

# An Example To Trace & Steps To Follow

A sermon by Rev. David Johnson

A couple decades ago there was a big marketing push based on a book called “In His Steps.” Do you remember the slogan, “What Would Jesus Do? There were WWJD wristbands, T-shirts, Bibles, Calendars, CD’s, Necklaces, Rings, Ties, and endless books and devotionals. Maybe you remember seeing the spin-offs, “What Would Jesus Drive,” or “What Would Jesus Eat?”

The premise of this movement was to encourage Christians to live their lives based on the example of Jesus; to ask yourself before making a decision, “*What would Jesus Do?*” The problem with that philosophy is that in order to successfully answer that question, you must have been exposed to, and know Jesus’ character! It’s simply not enough to know about Jesus or follow His “twitter” thread. You have to really KNOW Jesus.

Lot’s of people got caught up in the WWJD hype and thought the WWJD concept was a great idea. But most had little or no idea how to actually answer the question. They just didn’t have enough data to accurately formulate an answer! Few had read the book, *In His Steps*, and even fewer had really taken the time to study the gospel accounts of Jesus’ life and ministry! They were trying to answer the question *What Would Jesus Do*, based on the generalities gathered from Christian authors, preachers, or even some accepted societal norms. Sadly, few could accurately answer the WWJD question from firsthand experience, and most were simply answering the query based on the subjective *What Would My Jesus Do?*

It’s kind of like another old show Vicki and I used to watch called, *While You Were Out*. In the show, one spouse would remodel part of the house, with the help of a small construction crew, while the other spouse was distracted elsewhere for the weekend. The point of the show was to see if one spouse truly knew the tastes of the other. Throughout the weekend project, the host would slip in little questions for the remodeling spouse, to see how well they knew the preferences of their mate. When the absent spouse returned, the quiz questions were asked of them. If the first spouse answered correctly, prizes were awarded (accessories to enhance the remodel).

In order for the show to work without ending in divorce proceedings, one spouse had to know the wishes of the other. They had to know their spouse intimately, and be willing to put their own desires or bias’s aside. They must have spent time learning their likes and dislikes. They couldn’t, and shouldn’t, make these types of decisions without sufficiently studying their mates.

But yet, we do it all the time with God. We go through life making snap decisions when we have little or no idea what God really thinks about a particular issue. I get calls all the time from people asking me what I think they

should do in a particular situation. What they really want to know is, “What does God think I should do here?”

Now, don’t get me wrong! I’m not saying that I don’t want people to call me for counsel, prayer, or encouragement. The Bible is clear about wisdom being found in the guidance of many counselors. Also, I take my call as Pastor and Shepherd very seriously and feel honored to be used by God in this way. All I’m saying is that most people call me because they haven’t spent enough time with God themselves. Or if they have, they’re struggling with what God actually wants them to do and are looking for someone who will agree with what they truly want.

That’s why books like 1 Peter are so important, and why they get so little air-time in today’s culture. They prick us and make us uncomfortable; they challenge us to walk a spiritual path that’s difficult and painful. But Peter and the apostles understood better than most, how critical it would be for a believer in an unbelieving culture to hear a clarion call to holiness rather than placebo platitudes.

1. Peter begins with a general call to Christ.(ch.1)  
“**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...**” 1:3
2. Newborn Christians long for the Word (2:1-3)  
“**like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,** <sup>3</sup> **if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.**” 2:3
3. Christians are (must be) different from the world (2:4-10)  
“**But you are A chosen race, A royal priesthood, A holy nation, A people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;** <sup>10</sup> **for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.** 2:9-10
4. Christians must “mirror” excellent behavior (2:11-12)  
“**Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.** 2:12
5. Christians honor all, especially authorities (2:13-17)  
“**Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.** <sup>17</sup> **Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.** 2:16-17
6. Christians work hard and respect their bosses (2:18-20)  
“**For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.**” 2:20

After laying these foundational principles before his readers, Peter brings them to this consolidating statement:  
**1 Peter 2:21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,**

“For you have been called for this purpose...” What purpose? Suffering! Peter says as much in his next phrase, “...since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example...” You see, what Peter is reminding us, and what we so often forget, is that you can’t follow the Christian

pathway without suffering. It is part and parcel of the Christian's identity and calling. It was also on this pathway of self-sacrifice and hardship that Jesus walked Himself, showing us the very footsteps to take on the way.

This is where the concept of "In His Steps" began. It was never intended to be a flippant marketing catchphrase or even a superficial filter for extravagant living. This call to walk as Christ (not simply walking with Him) is to be a wakeup call for the serious follower of Jesus. A shock-collar of sorts, to get the attention of the easily distracted. But the idea of asking WWJD actually goes much deeper than a mental hurdle we overcome before we act:

*"By all this suffering of his the Christ who suffered thus leaves us [an example] (found only in this verse), a writing or a drawing that is to be placed under another sheet and to be re-traced on that upper sheet by the pupil ... "in order that we may follow his tracks." ... We must go the way the Master went. When he was doing the highest good for others he suffered; this is the reason that our call obligates us to suffer in our humble way when we do good to others for conscience's sake. - Lenski*

You see, to be a follower of Jesus, we must study His life and character so well, that we are able to trace in our own lives, the very example of Jesus. We aren't only to walk in the proximity of Jesus, we're to be a mirror image of His life sketched on the pages of Scripture. It was this understanding of what it truly means to walk *In His Steps*, which Peter carries forward in his thoughts:

**1 Peter 2:22-25 who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; <sup>23</sup> and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; <sup>24</sup> and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. <sup>25</sup> For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.**

One commentator summarized these verses this way:

*"For this you were called because also Christ suffered in your behalf, leaving behind for you a writing-copy in order that you may follow his tracks;*

- \* He the One who did not do sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;
- \* He the One who, being reviled, kept not reviling in turn; suffering, kept not threatening but kept committing (himself) to the One judging righteously;
- \* He the One who his own self carried up our sins in his body on the wood in order that, having ceased to exist for the sins, we may live for righteousness;
- \* He the One with whose stripes you were healed!"

This is the Jesus whose example we're to trace and in whose steps we're to walk. But this won't come easily. It can only come through humble submission to the Holy Spirit and study. As Paul writes in Romans 12:

**Romans 12:1-2 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.**

The only way you will know *What Would Jesus Do?*, is by knowing Him well enough to answer the question, *What Did Jesus Do?* What is the nature and character of God? What has He taught? What principles from Scripture apply in this situation?

You may not find your identical circumstances listed in a particular chapter and verse. But if you have spent enough time studying His teaching, observing His creation, examining His actions, you will have enough exposure to successfully identify what the perfect will of God is for that situation, by the power and leading of the Holy Spirit.