



WHEN HE CALLS US TO FOLLOW

July 2019

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him.

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It is said that following Jesus isn't easy. You will have to give up things. Your life will change. The disciples gave up their fishing nets and boats, their careers. They joined Jesus, giving up their self-centeredness.

Committing our lives to Jesus as the One who died to save us from our sins will mean leaving old ways behind. We'll have to leave our sins behind. Our lives will no longer be centered on ourselves. We will need to spend time with him.

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus called Peter and other disciples to follow him. After the resurrection, when he met Peter on a beach, he again called him to "follow me." Today he calls you in the same way. Are you ready for the journey?

It's true. Following Jesus isn't easy. It's challenging. But I've found it to be a great adventure too. Following Jesus can be compared to what it means to explore places you've never gone before, to hike in high mountains with green valleys lying below, to go to far-off lands and witness new and different cultures. None of this is easy either, but who would want to miss such experiences? Such is the joy Jesus can bring to our lives.

Walking with Jesus over the last thirty years has been like that for me. Sometimes it was hard, but I would never have wanted to miss any of it. I was excited about the work God called me to do. It brought fulfilment and meaning to my life. I never knew where Jesus would take me, but the journey always turned out better than anything I could have planned on my own. Yes, there was uncertainty. But Jesus was a trustworthy companion.

My disabilities didn't disappear. Suffering didn't disappear. But through my work for God I experienced a sense of fulfilment that few other endeavours could supply.

Hebrew 12:2 is an interesting line: *"For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

When I first read this, I was puzzled. You might find it so yourself. Why was Jesus joyful about going to the cross and suffering?

Christ's joy came from the knowledge that his suffering would save souls. The joy was not in the suffering but in the realization that good would come out of it. I feel the same way. I've given my life to Jesus and I suffered discrimination and injustice as a result of the work he called me to. But in the end, I know that following him in the way I did will help many. That's my joy.

You too can know this joy. You'll find it by following Jesus' example. By trying to be like him. By being humble, caring for those in need. By not thinking of yourself alone. By telling others about the hope they can find in him.

And the best of all? It's when you ask Jesus to fill your heart with his love and to help spread that love to those around you. That, I believe, brings the greatest joy.

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