



Links Players

FOLLOWERS OF JESUS 1: LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS

And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. (Matthew 4:19-20, ESV)

TWENTY-THREE YEARS LATER, there's no question that First Tee has grown up. Oh sure, it's still all about the kids, especially those kids who would otherwise struggle to obtain the opportunities for learning and recreation provided to them by the program.

First Tee, if you don't know by now, is junior golf and a whole lot more. And those who run the many, many chapters around the United States will tell you it's the *whole lot more* that makes a difference for the kids. The Nine Healthy Habits promote physical, emotional, and social well-being, while the Nine Core Values—honesty, integrity, sportsmanship, respect, confidence, responsibility, perseverance, courtesy, and judgment—train a child to be a leader no matter what course he or she follows.

Leadership is a powerful idea, and it isn't just for kids. It's presumed that everyone will reach this next level in life. Indeed, almost everyone does in one way or another—as a parent, a mentor, a coach, or even a bad influence! If you browse online, in-store, or at the library for books on leadership, you'll find shelves full of them. The leadership gurus abound, and many of them are making a very good living by fueling the hopes of those who would lead.

Then there is Jesus. I'm not given to calling him a guru, though he was smarter and wiser than any person who ever lived. As the Son of God, he was the incarnate carrier of "ways that are higher than our ways and thoughts that are higher than our thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9). He understood life as none of us do. So guru or sage or master consultant, Jesus outshines them all. And what Jesus knew was this: You cannot rightly lead until you have learned to follow.

Does that sound like a disappointing comedown? Probably. Humble callings do that to a person. Any person. But Jesus put the line in order: "Follow me, and I will make you..."

The leadership wise guys usually do all they can to build you up and tell you that you can do it. Jesus says, *If you follow me, you'll discover exactly what leadership should look like—and it's going to surprise you.* This is a calling of another kind, but it's the calling of Jesus, and one we do not want to ignore.

Opening questions What are key attributes you identify with excellent leaders? How does one come by such traits?

READING Matthew 4:18-22, Matthew 9:9-13, 1 Peter 2:18-25

Following Jesus (Matthew 4)

What features of this brief encounter stand out to you? What do you think prepared the fishermen to follow Jesus so willingly?

Another follower (Matthew 9)

Unlike the others, Matthew was not a fisherman. How wide is the variety of Jesus' followers? What do they have in common? How do you fit in among them?

'In his steps' (1 Peter 2)

What did Peter identify as some of the hallmarks of Jesus' life? Do you find yourself in a similar place or a different one? How closely can you follow in Jesus' steps, especially if your life seems much different than his?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2020 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/Bq1Hy51cD9Q>