

## Follow Me

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Stephen Ambrose is the author of a book called *Band of Brothers*. While most have probably not read the book, the HBO TV series produced by Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg put Stephen Ambrose and his book on the map. The plot is about Easy Company in the 101<sup>st</sup> Parachute Infantry Division in World War II. Easy Company was dropped in the hot zone on D-Day to clear the way for the Marines who took the beaches. They were used more than any other parachute division and suffered unbelievable casualties.

The author, Steven Ambrose, is a historian who gathered facts about his story from army records, journals, letters, and personal interviews. Most of his information, however, came from a man named Dick Winters. Winters is clearly a main character in the book and TV miniseries. He is the hero and leader on most occasions, and even after he left Easy Company the plot of the book still follows his adventures.

Every person who spoke of Dick Winters commented on his natural ability to lead others. Winters said in his memoirs that his theme in life, and later after the war, was simply, "Follow me". He did not tell people in war or business to do things that he would not, or had not done himself. Until about two years ago, Winters was still traveling around the country conducting leadership seminars which are appropriately titled, "Follow Me."

These words, "Follow me," were some of Jesus' first and lasts.

Jesus' baptism by John marked the beginning of his ministry. Immediately after Jesus was baptized, according to Matthew's gospel, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. After He returned He went to Galilee (Matt. 4:12). "Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, "**Follow Me**, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:18-19).

Similarly, Jesus' last recorded words to Peter were identical. John 21:18-19 says, "Truly, truly, I say to you [Peter], when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go. Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "**Follow Me!**"

Peter did not walk ahead of the Lord in order to go beyond the things that Jesus taught. Neither did he walk beside Jesus as an equal. Peter's place was to follow in the steps of the Christ. Even when Peter would walk on the water in Mark 14 it was only after Jesus already had. Jesus did not tell His disciples to do anything that He had not done, or that he was not willing to do himself. Even when Christ alluded to Peter about his death it was only after Jesus had died that same horrible fate.

The command to follow Jesus was not only a command for Peter. "And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and **follow Me**'" (Mk. 8:34). Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Jesus glorified God in every aspect of his life. Jesus came to associate with sinners in order to show them the way and the truth and the life. Are we following him?

We are to follow Jesus in life and in death; but that's not all. God's promise is that his people will follow Jesus to heaven. Just before Jesus' death, "Simon Peter said to Him, 'Lord, where are You going?' Jesus answered, 'Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later'" (Jn. 13:36). "For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection..." (Rom. 6:5). Jesus blazed a trail so that we can follow Him here and now, but also, so we can follow Him straight into heaven after our walks on this earth are finished.

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