



Vantage Point

Pt. 6 - Following the Leader

Peter Pan video (Following The Leader)

So we're paying our dues to being in Orlando and the magical world of Disney. Now I'm sure what we all saw there took us back to some point in our childhood around the time we first saw Peter Pan. But there were some real problems with what we just witnessed there, that in another context, would mortify us.



Let me commentate:

A group of very young boys are out in the wilderness **alone** and are being blindly led by a boy, who's not much older and has his eyes closed the half the time. He can't really know where He's going. He leads them through a torrential waterfall to cross a creek on slippery rocks, unknowing that the last rock is not a rock at all but a hippo which could have swallowed several of the boys at one time. To make matters worse, his toddler little brother, who can barely walk, is tagging along in the rear of the line. How responsible is that? From there we find them crossing hand over hand on a vine no telling how high up in the trees. If that's not bad enough, care is not taken to have them cross one at a time, but all their weight is on the **same vine**. It's a wonder the thing didn't snap. Fortunately, they made it through and found themselves on the ground, only to walk right by a family of wild gorillas (whom we all know to be ferocious and territorial.) They survive that, but did you notice that the leader of this group is so out of it, he doesn't even notice that his top hat is removed and replaced. Again, how did this kid qualify to be the leader and take care of the rest of these children? But they go on through a field, startling a rhino who could have charged and smashed them to a pulp. Finally they walk by a sleeping bear without a care in the world, waking it with their irresponsible singing. The bear is clearly agitated but stays its attack only due to its bewilderment of the small teddy bear the toddler is carrying on his shoulders. How do you like that? The smallest member of that party is probably the one who prevented the certain mauling that was about to happen. And what is the purpose of all this? Well as they are indicating in song, they are "following the leader." And where is the leader leading them? They are going to assault the group of natives who have resided on that land long before they arrived and want nothing more than to be left alone. So there you have it. And the question I have after observing all that is: what posses someone to follow someone else through all that peril?

There is another story I want to share with you where a guy did something pretty wild for the sake of following his leader

Matthew 14:22-33 (The Message)

As soon as the meal was finished, he insisted that the disciples get in the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he dismissed the people.²³ With the crowd dispersed, he climbed the mountain so he could be by himself and pray. He stayed there alone, late into the night.²⁴ Meanwhile, the boat was far out to sea when the wind came up against them and they were battered by the waves.²⁵ At about four o'clock in the morning, Jesus came toward them walking on the water.²⁶ They were scared out of their wits. "A ghost!" they said, crying out in terror.²⁷ But Jesus was quick to comfort them. "Courage, it's me. Don't be afraid."²⁸ Peter, suddenly bold, said, "Master, if it's really you, call me to come to you on the water."²⁹ He said, "Come ahead."

Jumping out of the boat, Peter walked on the water to Jesus.³⁰ But when he looked down at the waves churning beneath his feet, he lost his nerve and started to sink. He cried, "Master, save me!"³¹ Jesus didn't hesitate. He reached down and grabbed his hand. Then he said, "Faint-heart, what got into you?"³² The two of them climbed into the boat, and the wind died down.³³ The disciples in the boat, having watched the whole thing, worshiped Jesus, saying, "This is it! You are God's Son for sure!"

What in the world is going through Peter's mind for him to think that he can step out of that boat and defy the laws of physics? Have you ever thought about that. It isn't like he didn't know what happens in the water. After all, as a fisherman, he basically lived on the water. There is something extraordinary that is taking place here between Jesus and Peter that we need to "dive into" (no pun intended). But before we get into that I want to revisit what we have talked about in the previous weeks.

If you haven't been here, we're in a series about discipleship. We're calling it Vantage Point to hopefully introduce to you some perspectives about what it looks like to be a disciple of Jesus Christ in ways you may have never thought of. So let's take a moment and quickly recap the key Vantage points from the previous 5 weeks.

1. Discipleship is not a program

The first week we said that discipleship is not a program, but a process. If you've been in church before, you've probably heard discipleship mentioned as a part of that church, but as we look at scripture, we see that its supposed to be a way of life. Here at Genesis Church, it's not a part of who we are, but it is the driving force behind everything we do. We take it literally when Jesus said "Go and make disciples."

2. You can't be a disciple if you're not willing to learn.

A disciple is a student. A good student is one who realizes that they don't know everything and they have a lot to learn. We looked at the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3, where Jesus told him that he must rethink what he already knew in order to fully understand.

3. We are to conform to the image of Jesus, not conform Jesus to the image we want Him to be.

In order to fully grasp the teachings and actions of Jesus, we have to understand the culture and heritage that Jesus was a part of. In short, Jesus was a Jewish rabbi. He thought, taught, and acted as a Jew. This is important, because sometimes, we like to take Him and make Him into something we are more comfortable with.

4. Discipleship is about a relationship.

We already said that discipleship is process and not a program. Here we went one step further and said that being a disciple is all about having a relationship with Jesus. In this relationship, He is the master, and we are the apprentices

5. Discipleship was first built upon a community with others.

Then last week we talked about how the disciples were never alone. We discussed that as disciples, we have to have others in our lives. In fact we looked at how different the first 12 were, yet the lived life together and we should do the same.

Today, there is one thing I want to point out that runs through all that we've talked about so far. A disciple of Jesus is one who gives their all. We see over and over again how the disciples of Jesus were fully devoted to Him. There is a word for this: **PASSION!** To make sure we're all on the same page, lets look at the basic definition:

1. **Emotion:** intense, driving, or overmastering feeling or conviction; an outbreak of anger
2. **Ardent affection:** love; a strong liking or desire for or devotion to some activity, object, or concept; an object of desire or deep interest

This leads us to this week's Key Vantage Point:
Passion to be like your Master

So the question I want each of you to ask yourselves this morning is:

What do I need to do to become a passionate disciple of Jesus?

One thing I feel I need to point out is that I use the words disciple and follower synonymously. In the years I've been studying specifically about what a disciple is, I come to give discipleship a very simple definition which is

The simple definition is: **Following Jesus!**

- Lifestyle not just a status
- Action not just belief.

And it is not easy

Following Jesus (being a disciple) demands our total commitment. It requires every bit of what we have. Everything else in our lives take second place to Him. Being His Disciple is enlisting in a war against an ungodly world, powers, circumstances, and even our own sinful nature; and these enemies come at us relentlessly everyday. They don't get tired, they don't give up, they stop at nothing until you are defeated and useless. Not only are we to fight, we are to fight hard, and we are expected to win. NO matter the circumstance, or opposition, we are told that losing is not an option. But don't take my word for it, see what Jesus had to say about what is required to follow Him.

Luke 14:25-33

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters— yes, even life itself—such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.' "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

Sounds like fun right?

Truth is that this sounds overwhelming. Many times we it seems we cannot even handle our daily routine of work, family, school, bills, etc; so how in the world are we to live up to these standards? Then, unfortunately, our tendency is to tell ourselves that is not for me; I cannot do this; or I'm not good enough to be that. The question at this point is, why do we give up so easily? Why do we settle for less? **What causes us to think that we cannot be a follower of Jesus with the passion that the disciples had?** Think on that while we look more closely at the story I told earlier.



Matthew 14:22-27

22 Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. 23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24 but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. 25 Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. 27 But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. **Don't be afraid.**"

There are several things we need to take notice of within the story here:

First you have to understand how a Jewish person thought of the sea. In the New Testament, the sea symbolizes chaos, evil, and evil beings. The depths of the sea were seen as the home of demons, a place called the Abyss, according to Jewish tradition. Luke records Jesus' casting out of demons who beg not to be sent into the Abyss: When Jesus sends them there anyway, they enter a herd of pigs that plunges into the sea. Luke 8:31 Ray Vanderlaan
In addition to being in the water, they were seeing something that they didn't understand (Jesus walking on water.) Their reaction was fear. Can you blame them? What would you think? Finally is Jesus' response with is "Don't be afraid"

What is the most frequent command is all of Scripture "**Don't be afraid**"

Let's stop there for a moment and ask why is God telling us this over and over again. A typical life:

Even as early as childhood, we fear being alone, unloved, and abandoned. Remember the first days of school? We mix with our peers and are afraid of looking stupid, or not measuring up to everyone else. Of course it gets easier as we get older right? WRONG! We spend so much time worrying about relationships. Who will we marry? Will the timing be right? Will they be the right one? Will the marriage last. We fear what will happen in our jobs. We're afraid that we won't get the right one, and if we do, will we be able to perform it? The we wonder what would happen if we loose it. As life goes on, we worry and fear about retirement until finally there is nothing else to fear except death. If you think about it, death is what ultimately looms behind all these, and every other, fears.

We have to understand that if we let fear rule our lives, we will live defeated. We'll never take chances. We'll never put ourselves out. Our decisions will always be made out of desperation with limited options. Fear leaves us cowering in corners unable to comprehend the life that is available. It crushes our passion: leaving us striving for nothing more than comfort and security.

Fear keeps us from following our dreams and fulfilling our purpose? Fear keeps us from taking chances. Fear gives us a false sense of security in thinking that if I always play it safe, then I'll never loose. Sometimes that is true, but then you'll never gain either.

What I hope that each of you will do is really examine your entire life and ask God to reveal to you where fear is dominating. This can be extremely difficult for some because facing these fears will require facing issues that are suppressed and difficult. Your life has been lived by avoiding these issues, and you may even need help dealing with them. While difficult they may be, not facing them, will keep you living less of a life than you could. N.T. Wright made a very simple but profound statement when he said,

**"...until you learn to live without fear you won't find it easy to follow Jesus."
N.T. Wright**

So, the next question has to be...

How do we overcome fear in our lives?

Let' go back to our story of Jesus and Peter.

Matthew 14:28

28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." 29 "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.



Ok, so we've established that there's something extraordinary out of place happening and that they're afraid But when Jesus calls to them, Peter reacts despite being afraid jumps out of the boat. What was Jesus to Peter that he would trust Him for the extraordinary? That's just it...Peter knew and trusted Jesus. What does that look like to us today? How can we know Jesus good enough to "jump out of the boat" when He calls?

- We can devote our life to following Him
- We can commit to learning from Him
- We can accept who He is instead of making Him to who we want Him to be
- We can put Him first in our lives
- We can accept that He intends our journey to lived out with others

Peter knew enough of who Jesus was to passionately trust, and go, to Him even in impossible circumstances. What circumstances do are you facing today that seem impossible? Perhaps the possibilities would change if you were more familiar and passionate with Jesus. Would that we all have that same passion that Peter had.

But let's not fool ourselves into thinking that this is easy:

Matthew 14:30-33

30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord,save me!"

31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

32 And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. 33 Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."



Things did not work out for Peter like he planned. Yes he trusted Jesus, and was passionate about stepping out of the boat, but he became distracted. He noticed the waves around him allowing fear to creep in. His focus became less on Jesus an more on his incapacibilities. Fear crept in, and he started to sink. Fortunately, Peter cried out to Jesus again, and Jesus caught him. This is a reminder that only way to "stay afloat" is to keep our attention on Jesus at all times. Now, lets go back to the question we left off earlier: **What causes us to think that we cannot be a follower of Jesus with the passion that the disciples had?**

The answer is fear. The better we understand this, hopefully, the more likely we will call out to our Savior for him to pull us back into Himself.

When we follow our leader, Jesus, we can trust where He leads us and that we have the capability, IN HIM, to do what he wants us to accomplish. In Him, we can live a life of passionately living as His disciple- to do what is impossible. We don't have to be afraid, because we have a relationship with Him, and that relationship is pure love. Did you hear me? There is no fear because He is love! John tells us this straight out:
[There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. 1 John 4:18 TNIV](#)

Understanding the impact that fear has in your life will hopefully help you understand how important it is to pursue Jesus as His disciple because that is the ONLY WAY to have [the passion to be like your Master](#)

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