

A CALL TO **DIE**. A CALL TO **LIVE**.

FOLLOW **ME**



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PLATT

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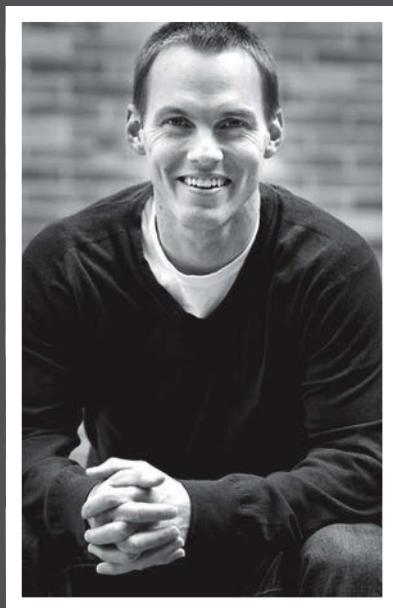
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CONTENTS

THE AUTHOR.....	4
1 THE CALL.....	5
2 BE TRANSFORMED.....	15
3 DELIGHT IN GOD.....	25
4 GOD'S WILL.....	35
5 THE CHURCH.....	45
6 OUR MISSION.....	55
PERSONAL DISCIPLE-MAKING PLAN.....	65



THE AUTHOR

David Platt is the lead pastor of The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Alabama. He is also the author of *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream* (Multnomah, 2010) and *Radical Together: Unleashing the People of God for the Purpose of God* (Multnomah, 2011). A well-known expositor, Platt holds three advanced degrees, including a doctorate from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Platt's first love in ministry is spreading the gospel by making disciples. "I believe that God has uniquely created every one of his people to impact the world," he says. "God is in the business of blessing His people so that His ways and His salvation might be made known among all peoples." To this end Platt has traveled throughout the United States and around the world, teaching the Bible and training church leaders.



SESSION 1
THE CALL

START

THE CALL

Four fishermen stood by a sea in the first century when Jesus approached them. “Follow Me,” He said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” With these words, Jesus beckoned these men to leave behind their professions, possessions, dreams, ambitions, family, friends, safety, and security. He bid them to abandon everything. “If anyone is going to follow Me, he must deny himself,” Jesus would say repeatedly.

In a world where everything revolves around self—protect yourself, promote yourself, preserve yourself, take care of yourself—Jesus said, “Slay yourself.” And that’s exactly what would happen. According to Scripture and tradition, these four fishermen paid a steep price for following Jesus. Peter was hung upside down on a cross, Andrew was crucified in Greece, James was beheaded, and John was exiled. Yet they believed it was worth the cost. In Jesus, these men discovered a love that surpassed comprehension, a satisfaction that superseded circumstances, and a purpose that transcended every other possible pursuit in this world. They eagerly, willingly, and gladly lost their lives in order to know, follow, and proclaim Him. In the footsteps of Jesus, these first disciples found a path worth giving their lives to tread.

Two thousand years later, how far from this path have we wandered? Somewhere along the way, amid varying cultural tides and popular church trends, it seems that we have minimized Jesus’ summons to total abandonment. Churches are filled with supposed Christians who seem content to have a casual association with Christ and seem content to give nominal adherence to Christianity. Scores of men, women, and children have been told that becoming a follower of Jesus simply involves believing certain truths or saying certain words. But this is not true. Disciples like Peter, Andrew, James, and John show us that the call to follow Jesus is not simply an invitation to pray a prayer; it’s a summons to lose your life. There is more to Jesus than the routine religion we are tempted to settle for at every turn, and experiencing biblical discipleship begins with answering the call.

Complete the viewer guide below as you watch DVD session 1.

When we come to Matthew 4:19, we see Jesus saying to four fishermen, “Follow Me.”

Who is the “Me” that’s going to be followed here?

Jesus is worthy of far more than church attendance and casual _____.

He is worthy of total abandonment and supreme _____.

What does the word “Follow” mean?

To live with radical _____ for His glory.

You become a follower of Jesus, and you lose _____ as you know it.

We live for one thing: to honor the _____.

To follow Him is to live with urgent obedience to His mission.

Every follower of Jesus is a _____ of men.

Every disciple is a _____ - _____.

FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, FOLLOWING JESUS HAS ALWAYS INVOLVED FISHING FOR MEN. BEING A DISCIPLE HAS ALWAYS INVOLVED MAKING DISCIPLES.

RESPOND

When it comes to answering Jesus' call to follow Him, we discover that what He's really asking is for us to give up everything—literally, life as we know it—and die to ourselves. As we read about the first disciples of Jesus, it becomes abundantly clear that they were willing to walk away from everything that was familiar and natural to them.

As He was walking along the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea, since they were fishermen. "Follow Me," He told them, "and I will make you fish for people!" Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and He called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed Him (Matt. 4:18-22).

What was Jesus' specific statement to Peter, Andrew, James and John? How did they respond?

In the column on the left, make a list of the things the fishermen left behind according to Matthew 4:18-22. In the column on the right, list what each thing represented.

Left Behind

Boats

What It Represented

Profession/livelihood

What's changed in the 2000 years since Christ called those first disciples? Does Jesus still call us to leave everything behind and follow Him? Think about Christians today. Is it possible that we've begun to settle for routine religion rather than really living for Christ?

What excuses do Christians today often make that keep us from leaving everything behind as we answer Christ's call?

List people you know who have committed their lives to following Jesus. What have they left behind? Are you willing to do the same? Why or why not?

TO FOLLOW JESUS MEANS TO LIVE WITH RADICAL ABANDONMENT FOR HIS GLORY.

When we really begin to look at what Jesus meant when He said, “Follow Me,” we will discover far more pleasure to be experienced in Him, indescribably greater power to be realized with Him, and a much higher purpose to be accomplished for Him than anything else this world has to offer. And as a result, we will all—every single Christian—eagerly, willingly, and gladly lose our lives to know and proclaim Christ, for this is simply what it means to follow Him.

HOW DO YOU BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

Think about that question, “How do you become a Christian?” What comes to mind when you think about responding to Jesus’ invitation to follow Him? How would you tell someone to begin following Jesus? Is it really as simple as walking an aisle and praying a prayer?

Read Matthew 4:18-22 again. Why do you think Jesus called Peter and Andrew to follow Him rather than just agree with certain truths about Him?

Sadly, today we have subtly and deceptively minimized what it means to follow Jesus. We have replaced challenging words like, “Leave everything and follow Me,” with trite phrases like:

- *Ask Jesus into your heart.*
- *Invite Christ into your life.*
- *Pray this prayer after me, and you will be saved.*

Should it alarm us that the Bible nowhere mentions such a prayer? Should it concern us that nowhere in Scripture is anyone ever told to ask Jesus into their heart or invite Christ into their life?

How can these simple phrases lead to a misunderstanding of following Jesus?

Is it possible to profess Christ without knowing Christ? Explain.

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord!’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father in heaven. On that day many will say to Me, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in Your name, drive out demons in Your name, and do many miracles in Your name?’ Then I will announce to them, ‘I never knew you! Depart from Me, you lawbreakers!’ (Matt. 7:21-23)

According to this passage, who will enter the kingdom of heaven?

Why will Jesus say to some, “Depart from Me”?

These are truly difficult and challenging words from Jesus. There will be many who have believed they were followers of Jesus that will stand face-to-face with Him only to be told that they do not really know Him. Because of this, we should be very concerned about what the Bible does say about following Jesus.

RENOUNCE YOURSELF

In Matthew 4:17 Jesus begins His ministry on earth proclaiming, “Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!” The word “repent” means to confess your sins and turn from them. Repentance is a rich biblical term that signifies an elemental transformation in someone’s mind, heart, and life.

When people repent, they turn from walking in one direction to running in the opposite direction. From that point forward, they think differently, believe differently, feel differently, love differently, and live differently.

Have you chosen to follow Jesus? How did that journey begin for you?

In what ways have you begun to think differently, believe differently, feel differently, love differently, and live differently?

Write one response in each of the following categories below (follow the example):

	My life before repenting...	My life after repenting...
Thinking:	<i>How can I help myself?</i>	<i>How can I help others?</i>
Believing:		
Feeling:		
Loving:		
Living:		

HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN?

“How do you know that you are a Christian?” Or, “How do you know that you are saved from your sin?” The most common replies to these questions from professing Christians are, “Because I decided to trust in Jesus,” or “Because I prayed and asked Jesus to come into my heart many years ago,” or even “Because I have given my life to Jesus.” Such responses are not wrong, and I assure you my aim is not to be the word police, but I do want to offer what I hope is a healthy reminder that you and I are not saved from our sin primarily because we decided to do something however many years ago. Instead, we are saved from our sin ultimately because *Jesus* decided to do something two thousand years ago.

But surely the searching love of God must be believed and received. God is not the only one working in salvation, is He? A man or woman must choose to accept or reject the mercy of God in Christ, right? Absolutely. The mystery of God’s mercy in no way negates the nature of man’s responsibility. But the only way we can seek Christ in our sinfulness is because Christ first sought us.

Why is it important to recognize that Jesus initiates our salvation, and not us? What is our responsibility regarding salvation?

How do you know that you are a Christian, saved from your sin?

WHEN WE ARE GLADLY WILLING TO LOSE
OUR LIVES TO KNOW AND PROCLAIM CHRIST, WE HAVE
ANSWERED THE CALL TO FOLLOW JESUS.

REFLECT

on what you studied.

Read Luke 14:25-27.

Imagine a woman named Ayan. Ayan is part of a people who pride themselves on being 100% Muslim. Ayan's identity, familial honor, relational standing, and social status are all linked with Islam. Simply put, if Ayan ever leaves her faith, she will lose her life. If Ayan's family ever finds out that she is no longer a Muslim, they will slit her throat without question or hesitation.

Now imagine having a conversation with Ayan about Jesus. You start by telling her how God loves her so much that He sent His only Son to die on the cross for her sins as her Savior. As you speak, you can sense her heart softening toward what you are saying. At the same time, though, you can feel her spirit trembling as she contemplates what it would cost for her to follow Christ. With fear in her eyes and faith in her heart, she looks at you and asks, "How do I become a Christian?"

You have two options. One, you can tell her how easy it is to become a Christian. All you have to do is assent to certain truths, you might say. If Ayan will simply repeat a prayer, she can be saved.

Your second option is to tell Ayan the truth. You can tell Ayan that in the gospel, God is calling her to die. Literally.

- To die to her life.
- To die to her family.
- To die to her friends.
- To die to her future.

And in dying, to live. To live in Jesus. To live as part of a global family that includes every tribe. To live with friends who span every age. To live in a future where joy will last forever.

Ayan is not imaginary. She's a real woman I once met who made a real choice one day to become a Christian—to die to herself and to live in Christ, no matter what it cost. Because of her decision, she was forced to flee her family and friends. Yet she is now working strategically and sacrificially for the spread of the gospel among her people. The risk is high as every day she dies to herself all over again in order to live in Christ.

Put yourself in Ayan's shoes. How hard would it be to choose to follow Jesus?

Reflect on your own call to follow Jesus. What did you leave behind to follow Him?

How will your decision to follow Jesus impact your life and the lives of others today?

Pray that God will draw you closer to Him as you leave the things of the world behind and follow Jesus.

Read Galatians 4:4-5.

Cody is a member of our church who moved to Thailand to share the gospel with college students. One night, a student named Annan invited Cody to go to a movie. The two of them arrived and sat down in the theater to watch the film, but before it began, a video was shown about the king of Thailand. Immediately, everyone in the theater rose and applauded, including Annan. Some people began to cry tears of joy. As this short video played, people were visibly moved simply by the sight of their king on the screen.

When the movie ended and Cody and Annan walked out of the theater, Cody asked, “Why did everyone react with such emotion when the video about the Thai king was played?”

Annan responded, “Oh, Cody, we love, respect, and honor our king, for he is a king who cares for his people.” He continued, “Our king will often leave his palace and come to villages and communities in Thailand to be with the people—to know them and identify with them. We know that our king loves the Thai people, and we love him.”

As Cody listened, he knew that this description was setting the stage for him to share the story of a much greater King. In the days to come, Cody told Annan about how God, the King over all the universe, loved us so much that He came to us in the person of Jesus. He came to identify with us, even to the point of taking all of our sin upon Himself in order to save us and to make it possible for us to follow Him. Upon understanding this glorious reality, Annan became a follower of Jesus—not because he had been pursuing King Jesus, but because he realized that King Jesus had pursued him.

As you prepare for next week’s session, reflect on the truth that Jesus came to us. He came to earth as a man to extend God’s grace and mercy to us. It is Christ in us that transforms our life and allows us to follow Him. As we follow Him, our lives will be transformed in every way, made into the likeness of His image.

What does it mean to be transformed? Have you ever seen someone’s life become radically different after responding to Jesus’ call to follow Him? When?

Consider your own life. What is one area that most needs to be transformed?

Pray, focusing on how following Christ and becoming more like Him can begin to transform your life today.

ENGAGE

MIND GAMES

Following Christ comes with a cost that accompanies stepping out of casual, comfortable, cultural Christianity. Consider the thoughts and things of this world that we must let go of in order to follow Jesus. Perhaps you've heard the old saying "garbage in, garbage out" in reference to the things you watch, listen to, and participate in. In essence, this is referring to the things we give our time and attention to and how they affect our lives. If we look at pornography, it will shape the way we view sexuality. If we listen to music that glorifies an ungodly lifestyle, it will shape our view of how to live. Whether or not you agree with this saying, the Bible is clear in Philippians 4:8-9:

Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is any praise—dwell on these things. Do what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Dwelling on these things will result in God's peace being with you. This week, try this experiment:

Filter everything you listen to and watch on TV, the Internet, or the movies through this Scripture passage. Intentionally plan to listen to music and watch TV shows that are honoring to God and reflect His truth and beauty. This may take some planning, so think it through.

Plan to read through and reflect on the following passages this week:

- Monday—*Isaiah 40:29*
- Tuesday—*Psalms 119:138*
- Wednesday—*Romans 8:35-39*
- Thursday—*1 John 2:5*
- Friday—*Hebrews 12:10*
- Saturday—*Psalms 107:9*
- Sunday—*Romans 8:31*

At the end of the week, answer these questions:

How has this week been any different than a "normal" week as a result of what I heard or listened to or what I saw?

What are some things I need to do differently to adjust how I fill my mind from this week forward?

How will I fill my mind with truth on a regular basis?