

# Twitter is Not the Way to Follow Jesus

First-century Jewish rabbis would've hated Twitter. Personally, I like Twitter—but I'm not a first-century Jewish rabbi.

Twitter has redefined what it means to follow someone. Most people on Twitter want lots of people to follow them. *Read my tweets and validate my importance.* OK, that may not be completely fair; after all, you can look to the right of this blog post and see my own invitation: FOLLOW ME ON TWITTER. (*You're welcome to follow my tweets, but all the validation I need comes from Jesus. And my mother.* )



Social media lets us follow people at the drop of a hat, but we're not really following them. In the first-century world of the Jews, if you chose to follow someone, it

meant you wanted to literally follow them, be with them, learn to emulate them, and even eat and dress like them.

So why would the rabbis of that time dislike Twitter? They didn't allow just anyone to follow them. It wasn't your call; the rabbis chose who could follow them.

Step into the world of a Jewish kid.

1. **Bet Sefer.** All Jewish kids went to this synagogue school. From about ages 6-12 (or possible 4-12) kids learned to read and write by using the Hebrew Scriptures. In the process, the girls memorized the Book of Psalms, and the boys memorized the entire Torah (the first five books). (*Few of us have the discipline to memorize one verse a week.*)

At age 12, the boys went to learn the family business, and the girls went to learn the first-century version of home ec. But the brightest of the boys were given the opportunity to go to...

2. **Bet Midrash.** From ages 12-15, these select boys would study—and memorize!—the Tanakh, what Christians would identify as the entire Old Testament. Whew! And they did this while also learning the family business.

3. **Bet Talmud.** At age 15, most young men would simply go full-time into the family trade. But if a young man wanted to continue on and become a rabbi, he would find a rabbi he wanted to learn from, approach him, and ask something like, "Can I be like you?"

This young man didn't simply want to know what the rabbi knew; he wanted to be what the rabbi was. But the rabbi would quiz him *thoroughly*—and if he passed the muster, the rabbi would say, "Yes, I believe you can become like I am."

But more often than not, the rabbi's response was—and let me state this with southern gentility—"Bless your heart, but I think you're better suited for the family business." You can see how this could devastate a young man who had his sights on being a rabbi.

Simon and Andrew were fisherman. They went to the first level of school, but even if one of them was bright enough to go to the second level of school, he hadn't made it to the third level. Even if Simon or Andrew wanted to follow a certain rabbi, he couldn't. From the perspective of the rabbis, these men were not "you-can-follow-me" material. They were not the brightest and the best, but better suited for smelling like fish.

But along came another rabbi with a fresh new approach. Simon and Andrew had already been exposed to Jesus as a teacher and rabbi (Luke 5:1-3; John 1:40-42). It had to be one of those rock-your-world moments when the best rabbi they had ever heard came to them and said, "Follow me" (Mark 1:16-18).

No need to be the one who asks, "Can I follow you?"

No entrance exams.

No need to be the brightest and best.

No need to prove your worthiness.

An unexpected invitation: Follow me.

Jesus extends the same invitation to us—Follow me—but this is not a Twitter invitation with no real commitment. Jesus calls us to

- Go where He goes.
- Live like He lives.
- Think like He thinks.
- Be like Him.



It's a great adventure to follow Jesus.

*"Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children" (Eph. 5:1).*