

1 Rules of the Road

- If discipleship is a journey, what are the rules?

2 Tonight's Text

- The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. (John 1:43–44 NIV)
- Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote — Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. (John 1:45–46 NIV)

3 Tonight's Text

- When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." (John 1:47–48 NIV)
- Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." (John 1:49 NIV)
- Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." (John 1:50–51 NIV)

4 Introduction

- One of the great rites of passage in American culture is when a teenager gets his or her driver's license.
- It takes study, it takes practice, and it takes nerves of steel to demonstrate to a traffic officer that you have the right stuff to drive solo.
- However, driving solo doesn't mean we act independently from the rules of the road.
- If we do and others do so as well, the road will a very dangerous place to drive our cars.

5 Introduction

- While most of the United States observes similar driving laws,
 - like driving on the right side of the road and
 - actually stopping at stop signs,
 - there are nuances in some of the rules that tend to vary from state to state.
- In some states, in fact, the laws on the books can be downright goofy.
- Consider these weird rules if you're planning a road trip this coming year.

6 Weird Traffic Laws

- In Little Rock, Arkansas, "no person shall sound the horn on a vehicle at any place where cold drinks or sandwiches are served after 9 p.m."

- Decades ago, it was illegal for a woman to drive down Main Street in Waynesboro, Virginia, without her husband walking in front of the vehicle waving a red flag.
- In Montana, it's illegal to leave a sheep unescorted in a truck.
- In Oregon, it's perfectly acceptable to make a left turn on red as long as you're turning onto a one-way street.

7 **Weird Traffic Laws**

- In Minnesota, it's illegal to cross state lines with a duck on your head.
- Tennessee has a law that prohibits shooting at animals from a car, unless that animal happens to be a whale.
- In San Francisco, car wash owners are restricted from drying off vehicles with used underwear.

8 **Traffic Joke**

9 **Weird Traffic Signs**

10 **Rules of the Road**

- It's hard to imagine any circumstance where you'd need to use a duck for a hat or ride a camel on the highway (illegal in California), but there are still plenty of rules of the road that are essential if you're going to make it safely to your destination.
- The key, however, is to translate those rules from the driver's manual into practical experience so that obeying them becomes second nature.

11 **First Century Traffic Laws**

- The traffic laws in Jesus' day were a whole lot less stringent and weird since most people of the poorer classes traveled by foot.
- Jesus may have walked thousands of miles in his lifetime, all without ever honking a horn or making a left on red.
- But, as he traveled, he began to define a different set of rules for those who would follow him on those ancient roads and for those of us who follow him today.

12 **Jesus calls His Disciples**

- The story opens with Jesus on the road from the place of his baptism back to Galilee, his home territory.
- The road running along the Jordan was the main north-south route through the region, and Jesus and his people would have traversed it many times on the way to and from Jerusalem for the various Jewish festivals and feasts.
- Having been baptized by John and commissioned for his mission, Jesus traveled north with Andrew and Simon Peter, his first two disciples, in tow (vv. 35-42).

13 **Jesus calls His Disciples**

- Even though Galilee is the destination, we know that Jesus has a much longer journey in mind.
- In Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter, Jesus encounters two men to whom he will also teach the rules of the road—three rules to which everyone since has been compelled to adhere to if they're going to become licensed disciples of Jesus.
- In fact, we could argue that these are the most important rules ever put on the books:

14 **Rule #1: FOLLOW**

- “Follow me . . . ” (v. 43)
- This first rule is the equivalent of Jesus holding up a red flag and waving it in front of those who would come after him.
- Note that it’s always said in the imperative—not a suggestion or a request, but a command.
- It’s not simply “believe in me,” “think about me” or “consider me.” It’s “follow me.”
- To be a disciple of Jesus is to leave the route you were on and take a narrow, one-way road behind him.

15 **Rule #1: FOLLOW**

- Philip is the first to hear this clearly-stated rule in John's gospel, although we hear Jesus using those two simple words of command to the disciples elsewhere in the gospels.
- Unlike in those other stories where the disciples drop their nets, or get up from the table and start falling in behind Jesus, Philip's first response to this rule is to go and get another follower.

16 **Rule #1: FOLLOW**

- The first person Philip tells is Nathanael who, interestingly, doesn't appear in any of the other gospel lists of the Twelve.
- John’s point might be that Jesus’ command to “follow me” isn’t just for those original 12 disciples but for everyone.
- Philip immediately sees that Jesus is the one about “whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth” (v. 45).
- Jesus, in other words, is the one to whom all the ancient Scriptural rules of the road point.

17 **Rule #1: FOLLOW**

- Following Jesus means picking one direction and one person—to follow.
- It’s the equivalent of veering off the superhighway and driving down a dirt road, which is why it’s a major deviation from the rules everyone else is following (Matthew 7:13).
- Later in John’s gospel Jesus will say, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (14:6).

- It's not as if Jesus is in the way, as many interpret this passage, but rather that Jesus is calling people to follow him on the one road that leads straight to the heart of God and God's mission.

18 **Rule #1: FOLLOW**

- Too often we've defined the rules of Christian faith in terms of what we believe about Jesus instead of focusing on actually following him and doing as he does.
- Information is important, but imitating Jesus is really the heart of discipleship.
- The only way we can really know what he is about is by going all in, pushing down the accelerator and following him, which leads us to the second rule:

19 **Rule #2: COME**

- "Come and see . . ." (v. 46)
- Philip responds to Nathanael's skepticism with an invitation to "come and see" what Jesus is about.
- Philip doesn't try to argue or coerce. Rather, he invites him to come and meet the rabbi.
- Philip believes that once Nathanael checks out Jesus for himself, he too would come to the same conclusion.
- When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." (John 1:47–48 NIV)

20 **Rule #2: COME**

- Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." (John 1:49 NIV)
- Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." (John 1:50–51 NIV)

21 **Rule #3: SEE Greater Things**

- "You will see greater things than these . . ." (v. 50).
- Nathanael was amazed that Jesus knew him, but if that in itself was amazing, Jesus told his new disciple that he hadn't seen anything yet. The rest of John's gospel reveals the amazing things.
- Those who accepted his invitation witnessed healings, exorcisms, miracles, the transfiguration and, especially, resurrections of the dead.
- Following Jesus was a ticket to a wild ride with many twists and turns.

22 **Rule #3: SEE Greater Things**

- Later in the gospel, Jesus tells his disciples that even the miraculous things they witnessed were nothing compared to what they would do when he was gone.
- “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.” (John 14:12–14 NIV)
- Those who accept the challenge of following Jesus and the invitation to come and see have the potential to do the things that Jesus did.

23 **Rule #3: SEE Greater Things**

- Many Christians, however, are content with doing only what they can do;
 - following the rules that are easiest to obey and
 - taking only the roads that are clearly marked, safe and smoothly traveled.
- The disciples of Jesus learned, however, that following Jesus is actually a journey filled with strange and exciting opportunities to rewrite the rules of the way things currently work in the world.
- It’s an invitation to run off the map and to flout the self-imposed rules that keep us, and those around us, from experiencing true, abundant life.

24 **Conclusion**

- The truth of the matter is that we all have to obey the rules, both goofy and great, whenever we strap into the car.
- Strapping into the life of discipleship, however, is a much wilder ride with a better destination!
- So then, if you want to see angels ascending and descending, follow the spiritual rules of the road of heaven and you will see the glory of God.
- Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words (the rules of the road) will never pass away. (Luke 21:33 NIV)

25 **Communion**

- As we prepare our hearts tonight for communion, let us remember that what we are celebrating (memorializing) is an event for which we are thankful—the purchasing of our salvation.
- Jesus died for us, so that we could be freed from the power of sin, where we through the Spirit would have freedom to follow the rules of the road and be blessed.
- So then, let us be that follower of Christ who finds on the road of life—abundant life that God promises to those who honor the words of His Son, Jesus Christ. Amen!

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