

Helping Others Follow **Jesus**  
by Senior Pastor Tom Harrison

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In February, I've spoken about "Helping Others Follow Jesus." It answers "Why does Asbury exist?" This must be what we are about. Attendance, buildings and finances are important because people are important and we the utilities companies don't operate on love. We have to pay the bills, and we want to have a nice building and we want to use our building. However, we didn't build the church just so we can enjoy the music, hear a nice talk, make some friends, have some nice studies and maybe help some folks learn to read. All of those things are important and we'll do all of them. "Helping Others Follow Jesus" is why we exist.

1.) **FORGIVENESS**. We often don't understand our need for forgiveness. Many of us compare ourselves to others and think: "Well, I'm not as bad as \_\_\_\_." We like to think we can pay our own way and work to make ourselves fairly presentable, as if God grades on the curve.

Today's scripture (1 Timothy 2:5-6 - pg. 1846): ***There is one God and one mediator between God & men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men — the testimony given in its proper time. And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle — I am telling the truth, I am not lying — and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles.***

Jesus came to bridge the gap we have with God. This was the purpose of Jesus' death – the cross was about God putting our sin upon Jesus. We can all agree upon one thing: we are sinners. There are no exceptions. Some sin brings greater consequence than others, but we have all fallen short of God's plan for our lives. Our greatest need we have in life is to be forgiven. Our greatest need is forgiveness. As 1 John 1:9 says: *"If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* The Apostle Paul was on a mission (*"appointed a herald and an apostle"*) to proclaim this truth. He knew about sin, because he, the author of more books in the Bible than anyone else. In 1 Tim 1:15 Paul wrote: ***"Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst."*** This "chief" of sinners, who said he was "the worst" or "Sinner #1" – was forgiven by the grace of Jesus whom he'd been persecuting.

2.) **ETERNAL LIFE**. We receive Forgiveness from God through the cross and we receive Eternal Life through the resurrection. We should follow Jesus because He also gives us eternal life. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life."* If

there is no resurrection, let's go home. We aren't going to follow a dead Messiah. It was the resurrection which changed everything. Those disciples were absolutely crushed by Jesus' death on the cross. They were absolutely transformed by His resurrection.

3.) **PURPOSE.** Forgiveness and eternal life are two essential parts of the Christian faith. However, there is something else. Without a compelling reason to live we ask: *"Is that all there is?"* Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes. As the ultimate hedonist, he tried everything to find meaning in life but kept concluding that "Everything is meaningless." He seems terribly bored. One thing I didn't find in Ecclesiastes – while there are faith references – (*Remember Your Creator – Fear God + keep His commandments*) there's nothing about serving or witnessing or sharing his faith. *Helping others follow Jesus*, is modeled after Jesus' invitation to discipleship: **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 make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. (Matthew 4:18-20)** It's not just enough for me to get mine – I need to help others find faith, too. Others need forgiveness, eternal life and purpose, too.

Every believer has a *responsibility* to help others follow Jesus.

### **My Personal Plan**

- 1) Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind someone who may be struggling spiritually or seeking God. Write his or her name.
- 2) How will you PRAY for this person?
- 3) How could you SHARE your faith with this person?
- 4) To what event or activity could you invite him or her?
- 5) How could you accompany him or her?

### **3 points:**

- 1.) **Jesus is our Leader.** Jesus is God. We aren't. Jesus gives us life. We can't.
- 2.) **We Follow Him.** I'm not your leader – Jesus is our leader. He's the Good Shepherd. I'm a follower, too. That in no way diminishes us. Followers still have influence.

A guy went into a shopping mall to get some supplies as he was headed to West Virginia University in Morgantown from Washington, D.C. – a trip of about 200 miles. The snow was really falling when he went in to the mall, but when he came out of it, the visibility was nearly zero. He didn't know what to do. As he sat in the parking thinking about what he should do, his answer miraculously appeared in front of him. It was a snowplow. He fell in line right behind it. Why fight the snow

when a machine can do it for you? He followed for about 45 minutes. He could see nothing but the red taillights right in front of him. It was a tough ride with a lot of turns, but at least he had a clear path to follow. Then the snowplow stopped and the driver got out and came back to the car. He asked the driver, “Where are you going – you’ve been following me for almost an hour?” The driver said: “Morgantown.” The snowplow driver said, “Well, you’ll never get there following me. I’m plowing out the mall parking lot.” If we follow the wrong leader we may make good time but we may never reach our intended destination.

Who are **you following**? Have you ever made a commitment to Jesus Christ?

3.) **We Help others follow Jesus, too.** It’s more than just my friends – it’s reaching out to others to share the good news with them. If we’re not helping people follow Jesus, we’re just wasting our time playing church. All the sermons, studies and service, all the music and mission – if we’re not being “fishers of men” then we’ve missed our purpose. If we just come to church to take notes in our Bibles and not take our faith out of here and into the world, we’ve missed our purpose.

Who are you **helping others** follow, too? This is one of the most meaningful parts of life. You don’t have to be an expert who knows all the answers, you don’t have to be a great speaker or conversationalist, you don’t have to have a lot of money; but you do have to be a follower of Jesus and care about others. You may be a teacher or a coach, a Sunday School teacher, a fellow student or employee. It may be someone in your family or a classmate or someone at church or someone in your neighborhood. We just need to pay attention – to look up and down and all around. We need to see people and care about them. We need to invite people to “follow Jesus with me.” We are NOT the experts. We are NOT the leaders. We are only followers. Jesus is the leader.

John F. Kennedy, Jr., was born on Nov. 25, 1960, two weeks after his father was elected President. Shortly after his father’s funeral, little John-John who had just turned 3, and whom many of us remember him saluting his father’s casket, approached a family friend. He asked William Haddad: “Are you a daddy?” Haddad said yes. John-John pleaded: “Then will you throw me up in the air?” That little boy yearned for the lift that only a real-life father could give him. I think we all yearn for that lift, too. That’s why we need to help one another follow Jesus. We don’t do this alone. We need community. We need each other.

In 2013, we asked our congregation to list the first names of people who we thought might not know the Lord. Here are some of those names.

There's a lot going on in our country right now. We have a great opportunity to transcend the political divide. We can be people of healing and peace and prayer. We can advocate for the Prince of Peace. We can tell people the Good News that there is forgiveness in His Name – that He died for our sins. We can tell people the Good News that there is resurrection in His Name – that there's going to be something far greater than this world could ever offer. We can tell people the Good News that there is a reason to live – that God's grace is abundant and free and powerful and enabling and can get us out of helplessness and despair. God's grace gives us a passionate reason to live. Jesus is calling us to Follow Him. Jesus is asking us to get up out of our boat, to get off of our mats, to get up from our tax collecting tables, to climb out of our Sycamore trees and come down and meet Him, to come out of the caves where we're wrapped in dead man's clothes, to get up off the road where we've been blinded. We've got an opportunity to respond. We can Follow Jesus. We can Help Others Follow Him, too. But we've got to get up and Go. We've got to respond. To sit in the boat and complain that the fish aren't biting is to focus on the wrong thing – we're not fishing for fish – we're fishing for people. And we aren't going to catch any people as long as we're sitting in our boats on the water. God has made it all possible for us. But we've got to get up, stand up, climb down, rise up and walk.