



CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: Follow Me

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Part Three – Our Commitment

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Good morning, church! My name is Pastor Jeff. I'm one of the pastors here. I get the privilege of getting to speak, to give a sermon this morning from God's Word. I oversee some of our Life Groups. I'm on the Life Groups team, and so because of that, I am going to now give you a Life Group plug.

We have a bunch of new Life Groups that are starting up this new year. We are launching some new groups and we want you to be a part of it, so if you are newer to the area, a Life Group is going to be a great spot for you to be able to get plugged in, meet some people, have people who are going to encourage you in your faith, and just have some great relationships

If you are new to faith or if you maybe have some questions about what it looks like to be a Christian, a Life Group is a phenomenal place for you to be, because that's a place where you can have a good conversation with people who are going to love you, care for you, and talk with you honestly about what it looks like to be a follower of Jesus.

We have a website I'd like to point you guys toward. We actually have an insert for your bulletin. On it, we have our website, LifeGroupLaunch.com. In that, we have different groups and different instructions for how you can get plugged into community. We have lots of different groups. We have married groups, young married groups, men's groups, women's groups, and singles' groups. If you are looking for community, we have lots of different options for you.

You can click on a group. You can sign up and be a part of that community starting in February. We have a big launch event. That's February 11, and we would love to have you come and be a part of that. Thank you for thinking about that, and I hope you'll sign up soon because we only have a certain number of slots. I think we have 150 slots, or something like that. It sounds like a lot, but that could run out quickly, so sign up today and be a part of that.

Why don't you turn in your Bibles with me to Romans, chapter 6? If you do not have a Bible, we have black Bibles underneath the seats in front of you. If you don't own a Bible, that one's yours. Just promise to me that you'll read it. That'd be awesome. We'd love for you to have that.

We have been going through this sermon series, *Follow Me*. We typically go through a book of the Bible. We've been going through Mark for a while now. Typically, we go chapter by chapter, verse by verse, through a book of the Bible together every Sunday morning, but we've taken a six-week break here at the beginning of the year to talk about what it looks like to be a follower of Jesus. What does it look like to be a disciple? Many people say they are Christians, but does that honestly affect their hearts? Does it affect their lives?

This sermon series is not a call to be a cultural Christian but to be a devoted disciple to Jesus Christ. There's a big difference between giving God lip service and giving God your life. Many people will give God credit in some shape or form. You've probably heard the athlete, after the game, giving glory to God or the actress, when she wins an Emmy, or the politician when he wins and you hear it in the speech. You wonder, "Is that a legitimate thing or is that just a cultural thing?" We are looking for devoted disciples, not cultural Christians.

This series is also not a call to be more legalistic or just a better Christian. This is a call to have a proper relationship with God in every avenue of your life. This is a call to discipleship, to sanctification, to looking like Jesus.

We define discipleship as *the ongoing process of learning to be a devoted follower of Jesus and helping others to do the same*. That's because God desires a deep, abiding, close relationship with you where you know him, trust him, and live for him. We want to see people who love Jesus, who are growing closer in their relationship with Jesus, and helping others to love Jesus too.

We're in week three. The first week, we talked about *Our Conversion* and how conversion is a total change of heart toward Jesus and our sin through the gospel. We had a call for people to act on that, to put their faith in Christ, to repent and be baptized. Praise the Lord, we had five people come up for salvation and 25 more people come up for baptism.

We had four people get baptized at the Night of Worship, which was just amazing. It was super fun. By the end of the day today, we will have six more people baptized in these services. Can we just praise God for that? That's pretty amazing.

In week two, last week, we talked about *Our Cost* and how Jesus isn't looking for fans; he's looking for followers. The call was for people to decide to pick up their cross and follow Jesus with every aspect of their lives. Again, praise God, in the four services, we had 75 people rededicate their lives to Jesus. It's a blessing to see people want and desire a deeper relationship with Christ.

This morning, we are going to talk about *Our Commitment*. What does a disciple do? How does that look in their daily life? We're going to look at Romans 6 and see what Paul has to say about that. Would you stand with me for the reading of God's Word? We're going to read Romans 6 together. We're going to start in verse 15 and go through the end of the chapter.

"What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?"

But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Father, we thank you for that last verse. We thank you for that gospel truth, Lord, that we have eternal life with you. Many of us are worshiping in that right now. God, I thank you for all the other churches that are worshiping just the same, that are rejoicing in your salvation.

God, I think about Doxa Church in Bellevue and just their faithfulness to the gospel, how they love their people, and how they're trying to make a difference in Bellevue. I pray that you would bless Pastor Jeff and all of the pastors who are on that staff. Bless their congregation, Lord, that they would come to know you in a real and dynamic way and that they would make an impact on their city.

God, I also pray for our congregation this morning. I pray for our church, the brothers and sisters in Christ, Lord, that we would rejoice in the gospel, that we would see areas in our life where we need to change, and we would have amazing hope in what you've done for us. We love you. Show us from your Word what you want us to do. We ask these things in your name, amen.

There was a man who enjoyed watching sports. He grew up all of his life watching the games with his dad. The team was good every once in a while, and they were bad every once in a while, but consistently, faithfully, the man watched the games. He listened to the games. He paid money to go to the games. He got jerseys of his favorite players and would have them write their names on his expensive jersey with a Sharpie. Then, he would stop wearing the expensive jersey because the player had put ink on it.

The team won the championship one year, and it was like he was in another world. The colors seemed brighter. Traffic wasn't a problem anymore and life was good. If you asked, he could rattle off the numbers, stats, and even the latest rumors about the players. His identity, his worth, and his happiness is tied up in the team. He is a willing servant to the team with his mind, and it showed with his actions.

There was a woman who enjoyed a cup of coffee every so often and would occasionally go to the local store or chain and buy a latte. Over time, a couple of days a week became a daily occurrence, to the point where if there wasn't coffee in her system, her husband would notice. All of her gift requests started to change; they became gift cards to the local shop.

All of her coffee mugs changed to the logo of the particular store where she bought her beverage. Changing the color of the cups meant the start of the holiday season. Her identity, her worth, and her joy are found there. She is a willing servant to the company with her mind and with her actions.

Why do I bring these far-off fairy tales today? People are worshipers by nature. In every way of life, whether it be sports fandom, food, drink, or faith, we are always worshiping with our minds and then actively serving something with our actions. We give worth, value, and authority to something and then we live out to serve what we worship. So, Paul asks the question in the beginning of this passage... *Who owns you?* To whom are you a willing servant?

Verse 16: **"Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?"** Paul uses strong language here, using the word *slave* eight different times in the passage. This word means to be a slave, a domestic servant, or a day laborer.

This word does not describe authority or the chance to move up the American ladder of success. This is a pawn on the chessboard, but it is also a willing commitment to actively obey and serve their master. Our commitment as Christians is to be a slave to God, to surrender to him and to him alone. Disciples find their salvation and their identity in God. They submit to God's authority and they actively live for his glory instead of their own. Simply put, disciples are slaves under God's ownership, obedient to his authority, and living how he wants us to live.

This morning, we are going to focus on what a disciple or slave does. A disciple serves. Why do we serve? Who do we serve? What's the purpose of our serving? I know for many of you in here, you have attended church for a long time and you have not yet taken the opportunity to serve for the kingdom of God, and so I am excited for you this morning. For all of us, my hope is that at the end of our time together, we will see and respond to serve because we see we have been saved to serve. In fact, that's the first point for our little time together today.

1. *Serve because you have been saved.* A disciple or slave lives in response to the gospel. Look at verse 17 with me. **"But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness."** You and I were completely enslaved to sin, completely disobedient and rebellious in the sense that nothing we did was for God.

That's just the reality of sin. By nature, we look nothing like Jesus, not only because of what we do, but because of who we are. We are sinners, and as a result of our sin, we separate ourselves from God. We are lost without Christ. We are dead without Christ. We have no hope if we don't have Christ.

Then we just kind of figured it out, right? We just flipped the switch. I don't know. Maybe we turned 25 and the hormones kind of got sorted out, and then we just matured and started living for Jesus. Is that what the passage says? No. God had to change us, and he had to change us at our very core. He had to change us at the heart so we could be a different people for him.

That's the gospel. When I say *gospel*, I mean this. The gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ came, died, and rose again for the forgiveness of our sins. Jesus came, lived a perfect life, died a perfect death for us on the cross, and rose again to forgive all of our sins, to take on our chains and to say, "I will die for that so they can have life."

That's the story of the Bible. The Bible is a comprehensive story about God's redemption, about the gospel. God gives life to people so they would be his. We then choose chains of sin and we separate ourselves from God, so God sends his Son, Jesus, to die for our chains so we could be his people again.

God saved you and me so we could have a new identity, purpose, and destiny. Our identity would be found in Christ, our purpose would be to live for Christ, and our destiny would be eternity with Christ. God did all that. He accomplished all that by sending his Son to serve.

Pastor Koby preached on this a month ago. He said, in Mark 10:45, "**For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**" Jesus came to serve and he died for us so we could live. Because of what he did for us, we are saved. We now have life. We now have eternal hope and we can now serve and live like Jesus did, not as a way to pay it back or to earn our keep, but just to say thank you. When you serve, you live like you believe the gospel, so serve because you've been saved.

2. *Serve because you have been saved to serve Jesus.* A disciple, a slave, lives under Jesus' authority. The Christian life is really both about freedom and about ownership. Before Christ, we were free to do whatever we wanted and yet totally enslaved to sin, evil, and lawlessness. Paul is explaining that we showed and presented our bodies as a slave to sin, a willing servant to sin.

What was the result of that? More sin and more sin and, ultimately, death. But God saved us through Christ so that in Christ, we're free from that sin and evil and are now under the ownership and authority of Jesus.

Verse 19: "**For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.**" Your past is your past. That happened. Let's acknowledge it, but God has saved you so now show and present your body as a slave to God alone. It will lead to life.

Paul says something like this in Romans 12:1. He says, "I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual worship." When we come before the Lord, we just say, "We worship you as our Savior. We worship you as our Lord and as our King. You are God. You are everything." For Jesus to be everything it means he needs to own everything.

If we say Jesus is Lord and we truly follow him, then it stands to reason that he would own every part of our life. So, my time isn't mine. My money isn't mine. My house isn't mine. My family isn't mine. He owns it all. I am called as a slave, a worker, a servant, to surrender my rights to my Master, my King, and my Lord.

This isn't just simply a passive letting go, like, "Okay, Lord. Whatever. You can have it." Instead, it's a renewed, active response. I'm called to actively live for him. "God, I know everything I have is yours and so the time you own, I'm going to give all of it actively for you. The money you have entrusted to me, I will use for you. The house you have been gracious to give me, I will use it for you. My family with whom you have blessed me... We're going to make an impact for you." You get the pattern. Serve because you have been saved to serve Jesus with everything.

I looked up and down the Bible as I was studying for this and I could not find a loophole here, and so I just have to say it. There is no age restriction on Jesus' ownership of your life, so there is no age restriction on your service to God. Young adults, college students, young professionals, you do not need more seasoning or maturing to actively obey Jesus. You can do it now. You can serve him now.

In fact, I would just encourage you to set that foundation of service now so that, Lord willing, when you get a spouse and family you would already have that set up as a foundation of serving Jesus in every aspect of your life and putting him first. I would encourage you that you will find your greatest joy in consistently serving him now.

Families, young families, you can serve. I am a father of four, and all of them are 6 or under, so I get busy. I understand it. Life can get busy. You seem like you're in an endless cycle of school drop-off, ballet class, quick workout if you can get it, pickup from school, take to basketball practice, make dinner in there somewhere, put them to bed, crawl into bed to get enough sleep to do it all over again tomorrow. I get the pattern. I live the pattern.

But you can still serve. Really, you can find your greatest joy in serving and setting an example for your family. Some of you might be thinking, "Well, yes, but my family *is* my service." I'm not discrediting that at all. Yes, there is a season where you need to serve your children. It's important, but I want to encourage you to see how you could serve *with* your family. Your kids need an example of what it looks like to serve and to put God first in everything. You have a great opportunity to do that now.

Grandparents, empty nesters, young at heart, you can serve. There is no age restriction on your service to God. You are entering into a season or are enjoying a season where you get more opportunities for vacation. You're thinking about retirement. You worked hard through your career, and congratulations on that retirement. You have worked hard, and now this is the fun time, and I totally agree with you.

This is the fun time, because now you have the joy of giving so much more of your time to actively serve God. It's awesome! There really is no retiring from serving God and following Jesus. A slave is a slave for eternity. If you don't believe me, I'll use some Scripture to try and back it up. Here are a couple of passages from Revelation about heaven.

"Therefore, they [people in heaven] are before the throne of God, and [they] serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence." Who's doing this? The people of God. What are they doing? They're serving. Who are they serving? Jesus. How often are they serving? Day and night. For how long? How long is heaven? Forever. It sounds like it's God's design that we would serve him.

Another verse, in Revelation 22: **"No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him."** The word for *servants* is the same word Paul uses for *slaves*. His slaves will worship him. This is heaven. This is eternity with God.

Serving is not drudgery, a have-to, or even just simply a good thing. It is a God-designed great thing that he has prepared for us to do for him. It's a privilege and it brings us great joy. You might have noticed that I have put a direct correlation with our joy and our service, and that's because Jesus says that exact thing in John 15. He says,

"If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."

Jesus tells us to keep his commandments. He puts himself in authority over us. He tells us how to serve by laying down our wants and desires and actively loving and serving other people, and then he says the reward of your obedience is his love and his joy, which is greater than anything we could ever imagine.

Now, many of you are already experiencing this. You already have the joy of faithful service. I think of a few people. I think about Faith Fitch, who faithfully serves on the coffee team with her mom. I think about Mike Blakeslee, who comes to church and drives home to drop his wife off and then comes back to pray with people during fourth service.

I think about Karen Young, who for eight years has been with the food bank, organizing, logging food, stocking shelves, and being available for any task that's thrown her way. I think about Rick

Ensey, who for the last five years has taken two weeks of vacation to be a middle school camp counselor and to go on the Mexico mission trip, just faithfully serving and being available to see students grow in their faith.

I think about Riley Korf, who welcomes a group of high school guys into his home every week for a Young Life group where they eat all of his food and talk about Jesus. He has this thing called an open fridge policy where they can just go ahead and have at it. These are high school football players. Talk about service to the Lord!

I could probably name 100 more people who are humbly and faithfully serving, and they have great joy in doing it. They have great purpose in doing it. They know what they're doing and they know for whom they're doing it. I get excited when I think about the opportunity some of you have to find real joy in serving God this way.

To be a Life Group leader, to mentor a young couple, to be a prayer warrior for our ministries, to be a person who opens up your home for the gospel, to be a youth leader, to have intentional friendships with your neighbors and the people in your cul-de-sac, to have more gospel conversations with your family...

You can have this joy. You can have this purpose. You're called to have these things and you're rewarded when you do them, so serve because you have been saved to serve Jesus with everything you have.

Some of you might be thinking, "What's the endgame here? I get it. You're telling me to probably give up a couple of hours of television per week and to do something. What does that look like? What's the point of all this, other than reward from Jesus our Lord?" We serve so people can see Jesus.

3. *Serve because it shows people our Savior.* As a church, we're not talking about discipleship as a means to puff out our chest and say we have a great thing going here. We don't want to do this so we would look good compared to other churches or to kind of say something like, "Well, they do *this*, but we do *this*, so we're so much better than them." No, we do this so we can have active Christians who make an impact for the kingdom.

We don't want to be a bunch of out-of-shape Christians when it comes to our faith. We want to be actively living, to bless others so we can show them Christ. This is so God can be seen in Bothell, Lynnwood, Everett, Kirkland, King County, and Snohomish County. This is about people finding hope in Jesus through you, because God has saved you to go out and make more and better disciples.

He has saved you so he can use you for his purposes, and the greatest way you can serve God is by showing his glory to the people he has put right in front of you. You know, too often, people just see Christians as hypocrites. They see us as soft. They see us as wishy-washy. They see us as not really any different than anyone else. I think in many cases, they have a point, because they

look and point at people who are trying to consume all the benefits of Jesus without really committing to follow what Jesus says.

They look at cultural Christians and they say, "Some faith!" But when you serve, you show that there is a God for whom it is worth giving your life. You point to our God who sent his Son to serve and die for you, and when you actively live like that, when you actively serve and live like Jesus, people will notice the difference.

By a show of hands, how many of you know Romans 6:23? You might have learned it as a kid or something like that. You've known it for a while. It's a famous gospel passage. It was the last verse we read. I'll read it one more time. **"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."** It's an amazing passage about the gospel and how we can have a relationship with Jesus even though there is the reality of our sin, but God offers us a free gift so we could have hope in him forever. That's amazing truth.

What would it look like for you to serve in such a way so you could share Romans 6:23 with someone? At a minimum, when Ashley and I serve, our kids ask us questions. "Dad, why are you going to help this guy move, and why are you taking me with you?" That's an opportunity to share the gospel with my 6-year-old son.

"Well, Gabe, we do this because God served us and he sent his Son to serve, and so when someone needs help, we want to come around them, love them, and care for them. I need your help because there are lots of little pillows you need to carry." It's just an opportunity to share hope with my son. I pray and look forward to the opportunity when I can share hope in Christ to the people my family is actively serving right now.

I heard a story from a guy who said he just continued to serve and serve his neighbor until one day, the neighbor said, "Why are you doing this?" He said, "Well, I love you." "Okay." Then, after serving and serving, after a little bit of time, he said, "Why do you love me?" That's when he had the opportunity to say, "Because Jesus loves you," and he could share real, tangible hope with him. It was out of an authentic relationship where he had already been loving his neighbor. Serve because you have been saved to serve Jesus for the sake of the gospel.

Some of you are here and you need to start serving. To be frank, you've consumed for a while and, unfortunately, you look more like a cultural Christian than a devoted disciple. Personally, I'm convicted of this because if you walk by me in the lobby, at least in past weeks, you would walk by me and I would say, "Hey, I hope you enjoyed the service." When I do that, I encourage you to simply consume.

When I say, "I hope you enjoyed the service," I say, "You know what? Sit. We have comfortable chairs. We have childcare for 70 minutes. You can watch us on the televisions. We'll do the Jesus thing for you and you can just enjoy the show." Church is not meant to be like that. Church should be a place to be awed by the glory of God and to worship with our brothers and sisters in Christ, but then to be charged up and strengthened so we can be sent out to go show Jesus to other people. That happens when we get in the game together. How is God calling you to serve?

For some of you, you might not know where to start, and so this might seem daunting. I just want to encourage you with some first steps to where you can kind of dip your toe into the pool of service. In your bulletin, there is a white sheet that says, "Serve." I'm a pretty blunt guy, so that's kind of how it goes.

"Serve." There are lots of different opportunities where you can try to flex those muscles and learn what it looks like to serve in a consistent way. This isn't the end-all, be-all list. There are many ways you can serve for the kingdom. These are just some ways you can start. You can serve with kids, students, the First Impression Team (ushers, greeters, and coffee team), facilities, technical arts, media, or maybe a particular spot where you feel very gifted.

I haven't seen any tambourine players on the worship team lately. I'm sure Koby is looking for many, so you can always contact him. Or, you might just say, "You know what? I'll serve wherever you need me." I hope you will fill this out. I hope you will see that you have been saved to serve and that these are steps you can take to grow in your faith and grow in your joy, because as you do that, you can experience, "Man, Jesus did this and so much more for me. What a joy to get to do something back for him!"

Remember, our commitment as Christians is to be slaves to God alone. We find our salvation and identity in him. We submit to his authority, and we actively live so people can know Jesus. When we live like this, we show people our Savior, Jesus, and we offer eternal hope to people who desperately need it. Serve because you have been saved to serve Jesus. Surrender everything you have for him and commit to live that out.

I want to make a clarification. I do want to make a quick comment here. If you do not have a relationship with Jesus, I do not care about you filling out a form. I care about you having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. After I pray, we're going to have people up here who would love to pray with you and talk with you about what a relationship with Jesus looks like. I hope you would come forward and that you would get prayed for and that today would be the day where you start the journey of a relationship with Christ.

But if you are here and you have a relationship with Jesus and you are not serving, I am charging you to fill out that card and get in the game. Let's pray.

O Lord, we come before you very thankful because we know everything you've done for us. God, we think about, we've sung about, and we've prayed about the gospel and the things you've done. That's why we're here. God, I thank you that you give us the joy of being part of your team and to be able to serve you actively. I pray that we would.

God, I pray for my friends who are here who don't have a relationship with you. God, I pray that today would be the day where they surrender their hearts to you, where you become everything for them, and where they would walk in obedience to what you call them to do and they would have hope for eternity. I pray for my brothers and sisters in Christ, Lord, who need the joy of

serving. I pray that today would be a turning point in their faith where they would grow in devotion to you, in love for you, and in their joy. I ask these things in your name, Lord. Amen.

Please fill out one of those cards. There are tall tables at the exits where you can turn those things in. I hope you will do that. Then, after you've done that, go and get in a Life Group and go to LifeGroupLaunch.com and do that. Thank you so much.

Have a great Sunday. We'll see you next week.