

Rooted Simply Word Study: Follow



Matthew 16:24

“If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and **follow** Me.”

This final verb is the culmination of the first two. Denying self and taking up the cross *prepare* the disciple for this ultimate action: **following** Jesus.

The Greek Word: ἀκολουθέω (akoloutheō)

The verb ἀκολουθέω means:

To go after, accompany, or join as a disciple

To walk the same road

To align oneself with the teaching and example of another

To obey, imitate, or live in step with

It's not merely physical movement. It's **relational allegiance** and **lifestyle imitation**.

How the Word Functions in the Verse

When Jesus says “follow Me,” He is calling for:

Imitation — living as He lived

Obedience — submitting to His teachings

Relationship — walking with Him in trust

Direction — letting Him determine the path

Perseverance — continuing with Him regardless of cost

It's not a momentary act. It's a **lifelong journey**.

The Grammar Matters

The verb is in the **present imperative**, which signals:

Continuous action

Ongoing lifestyle

Daily, habitual following

Unlike “deny” and “take up,” which are decisive acts, **“follow” is a continual, ongoing practice.**

It’s the rhythm of discipleship.

Cultural and Discipleship Background

In the ancient Jewish world:

A disciple didn’t just learn from a rabbi; they **lived with him, walked behind him, and imitated him.**

To “follow” a rabbi meant:

“I adopt your interpretation of Scripture.”

“I take on your way of life.”

“I go where you go.”

“I become like you.”

Jesus intensifies this:

He doesn’t say “follow My teachings.” He says **“follow Me.”**

The person of Jesus becomes the path.

Other Biblical Uses of ἀκολουθέω

This verb appears frequently in the Gospels:

Matthew 4:19 – “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Matthew 8:22 – “Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

John 10:27 – “My sheep hear My voice... and they follow Me.”

Revelation 14:4 – the redeemed “follow the Lamb wherever He goes.”

In every case, following Jesus is **personal, costly, and transformative**.

Spiritual Implications

To “follow” Jesus means:

Walking His path, not your own

Living His values, not the world’s

Trusting His leadership, even when the road is hard

Becoming like Him in character and mission

Staying close to Him in relationship

It’s not about perfection. It’s about **direction** – moving toward Him.

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A Practical Summary

Here's a simple way to capture the meaning:

Aspect	What "Follow" Means
Relationship	Walk with Jesus closely
Obedience	Do what He commands
Imitation	Live as He lived
Direction	Go where He leads
Continuity	Keep following daily

A Thought to Carry Forward

"Follow Me" is not a call to a destination. It's a call to a **Person**.

Denying self breaks old allegiance. Taking up the cross embraces the cost. Following Jesus establishes the new way of life.