

REPS  
DAY TWO  
**FOLLOW THE  
LEADER**

**READ**

**JOHN 12:20-26**

**MARK 8:34-38**

**REFLECT**

In our modern conception of faith, a lot of emphasis is placed on belief. While such emphasis is entirely appropriate, the word “belief” is often reduced to mere intellectual assent. If we say the right words in the right way and behave in accordance with a certain set of doctrines or rules, then we might be deemed a “Christian.” But Jesus isn’t interested in mere believers, he wants followers. True faith isn’t just assenting to what Jesus says, but doing what Jesus says, no matter how difficult or costly. It means following Jesus into deeply uncomfortable or dark places so that we can do the work of the light. It even means following Jesus into suffering for the sake of others.

This is what it means to believe that Jesus is not just our savior, but also our Lord. To follow Jesus is to mature from seeing him as a spectacle and to seeing him as the one to whom we are willing to commit our whole lives. Jesus’s own words on this matter can seem especially harsh: “Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” (John 12:25) Must we really die in order to follow Jesus?

As athletes, we have an intimate knowledge of the sacrifices necessary to become competitive in sports. Sometimes sacrifice looks like submitting ourselves to a particular workout plan or coaching philosophy. Sometimes it means saying no to our personal desires or needs for the good of our teammates. Sometimes it takes the form of enduring temporal pain and suffering for the realization of a later, greater goal. None of these things are necessarily easy. In fact, some of them may seem foolish to a world that preaches self-gratification or are just straight-up undesirable. Similarly, when Jesus tells us to follow him, sometimes it means submitting ourselves to teachings that will put us at odds with our own comfort or immediate context. It means aligning our lifestyles and behaviors with the life of the one whose name we bear and whom we claim to follow. The payoff won’t necessarily be immediate or self-gratifying, but we can have confidence that the ultimate goal is worth it.

While he was on earth, Jesus’ life of service led him to suffering on the cross, which resulted in the ultimate victory over sin and the grave. We are the beneficiaries of this great sacrifice – are we now willing follow Jesus and do likewise for our teams, our campuses, and our world?

**RESPOND**

- What are some ways in which you might believe in Jesus without truly following him? Is there a place that you might hesitate to go even if Jesus was there?

Jesus would often be found in “unsavory” places associating with the “wrong” people so that he could love on them, listen to them, forgive them, and demonstrate that God’s glory could be revealed through them. (Mark 2:15-17, Luke 7: 36-50, John 9:1-5)

- Who are the “unsavory” people on your team or on your campus? Would it cost you to love them like Jesus would?
- Ask the Lord to give you the faith and courage to live a life that points to the one whom you follow.