

THE BIG IDEA: Following the _____ leads us to the _____.

1. Following the _____

2. Leads us to the _____



The Take-Off

Today we kick off a brand new series, and I am pumped about this one because I'm confident that it will speak to every one of us right where we live.

The series is called "No Matter What" and I'm going to encourage you to encourage others all over your social networks throughout the series simply by adding the hashtag #nomatterwhat to what you post.

Here's what will happen: people who would never even think of stepping into the Lord's presence because they associate it with close-minded, judgmental people who are "agin" everything will read what you post and start to realize that there is a Savior who is committed to them No Matter What.

This will be a series about hope more than hate, and about being for more than against. Before we dive into the foundational week and start building, let me try and give you an overview of where we'll be going over the next few weeks, kind of a nutshell of the series.

Here's **THE BIG IDEA** for the entire series. Literally, if you remember nothing over the next few weeks, you'll be good if you remember this: **WE CAN STAND NO MATTER WHAT WHEN WE KNOW WHO MATTERS MOST**

Today we'll be talking about associations and how they can help us come out victorious no matter what.

Now, take a deep breath in and out. If you were able to do that, then I can tell you how today's going to end for you: you're going to be full of encouragement and then full of questions.

That's normal, because for so many of us what we'll learn today and what we'll live up to today can seem worlds apart, and that's challenging.

Over the next few weeks, we'll see what the Bible says about standing no matter what you're facing, no matter what you've done, and no matter what (or who) is against you.

But it all starts with this morning and learning that we can stand no matter when we follow the right person because **following the right person leads us to the right place.**

Let's split that in 2 parts and see how the right associations can help us live victoriously "no matter what"

1. Following the right person

No one wants to spend a lot of time on this one, but who we're associated with - especially who we're influenced by - is HUGE!

Relationships can literally make us or break us, so we've got to think carefully about who we hitch our wagon to, don't we?

Proverbs 13:20 - only 2 options: walk with the wise or the foolish

1 Cor. 15:33 - bad company corrupts good morals

- the word for "corrupt" in the Hebrew actually means to "lead away"

- it is the way relationships can hurt us because we think we're just "hanging out" and in reality we're being led away from the good things we know

Psalms 1 makes it even clearer how important our associations are

- if we choose to not walk with or stand with or sit with (basically follow) the wicked, we'll be blessed

- the opposite would then also be true: we can't be blessed if we are associated with the wrong crowd

- Exodus 23:2

We could probably take the rest of the morning to go around the room and share stories about stupid things we've done for no other reason than we were following the wrong person or group of people

I have lied, put other peoples' lives at risk, and cheated because of associations

I have loved, helped make other peoples' lives better, and encouraged because of associations

Associations lead to outcomes

The only question is which outcome will the people you're following lead you to?

If you want to live with a hope that never fades, with an assurance that you will win no matter what you face, then the only right person to follow is Jesus.

Here's why choosing to follow Jesus is so important: He's the only one Who can lead us to the right place - victory!

2. Leads us to the right place

To really get this truth, we're going to need to understand the idea of "tethering"

According to Webster, tethering is "tying (an animal) with a rope or chain so as to restrict its movement"

In the smartphone era, it's attaching wirelessly a pc, tablet, or laptop to your smartphone as a modem

Basically, you attach one thing to something else and it gets everything the other one has

That's what happens when we follow the right person - Jesus

We tether ourselves to Him and He leads us to places of overcoming and victory NO MATTER WHAT

2 Corinthians 2:14 - Jesus leads us in victory!

People can only take us where they've been:

- Jesus came from heaven and returned to heaven (Phil. 2:6-11)

- He's gone there so that we can be with Him where He is (John 14:3)

Here are some of the things that happen when we follow Jesus:

- Matthew 11:28-30 - we find rest and rhythm

- John 15:5 - we bear fruit

- Hebrews 6:19-20 - we have hope

- 1 Cor. 15:57 - we have victory

Why? Because we are following the right person, and He will lead us to the right places.

Before we wrap up, let's address a few issues:

1. What about hard times?

a. We'll be looking at some examples over the next few weeks of people in the Bible who followed God no matter what and overcame the obstacles they were facing

b. Following Jesus means that even though we may go through hard times, we know that we will actually go through them! (Isaiah 43:2; Psalm 23:4)

c. Imagine a bungee cord tied between you and someone on the other side of the room - you might pass through a lot of stuff, but it's all on the way to where they are

d. Same with Jesus - that's why we can have hope even in hard times and a no matter what attitude

2. Can I follow someone else and still get there?

a. Short answer: no.

b. Longer answer: John 14:6 says that Jesus alone is THE way; John 10:10 says that Jesus leads to life and Satan leads to death; even still, some of us think we've got a pretty good idea how to do what we want and still end up victorious, but the Bible says that leads to death, too (Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25)

3. Is living with a no matter what attitude the same as just being stubborn?

a. No, because stubborn is about getting YOUR way, and we just learned in Proverbs - TWICE! - that your way leads to death.

b. Living with a no matter what attitude is about going HIS way and having the confidence that we'll end up where He is no matter what we face along the way.

The Landing

- Not many of you have heard of Stacey King, Cliff Levingston, Bob Hansen, Mark Randall, Rory Sparrow, Joe Courtney, Ed Nealy, Jack Haley, Dickey Simpkins, Bison Dele, Keith Booth, or David Vaughn, but all of them have something in common.
- Every last one of them is an NBA champion, because every one of them played with Michael Jordan.
- These men understood that their connection with Jordan would lead them to a ring
- In fact, Chuck Daly (coach of the Detroit Pistons in the Jordan years) said that John Paxson played on a 12 foot string with Jordan - he was tethered to him
- This week-end our nation celebrates Memorial Day, and we recognize the same principle in those who gave their lives in service for our country!
- They led each one of us to a place of freedom, and where we are is the result of our country placing our future in their hands throughout the many wars we have fought as a nation
- In sports and in war, we understand and accept the big idea: **following the right person leads us to the right place**
- How much more victory will we know when we have anchored ourselves - tethered our lives - to Jesus!
- 1 Cor. 15:57 - He leads us to victory, and because we know that, we can stand firm...
- NO MATTER WHAT!