

4-2019

Who Are You Following?

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Recommended Citation

Slikkers, Ingrid, "Who Are You Following?" (2019). *Lake Union Herald*. 847.
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/luh-pubs/847>

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Who Are You Following?

“You left me!” His eyes filled with fear, then betrayal. It was our weekly trip to the grocery store. I had placed my infant son in the child seat of the grocery cart; the oldest, who now looked at me with such distress, usually walked alongside me as we chose items and he placed them in the cart.



▲ Ingrid Weiss Slikkers

We had paused at the freezer while I read the ingredients on a box of waffles. Satisfied with the nutritional information, I placed it in the cart and continued to the next glass door of the frozen foods aisle to pick out fruit for smoothies. After selecting a few bags, I turned to take my son’s hand to proceed to the next aisle. The sinking feeling came before my mind registered what my eyes saw. There was no one next to me; no one down the aisle either way. My son had completely vanished in what had seemed like seconds. I replayed in my mind the last few minutes as I started frantically calling his name. I recalled that he had been following me down this aisle as he played with the Thomas the Train electrical toothbrush we had chosen. I pushed the grocery cart quickly to the main aisle where I could see further.

A feeble voice arose that I located two aisles further down. “Mama!” I hurried to hold him in the center of the aisle as I noticed another woman with an infant in the seat, leaving that section and circling on to another. My subconscious recalled that she had passed me while I looked at the waffles. After numerous hugs and the wiping of tears, I said, “Buddy, I never left you; I actually didn’t really move from where I was. I think you left me. I think you followed the wrong mommy because you didn’t look up to confirm it was me, you were so busy looking at Thomas!”

He argued with sobs, “No, mama. I was following you the whole time. YOU LEFT ME!” I could only hug

him again, hold his hand and complete our mission as reasoning was futile due to his panic.

Later, I recalled a different time when I felt a little hand take mine. I saw it was a child that I didn’t recognize. She had reached up to take her mommy’s hand in a crowd; when she looked up and saw I was not her mommy, she was terrified.

How many times have I done the same with God? How many times have I accused Him of leaving me when I was the one following the wrong person?

And how many times have I have followed the wrong person in this culture of comparisons — “perfect FB families,” parenting books, ways to discipline, activities to do, etc., and endless new research I am always trying to read and implement? Who am I following? I pray it is my Heavenly Parent. I simply need to look up to verify it’s Him and take His hand. ■

Ingrid Weiss Slikkers is assistant professor of Social Work at Andrews University, a Child and Family therapist, and is constantly learning more about God because of her sons.

