

HOW TO FOLLOW (MK 8:31-38)
Given by the Rev. Corinne Hodges
Sun., March 8, 2009, St. John of the Cross, Bristol

- I. Intro
 - A. Vestry questionnaire “What are your gifts and strengths as a leader?”
 - 1. Difficulty with answering, thrown off by the word “leader”
 - 2. Many people are more comfortable with the notion of being a follower—let someone else be in charge, do hard work, get blamed if something goes wrong
 - B. Interesting though, that esp. in the area of faith, we often discover that being a follower is not so easy

- II. MK 8 Jesus helps by providing instructions on how to be a follower:
 - A. Deny ourselves
 - B. Take up your cross
 - C. Follow Christ

- III. Deny ourselves: story of friend who discovered infidelity in marriage
 - A. Deny=to declare untrue or refuse to admit or believe
 - 1. If someone tells us something we do not want to hear (denial of truth)
 - 2. If we fall ill, deny prognosis
 - 3. If someone lies to us or cheats on us, don’t want to believe it
 - 4. J: could not deny the truth, evidence was there=anger, hurt
 - B. Deny oneself=self-restraint, exercise self-control for the greater good
 - 1. Other friends surprised that J not more mad
 - 2. To put the needs of her children and family before her own
 - 3. Get along, make the divorce as amicable as possible

- IV. Take up our cross
 - A. Cross(es)—the suffering(s) each of us have in our lives
 - B. Weekend J told news. Struck by the crosses each friend had to bear:
 - 1. Discovery of disloyalty=loss of marriage, home, family, security.
 - 2. Child with serious illness.
 - 3. Adoption.
 - 4. Story same with each of us—most of us at some point in our lives have, do or will know suffering at a personal level
 - C. Take up our cross—not an “if,” but how we handle it
 - 1. Resent suffering and live a life of bitterness
 - 2. L: Accept it as a fact of life and move on in a new way—what I saw each of my friends doing

- V. Follow Christ
 - A. Follow=not to lead, allowing someone else to be at helm and make decisions
 - B. Follow Christ—Christ as director of our life
 - 1. Don't always want to do what God wants us to do—precisely why we deny the truth, resist pick up our cross
 - 2. Follow Christ takes TRUST
 - a. Like Abraham in the desert, we are asked to walk an unknown path
 - b. We cannot see where the road is going and so we have to believe God will lead us to the right place at the right time, God will take care of us
 - 3. Didn't want to get divorced; didn't want to move and leave all her friends; didn't want to work—hadn't had job since after college
 - 4. Now: Relationship that is healthy and happy; new home closer to family and has great support; discovered skills she never knew she had and has gone from a part-time job to a full-time career that pays the bills and she enjoys
 - 5. God given her new perspective on life: she no longer takes her family, friends, home or health for granted; she is truly grateful for what God has given her in a whole new way
- VI. Concl.
 - A. Fact us that in this world, we need both leaders and followers. For we cannot have one without the other.
 - 1. Leaders need people who are willing to join them and help carry out dreams, hopes and ambitions
 - 2. Followers need someone who is willing to set the tone, guide and steer
 - B. But in the area of faith, there is truly only one leader...and it's not us.
 - C. ALL of us are equal followers: called to be selfless, pick up our individual sufferings, and step behind Jesus on the path to life.