

Come Follow

Matthew 4:18-22 • 9:9-13 • 11:28-30 • 16:24-26 • 19:16-26

New Collective Church • Sunday, September 6, 2026

The Big Idea

We already know how to follow. We do it a hundred times a day with a tap, and it costs nothing, changes nothing, and the person we follow never learns our name. Then we bring that same habit to Jesus and wonder why nothing shifts. In Matthew 4, four men leave their nets, their boat, and their father in the same breath they say yes. Pastor Mark walked four contrasts that all turn out to be true at once, and underneath every one of them sits the uncomfortable question: are we following him in order to become like him, or have we quietly been asking him to become more like us?

LEADER NOTE

OPEN WITH LAST WEEK. Part 1 sent everyone home with one name to invite. Ask how those conversations went, including the ones that did not happen, and do not only follow up on the wins. Pastor Mark built on last week directly from the platform: Simon and Andrew are the same two men from John 1, seen from a different vantage point, and last week's line about coming to see the new you turns up here as you will never see the new you until you get out of the boat. Naming that link takes ten seconds and makes the series feel like one thing rather than five.

Opening Prayer

Thank God that he made the first move. Ask him for the honesty to see what following him actually costs, and the nerve to want it anyway.

Icebreaker

Who is somebody you follow online that you have never met, and what made you hit follow?

LEADER NOTE

Five minutes, and let it be light. You are setting up the exact comparison Pastor Mark opened on, so the answers people give here become the raw material for movement 1. Listen for anyone who says they follow someone they admire and want to be like, because that is the bridge.

Read Together

Open your Bible or app. Read Matthew 4:18-22 out loud together, then keep these handy as the discussion moves.

Matthew 4:18-22 Come follow me. The nets, the boat, and the father, all left at once.

Matthew 9:9-13 Matthew at the tax booth, and go and learn what mercy means.

Matthew 11:28-30 Come to me, all you who are weary. My yoke is easy.

Matthew 16:24-26 Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me.

Matthew 19:16-26 The rich young man, and who then can be saved.

Hosea 6:6 The line Jesus told the Pharisees to go and learn.

LEADER NOTE

Read Matthew 4:18-22 slowly and ask the group to count what gets left. Nets, boat, father. Most people hear only the nets. The father is the one that costs the most, and noticing it does more work than any question you could ask about it.

Discussion

1. Following Is Not What You Think It Is

The frame for everything after it. Modern following costs nothing and changes nobody. The word in the text means a committed student and practitioner of a way of life, and preserve all three parts of the goal Pastor Mark gave: to be with them, to become more like them, and to do what they do.

We have a view of Jesus as if he is Burger King, not be king. I show up and I just ask him to have it my way.

- a.** Where do you notice people assuming Jesus shares their preferences, their instincts, or their politics?
- b.** Looking at your last year honestly: were you becoming more like him, or were you asking him to become more like you?

LEADER NOTE

Question a is deliberately about people in general rather than the person answering, which is what makes it safe enough to answer. Then b turns it inward. Do not let a become a chance to name other groups the room already disagrees with. If it drifts that way, ask what a survey would say about us. Mark 3:14 is the anchor underneath the three-part goal: he appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach. Being with him comes first, and the sending follows.

2. Immediate yet Extraordinary

Matthew 4:18-22

Keep all three things left behind, since the specificity is the point: nets are provision, the boat is possession, the father is safety, comfort and identity. And keep Pastor Mark's qualifier that this is not only about walking away from what is obviously evil. Everything goes on the table.

Don't stay in the boat clicking. Actually get out of the boat and follow him.

- a.** Why do you think a person can sincerely believe Jesus is who he says he is and still never actually move?
- b.** What is still in your boat? Name the thing you would rather Jesus just climbed in beside.

LEADER NOTE

This is the movement where the gospel invitation lives. Pastor Mark closed the whole service here, with a prayer for anyone who had never taken a first step, and said the longer you wait the easier it becomes to never do it. Somebody in your group may be in exactly that spot. On b, expect the honest answers to be relationships and money rather than sin, which is precisely Pastor Mark's point.

3. Inclusive yet Exclusive

Matthew 9:9-13

Both halves, and both are uncomfortable. Whosoever, from John 3:16, is as wide as it gets, and it includes the person you do not like. I am the way, from John 14:6, is as narrow as it gets. Groups almost always find one half easy and the other embarrassing, and which half depends entirely on who is in the room.

While you did not approach him, he approached you. While you could not get to him, he came to you. While you had been passed over by others, he picked you. While you had been ignored by people, he invited you.

- a. Why do you think the inclusive half makes people just as uncomfortable as the exclusive half?
- b. Who are you hesitant to extend mercy to right now?

LEADER NOTE

Question b is the sharpest in the session and Pastor Mark asked it directly from the platform. It is also the natural continuation of last week, where the assignment was to name somebody and invite them. Expect a long pause. Let it sit. If the group is quiet, go first yourself, which is usually the only thing that unlocks it.

LEADER NOTE

On Hosea. I desire mercy, not sacrifice is Hosea 6:6, quoted by Jesus here and again in Matthew 12:7. Hosea married Gomer, she was unfaithful, and in Hosea 3 he buys her back. Pastor Mark had this right. One nuance that strengthens rather than weakens it: the not in that verse is a Hebrew way of saying rather than, so God is not abolishing sacrifice, he is saying mercy is what he was always after underneath it. That is exactly what Jesus is pressing on the Pharisees, who had the sacrifices and none of the mercy.

4. Light yet a Load

Matthew 11:28-30 · Matthew 16:24-26

Pastor Mark called this the messiest part and refused to tie a bow on it, which is the right instinct. Hold his two-front framing: the yoke confronts the person trying to get right through rule keeping, and taking up the cross confronts the person trying to get satisfied apart from God. Neither one is the way. Groups reliably collapse this into whichever failure mode they personally do not have.

Jesus is our yokemate. He has the weight, but he lets you walk with him.

- a. How can the same invitation be rest for the weary and a cross to carry?
- b. Which are you more prone to: trying to earn it, or trying to get satisfied somewhere else?

LEADER NOTE

The yoke background is solid. Taking a teacher's yoke was a real expression for taking on their interpretation and way of life, and Jesus is explicitly contrasting his with the one the religious leaders imposed. Matthew 23:4 has them tying up heavy loads and putting them on other people's shoulders without lifting a finger, and Acts 15:10 calls the law a yoke neither we nor our ancestors could bear. Read either aloud if the group wants the contrast sharpened.

LEADER NOTE

On yokemate. The picture of Jesus in the yoke alongside you pulling the weight is a preacher's extension rather than something Matthew 11:29 states, where the text says take my yoke upon you and learn from me. It is a good image and the theology under it is sound, since 2 Corinthians 5:21 says God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Just know the difference if someone asks where the yokemate part is in the verse. Worth adding: Luke 9:23 has take up their cross daily, which keeps this from sounding like a single dramatic decision.

5. Impossible yet Possible

Matthew 19:16-26

The disciples' astonishment is the hinge. They ask who then can be saved because, as Pastor Mark put it, they all had something. Then keep the parallel he closed on: Jesus was speaking to people who think they are righteous and people who think they are rich. He never named a dollar amount and he never conceded that anyone was actually righteous.

Life is not found in an abundance of my righteousness or in an abundance of my riches. Life is found in one name.

- a. What do you think the disciples heard that made them ask who then can be saved?
- b. Where are you quietly counting on your own righteousness or your own resources?

LEADER NOTE

Two ways a group defuses this passage, and you want to block both. The first is treating sell your possessions as a universal command, which the rest of the New Testament does not support. The second, far more common, is deciding it was about that man's specific idol and therefore not about me. Pastor Mark's framing is the way through: the test is not the size of the account, it is whether there is something you would refuse to release if Jesus asked. He named a relationship that is bankrupting someone and lies that feel like riches while robbing the soul.

Application: Pick One

Pick the one you would rather avoid.

- Have it your way. Catch the moment this week when you want Jesus to agree with you rather than change you. Write down what you were hoping he would sign off on.
- Carry a verse. Take Matthew 4:19 or Matthew 19:26 with you this week.
- Pick your contrast. Which of the four is hardest for you right now, and what is avoiding it costing you?
- Extend the mercy. Name the person you are hesitant to show mercy to and take one step toward them this week.

LEADER NOTE

The fourth one is the through line of the series. Last week the ask was to name somebody and invite them, and this week it sharpens into mercy toward a specific person. Keep the same list of names going week to week rather than starting fresh, since the whole series is building toward people who actually go.

Closing Prayer

Thank Jesus that he came to us rather than waiting for us to qualify.

Ask him to show each person what is still sitting in the boat.

Pray for anyone here ready to take a first step, and for the people this group named last week.

LEADER NOTE

Pastor Mark ended the service with a salvation invitation and the word immediately, landing back on his first contrast. If your group has anyone who has not taken that step, this is the moment, and the honest thing is to say so plainly rather than hinting. Nobody should feel singled out. Offer it to the room and then be available afterward.

“Don’t stay in the boat clicking. Actually get out of the boat and follow him.”

Pastor Mark

Going Deeper

- Read Matthew 4, 9, 11, 16 and 19 in one sitting. The invitation gets costlier and freer at once.
- Read Hosea 3. It is short, and it is the story behind the line Jesus told them to go and learn.
- Read Mark 3:14. He appointed twelve that they might be with him. Being with him comes before being sent.

Read This Before You Meet, Not During

Everything from here on is preparation for you as the leader. None of it needs to be covered in the room. Skim it Monday, keep the accuracy notes in your back pocket in case someone asks, and run the session off the pages above.

Sermon Arc and Key Moves

Pastor Mark gave his own outline and called it It's This and It's That. Four contrasts, each one two things that do not seem to belong together, all of them true at the same time.

- Frame. Following is too familiar a word. Modern following costs nothing. A disciple is a committed student whose goal is to be with the teacher, become like the teacher, and do what the teacher does.
- The reversal. Only one person in this relationship should be changing, and we quietly want it to be him.
- 1. Immediate yet extraordinary. Matthew 4. Nets, boat, father, left at once. Everything goes on the table, not just the obviously sinful things.
- 2. Inclusive yet exclusive. Matthew 9. Whoever, and the only way. Matthew the tax collector, and go and learn what mercy means.
- 3. Light yet a load. Matthew 11 and Matthew 16. My yoke is easy, and take up your cross. Religion on one side, the way of the world on the other, and neither one is the way.
- 4. Impossible yet possible. Matthew 19. The rich young man, who then can be saved, and with God all things are possible.
- Landing. Not those who think they are righteous or think they are rich, but those who know they are neither. Then a salvation invitation that returns to immediately.

Key Cross-References

Verified against NIV. Each supports a specific claim made from the platform.

- Mark 3:14. He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach. The biblical anchor for the three-part goal of a disciple.
- John 15:16. You did not choose me, but I chose you. The reversal, stated by Jesus himself.
- Acts 4:13. They saw the courage of Peter and John and realized they were unschooled, ordinary men, and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. The firmest ground for Pastor Mark's point about who did not get picked.
- John 3:16 and John 14:6. The inclusive half and the exclusive half, side by side.
- Hosea 6:6 and Hosea 3:1-2. The verse Jesus quotes, and the story behind the prophet who wrote it.
- Matthew 23:4. They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders. The yoke Jesus is contrasting his with.
- Acts 15:10. A yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear.
- 2 Corinthians 5:21. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Underwrites the yokemate picture.
- Luke 9:23. Take up their cross daily. Keeps movement 4 from sounding like one dramatic decision.
- Romans 3:10 and Isaiah 64:6. There is no one righteous, and our righteous acts are like filthy rags. Both stand behind Jesus' irony in Matthew 9:13.

Series Alignment

Part	Title / Focus	Core Scripture
Part 1	Come See	John 1:35-51; John 4:7-42; John 1:14
Part 2 ← HERE	Come Follow	Matthew 4:18-22; 9:9-13; 11:28-30; 16:24-26; 19:16-26

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide was drafted with AI assistance from the sermon transcript and Pastor Mark's own message notes, then reviewed by a group leader for scriptural accuracy and faithfulness to the message before it was shared. Scripture references follow the NIV. If something does not sound like the message you heard, please say so.