

Extraordinary Living: Lesson in Faith from Ordinary People

“Obedience despite others”

Part 5

Intro: Many of you know the story of Foothills starting in the Elementary School over 19 years ago, but what most of you probably don't know is the story of where the vision of Foothills came from. What most of you may not know is there was an obedience journey God took me through first. Let me share with you what took place back in Dec. 1996. God entrusted something extraordinary to me. Now, would I follow Him despite what others said?

- Extraordinary living is the result of our loyalty being to Jesus above all other relationships. That lesson had to be driven home in my life before God would entrust Foothills to me.
- That same lesson needed to be emphasized in one of Jesus' disciples name Peter as well after Jesus' resurrection.

Summarize John 21 – Jesus post resurrection encounter with disciples

- 3 truths about obedience despite others.

1. Jesus wants our loyalty to Him above all others

John 21:15 “After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” Peter replied, “you know I love you.” “Then feed my lambs,” Jesus told him.” (NLT) Jesus goes on to repeat the question 2 more times.

- Jesus will give us opportunity to demonstrate our loyalty to Him
 - Jesus gives Peter three chances to declare His loyalty. Since Peter denied Jesus three times, Jesus gives Peter three opportunities to redeem Himself.
 - Jesus will do the same with us. WHY? How can we follow Jesus fully without being loyal to Him above others? How can we follow Jesus into the extraordinary until we love Him more than others?
 - If Jesus is not the number one relationship we are loyal to this means another relationship has more influence over us than Him. Therefore, if we fear losing this other relationship over Jesus, we will cave when the pressure is on.
 - If we fear the disapproval of others more / fear their rejection / fear their retribution / fear the relational consequences / we will not follow Jesus into the extraordinary. WHY?
 - Because the extraordinary requires loyalty to Jesus first. There's a price to be paid to experience the power of God in this life. You have to be willing to look like a fool to other people. You might have to put up with ridicule.

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- This has been my journey...and it continues to be my journey. Jesus knew that the path He was taking me on would require me to have loyalty to Him above all others. Criticism and ridicule have been part of this 19 year experience.
 - We don't do church right / I don't preach right or don't preach the bible / people criticize our mission / our role in our town / criticize we purchased this building / recently we were called a money cult / slandered on facebook
- Jesus wants to know if you will live your life for the audience of one. Will you live your life to please one person above all others no matter what it may cost you?
- Loyalty to Jesus is a prerequisite for the extraordinary
 - Loyalty connects us relationally to Jesus. Just think how this works in a marriage. Lisa and I just celebrated 30 years of marriage. 30 years ago I told my wife that I love her more than all others.
 - Share about anniversary and what we did – explain
 - Unless you have extraordinary loyalty you can't have an extraordinary relationship. Loyalty is foundational. If you are more loyal to your own needs rather than the needs of your spouse you cannot have an extraordinary marriage.
 - Everything we do as followers of Jesus comes from our relational connection with Jesus. The deeper the loyalty, the deeper the connection. The deeper the loyalty the deeper the love.
 - Jesus wants us to experience the extraordinary with Him but He is looking for a growing loyalty in us first.

2. Loyalty to Jesus results in ministry assignment

With each statement of renewed loyalty to Jesus, there was an assignment given to Peter. *"Then feed my lambs," / "Then take care of my sheep," / "Then feed my sheep." / "Follow me."* If this is where your loyalty stands, THEN...

- Jesus loves everyone but only trusts some
 - I know this may sound strange but Jesus only trusts those who are loyal to Him not those who simply believe in Him. The question we all must ask ourselves is this: I know Jesus loves me, but does Jesus trust me?
 - Jesus loves everyone the same but He does not trust everyone the same. WHY? Love is not earned...but trust is. It works this way in every relationship and in our relationship with God.
 - Too many people want God to entrust to them great ministry assignments before they have demonstrated they are trustworthy. What do I mean? As long as you are more influenced by others than Jesus, how can He entrust great things to you?
 - This is why we will all face loyalty opportunities throughout this life. Will we be more loyal to our friends / our fears / money / careers / possessions / desires / pain / pride / OR will we follow Jesus no matter what? Loyalty!

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- The more we choose following Jesus over all these issues, we grow our spiritual trust. We take our relationship with Jesus deeper. Spiritual maturity is demonstrated much more by what we are loyal to more than how much bible knowledge we have.
- What does your loyalty say about your spiritual maturity?
- The more Jesus trusts us the more influence he gives to us
 - Jesus wants to lead your life into the extraordinary but He must trust you in order to do so. The more He can trust you, the more influence for the Kingdom of God He gives you. The more extraordinary you experience.
 - WHY? He cannot entrust you with power until you are trustworthy with it. The potential for power is in you but it will not be unleashed until He trusts you.
 - **Illustrate:** I didn't let my girls drive my vehicles when they were 5. Did I love them? Of course. Did I trust them to handle the responsibility of driving? Of course not! They weren't mature enough for that yet. Exactly!
 - If you want God to entrust more of an extraordinary life to you that is defined by His power than stop being 5. Spiritual immaturity kills the extraordinary in your life. Loyalty is what spiritual maturity looks like.
 - As you grow in your ability to follow Jesus regardless what is going on in your life or who agrees with you or not, He will entrust more influence to you. He will entrust more power to you. You will experience more of the extraordinary in your life. You start tasting the results of living in the Kingdom.
 - We are here to influence this world for Jesus, but this is a big responsibility. The more He trusts you, the more He will give to you. It's just that simple.

As we grow in this trust and loyalty, God gives us specific assignments to follow Him in.

3. Following Jesus in our assignment is our focus regardless of others

John 21:20-22 "Peter turned around and saw behind them the disciple Jesus loved—the one who had leaned over to Jesus during supper and asked, "Lord, who will betray you?"²¹ Peter asked Jesus, "What about him, Lord?"

²² Jesus replied, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? As for you, follow me."

Here are two truths about this we must remember as we follow Jesus

- Jesus has different assignments for different people
 - Even though Jesus had 12 disciples, they all had unique assignments. The Kingdom assignment Jesus gave to Peter was different than the one given to John. They all were following Jesus making a difference in this world but each according to their unique assignment.
 - Why is this important to understand?

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- **Jesus wants you loyal to what He has called you to do.** Even with our spiritual assignments, we have to keep our eyes on Jesus not others. Our focus is not what Jesus has asked others to do but what He is asking you to do. There are times we simply have to stop worrying about others and just follow Jesus. This is tough because we want everyone else to come with us.
- **Don't project your assignment on to someone else.** It's very easy to think that everyone should feel the same as you when it comes to your assignment. You might even think something is wrong with them because they have no passion for your thing. You may even think you're more spiritual than they are. (children / resource center / Guatemala /
- **Don't be surprised Jesus is calling you to follow.** WHY? God changes the world by calling individuals. The example we have in the word of God is when God wants to do something, He calls a man...he calls a woman to follow Him into the extraordinary. He doesn't form a committee / he doesn't create a think tank / and He doesn't ask of our vote. He works through the individual He calls. He is calling every one of you to follow somewhere.

- Our priority is following not wondering about or waiting for others

"What about him, Lord?" This seemed like a legitimate question. John was Jesus' best friend and the one He entrusted the care of His mother to. Jesus' response was one of where Peter's focus needed to be. *"...what is that to you? As for you, follow me."*

- **We can't wait for others before following Jesus**

I know a lot of people who say; "I'll get serious about this when my husband does / wife does." We put off following Jesus for a variety of other reasons. We're going to wait until our kids are raised / wait until we finish our schooling / wait until we're more financially secure / wait until my church starts a ministry I'm interested in / wait until I get married

- Jesus' response to all this is the same; "What is that to you...you follow Me." In other words; "Why are you more loyal to that rather than Me?"

- **There will be times when we leave others behind**

Some of the greatest relational pain I have experienced in ministry is because of this issue. I have left a lot of people behind in order to follow Jesus. There will many people who simply will not go with you. OR, they will only go with you so far. When the journey gets hard; when the direction requires a greater cost – greater sacrifice, many of your friends will stop following. It's in these moments where I have said; "Lord what about him?" Every time Jesus says; "What is that to you...you follow Me."

- Years ago there was a simple song written called "I Have Decided". The last verse in the song says; "Though no one joins me, still I will follow. No turning back. No turning back."

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- This captures the heart and spirit of the extraordinary life. Even if I have to follow Jesus alone, I will never turn back to this world and stop following Jesus. I will never turn my back on Jesus.
- This type of relational loyalty to Jesus is what demolishes strongholds and transforms our world. It is this kind of relational commitment to Jesus that leads to the extraordinary life.

How is Jesus calling you to follow Him despite others? Where is your loyalty divided / torn / leaving you indecisive? When you decide to live your life to the audience of One, life takes on a simplicity. At the end of the day, I always choose loyalty to Jesus. How is Jesus calling you to this kind of simplicity with Him? Have you decided to follow Jesus?

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