

# Who to Follow?

We recently watched a film about climbers on Mount Everest. In driving snow and caught by cloud, the climbers could not see much more than an arm's length in front of them. They would have stopped, but the conditions were so bad that they had to continue, to reach safety.

With such poor visibility, each climber had to follow the footsteps of the one in front. They could not see to navigate themselves, or to follow a preferred route. Roped together, they were completely dependent on each other. More importantly, they had to rely on the leader to take the right path, to avoid danger and to bring them safely down the mountain.

In the film, one of the leading climbers took the wrong path. Disaster struck. Many fell. And some died. The tragic thing is that it was telling a true story, one re-enacted every year in the world's mountain regions.

## Leading Where?

In every part of our life, there are leaders who we can follow: in business, in science, in sport and in the media, to name but a few. In many cases, it doesn't matter. The choice of which footballer's skill to enjoy; which professor's research to follow; whose accounting practice to copy. These are unlikely to affect our lives, so long as we do not take them too seriously or actually try to live by them.

When we consider who we follow in life, the position is very different. There are many in the world who offer themselves as leaders, some more credible than others. Politicians offer a national or world view. Philosophers and reli-

gious heads provide their own answers to ethical and spiritual dilemmas. There is even a growing industry of 'life coaches' who advise on everything from career options to home décor.

Many of these are contradictory. One will say that our priority should be charity work, whilst the next says it should be wealth generation. Should we treat others as they treat us, or how we would *like* them to treat us? Is national interest more or less important than a country's place in the world? Maybe we need a leader to tell us which leader to follow... oh dear!

## The Right One to Follow

From the beginning, God demonstrated that He is all-knowing and all-powerful. He created the universe, keeps all life going and guides the lives of men and women. He has made promises, which He keeps; foretold the future through His prophets; and given comprehensive principles and laws to keep people safe and maintain their relationship with Him. This makes Him totally different from the fallible, inconsistent leaders of our world. We can trust Him, rely on Him and be sure that His guidance will never fail or change.

For this reason, God's people were told by Moses in Deuteronomy 8:19 not to follow other gods. Speaking about the nearby nations, he said:

*Take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, "How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise" (Deuteronomy 12:30).*

Rather, God said:

*You shall follow what is altogether just, that you may live and inherit the land which the LORD your God is giving you (Deuteronomy 16:20).*

By following God and His principles, we are assured of a firm foundation for our lives. While we cannot see the future, He can. The obstacles which will come into our lives may seem insurmountable, but He has the divine view and will help us navigate them. He is not subject to change or disaster.

## **“Follow Me”**

When Jesus came, the Son of God and His representative, he made the same call to men and women.

To the fishermen he said: *“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19)*. He called many others from different occupations, like Matthew the taxman (9:9) .



In fact, the call is also a command. If we want to share the hope that God offers, we *must* follow Jesus, thereby following his Father too.

*Whoever desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me (Mark 8:34).*

*He who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me (Matthew 10:38).*

If this sounds rather harsh, don't worry, it isn't. Looking at similar words Jesus used in the Gospel of John, we are assured that following him is about comfort and confidence:

*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand (John 10:27-29).*

*If anyone serves me, let him follow me; and where I am, there my servant will be also. If anyone serves me, him my Father will honour (12:26).*

When we follow Jesus, we can see where we are going and that gives us hope and life. The goal is the Kingdom of God. Life's disasters may be avoided or will become manageable with him as our guide, to help us make the right choices for our long term good. With the Bible in our hand, we have constant access to the words of God and their expression through the Lord Jesus.

In Revelation, the Bible describes those who will be in God's kingdom:

*These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes (Revelation 14:4).*

In the most famous Psalm, the writer is confident:

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life (Psalm 23:6).*

**Editor**