



Follow Me...Men *by Dr. Keith Cowart*

In January, I shared a growing conviction that we need a clearer, more concrete understanding of what it means to be followers of Jesus. Now three months into this journey, my heart has been particularly stirred for the men of our congregation. In no way meant to overlook or diminish the call of Jesus on women, I simply believe God is longing to wake men up to the role of spiritual leadership to which He has called us from the beginning.

I suspect that one of the greatest obstacles for many men is the feeling of inadequacy. We're not sure what it looks like. We're not sure we have what it takes. Paralyzed by our fears, we go on day after day, knowing there must be more, but unwilling to take the necessary risk to go for it. I want to be clear that spiritual leadership does not arise out of any particularly personality type or set of natural abilities. To lead spiritually simply means that a man is willing to take the initiative and to accept responsibility for listening to and obeying Jesus personally and helping others to do the same.

I recently read the book, *Gates of Fire*, by Steven Pressfield. It is based on the story of the 300 Spartans who, according to legend, held off almost 2,000,000 soldiers of the Persian army for 3 days at Thermopylae. The story is told from the viewpoint of Xeo, the lone survivor of the battle. The Persian King, Xerxes, was so moved by the bravery and valor of the Spartans, he had one of his historians interview Xeo to learn the source of the Spartan's courage and strength. In Xeo's view, much of the credit was due to the leadership of the Spartan king, Leonidas. In a not-so-veiled critique of Xerxes, a king who led conscripted or enslaved men

while dressed in royal clothes and sitting on a throne far from battle, Xeo describes a very different kind of leader:

I will tell His Majesty what a king is. A king does not abide within his tent while his men bleed and die upon the field. A king does not dine while his men go hungry, nor sleep when they stand at watch upon the wall. A king does not command his men's loyalty through fear nor purchase it with gold; he earns their love by the sweat of his own back and the pains he endures for their sake. That which comprises the harshest burden, a king lifts first and sets down last. A king does not require service of those he leads but provides it to them. He serves them, not they him.

What a great picture of what spiritual leadership looks like. It's leading by example, by the power of one's own life. It's inspiring others rather than trying to control them. It's the commitment to empower others rather than use them. It's being the first to give and the last to take. It's rejecting privilege and embracing servanthood.

Notice that there's nothing in that description related to personality or a unique set of skills. It simply requires the courage to face your fears and trust that God will show up. And here's the best news of all, we are never called to be out front all alone. We lead by following the greatest leader in history. No one exemplifies Xeo's description of a king like the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ! As we take up our cross and follow Him, He will show us the way; He will fill us with His Spirit; and we will raise us up to be the authentic men He has called us to be.



Dedicated to Nick & Dianna

There is a young couple I know and attend CCC who are planning to leave town and what I assume is a fairly good employment situation to take themselves and three kids and go to live on a Mercy Ship. I am awed. I am overwhelmed. I am so excited for them.

I am horribly, terribly, unbearably envious of their daring and devotion. I am delighted to think of what an amazing opportunity



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they are jumping into, heading out to be the 'hands and feet', and especially to model servanthood for their family. What an amazing situation to take kids

into: living on a ship full of people dedicated to serving the underserved, those in the most desperate need of medical care who have no financial resources and cannot do anything to help themselves. Taking your family to the far side of the planet, but in a situation where all your basic needs are provided, which allows you to focus on the people you will meet. To go into the 'uttermost parts of the world' and provide modern medical care to people that will forever change their lives - just the medical care alone will have a permanent, dramatic effect. Each individual the Mercy Ship provides care for will be changed: possibly giving individuals an opportunity get the education they desperately want, jobs they need to provide for families, acceptance in a society that had previously shunned them, a chance to have a family, re-build relationships, establish themselves in their communities.

But also using the opportunity to minister to their hearts and fill them with Living Water. It is going to be such a fantastic time for the entire family. It makes me so envious. And thinking of how I wish something like this had happened in my life when I had kids young enough to be easily portable, and I was daring enough leap into such an amazing opportunity to give my family such a life-changing experience. Wow. Oh, wow....

(Written on Feb 12, 2012 by Fran Fluker. You can read more of Fran's musings at <http://acupofstonesoup.blogspot.com/>)

You can follow the journey of the Cash Family at their family blogsite!

<http://cashcrewship.blogspot.com/>

Follow Me...Together

(2012 Theme for Connect Ministry)

To be sure, Jesus loves individuals. He leaves 99 to search for one! And yes, we must respond personally to His call to follow, BUT Jesus is calling us to follow together. Life in Christ was always intended to be experienced in community. We were created for relationship, not just with God, but also with each other. Through community, we taste the life of the Trinity, who share life completely. Paul captures well God's yearning that we live His life together ...

"If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any fellowship with His Spirit . . . then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or

vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Look not to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." (Philippians 2:1-4)

We are enriched when we journey with Jesus together, but we also NEED each other. We cannot travel this road of self denial and surrender by ourselves. Community is one of God's primary means of grace for us.

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another" (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Lastly, it is our life together that bears witness to our Lord - *"By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another [as*

I have loved you]." (John 13:35)

I pray . . . that all of them may be one, Father, . . . that the world may believe that you have sent me." (John 17:20-21)

We are passionate about community here at CCC. We desire community to be a part of everything we do, but we believe authentic relationships happens best in community groups. If you are riding solo, contact me, so I can help you join in the caravan!

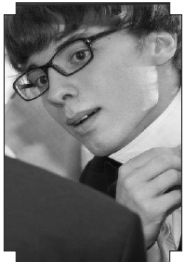


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PURE PRAISE

I want to introduce you to 3 guys who will be (and already are) making a difference around CCC. One has been around Christ Community for over a decade, and the other 2 have been here for less than 2 years. All 3 will be serving as interns this year in our worship ministry, and it is my pleasure to introduce them to you.



for 3 years, and did a great job. His name is Josh Russell. He also likes long walks on the beach.

The second guy is Garrett Dumler. You

The first guy most of you already know. He grew up in our youth ministry and has led worship for and with me on many occasions. His passion for God is so contagious, and his heart for worship is amazing. He led worship for the youth



Wednesday. He has a heart to serve, and has great leadership potential!. He also likes listening to Mozart under the stars.

The third young man is Darren Johnson. He is the newest guy around here, but it already seems like he is 'one of our own'. Darren serves as one of our drummers on Sunday, but also plays

probably know his parents!!! They are both on staff and do a fabulous job. Garrett is a great, hard-working, bright young guy. He is a junior in high school, and helps lead worship for our youth every



acoustic guitar. He has also been writing as well, like the song *Follow Me* that he sang to kick off our new sermon series in January. He is a great musician and a better man. He also likes horse-back riding and playing sports.

It will not surprise me if one or all of these guys becomes the next great worship leader, song writer, or church leader. I am committed to seeing them reach their full potential as long as they will allow me...or put up with me!!

If you see them doing something 'official' around the church, be sure and give them a good word. We all need it.



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Pursue Your Passion

What is your life passion? Have you ever considered what you LOVE to do or a group of people that you were especially compassionate toward?

That could be a foreign question to many of us. We are so busy with the dailyness of life that we rarely think about a greater purpose. In SHAPE class, the H stands for Heart and we talk about what drives you, what motivates you, what energizes you. We ask questions like: If you could do anything without any limitations, what would you do? What subject do you love to talk about? Is there a group of people that you would love to spend your time serving?

For some of us, our passion is a

“thing,” like music, writing, or cooking. For others, our heart is drawn toward a certain group of people...like children, or youth, or the needy. And for some, our passion is found in a cause like fighting human trafficking or poverty. Whatever the case, we all have something or some people group to which we feel called to pursue.

God gives us that passion. He desires for us to give of ourselves to others. He loves it when we pursue our God-given passion. He is glorified. The body of Christ is built up.

So, again...what's your life passion? What has God placed in your heart that He wants YOU to

do? Now, go for it! Don't let the fear of ridicule, or failure, or the unknown hold you back.

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of love, power, and a sound mind.” 2 Timothy 1:7

So, what are you waiting for? Go pursue your God-given passion! And if you need help with this...contact the SHAPE team. We'd love to help you!



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Access 18:16

by Shelley Walls

For over a decade I have known that when God knitted me together, He purposefully gave me a great zeal for individuals with disabilities. I never knew why I was so passionate about this population, but believed God would reveal it to me. Recently, through my prayer time, mentors, and reading, God asked me to begin a ministry for individuals with special needs at Christ Community Church. I asked God lots of questions about the ministry....



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What do we call it? Where in the river is it connected? What will it look like?

Faithfully God began to answers these questions. He first showed me this verse in Luke 18:16 (NIV), *“Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such*

as these.” The words “do not hinder” brought a flood of emotions (and still do). God

**TAKE DOWN
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said to me, “Take down the barriers and help all of my children have access to me, do not hinder.” Thus the name of the ministry for special needs was born: **Access 18:16.**



The mission of **Access 18:16** is to welcome families affected by special needs to a place of love, acceptance, and encouragement in an authentic Christ-centered community. **Access 18:16** will begin as a branch off of Kingdom Kids, offering a full range of support services during the 11:00 service. We hope to, eventually, integrate all ages of individuals with disabilities into the life of our church. Join the **Access 18:16** team by contacting me, Shelley Walls, at jimandshelley@yahoo.com or 706-615-9011.

If you wish to receive a print copy of this publication, please contact:

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