?"

The little fellow answered, "I don't know daddy, but you do."

That's guidance friends. All we need to know is just one step at a time.

There are a hundred questions men might ask me about my future, but I would have to say, I don't know. If people would think me a numb-skull for that, so I am. But I know Him, and I believe His promise that no follower of His shall wander in the dark. All I know is the next step. I don't mean what I am going to do next week. That's not the next step. I don't even mean what I am going to do tomorrow. That's not the next step. I mean right now. That is the next step.

Since this has been growing on my soul I have found a new delight in watching His providence hour by hour through the day. There is much I wish I could get done that I don't get done, but if I can just get done what He wants done, that is all that counts.

I say reverently, if we will follow Him, it is up to Him to make clear what He wants us to do, and to get us where He wants us to be. "No follower of Mine shall wander in the dark."

The first words Jesus addressed to those fishermen by the sea that morning were, "Follow Me." The words Jesus said to Peter by that same lake after the resurrection as He met them there once again were, "Follow Me."

"And He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness" John 8:12

Oh, praise His name for this wonderful truth!

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