

I Will Follow Where You Lead

Small Group Discussion Guide

"I WILL FOLLOW" | JANUARY 3, 2024

Based on the message by Pastor Willie Russell

1. SERMON RECAP

Pastor Willie Russell opened the new year by challenging the congregation to examine their position in relation to Jesus -- whether they are truly following Him, walking alongside Him as an equal, or even expecting Him to follow them. He unpacked the difference between being let out and being led out, using the imagery of a shepherd calling his sheep by name and leading them with purpose and intention. Pastor Willie reminded us that being led by the Holy Spirit is not always comfortable -- it may include wilderness seasons -- but God's leading always has a divine destination in mind.

2. KEY SCRIPTURE

John 10:3-4 (NIV)

"The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice."

3. ICE BREAKER

Have you ever gotten completely lost while driving -- maybe even when you thought you knew exactly where you were going? What happened, and how did you find your way?

4. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Three Positions

Pastor Willie described three ways people relate to Jesus: following behind Him, walking alongside Him as an equal, or leading and expecting Jesus to clean up the mess. Which of these positions do you think is most common among Christians today -- and honestly, which one do you find yourself slipping into most often? What makes it hard to stay in the "following" position?

2. Led Out vs. Let Out

Pastor Willie made a powerful distinction between being let out (just opening a door and releasing someone to wander) and being led out (personally guiding someone with purpose toward a destination). How does it change the way you see your salvation and your daily life to think of God as someone who leads you out rather than simply lets you out?

3. Wilderness Seasons

In Exodus 13:17-18, God intentionally took Israel the long way rather than the shorter, more direct route. Pastor Willie pointed out that Jesus Himself was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness. How do you typically respond when life feels like a wilderness -- a dry, confusing, or uncomfortable season? What would it look like to trust that the Holy Spirit is still present and leading, even in those moments?

4. Denying Yourself and Picking Up Your Cross

In Matthew 16:24, Jesus told His disciples that following Him required denying yourself and picking up your cross. Pastor Willie emphasized that Jesus didn't just fast for us or make a small sacrifice -- He emptied Himself completely (Philippians 2:6-8). What is one area of your life where you sense God is asking you to deny yourself right now? What makes that feel costly?

5. Hearing His Voice

Pastor Willie reminded the group that the sheep know the shepherd's voice -- and that every time we read the Word of God, Jesus is speaking to us by name. What are some practical habits or obstacles in your life that either help you hear God's voice more clearly or tend to drown it out? How can this group help one another tune in better?

6. Running with Your Eyes Fixed on Jesus

Drawing from Hebrews 12:1-2, Pastor Willie described Jesus as running ahead of us, setting the pace, and never stopping. He challenged us not to get so tired, distracted, or discouraged that we lose sight of Him. Think about a time when you kept your eyes on Jesus through a really difficult stretch. What kept you going, and what did you learn about God's faithfulness in that season?

5. APPLICATION CHALLENGE

This week, choose one specific moment each day -- morning, lunch break, or before bed -- to pause for five minutes and simply ask God, "Where are You leading me today?" Write down in a journal, notes app, or even a sticky note whatever you sense Him saying, whether through Scripture, a quiet impression, or a verse that stands out. Bring your notes to share with the group next week. The goal is not perfection -- it is practice in learning to recognize the Shepherd's voice.

6. PRAYER POINTS

- Surrender of Position: Pray that each group member would have the humility to move out of the "leading" or "side-by-side" posture and genuinely submit to following Jesus -- especially in the decisions and relationships

they are navigating right now.

- Wilderness Trust: Pray for anyone in the group who feels like they are in a dry, confusing, or difficult season. Ask God to remind them that His Spirit is present, that He has a purpose, and that He is leading them -- even when the path is not yet clear.

- Sensitivity to the Holy Spirit: Pray that as the group enters this new year, each person would grow in their ability to hear and respond to the voice of the Holy Spirit -- through the Word, in prayer, and in the everyday moments of life.

7. MEMORY VERSE

Psalm 23:1-2 (NIV)

"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul."

May this new year be one where we follow closely, listen carefully, and trust completely -- because the Shepherd knows our name and He knows exactly where He is taking us.