



Steppin' Out

**1 Peter 2:21 NIV
...you should follow in his steps.**

Are You Satisfied With Your GPS?

Ben since his was really young has always wanted to walk with me when I went around the school where we live. And he is like any child; he likes to talk as we go. One time we were chugging along, checking doors to make sure they were locked and I noticed that he sounded a bit out of breath. He was in the middle of a story and I was listening to him somewhat distractedly and I had not noticed what was happening. Ben was keeping up with me but not without extreme effort. For every step I took it required about three or four of his. I was walking so fast that he was practically running all the while maintaining his dialogue. The realization that Ben was so determined to be with me that he was willing to essentially run the whole way was humbling. Then as I slowed my pace to match his normal gait, the thought struck me. In whose steps would I struggle so much to keep pace? Is there anyone that I want so badly to emulate?

Who would you say walks in your footsteps? Or more pertinently, in whose footsteps are you walking right now? Who is your pacesetter, the one you are following? Are you keeping up with that person or lagging behind? Have you stayed on track or gotten off the path? Are you walking in the footsteps of your mother? Are you taking the same track as she took or is it your father? Perhaps if you think about it, your grandfather or grandmother is the one in whose footsteps you walk. Could it be a teacher that you are walking alongside or a big brother or sister? Maybe you have been trying your best to keep up with a mentor who taught you the business; or it might be that you have been following in the footsteps of your best friend who has always walked faster and more confidently than you. In whose footsteps are you walking right now? Have you thought about it, that there is the possibility that you really are trying to keep up with someone,

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Awakening

**Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory...
Luke 9:32NIV**

following in the footsteps of a person you may not even like or respect? Are you following in someone's footsteps?

The Apostle Peter famously insisted that every Christian has been called to follow in Christ's footsteps. **To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.** (1 Peter 2:21NIV) But what does that mean? How do you do it? Jesus made it clear that he too followed in someone's footsteps, those of the Father. He said, **"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.** (John 5:19 NIV) This was possible because somehow the Father showed the Son what He was doing. **For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.** (John 5:20 NIV) Somehow, as Jesus went about His business through the day, talking and laughing and eating walking from place to place, He could see what the Father was doing and it was clear to Him. So the Father, who was not visible in a physical sense and who also rarely spoke in a physical sense was able to show the Son exactly what he was doing in the physical space where Jesus lived.

Now if we are going to follow in the Son's footsteps, the Son who is not visible to us either, we must figure out what it was that Jesus saw so that He could follow in the Father's footsteps. Now we are not just considering principles that we are to follow or laws such as the Ten Commandments that tell us a way of acting but in real time, knowing somehow what the Son is doing and where He is going so we can follow in His footsteps just as the Son followed in the Father's footsteps.

Here is our premise. At every moment and in every way, the Son followed in the Father's footsteps so just a few examples of Jesus' actions should bring us clarity in this, how He could figure out what the Father, who is invisible was doing as Jesus went along His way. Let us consider a couple of examples of this process. When Jesus spoke with the woman at the well, in John 4, and carried on an extensive conversation with her, it was not a normal thing to do. Clearly He went outside what was reasonable when He did this because the disciples were stunned by it and even the woman was taken aback by His behavior. This was not mere social politeness on Jesus' part as He chatted with her and it left Him open to criticism. Yet because we know at each and every moment what Jesus did was connected to following in the Father's footsteps, we must assume this was precisely that. Jesus was following in the footsteps of the Father and doing what He knew the Father was also doing.

What was it Jesus saw that made it clear that talking to the woman at the well was following in the Father's footsteps? If we just take Jesus' words, we know one thing is true that He noticed. The woman was thirsty. And that thirst could only be quenched by what the Father could give her. She did not need physical water, she needed a dramatic change in her life that only God was able to do and she was thirsty. That is why Jesus asked her if she wanted living water. **"If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."** (John 4:10 NIV) What was it that Jesus saw about this woman that made Him realize that the Father was at work with her and that if He spoke with her, He would be following in the Father's footsteps? He saw that she was spiritually thirsty and it was

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a thirst only God could quench. That is all we can see with certainty from the description.

There is another example and that is Jesus inviting Himself over to Zacchaeus' house for lunch. Now all we know about Zacchaeus is that he was a tax collector, he was short and he went to an awful lot of trouble just to see Jesus. **So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.** (Luke 19: 4 NIV) What did Jesus see in him? What we just mentioned but the only truly pertinent detail to our discussion is the great desire Zacchaeus had to see Jesus. The fact that Zacchaeus was a tax collector opened Jesus up to a great deal of criticism so that isn't irrelevant but it isn't the outstanding detail. The fact that Zacchaeus had an insatiable hunger for God was what stood out to Jesus. There were others wanting to see Christ and probably more than one person who was short but the lengths to which Zacchaeus went to just look at Jesus put Him in the range of the Father's footsteps. Jesus could tell that the Father was doing something with Zacchaeus and so Jesus just followed the Father's lead.

A third example is most striking. Jesus made the odd decision to go toward Jerusalem when opposition to Him there was red hot and by going He put His disciples at risk. In fact Thomas realized this which explains his aside to the other disciples, **"Let us also go, that we may die with him."** (John 11:16 NIV) Jesus was in fact determined to go to Jerusalem knowing full well how terrible it would be for Him. **As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.** (Luke 9:51 NIV) The King James Version of this verse presents Jesus' resolve even more picturesquely, that He "set His face" to go to Jerusalem. Yet Jesus was not going in blindly. **"We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him.** (Mark 10:33-34 NIV) Again, recognizing full well that Jesus only followed in the footsteps of the Father, what was it that stood out to Him that Jerusalem was the place where the Father was leading Him? All we have is that so many people hated Him there and He would be rejected. There was not a single warm and fuzzy feeling that placed Him on the road with certainty that He was following in the Father's footsteps. Quite the opposite! The evidence was bound up in the rejection He encountered and the storm swirling there. Because of what He saw, Jesus knew that in Jerusalem, the Father was already there.

If you want to follow in Jesus' footsteps what are some clues you are heading in the right direction? How about a thirst that only Jesus can quench? Someone who clearly is empty and needing to drink from the Lord! Can there be any bigger clue that you are following in Jesus' footsteps if you come across someone who is empty and disillusioned and making bad mistakes and realizes she doesn't have answers? We are not talking about someone who is arrogantly doing stupid things; we are describing the one who has pause and thrown her hands up in the air and clearly doesn't know what to do. That is where Jesus is.

You can know you are following in Jesus' footsteps if you come across someone else who has an insatiable hunger for God; someone who is broken and is desperate for a

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change; who is looking for help. Perhaps the person is hurt and wounded, sick and tired, wandering about going from one religion to another, one solution after another. And yet he has not yet turned to Jesus. If you see this person, then you know you are following in Jesus' footsteps.

If you come across chaos or come across hateful opposition and you are certain you haven't done anything to deserve the criticism or the anger, then you are walking in Jesus' footsteps. Peter described this precisely. **For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.** (1 Peter 2:19-21 NIV) When you suffer for doing something good, when you are despised for obeying scriptures, when you are ignored for your hard work, when you are rejected and manhandled and even beaten for trying to live a holy life, then you are following in Jesus' footsteps. If there is nobody hating you or criticizing you or rejecting you or insulting you or taking away what has been yours, then you should be concerned about the path you are taking. Complain about the mistreatment you receive and you have gotten out of His footprints. Argue and fight for your rights and you have gotten out of His footprints. Avoid people because they don't like you and you have gotten out of His footprints. Bend your morals and your values and accept the less pure option because you want to please someone and you have gotten out of His footprints. You were not brought to Christ to be liked but to be hated, criticized and rejected. You were not brought to Christ to have it easy but to face troubles and bear under them courageously. You will if you follow in Jesus' footsteps have enemies simply because of the path you have taken and for no other reason. Stop griping about it and smile that you have been found worthy to walk in Christ's footsteps.

This week find that Zacchaeus or that woman at the well and make a go of it. Approach that person and bring Jesus into the conversation. You will know that you are walking in the footprints of Jesus when you realize you have come across that one person who has a thirst that only Jesus can quench or a hunger that only God can satisfy. Keep your eyes open and look for that person because if you truly are walking in Jesus' footsteps you will stumble upon her or him in a most serendipitous way. The Holy Spirit will point that person out to you and you will slowly or maybe quickly realize who you have found. You have found your woman at the well, your Zacchaeus and it will make your day. You will know that God's GPS is running and you took the right turn.

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