

# What Did Jesus Say?

*“Follow me.”*

I worry. A lot. I like to know what is going to happen, when, how, and why. Schedules and plans are my friend. Many Princeton students I meet seem to feel the same way. Several knew what they wanted to do with their lives before setting foot in a Princeton classroom. My senior friends are interviewing for jobs or receiving their grad school acceptance letters, and my junior friends are studying for the GRE and the MCAT and laying the groundwork through summer internships for whatever line of work they expect to do after graduation.

It's been a little nerve-wracking knowing that as a junior I have only a year left in the Orange Bubble and I have to start planning for the future in a very tangible way. Especially with the continual reminders that surround us on this campus that we are the chosen ones: best, the brightest, the future leaders of the world.

Freshman and sophomore year I had a lot of anxiety trying to figure out what I wanted to do with my life. One of my greatest fears was that I would squander my time at Princeton, letting the opportunities slip carelessly through my fingers. Maybe I wasn't taking the right classes, or doing enough activities, or applying for enough things. Maybe I didn't have the right plan.

There are a thousand variations to phrases like, “take control of your life,” and I have spent a lot of time trying to do that. It's exhausting and, frankly, it has made me a bit miserable. And that is why the message of Matthew 9:9 has become so powerful to me this past year. In Matthew 9:9 it says, “*As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, ‘Follow me.’ And he rose and followed him.*” That's the whole story. Jesus utters two words, “Follow me,” and Matthew does.

Jesus doesn't walk by Matthew with the directive, “Figure it out,” and then leave him sitting there until he's successful. He is much kinder. He takes the lead, and all he asks of Matthew is that he follow him. I find this enjoinder both incredibly liberating and incredibly terrifying. I don't have to have the perfect plan. But it is hard for a type-A personality (which I think is typical of Princeton students) to not be in control. I've often heard the saying, “If you want something done right, you have to do it yourself.” But that's not quite how it works in Christianity. The best results come when we let God take the lead.

In John 10:10-11 Jesus also says, “*I came that they might have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*” What is there to worry about when following Jesus? He isn't out to get me, to ruin my life. Psalm 23 says, “*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.*”

I've spent so much energy worrying about squandered time. It is so assuring to know that to follow Christ is not to waste my life, but to have it so fully. And a leader who is willing to ensure that, even at the expense of his own life (John 10:11), is pretty invested. Gladly will I trade my anxiety over the perfect plan for green pastures.

Looking back to my journal from the fall semester, I found an entry that contained these words: “If I simply follow His guidance I can go forth with boldness and energy.”

Since this realization just six months ago, my outward actions haven't changed much. After all I still should strive to do what I undertake excellently, as 1 Corinthians 10:31 points out: “*Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*” What *has* changed, though, is my mindset. I don't need to worry about messing up the future, or finding the perfect plan. Right now, God has led me to Princeton, and I should take advantage of the opportunities here and work hard.

In my life I will make mistakes- we all do, and following Christ doesn't make someone perfect- but I will not be so afraid of these mistakes. In the end, in the grand scheme of things, I have a leader I trust. He will lead me the best way, if I will let him. He wants to lead me to still waters, to restore my soul, and he wants that so much that he laid down his life for me. Now that is a leader worth following.

Who or what do you follow? And in the end, are they worth following?

-Natalie Scholl '13