Jesus’ original disciples literally followed him. They physically left jobs, families and homes to accompany him as he travelled around teaching and healing people.

After Jesus rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven, which means he’s no longer here physically. So we cannot literally follow him in the same way the first disciples did.

But we are still called to follow him. This is at the heart of what it means to be a disciple.

How do we do it if not literally?

Are we still to leave our jobs, families and homes; and if so, where do we go?

If we’re not called to do that, then what does it mean to follow him?

Is it spiritual, mental and emotional only; or is it also physical?

Does it only mean believing certain things or does it also mean doing certain things?

If we are Jesus-followers, we can’t afford for it to be vague or general here. We need specifics.

We see in our Gospel reading Jesus’ disciples wrestling with similar questions. They had been literally following him for roughly three years, and now he’s saying goodbye.

[***31***](http://biblehub.com/john/13-31.htm)*When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.*[***32***](http://biblehub.com/john/13-32.htm)*If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once.*[***33***](http://biblehub.com/john/13-33.htm)*Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’*[***34***](http://biblehub.com/john/13-34.htm)*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.*[***35***](http://biblehub.com/john/13-35.htm)*By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:31-35)*

It is hard for followers to watch their leader leave.

We all have people who we have looked up to it may be a family member, a teacher someone we have worked with and so on, people who have made us who we are today. A sense of shock and confusion sweep over us. What will we do now?

Jesus seemed to understand how difficult this was for his followers. “Little children… where I am going you cannot come,” (John 13:33). If we read on we notice Peter’s response as the scene unfolds:

[***36***](http://biblehub.com/john/13-36.htm)*Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.”*[***37***](http://biblehub.com/john/13-37.htm)*Peter said to him, “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” (John 13:36-37)*

They had followed him this far, why couldn’t they follow him now? What were they supposed to do? In answer to these questions, Jesus directs them to what he calls “a new commandment.”

*‘Where I am going you cannot come.’*[***34***](http://biblehub.com/john/13-34.htm)*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.” (John 13:33-34)*

No one is sure why Jesus calls this “a new commandment” because he doesn’t explain it. The command to love your neighbour as yourself had been around for many generations.

Perhaps he calls it a new command because *it shifts the focus from the initial command*.

Remember how their relationship with Jesus began:

[***18***](http://biblehub.com/matthew/4-18.htm)*While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.*[***19***](http://biblehub.com/matthew/4-19.htm)*And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”*[***20***](http://biblehub.com/matthew/4-20.htm)*Immediately they left their nets and followed him.*[***21***](http://biblehub.com/matthew/4-21.htm)*And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them.*[***22***](http://biblehub.com/matthew/4-22.htm)*Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. (Matthew 4:18-22)*

[***27***](http://biblehub.com/luke/5-27.htm)*After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, “Follow me.”*[***28***](http://biblehub.com/luke/5-28.htm)*And leaving everything, he rose and followed him. (Luke 5:27-28)*

After marching three years under the initial command, “Follow Me,” they would now be marching under the new command, “Love one another.” It’s not that they would no longer be Jesus followers or that loving one another was a new idea.

It’s that their focus would shift from physically following Jesus to loving one another. They would now follow Jesus *by*loving one another.

As Jesus says goodbye, he repeatedly commands his followers to love one another.

*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. (John 13:34)*

*“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. (John 15:12)*

*These things I command you, so that you will love one another. (John 15:17)*

Maybe the disciples had been bickering a lot that day and that’s why Jesus was so determined to get them to love each other. But consider some other passages.

Paul wrote that love is so primary for Jesus-followers that its absence renders all other acts of devotion and ministry useless.

[***1***](http://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/13-1.htm)*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*[***2***](http://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/13-2.htm)*And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.*[***3***](http://biblehub.com/1_corinthians/13-3.htm)*If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)*

John was the beloved disciple who rested against Jesus’ chest in the upper room. Let’s ask him what he thought Jesus meant when he gave the new commandment. Here are passages from a letter he wrote years later:

[***7***](http://biblehub.com/1_john/2-7.htm)*Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard.*[***8***](http://biblehub.com/1_john/2-8.htm)*At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.*[***9***](http://biblehub.com/1_john/2-9.htm)*Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.*[***10***](http://biblehub.com/1_john/2-10.htm)*Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. (1 John 2:7-10)*

[***11***](http://biblehub.com/1_john/3-11.htm)*For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. (1 John 3:11)*

[***23***](http://biblehub.com/1_john/3-23.htm)*And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.*[***24***](http://biblehub.com/1_john/3-24.htm)*Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. (1 John 3:23-24)*

[***7***](http://biblehub.com/1_john/4-7.htm)*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.*[***8***](http://biblehub.com/1_john/4-8.htm)*Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. (1 John 4:7-8)*

I enjoy a good loaf of bread and as we all know there are many types and flavours of bread, but they all start with of the basic ingredients of flour water and a raising agent that is what bread is based on. You can have many flavours, you add many things fruits, different types of flour to our base ingredients

I believe love is this way. You can mix in preaching, going to church, serving as a lay ministers, giving money in the offering plate, etc. – but love must always be the base

It is the context for every truly Christian deed. It is the essence of following Jesus. It is what identifies us as Jesus-followers.

*By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:35)*

I would like to offer you an Invitation.

We are called to follow Jesus primarily by loving one another. Rather than specific points of application. I invite you to consider these things over the next week and to think and reflect what it means in practical, concrete terms to follow Jesus by loving one another.

1. Read John 13:33-35. Think about why Jesus calls this “a new commandment.” What other scripture shed light on this question?
2. What does it mean, in practical terms, to love one another just as Jesus has loved us? (See John 13:1-17 and Philippians 2:3-8 to get the ball rolling.)
3. Do you think the people in your life know that you’re Jesus’ disciple because of the love you show for your fellow Christians? Why or why not?
4. And finally spend some time praying about this.