

Leaving Footprints



Introduction: Explanation of the title 'Leaving Footprints'

- Footprints - we all make them. In mud, sand, snow and carbon! But there is also another sort of footprint; the one we make as modern - day disciples of Jesus. As we seek to follow him in our everyday lives, whether in the church or in the world, we leave footprints behind us which imprint upon the places we go and the people we meet. So what kind of footprints are we leaving? Over the next four sessions we will aim to build our own discipleship footprint so we can see the kind of disciple we are as we follow Jesus today. Of course, even though your footprint will be similar to other people it will also be different (we have unique footprints just as we have unique finger prints).
- The titles of these four sessions are loosely based on the Diocesan *Growing in God* initiative in St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, Suffolk. The titles of the sessions of the *Leaving Footprints* course are:

- ✚ Growing Deeper
- ✚ Growing Church
- ✚ Growing in Influence
- ✚ Growing Others

Session 1: Growing Deeper



Questions: Are our footprints being shaped by Jesus? Are we in a relationship with Jesus? Are we becoming like the One we are following? Are we a disciple?

To begin we ask the question what is a disciple?

Here are some words which might define what a disciple is...

- A learner
- An apprentice
- A follower
- A committed devotee
- A believer
- A person-copier

Jesus had 12 close disciples and we probably can name a few (Peter, James, and John etc) but was Jesus, himself, a disciple of anyone?

1. Jesus followed his heavenly father

19 'Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, 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. 20 For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.' John 5:19-20

'I do nothing on my own but speak just what the father has taught me'
John 8:28



Jesus was not a disciple of another human being – but he was a disciple of God himself. The words Jesus spoke above, recorded in John's gospel, are the words a disciple would have used to describe the disciple-rabbi relationship. Jesus talks of doing what the Father did and speaking what the Father spoke. This form of imitation is characteristic of a disciple.

We may ask the question how Jesus knew what the Father was doing and how he heard what the Father was saying? The answer surely comes in the close relationship Jesus had with the Father as seen in the way he prayed.

2. Jesus' footprint began with prayer and worship

'One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray and spent the night praying to God' (Luke 6:12)

And as he was praying heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him... (Luke 3:21-22)

'Jesus took Peter, John and James with him and went onto a mountain to pray' (Luke 9:28)

As Jesus followed the father's will and ways he often withdrew to the solitary places. He no doubt worshipped in the synagogue and temple with other Jews but it was his personal prayer and worship which made an impression on those who followed him.

In Luke's gospel whenever Jesus spends time in prayer something seems to happen.

In the Bible passages above the event which happened next after Jesus prayed was of great significance. What happened next? Arising from Jesus' prayer in these passages we find

Jesus choosing his core discipleship team

Jesus being filled with the Holy Spirit and God speaking to him affirming his Son-ship

Jesus being transfigured and again God speaking in a similar way.

The disciples would have learnt from this the power and significance of prayer. These times were essential. This is where Jesus' own footprint was formed.

3. Disciples walked in the footprints of their Rabbi



[The following information is contained in the **Mishnah**, Jewish rabbinical interpretations of Scripture written down during the second century AD. Jewish scholars believe it contains the oral traditions present during the 1st century BC to 1st century AD and therefore would reflect what was true during Jesus' lifetime.]

Most Jewish children would have been schooled in the OT Scriptures from an early age in a local synagogue school called **Beth Sefer** (this was equivalent to our primary school aged 4-12). As children they would have learnt to read and write whilst memorising the Torah (the first five books of our old testament). This education was generally for boys and girls.

Beth Midrash was equivalent to our secondary school and was for boys who wanted to continue with their education. Whilst learning the family trade at home they would also have been educated in the rest of our OT (prophets, psalms and wisdom literature) and would have learnt how to interpret the Scriptures to apply them to everyday life.

"A few (very few) of the most outstanding Beth Midrash students sought permission to study with a famous rabbi often leaving home to travel with him for a lengthy period of time. These students were called talmidim (talmid, s.) in Hebrew, which is translated disciple. There is much more to a talmid than what we call student. A student wants to know what the teacher knows for the grade, to complete the class or the degree or even out of respect for the teacher."

Talmid (im) - Disciples

"A talmid wants to be like the teacher, that is to become what the teacher is. That meant that students were passionately devoted to their rabbi and noted everything he did or said. This meant the rabbi-talmid relationship was a very intense and personal system of education. As the rabbi lived and taught his understanding of the Scripture his students (talmidim) listened and watched and imitated so as to become like him. Eventually they would become teachers passing on a lifestyle to their talmidim."

Ray Van der Laan <https://www.thatttheworldmayknow.com/rabbi-and-talmidim>

The talmidim of a rabbi were therefore expected to live according to his teachings and interpretation of Scripture. This was called the rabbi's 'yoke'. The footprints you made were to be the same as your Rabbi.

*'Unlike many of our contemporary discipleship programs, there was no curriculum or agenda for this multi-year discipling experience. Rather it was a **continual daily relational living experience.**'* Doug Greenwold <https://bible.org/article/being-first-century-disciple>

4. What Me?



Already dismissed: So when Jesus meets Peter, Andrew, and James and John mending their nets in the family business they had already been ruled out of being disciples – they weren't that clever. They weren't the best of the best. They would never be a disciple of a Rabbi or get into a rabbinical school. They didn't make the Oxbridge grades. Yet Jesus calls them.

When Jesus meets Matthew the tax-collector, the swindler who is working for the Romans, a man who in many ways is breaking the Jewish Law, how unexpected is the call for him of all people to become a disciple?

Question: You are Peter or Matthew. Jesus calls you to follow him. What do you think and feel?

Jesus believed that they could follow him, that they could emulate him, that they could change the world. So they followed and it was an honour. They were believers in God, they knew some of the Scriptures but Jesus was now calling them to go deeper. Jesus was calling them to place their feet into his footprints. Follow me, imitate me, become like me.

Jesus calls people who are ordinary. He calls rejects, sinners, failures, no-bodies. He calls those who he sees have potential even though they may not see it themselves. He calls you. He calls us. He calls us to know him, walk with him and grow in him – deeper in the things of God. But as he does this he invites us, like he did Peter, James and John to go up the mountain to pray.

5. What does our prayer and worship footprint look like?



- Where do we start? Where did Jesus start? By nurturing his relationship with Father God. In what ways are we men and women of prayer?

List ways in which we can pray, worship and develop a personal relationship with God?

- "Quiet times" on your own (how do we do this – what do we use?)
- Prayer through the day (on the move and when you stop)
- Retreats and Quiet Days
- Worship/Prayer in small groups
- Spiritual Accompaniment (e.g. running mates)
- Worship/Prayer in Church

Is prayer and worship going to be an important part of the footprint you make? In terms of you and God how do you pray and worship individually and corporately? What is your footprint?

Principle: As you grow deeper in Jesus your footprint as a disciple will grow deeper. The deeper the Jesus-footprint in your life the more noticeable it will be.

Now watch the Video: 'Run the Race' at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sWDa_7QgryI

Will you run the race and endeavor to grow deeper in a relationship with Jesus?