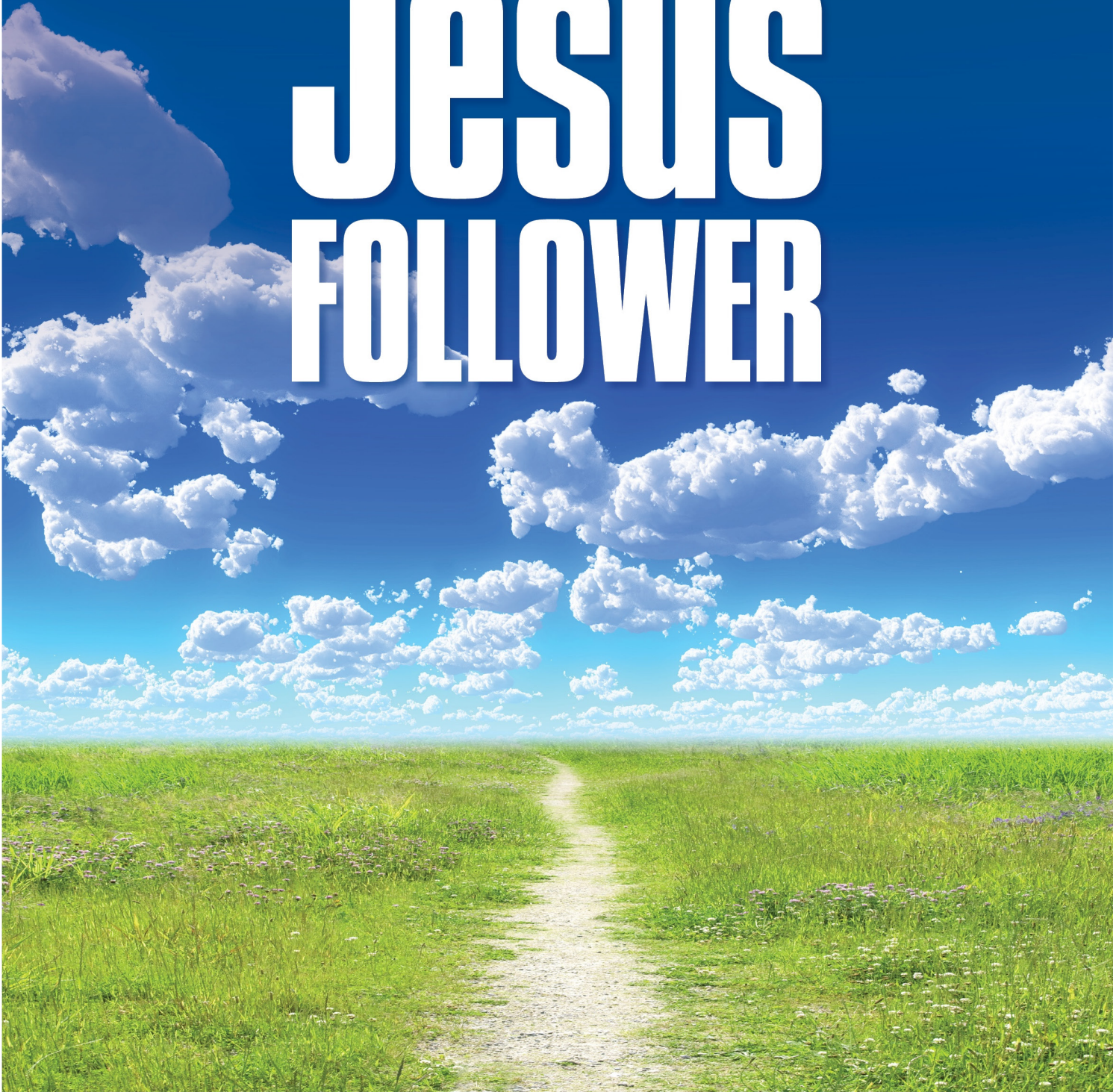


cool spring
BAPTIST CHURCH

LIFE GROUP STUDY

JESUS FOLLOWER



Jesus Follower

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How to Use This Guide

We are so excited that you are joining us as we walk through this Jesus Follower Guide. Together we are committed to listening for the Holy Spirit to show us who Jesus is, what Jesus came to do, and what it means to follow Him.

Each week of this Jesus Follower guide includes a combination of scripture, helpful background information, engaging group discussion questions, and practical application points.

In order to get the most out of this opportunity, we are asking everyone going through this study to commit to the following:

- 1.** Gather with your life group, or with 2-3 other friends each week of the study.
- 2.** Read the Gospel of John (2-3 chapters a week)
- 3.** Commit to practicing the application points at the end of each session.

We pray that each week of Jesus Follower will challenge you, inform you, remind you, and encourage you that the good news of Jesus transforms us and sends us back out into our community to share Him with others.

To watch the weekly videos, and to register your Jesus Follower group, please go to www.coolspring.org/jesusfollower

Historical Context of John

Purpose

The purpose statement in 20:30-31 indicates that John wrote with an evangelistic purpose, probably seeking to reach unbelievers through Christian readers of his Gospel. If the date of composition was after AD 70, the time of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, it is likely that John sought to present Jesus as the new temple and center of worship for God's people in replacement of the old sanctuary.

Author

A close reading of the Gospel of John suggests that the author was an apostle (1:14; cp. 2:11; 19:35); one of the Twelve ("the disciple Jesus loved," 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:20; cp. 21:24-25); and, still more specifically, John, the son of Zebedee (note the association of "the disciple Jesus loved" with Peter in 13:23-24; 18:15-16; 20:2-9; 21; and in Lk 22:8; Ac 1:13; 3-4; 8:14-25; Gl 2:9). The church fathers, too, attested to this identification (e.g., Irenaeus). Since the apostolic office was foundational in the history of the church (Ac 2:42; Eph 2:20), the apostolic authorship of John's Gospel invests it with special authority as firsthand eyewitness (Jn 15:27; 1Jn 1:1-4).

Setting

The most plausible date of writing is the period between AD 70 (the date of the destruction of the temple) and 100 (the end of John's lifetime), with a date in the 80s most likely. A date after 70 is suggested by the references to the Sea of Tiberias in 6:1 and 21:1 (a name widely used for the Sea of Galilee only toward the end of the first century); Thomas's confession of Jesus as "my Lord and my God" in 20:28 (possibly a statement against emperor worship in the time of Domitian); the reference to Peter's martyrdom, which occurred in 65 or 66 (21:19); the lack of reference to the Sadducees, who ceased to be a Jewish religious party after 70; and the comparative ease with which John equated Jesus with God (1:1,14,18; 10:30; 20:28).

Special Features

The Gospel of John is different from the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—in that more than ninety percent of its material is unique. John's Gospel does not focus on the miracles, parables, and public speeches that are so prominent in the other accounts. Instead, the Gospel of John emphasizes the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and how we, as believers, should respond to his teachings.

Jesus Follower: Session 1

What is a Jesus Follower?

Summary and Goal

A Jesus follower is someone who loves God and loves others, by abiding in relationship with Jesus and, through the Holy Spirit, imitating His life and His Mission. John's Gospel provides many examples of what it means to follow Jesus, but the restoration of Peter offers the clearest snapshot.

Main Passages

John 21:15-17

Session Outline

1. Do You Love Me? (John 21:15a, 16a, 17a)
2. Relationship with Jesus (John 21:15b, 16b, 17b)
3. Following Jesus' Lead (John 21:15c, 16c, 17c)

Theological Theme

Discipleship means following the mission of Jesus in the context of relationship with Jesus and others.

Christ Connection

Jesus provided the model for the life and mission of a Christian. The Holy Spirit supplies the power and burden for continuing the mission.

Missional Application

A relationship with Jesus transforms the Jesus follower so that they increasingly and passionately pursue Jesus' redemptive mission in the world.



Jesus Follower

What is a Jesus Follower?

Jesus Follower

One who loves God and loves others, by abiding in relationship with Jesus and, through the Holy Spirit, imitating His life and His mission

Love God = Our response to what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

Love Others = Out of the love God has for us, we love those God has created.

Abide in Christ = Walking with Jesus as we grow in our relationship with Him.

Imitate His life = The Holy Spirit enables us to reflect the life of Jesus to those around us.

Imitate His mission = Led by the Holy Spirit to show and tell the Good News of Jesus.

Introduction

At Cool Spring, a Jesus follower is defined as one who loves God and loves others, by abiding in relationship with Jesus and, through the Holy Spirit, imitating His life and His mission. Over the course of this study, each of those five components will receive devoted attention to ensure a clear understanding of what it means to follow Jesus. By way of introduction, this lesson will focus on a tremendous example of what a Jesus follower looks like, found in Peter's conversation with Jesus at the close of John's Gospel.


- When you think of the five components of being a Jesus follower, which one do you feel comes most easily to you? Which one would you like to grow in the most? How do your answers compare to those in your group?

1. Do You Love Me? (John 21:15a, 16a, 17a)

Following the crucifixion, Peter was filled with guilt after denying Jesus. Verses 15, 16, and 17 of John 21 all begin with some form of the same question from Jesus: "Do you love me?" The One whom he loved more than any other, but had denied in sinful weakness, was asking if Peter even loved Him.

But Jesus was not tormenting Peter; rather, He was restoring him. Jesus extended one opportunity for Peter to confess his love for Christ to match each of his earlier denials. This is how life as a Jesus follower is to begin—repentantly loving Jesus and accepting His offer of restoration.

- Share your own experience of accepting Jesus' grace in your life. What did you think and feel around the time you became a Jesus follower?



-  What are different ways people view Jesus in our culture? How has your view of Jesus been shaped by His grace in your life?

2. Relationship with Jesus (John 21:15b, 16b, 17b)

Peter answered Jesus' question readily and succinctly. Without hesitation, Peter confessed his love for Jesus. In doing so, he also acknowledged Jesus' thorough knowledge of his heart. The straightforward manner in which Peter answered must have made the subsequent re-asking of the question all the more painful. In fact, in his final response, Peter elaborated his understanding of Jesus' omniscience by qualifying his answer, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."

Peter's example has proved to be true of every Jesus follower throughout history. The doorway to following Jesus is loving Jesus. The love of which Peter spoke, however, was not merely a flowery, emotional affection. It was a robust devotion. It was a vow that the travesty of his denials would never happen again. It pledged Peter's life to the life and purpose of Jesus.

The doorway to following Jesus is loving Jesus.

-  How does your love for those close to you manifest itself in your daily relationship? What are some ways in which you treat your loved ones differently than other acquaintances?
-  Has there ever been a point in your life you would say your love for Jesus most closely represented the love Peter spoke of, as described above? Tell us about it.

3. Following Jesus' Lead (John 21:15c, 16c, 17c)

It is biblically incompatible for someone to claim to love Jesus and then reject His teaching, ethics, and mission. In the conversation with Peter, after each response in which Peter confessed his love and devotion to Christ, Jesus immediately redirected Peter to the mission. To love Jesus is to continue the mission of evangelism and service that He modeled throughout His earthly life.

Peter was repeatedly directed to "feed my lambs" or "tend my sheep." The meaning of both phrases was the same; Peter was to express his love for Jesus by imitating the manner in which Jesus went about fulfilling His mission.

Peter was to express his love for Jesus by imitating the manner in which Jesus went about fulfilling His mission.

Without that critical daily application, Peter would not have been fully loving or fully following Jesus.

- ❓ What examples from this past week would you point out as snapshots of imitating the mission of Jesus? How would you describe that mission in your own words?
- ❓ Who in your life are you regularly praying for and speaking to that they would believe and follow Jesus? How does that relate to following Jesus' mission?

Walk It Out This Week

- ❓ As you begin this study, will you commit to:
 - Read through the Gospel of John (2-3 chapters/week) as a part of this series?
 - Meet with this group each week?
 - Take application steps each week to put what you have learned into practice?

Prayer of Response

Close in prayer asking God to lead you further into being a true follower of Jesus in every area of life.

Additional Resources

- *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* by Jonathan Dodson
- *Multiply* by Francis Chan, Mark Beuving
- *Growing Up* by Robby Gallaty, Randall Collins
- *It's All About Jesus Bible Storybook*

For Next Week

Title

Love God

Main Text

John 1:1-14; 3:10-21

Memory Verse:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

-John 1:1-5

Family Time - Review John 21:15-17

Kids

Many of the concepts about being a Jesus follower can be very complex. When talking with children, it is helpful to focus on the concrete examples already in their lives. For instance, ask them about some of the things they love (a pet, parents, siblings, favorite food, favorite place, etc.). Explore how each of those things make them feel. Use those examples as a way of explaining why loving Jesus is so important.

- ❓ How do you know when someone loves you? How do they show it in their actions? (They will likely respond at some point that the person will tell them they love them. This is a great way to show some passages where Jesus tells us He loves us.)

Students

For the abiding aspect of love, focus on friendships in which they know even the small details about a friend (favorite food, how they can tell if they're in a bad mood, etc.). The depth of those relationships did not come quickly, but through an incredible investment of time. As that investment of time accrued, they also began to become a little more like that person—adopting some likes/dislikes, personality traits, and so on.

- ❓ Which of your friends would you say you know the most about? What were you the most surprised to learn? How long were you friends before you learned that? How have you noticed that you and that friend have become more alike from spending time together?

Extended Commentary

John 21:15-17

21:15. Embarrassing as it must have been at the time, this tender exchange restored Peter to leadership—a role he exercised early in Acts. Throughout the history of the church, thousands have been scattered on the roadside of good intentions for ministry; they traded God’s call for something else—like fishing. Even though this night of fishing may have been just a casual outing with the guys, as a professional fisherman Peter could have entertained thoughts of going back to his former work. Being with Jesus had been great, and it must have felt wonderful to have him alive again. But who knows what might be next? A fellow has to make a living.

For the next nine verses, John brought his Gospel to a close with the clear enunciation of Peter’s call to ministry. Jesus asked Peter almost the same question three times. This could reflect the three denials, but whether it did or not, the command was similar each time: Feed my lambs. . . Take care of my sheep. . . Feed my sheep. A quick glance at 1 Peter lets us know the disciple never forgot this moment.

Several questions jump at us from the text of these three verses. Even if we agree that the threefold reference probably does connect with the threefold denial, specific questions remain unanswered:

1. What is the meaning of the words more than these?
2. Why did the Lord change the command after each of Peter’s responses? Some indicate specificity in both the noun and verb changes such as a reference to children’s ministry (lambs) and service to adults (sheep). Also the varied ministries of apostleship and later eldership would include spiritual feeding and care of the flock. Perhaps all of this is implied in the text; perhaps none. The point is that Jesus called Peter to shepherding rather than fishing. His future work would involve ministry to people.

21:16. The shepherding call continued a second time as Jesus used Peter’s old name (Simon), reverting to “pebble” rather than “rock.” The flow of the text emphasizes humility and service rather than primacy over the other apostles.

21:17. At this point in the text there is a change of verb in Jesus' question while the verb in Peter's answer stays the same. We also learn that Peter was hurt by the third question. In Jesus' first two questions he used the word *aqā-pao*; hence the NIV translation "truly love." In the third we find the word *phileo* and the NIV drops "truly."

Most interpreters find no significant difference in the words, particularly since the conversation took place in Aramaic. Nevertheless, John's record in Greek did, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, adopt a different word. It seems difficult from the grammar of the text to argue that Peter's hurt was brought about only by the connection of a third question with his three denials. We might conclude that Peter was hurt because the question had been asked three times. But one should not dismiss the possibility that his discomfort lay in Jesus' use of a lesser word.

The preponderance of contemporary scholarship sees no difference between the words, but the careful Bible student should consider all the options. And before we leave this verse let us notice the brief but clear reference to omniscience in Peter's reply, Lord, you know all things. Peter switched words here as well. Know translates *ginosko* instead of *oidas*, which he has used twice before. Again, one must decide whether a conversation that probably took place in Aramaic using different words could possibly have any significant difference in the Greek translation—weighed against the exactitude of biblical words, particularly key words in John's Gospel like know and love.

Jesus Follower: Session 2

Love God

Summary and Goal

God has existed for all eternity as the love relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Out of this relationship (called the Trinity), you and I have been created. The goal of this week's lesson is to help you understand how God's relationship as the Trinity should inform your relationship with God and with others.

Main Passages

John 1:1-14; 3:10-21

Session Outline

1. God is love (John 1:1-10).
2. Jesus came to make the love of God known (John 1:11-14).
3. God's love is most clearly displayed on the cross (John 3:10-21).

Theological Theme

God is love. In His mission to redeem the world through Jesus, God made His love known for the entire world to see.

Christ Connection

The entire Bible and all of history point to Jesus from beginning to end.

Missional Application

Since God loved the world enough to send Jesus to redeem it, His followers should love the world enough to carry the message of Jesus into it.



Jesus Follower

Our response to what God has done for us in Jesus Christ

God's mood never changes, and He is consistent in His character. He is love.

Introduction

- ❓ Do you have any questions or observations from your reading in the Gospel of John this week?
- ❓ How were you able to apply what you learned this past week?

Joey Batson has been the head strength and conditioning coach at Clemson University for 35 years. He is one of the highest paid strength and conditioning coaches in the country and is regarded as one of the best in his profession. Today, Joey Batson is a hero. But in 2012, Clemson fans were convinced that he was largely responsible for some disappointing outcomes on the football field. Crowds can be fickle and the love of a crowd can shift and change from moment to moment. We can have confidence in God's love because it isn't dependent upon our abilities or His mood. God's mood never changes, and He is consistent in His character. He is love.

1. God is love (John 1:1-10).

One of the clearest explanations of God's loving character is found in 1 John 4:8 where we read, "God is love." In this verse, the apostle John helps us to understand that love is not only an activity of God, love is woven through His being as a part of His character. God is love, but love is not just who God became when the New Testament was written. Love is the very character of God from the beginning of all time. In the Gospel of John (written by the same author of 1 John) we learn that God exists very differently from the way that we exist. In John 1, we read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

John wrote of the Word as another name for Jesus. Jesus has existed with the Father and with the Holy Spirit for all of eternity. God has eternally existed as three persons in one. God exists as Trinity in perfect loving harmony within Himself.

- ❓ Read Matthew 3:13-17. How do you recognize the involvement of each of the three persons of the Trinity within this passage?
- ❓ How is your love of God increased when you consider how much greater He is than you and how graceful He is to love you in spite of your weaknesses?

2. Jesus came to make the love of God known (John 1:11-14).

Jesus was not received by His own people when He came to earth, but that didn't stop Him from serving. Jesus continued to serve, love, and minister to all who would receive Him because He came to make God's love known to the world.

- ❓ How did Jesus make His love known to you? What was the deciding point in your life that caused you to become a Christian?

John 1:14 is an amazing picture of God's love. John teaches us that Jesus didn't just love us from afar, but He became flesh and dwelt among us. The word dwelt literally means Jesus pitched His tent among us. God was so passionate to make His love known that He didn't just write it in a book, He sent His living Word to live among His creation who desperately needed His love.

- ❓ Why would Jesus come and live among a people who were not interested in loving Him in return? How should this shape the way we live?

3. God's love is most clearly displayed on the cross (John 3:10-21).

John 3:10-21 records a conversation between Jesus and a religious ruler of His day named Nicodemus. Nicodemus and the other religious teachers of the day emphasized obedience to the Old Testament law as the only way to show devotion to God. But Jesus hinted at a different way altogether. Obeying laws would never be enough. A man must be born again.

Nicodemus talked about rules, but Jesus spoke of the power of God's love that transforms people. Jesus spoke of a love that would pierce the darkness, break hearts, and even give new life to spiritually dead men and women.

- ❓ How do you think you would have responded if you had been Nicodemus?
- ❓ How differently might your evangelistic conversations go if you focused more on God's love and less on law and rules?

Walk It Out This Week

God is love and that love is most clearly shown through Jesus' birth, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. God's love is beyond anything we could ever imagine or hope for. He loves so much that He came to earth as a person and died for people who continue to refuse and reject His love.

- ❓ Read John 3:16-21 every day this week and reflect on the love God has shown you through Jesus.
- ❓ The love of God in Christ impacts our relationships within the church. Who is one person in our church you will reach out to and encourage this week?
- ❓ Jesus knew that He had to die for the world to be saved. Do you have a friend, relative, or neighbor who needs to know that Jesus loved them enough to die? Say their name and pray for them every day this week.

Consider using a journal as we go through Jesus Follower. Use it to record your thoughts, prayers, and commitments.

Prayer of Response

Close in prayer asking God to grow your love for Him based on His perfect love displayed in Jesus.

Additional Resources

- *Crazy Love* by Francis Chan
- *The Prodigal God* by Timothy Keller
- *Enjoying God* by Tim Chester
- *The Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd-Jones

For Next Week

Title

Love God: Part 2

Main Text

2 Corinthians 5:17-19; John 3:16

Memory Verse:

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.
-John 3:14-17

Family Time - Review John 3:14-17

Kids

Some of the truths in the Bible are hard to understand. Few are harder than the Trinity, but it is OK if you don't understand all of the ins and outs about how God exists. It is OK if you don't understand some of the Bible's big words and hard concepts right away. What you need to understand is that God loves you and has loved you for all of eternity. Even more than your mom and dad, God loves you and wants to have a relationship with you.

- ❓ What is hardest for you to understand about the Bible?
- ❓ Is there anything that can make God stop loving you?
(Hint, read Romans 8:35-39 to help you answer this question.)

Students

Growing up is hard. Sometimes it is even hard to believe that you are loveable. And yet, God loves you more than you can even try to love yourself. He knows every decision you will make and every sin you will commit from now until you die, and yet, He loves you anyway. God loves you without condition.

- ❓ How does the love of your parents help you to better understand God's love?
- ❓ How might the world be different if you tried to show others the same kind of unconditional love that God shows to you?

Extended Commentary

The Word Became Flesh (John 1:1-18)

No other book in the Bible has a prologue as overtly theological as does the Gospel of John. First, John made a clear and decisive statement regarding the nature of Jesus: “the Word was God” and that “Word became flesh.” John wanted it known that Jesus Christ was fully God in human form. That is the meaning of “incarnation,” from the Latin *incarnatus*, which means made flesh. God has made Himself known through Christ. Christ was both “Word” and “flesh,” not one to the exclusion of the other, and thus was the perfect and only God-man. Christ made His “dwelling” with us, a word associated with “tent” or “tabernacle,” intimating the literalness of God’s coming to humanity. This word usage should not be lost on the reader, for the tabernacle of the Old Testament was an earthly building filled with the glory of God (Ex. 40:34-35).

In using the term “Word” (*logos*), John was using a term familiar to both Jews and Greeks, though each attributed a different meaning to the term. For the Greek mind the “Word” referred to the rational principle that supervised or governed the universe. To the Jew, “Word” was a reference to God. Thus John wanted to equate the “Word” with God while noting that the Word was distinct from the Father. John stated that Jesus was with God “in the beginning” and that through Christ “all things were made.” Jesus is therefore seen as co-eternal with God and as the Creator.

John then discussed the purpose of the Word becoming flesh, namely that Christ brought life, a life that serves as the “light” for all people. The life Christ offers is beyond that of mere human life; it is life eternal with God. Therefore Jesus brought the light of truth and the life of salvation. The questions and concerns of this world that find no ultimate answers are met by the Light that pierces all darkness with the brilliance of truth, yet this truth has been rejected.

The bitter irony of this should not be lost on the reader. John emphasized this irony, stating that though He created the world, the world did not recognize Him. Though He came to His own, His own did not receive Him. God has come to the world for acceptance and relationship. Those who accept the Light, who believe in the message Christ proclaimed about Himself, are given the “right to become the children of God.” To be born into the kingdom of God is not something achieved on human energy (see Eph. 2:8-9) but by the grace of

the living God through Christ Jesus. This is to be balanced by the emphasis on the need to “receive” Christ. Though we bring nothing to God and contribute nothing to our salvation, the gift itself is dependent on our willingness to receive it from the one who offers it.

God’s Saving Love (John 3:1-21)

There can be little doubt that this section in John’s Gospel is the most renowned in all of Scripture, with verse 16 serving as the most familiar single verse in all of the Bible. There is good reason for this, for John 3:16 presents the clearest, simplest statement of the good news Christ came to bring to the world. What is that good news? First, that God loves you. Second, that God’s love was so great that He sent His only Son to tell the world about God’s love. Third, that anyone who will believe in God’s Son will never die but will live forever with God. Belief, of course, means far more than mere intellectual assent. Rather, it means placing one’s life and trust in complete surrender to the one in whom you believe.

The heart of Jesus’ message to Nicodemus is that men and women, in order to come to God in faith, must be “born again.” This is not optional, according to Jesus, but a necessity. By this Jesus meant being “born of the Spirit.” The reference to “water and the Spirit” has many possible interpretations, such as (1) water referring to purification; (2) synonymous with “born of the Spirit”; (3) baptism, either John’s or Christ’s. The latter of these three interpretations, that baptism is necessary for salvation, is the least desired understanding (Eph. 2:8-9). To be considered as well is that the Greek manuscript does not have an article (“the”) with the word “Spirit”; therefore it would be grammatically incorrect to separate Spirit from water. What is to be maintained is that to be “born again” is a gift from God through the Holy Spirit as a result of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. To be born again is to become a member of God’s family through faith in Jesus Christ, initiated by repentance and the desire to lead a new life to the honor and glory of Christ (1 Pet. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:17). Jesus’ purpose was never to condemn the world, for that is something we do to ourselves through our own willful choice to reject Christ, but rather Jesus’ purpose was to save the world.

Jesus Follower: Session 3

Love God (Part 2)

Summary and Goal

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The gospel teaches us that through Jesus Christ, God the Father has reconciled the world to Himself. Jesus' disciples are called to be active participants in the ongoing reconciliation ministry of Christ.

Main Passages

2 Corinthians 5:17-19; John 3:16

Session Outline

1. The gospel is an event in history (2 Cor. 5:17-18).
2. The gospel makes reconciliation possible (2 Cor. 5:19).
3. Reconciliation is an ongoing ministry (2 Cor. 5:17-19, John 3:16).

Theological Theme

On the cross, Jesus took the punishment for sin and reconciled broken sinners with their Creator God.

Christ Connection

The gospel overwhelms our sin and shame and makes us a new creation in Christ.

Missional Application

The ongoing work of reconciliation involves caring for the physical needs of those around us as well as proclaiming the gospel to the world.



Jesus Follower

Our response to what God has done for us in Jesus Christ

Introduction

- ❓ Do you have any questions or observations from your reading in the Gospel of John this week?
- ❓ How were you able to apply what you learned this past week?

The gospel isn't a prayer or a testimony. The gospel is an historical event that actually happened.

Maybe you're not old yet, but your body regularly reminds you that you aren't young anymore. Maybe you still run enough to be considered "in shape," and can fit into pants that you owned in high school. Even so, you know that your body doesn't feel the same way it did 20 years ago.

Dads often like to remind their kids that they are still "the man." But you can't deny that you are just a man. You rarely jump out of bed anymore; you sort of roll out of bed and spend the first couple of minutes trying to get all your joints moving. Age is a humbling reminder that people are finite. Age is also a good reminder of the need we have for Christ. Like the rest of creation, we wear out and are stained by sin. We need to be made new.

At salvation, we become new creations. Just as our bodies are imperfect, so too are our hearts and souls.

1. The gospel is an event in history (2 Cor. 5:17-18).

Christians have been reconciled to God through Christ in the gospel. It is important for Christians to understand that the gospel work of Jesus is not first and foremost a personal experience. The gospel isn't a prayer or a testimony. The gospel is an historical event that actually happened.

- ❓ Why do you believe that Jesus actually died and rose again? What evidence could you share with someone who asked?

The gospel is the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. The salvation of sinners is a glorious application of the gospel, but it isn't the gospel. Testimonies are great, but they aren't the gospel. The gospel is an event in history, which is why Paul used the past tense in 2 Corinthians 5:18. Christ has already reconciled Himself to sinners through His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension.

- ❓ How is sharing the gospel of Jesus different than sharing your own testimony? Why are both important?

2. The gospel makes reconciliation possible (2 Cor. 5:19).

The gospel makes reconciliation possible because on the cross, Jesus paid the penalty that every person owes. Romans 3:23 teaches that all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. Romans 6:23 shows us that the wages of sin is death. All people have sinned, and as a result of their sin, all people deserve death. But God who is rich in mercy has offered the gift of eternal life.

- ❓ How have we been reconciled to God through Christ? What impact does this have on our love for Him?

The gospel makes reconciliation possible because through the gospel it became possible for God to not count "their trespasses against them." As a result of sin, humanity's relationship with God was broken, but the gospel breaches the chasm.

- ❓ Re-read 2 Corinthians 5:18. Instead of being saved from sin, Paul says that you have been reconciled to God. How does this affect your understanding of salvation?

3. Reconciliation is an ongoing ministry (2 Cor. 5:17-19, John 3:16).

Reconciliation

Bringing together of two parties that are estranged or in dispute. Jesus Christ is the one who brings together God and man, with salvation as the result of the union. Reconciliation basically means "change" or "exchange." The idea is of a change of relationship, an exchange of antagonism for goodwill, enmity for friendship. Attitudes are transformed and hostility ceases.

Jesus completed the necessary work of reconciliation when He died on the cross and rose from the grave. Paul said that Christians have now been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation. This ministry of reconciliation means first and foremost the proclamation of the gospel to the world. But this also includes our reconciliation to others whether seeking forgiveness from another person or forgiving when you've been wronged. Because Jesus has reconciled us to God, we can seek reconciliation with others.

- ❓ Other than evangelism, what might you do to engage in the ministry of reconciliation today?

The message of John 3 is as applicable today as it was two-thousand years ago. God so loved the world that He sent Jesus, and whoever believes in Jesus will experience eternal life with Him. The ministry of reconciliation—proclaiming the good news about Jesus—has been given to Jesus' followers.

- ❓ How are you participating in Christ's reconciling ministry today? How does our love for God motivate us to participate in this effort?
- ❓ Last week we considered how the doctrine of the Trinity helps us to understand God's love. How is the entire Trinity involved in salvation?

Walk It Out This Week

- ❓ What is one act of love you can perform this week for someone out of the love God has for you?
- ❓ Consider how might God be calling you to reconcile with another person this week. Take action based on these convictions.

Take time to encourage at least one person about the love of God this week.

Prayer of Response

Thank God that He has reconciled His people to Himself because of His great love. Ask Him to lead you to share that great love with others this week.

Additional Resources

- *What is the Gospel?* by Greg Gilbert
- *Be Encouraged* by Warren Wiersbe
- *Exalting Jesus in John* by Matt Carter and Josh Wredberg
- *Indescribable* by Louie Giglio

For Next Week

Title

Love Others

Main Text

John 13:1-16,34-35

Memory Verse:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

-John 3:16

Family Time - Review 2 Cor. 5:17-19

Kids

It's not fair. That seems to be one of the favorite phrases of 5-year-olds. If they get in trouble or if they don't get a treat, they confidently assert, “It's not fair!” In other words, “I didn't get what I deserved.” We don't deserve God's love, but He gives it to us anyway. God loves us regardless of the fact that we are sinners. And He loves you too.

- ❓ Read and memorize John 3:16. After you have memorized John 3:16 substitute your name where it says “the world” (For God so loved Sam . . .). How does this verse feel different when you say it with your name?
- ❓ Have you ever received a gift you didn't deserve? How did it make you feel? How is God's love a gift you don't deserve?

Students

Teenagers often struggle with questions of evil and justice. You may not always know how to formulate all of your questions into words, but it can seem at times as though God is unfair. But, if God were fair, He would punish us for our sins and would not have made a way for you to be reconciled to Him. The gospel is unfair because grace isn't fair. Grace is unmerited favor—it is a gift that we don't deserve.

- ❓ How is the grace of God unfair, and why is that a good thing?
- ❓ What can you do to show grace to someone today?

Extended Commentary

2 Corinthians 5:17-19

5:17-18 The words in Christ refer to being in union with him. Genuine conversion begins life transformation, but not by reforming the old nature. The indwelling Spirit creates divine life in believers (Rm 8:8-10), so that the new has come. Other NT passages communicate this truth by using language such as “born again” or “regeneration” (Jn 3:3-8; Titus 3:5; 1Pt 1:23). Those who were enemies of God have now become friends by being reconciled to him. God’s wrath against sin was satisfied in the death of his Son. Sinners—who formerly put self-interest above God’s glory (Rm 1:21; 3:23)—have been brought to cherish God as their highest treasure (2 Cor 4:6). The ministry of reconciliation—being an agent of this good news—was Paul’s special responsibility, but the task belongs to all who have received this ministry.

5:19-21 What Christ did, God did. Christ’s death mainly affected the world, that is, human sinners (rather than evil supernatural beings, for whom no divine provision for reconciliation has been made). Christ’s death upholds God’s righteousness. Trespasses were placed on the one who did not know sin. In return, the righteousness of God is credited (imputed) to all who are in him. The message of reconciliation is known to others only when ambassadors for Christ spread it. The Great Commission is the responsibility of reconciled human beings, not angels (Mt 28:18-20).

John 3:16

3:16-18 God, out of love, gave his one and only Son (cp. 1:14, 18), so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life (see notes at 5:26; 14:4-6). John’s favorite designation for Jesus is the Son sent by the Father (3:34-36; 5:19-26; 6:40; 8:35-36; 14:13; 17:1), imagery taken from the Jewish concept of the shaliach (messenger), according to which the sent one is like the sender himself and faithfully pursues the sender’s interests (13:16, 20). Jesus is that “sent one” par excellence (9:7), and he in turn sends his disciples (see note at 20:21-22). Being sent implies that the commission, charge, and message are issued by the sender rather than originating with the ones sent. The messengers’ role is to fulfill their commission according to their sender’s will.

Jesus Follower: Session 4

Love Others

Summary and Goal

We love others because God loves us. Having been united with the Father, Son, and Spirit, we now share in their self-giving love toward others.

Main Passages

John 13:1-16,34-35

Session Outline

1. Jesus loved first (John 13:1-5).
2. Jesus loved through service (John 13:5-16).
3. Jesus taught His disciples to love as He loves (John 13:34-35).

Theological Theme

The love of God is offered freely.

Christ Connection

Jesus loves us in spite of our rebellion and regardless of our love toward Him.

Missional Application

Jesus served His disciples as a display of His love toward them. When we serve the world, we show Christ's love and open doors for the proclamation of the gospel.



Jesus Follower

Out of the love God has for us,
we love those God has created

Introduction

- ❓ Do you have any questions or observations from your reading in the Gospel of John this week?
- ❓ How were you able to apply what you learned this past week?

Recently, residents of a village in Wales have been baffled by the crashing of their internet every morning. Staff repeatedly visited the village and found no fault with the network or hardware associated with the network. Cables were replaced, but the problem continued like clockwork every morning.

After carrying out several tests, engineers suspected that the problem could be caused by a single appliance emitting electrical interference. Using sophisticated equipment, engineers worked to locate the “electrical noise.” At 7:00 one morning, the noise was discovered and traced to a particular home. It turns out that every morning at 7:00 AM the occupant of the home would turn on their old TV and that TV would in-turn knock out internet for the entire village.¹

This is an example of how one person’s actions can affect an entire group. Similarly, we are called to live as individuals in a way that benefits many others because of the love we have received from God.

1. Jesus loved first (John 13:1-5).

John took care to emphasize not only that Jesus loved, but that He loved first and He loved to the end. Jesus didn’t come to earth only to do a job, He loved his “own who were in the world,” and “he loved them to the

John took care to emphasize not only that Jesus loved, but that He loved first and He loved to the end.

very end.” Even as He knew that He would die and be betrayed, Jesus loved anyway.

Jesus also knew who He was and where He was going. Jesus’ love was especially selfless in light of the fact that He recognized His own divinity. This was God kneeling before His creation and serving them. In service, He continued to woo them into salvation, but He also taught them how they were to treat each other and the world around them when He was gone.

This was God kneeling before His creation and serving them.

- ❓ How hard do you find it to love those who do not love you in return?
- ❓ How does recognizing the way Christ has loved us help change your perspective on this?

2. Jesus loved through service (John 13:5-16).

In serving His disciples, Jesus did not surrender His position as teacher and Lord. Instead, He showed His disciples that He loved in both word and deed. He didn’t merely tell them that He loved them, He showed His love by serving them.

- ❓ Think back over the past week, how have you served those you love?

Jesus also taught His disciples that His love involved sacrifice. He would show even greater love a few hours later on the cross, but in this moment at the last supper, He taught Peter and the others that the only way to have a share in Jesus is to be served by Jesus. We need not only to learn from Jesus, but to be cleansed by Jesus.

- ❓ If you had been a disciple with Jesus on that night, how would you have felt when He washed your feet? What is a modern-day equivalent of washing feet that we could do to serve others today?

3. Jesus taught His disciples to love as He loves (John 13:34-35).

Christians often train in apologetics—the defense of the Christian faith. However, when Jesus taught apologetics, He didn’t begin with clever tactics or carefully sourced

The greatest way for individual Christians and entire churches to advocate for the power of the gospel is to love each other the way that Jesus loves His followers.

facts. Jesus said, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” The greatest way for individual Christians and entire churches to advocate for the power of the gospel is to love each other the way that Jesus loves His followers.

- ❓ Why is love of fellow believers a strong apologetic?
- ❓ When have you seen a divided church turn people off to the gospel? When have you seen people drawn into a church by their unity?

Walk It Out This Week

Jesus loved from the beginning to the end of His life. Love brought Him to earth and led Him to the cross. He loved with His words and His deeds, and He taught His disciples to imitate Him by loving each other selflessly.

- ❓ Think of one way you can love another person selflessly this week and follow through on it.
- ❓ Read John 13:34-35 every day this week and spend time praying through how Jesus is calling you to love others as He has loved you.
- ❓ Is there anyone you know that might be opposed to you (as Judas was to Jesus)? Set aside time this week to pray for that person daily.

Prayer of Response

Close in prayer thanking God for His love that has been displayed most clearly through the cross. Ask Him to lead you to love others in the same way He has loved you.

Additional Resources

- *The Gospel* by Ray Ortlund
- *Everybody, Always* by Bob Goff
- *John: That You May Believe* by R. Kent Hughes
- *John* by Gary Burge
- *The Very Best, Hands-On, Kinda Dangerous Family Devotions* by Tim Shoemaker

For Next Week

Title

Abide in Christ

Main Text

2 Corinthians 13:14, John 15:1-8

Memory Verse:

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

-John 15:4-5

Family Time - Review John 13:34-35

Kids

Jesus loves us even when we don't deserve it. When you are learning about Jesus, it can sometimes seem like Jesus is all about rules. But, more than anything else, Jesus is love. He loves you even though you sometimes break the rules and break His heart. He loves you and He wants you to love Him back. In fact, He loves you so much that He died on the cross for you.

- ❓ How hard is it for you to love people who are not nice to you?
- ❓ What can you do to show more love to someone in your family this week?

Students

Love is more than a feeling, it is a decision and a choice. Jesus loved His disciples because He wanted to, not because they deserved it. Jesus loved because He is love and He chose to love. Likewise, He commands us to love others, not because we always feel like it, but because it is the godly thing to do. We are expected to choose love.

- ❓ Who has taught you the most about God's love? How has this impacted the way you love others?
- ❓ Who is hard for you to love? How might you serve them this week as a way of showing your love toward them?

Extended Commentary

John 13:1-35

13:1-17 With his crucifixion imminent, Jesus washed his disciples' feet as a final proof of his love and to give them an example of humility and service. In a striking demonstration of love for his enemies, Jesus washed all of his disciples' feet, including Judas's. Jesus' act is all the more remarkable because washing people's feet was considered a task so low it could be performed only by non-Jewish slaves. In a culture where people walked long distances on dusty roads in sandals, it was customary for the host to provide water for foot-washing. This was usually done upon arrival, not during the meal. The disciples probably felt guilty that none of them had thought to do this.

13:1 References to Jewish religious festivals and the coming of Jesus' hour (see note at 2:4) now converge. Jesus' own refers to the Twelve, the representatives of his new messianic community (1:11).

13:2-3 These verses show that Judas already was under Satan's influence and that Jesus had full knowledge of this before he washed the disciples' feet.

13:4-5 The practice of foot washing had a long OT tradition (Gn 18:4; 19:2; 24:32; 43:24; Jdg 19:21; 1Sm 25:41). Jesus' performance of this menial task exemplified his humility (Php 2:6-8).

13:6-11 What Peter failed to realize was the humiliating nature of Jesus' mission to be our Savior.

13:12-15 The phrase in 1Tm 5:10, "washed the saints' feet," shows that the disciples got Jesus' message.

13:34-35 Love must be the distinguishing mark of Jesus' disciples. Jesus' new command closely resembled the Mosaic commands to love the Lord (Dt 6:5) and one's neighbor as oneself (Lv 19:18; cp. Mk 12:28-33). Elsewhere Jesus said we must love even our enemies (Mt 5:43-48). While the command to love God and one's neighbor was thus not new, Jesus' example (as I have loved you) was unparalleled, as was his insistence that we should love our enemies.

References

1. Guy, Jack. "Old Television Kept Wiping out Village's Broadband for 18 Months." CNN. September 22, 2020. Accessed September 25, 2020. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/22/uk/old-tv-breaks-broadband-village-scli-intl-gbr/index.html>.

Jesus Follower: Session 5

Abide in Christ

Summary and Goal

As we abide in Christ, and He in us, the Holy Spirit changes us to be more like Jesus. Through spiritual disciplines such as daily Bible reading, prayer, corporate worship, and personal evangelism we abide in Christ and we are conformed into His image.

Main Passages

2 Corinthians 13:14, John 15:1-8

Session Outline

1. Growing Christians abide in Christ (John 15:1-5).
2. Christians bear fruit (John 15:6-8).
3. Christians grow in grace and love (2 Cor. 13:14).

Theological Theme

A Christian is a person who has been saved by Jesus and is connected to Jesus. Salvation is not only for the future; it is the lived experience of those who abide in Jesus.

Christ Connection

Justification is complete at the moment of salvation. Jesus saves to the uttermost (John 15:3).

Missional Application

Christians have a responsibility to live out Jesus' mission to the world by bearing fruit in accordance with Jesus' work in their lives.



Jesus Follower

Walking with Jesus as we grow in our relationship with Him

Introduction

- ❓ Do you have any questions or observations from your reading in the Gospel of John this week?
- ❓ How were you able to apply what you learned this past week?

2020 has been a unique and challenging year. Everything seems to be shifting and changing. But though the world is different, God has not been surprised—His love is not diminished, and His plan for the church and the world is the same today as it has always been. The world is different, but God stays the same.

The fact that God stays the same is explained in a doctrinal term called *immutability*. To say that God is immutable means He is not affected by outside circumstances. Nothing that happens in the world changes who God is. This is important because if God were subject to regular change, he could not be an anchor that holds fast in the storms of life. If God were subject to regular change, we could not be confident in our eternal salvation, because God could change His mind and change the rules of the game.

1. Jesus Followers abide in Christ (John 15:1-5).

In some ways, everyone who is in Christ abides in Christ. In this series we have already seen that those who are in Christ are new creations. Therefore, anyone who has been saved is “in Christ.” However, Jesus offered some “if” statements in John 15 that suggest Christians may sometimes wander away from fellowship with Him. Apart from continuing fellowship with Jesus, Christians are

separated from the “vine” that gives life; but in Jesus, Christians are connected with the power of Christ that changes the world.

- ❓ What does it mean to be “in Christ”? How do we abide in Him?

Abiding in Christ can sound like a mystical, spiritual experience, and to some degree it is. However, abiding in Christ happens through very concrete steps. We abide in Christ through spiritual disciplines such as regular Bible reading, prayer, corporate worship, silence and solitude, and personal evangelism.

- ❓ What spiritual disciplines do you practice regularly in your life?

2. Jesus Followers bear fruit (John 15:5-8).

Sometimes Bible phrases can be over spiritualized to a point that normal people have difficulty relating them to real life. When you read “bear fruit” in John 15, you could substitute it for “looks or acts like a Jesus Follower.” Jesus said that whoever abides in Him bears fruit, or looks and acts like a Jesus Follower. Those who do not abide in Him are “thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.” Jesus Followers bear fruit. Those who do not bear fruit are imposters who are eventually cut off.

- ❓ In what areas of your life do you see Christ’s impact most readily? In what areas of your life do you need to pray for more “fruit”?
- ❓ Why is it important that followers of Jesus continue to bear fruit? How do spiritual disciplines help us to grow spiritual fruit in our lives?

3. Jesus Followers grow in grace and love (2 Cor. 13:14).

Sanctification should result in bearing fruit and an increase in holiness. But growing in Jesus should also result in grace and love. Just as Christ shows you grace in your salvation, so too should your relationship with Christ result in you being more grace-filled, loving, patient, and kind.

Sanctification

The process of being made holy resulting in a changed lifestyle for Jesus Followers.

- ❓ Why is it important that our relationships with and love for others always flow out of the love we have been shown in Jesus?
- ❓ How might the recent climate of our country lead Christians to behave in ways that are un-loving and lacking in grace?

Walk It Out This Week

The work of Jesus in the lives of believers conforms them into His image. Over time, Christians who spend time with Jesus look like Jesus and act like Jesus. Eventually, the fruit that Christians bear will be not only evangelistic fruit, but also the fruit of grace, love, peace, and repentance (Gal. 5:22-23).

- ❓ What do you need to limit or cut out of your life so that you might further abide in Jesus? Take concrete steps toward this change this week.
- ❓ Take up or renew a spiritual discipline this week. Plan time each day to devote to this discipline.
- ❓ Ask at least one person to check in with you this week to keep you accountable for practicing spiritual disciplines. As a group, offer to do this mutually for one another.

Over time, Christians who spend time with Jesus look like Jesus and act like Jesus.

Prayer of Response

Close in prayer thanking God that He has brought you into relationship with Him through His Son Jesus. Ask Him to lead you to abide in Jesus each day, that you might grow more and more like Him.

Additional Resources

- *Abide in Christ* by Andrew Murray
- *John* by Gary Burge
- *The Gospel of John* by J. Ramsey Michaels
- *How Great is Our God* by Louie Giglio

For Next Week

Title

Imitate His Life

Main Text

John 5:16-19; Romans 8:14-16

Memory Verse:

So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.

-John 5:19

Family Time - Review John 15:1-8

Kids

There is nothing you can do that is more important for your spiritual growth than to regularly spend time in God’s Word. Reading the Bible is one of the spiritual disciplines. You don’t always have to read the Bible; you can listen to it on an audio version. You can spend time in children’s storybook Bibles, or you can sing biblical songs. You can also get your mom and dad to read the Bible to you over dinner or at bedtime.

- ❓ How do you memorize Bible verses? Why is memorizing God’s word so necessary for us as Christians?
- ❓ Why is it so important to read the Bible? How has reading the Bible helped you? What have you learned recently from God’s word?

Students

There is nothing you can do that is more important for your spiritual growth today and in the long-term than to establish a daily pattern of Bible reading. The best way to make sure that you read your Bible daily is to set aside a particular time and place to read each day. You can also begin journaling about your Bible reading to help you to better understand and remember what you read.

- ❓ Do you have a regular Bible reading time each day? If not, why not? If so, how could it be better?
- ❓ Did you know that you could read through the entire Bible in a year by committing just 12-15 minutes to the Bible each day? What could you give up in your life that would allow you to read the entire Bible in a year?

Extended Commentary

John 15:1-8

Here Jesus put forth another declarative “I am” statement, this time asserting that He is the “true vine” and that God is the gardener (15:1). In the Old Testament the “vine” is frequently used as a symbol of Israel (Ps. 80:8-16; Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21). This symbol was often used when Israel was lacking in some way. Jesus, however, is the true Vine.

Two scenarios are presented that should be seen as representative for the Christian life: first, the one who is on the vine and producing fruit (Matt. 3:8; 7:16-20) and second, the one who is on the vine who is not producing fruit. The productive vine is pruned for greater production, while the nonproductive vine is cut off for destruction. The key to producing fruit is one’s relationship to the vine, to “remain in the vine” (15:4-5, 7). Apart from Christ nothing can be accomplished (15:5). The verse “Ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you,” as with 14:13, needs to be seen in the context of one who is firmly part of the vine (15:16). When one is in such a close and dynamic relationship with Christ, requests coincide with His will. In other words, asking whatever you wish and having it granted is dependent upon the first clause of the verse: “If you remain in me and my words remain in you” (15:7).

2 Corinthians 13:14

13:14. Paul’s final words to the congregation depicted his deepest desires for them. He closed with a trinitarian benediction. This is Paul’s only full trinitarian benediction in all his writings. Normally, he mentioned only Christ and/or God the Father. Sometimes he mentioned none of the persons of the Godhead specifically. Only occasionally did he mention the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13).

The associations between the persons of the Trinity and the specific blessings are not particularly significant. Elsewhere, Paul associated Christ with love (Rom. 8:35) and fellowship (1 Cor. 1:9). He also set God alongside grace. Further, he associated the Holy Spirit with both love (Col. 1:8) and grace (i.e., charismata or “gifts of grace,” 1 Cor. 12:4).

Paul prayed for grace, love, and fellowship with the persons of the Trinity because these blessings are so essential to the spiritual well-being of the church. Divine grace is the unmerited mercy of God toward his people, granting them forgiveness of sin. Divine love is God's affection and loyalty toward his true people that secures them in a saving relationship with him. Divine fellowship is the experience of the nearness of God that encourages and empowers believers in their daily walk before him.

Paul wanted all this and more for the congregation at Corinth. Despite the troubles they had given him over the years, his desire was to see them enjoy the rich blessings of God in their lives. If they would take his epistle to heart, they would surely receive those blessings.

Jesus Follower: Session 6

Imitate His Life

Summary and Goal

The Holy Spirit enables us to reflect the life of Jesus to those around us by living out the relationship that Jesus had with His Father.

Main Passages

John 5:16-19; Romans 8:14-16

Session Outline

1. Christians are imitators (John 5:16,19).
2. Christians are empowered (John 5:20; 14:16).
3. Christians are adopted ambassadors (Rom. 8:14-16).

Theological Theme

Christians are enabled to reflect the life of Jesus to those around them because of their adoption as children of God. As children of God, Christians are also empowered by the Holy Spirit to minister on Christ's behalf to the world around them.

Christ Connection

Through His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus made it possible for sinners to be reconciled to God through new birth and adoption.

Missional Application

When we preach the gospel to others, we do not only give them an opportunity to be saved, but also to be welcomed into a new family as children of God.



Jesus Follower

The Holy Spirit enables us to reflect the life of Jesus to those around us

Introduction

- ❓ Do you have any questions or observations from your reading in the Gospel of John this week?
- ❓ How were you able to apply what you learned this past week?

Do you consider yourself to be culturally relevant? Can you name any top 10 Billboard artists or identify celebrities by their picture on Instagram? Remaining culturally relevant is hard. It requires a constant commitment to pop culture. But maybe cultural relevance shouldn't be our goal. In his 1985 book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman warned that the constant barrage of cultural crises threatened to rob society of real meaning and order.

As Christians, it is OK to be irrelevant. You don't have to be an expert on everything. It is OK if you aren't aware of the latest scandal or the most recent issue causing cultural indignation. Christians should stand for Christ and His gospel and should stand against injustice wherever it is found. However, standing for Christ and standing against injustice does not require you to scour the internet daily for reasons to be angry and outspoken.

- ❓ How does the clamor of culture draw you away from your relationship with Christ?
- ❓ How would your life change if you were comfortable being culturally irrelevant, but rooted in Christ?
- ❓ Who would you invest in if your attention were not drawn away by internet sensations or cultural clamor?

1. Jesus Followers are imitators (John 5:16,19).

Jesus wasn't trying to reinvent something. He saw what the Father did and He imitated His Father. As Jesus' followers, Christians do not need to wrestle with the weight of being unique or authentic. The goal for followers of Jesus is to look like Jesus. Spend your time imitating Jesus and you will honor Jesus.

- ❓ How can you imitate Jesus in your job right now?
- ❓ Read 1 Corinthians 11:1. Could you urge others to imitate you as an example of how to live as a disciple of Christ? If not, what do you need to change?

2. Jesus Followers are empowered (John 5:20; 14:16).

Imitating someone can be a daunting task. Just because Patrick Mahomes can complete no-look passes in the NFL doesn't mean you can do the same thing. You might want to imitate him, but you probably do not have the skills to do so. As Christians seek to imitate Christ, though, we have a helper.

- ❓ Read John 14:16. What name did Jesus use to refer to the Holy Spirit?
- ❓ How have you experienced the empowering help of the Holy Spirit as you seek to be like Jesus?

The Holy Spirit is given to Christians to empower them to serve and imitate Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul taught that the Holy Spirit empowers Christians to serve for the building up of Christ's church. When you were saved, you were also empowered. You need not worry that you can't serve Christ with your talents or abilities. The promise of God's Word is that the Holy Spirit has given you the gifts you need to honor Christ and serve His church.

3. Jesus Followers are adopted ambassadors (Rom. 8:14-16).

- ❓ What reason did Paul give for not being afraid?

The goal for followers of Jesus is to look like Jesus. Spend your time imitating Jesus and you will honor Jesus.

Ambassador

Representative of one royal court to another. Jesus Followers represent Jesus to the world.

As a follower of Christ, you not only carry the message of Jesus as an ambassador, you bear His name as an adopted brother or sister. You are part of the family!

The Bible makes no distinction between Jesus and Jesus' followers as it relates to relationship with the Father. Jesus' followers are co-heirs with Jesus (Rom. 8:17). As a follower of Christ, you not only carry the message of Jesus as an ambassador, you bear His name as an adopted brother or sister. You are part of the family!

- How does it feel to know that you can call God your Father? What do you find encouraging about this? If your father was not a good example, how is this view of God challenging?

Walk It Out This Week

Christians are called to imitate Jesus, and they are empowered by the Holy Spirit to do so. The greatest privilege of Christians is to be adopted by God and trusted as ambassadors to carry the message of Christ. As an ambassador, you speak for your king. Christians bear the name of their King and speak on His behalf to a watching world.

Read Romans 8:14-16 each day this week. Meditate on the truth of your adoption as a child of God. Journal some ways that this has impacted your life.

- Is God calling you to do something for Him? Spend some time praying about the things He is calling you to and ask Him for obedience to walk in those things.
- Think of someone who needs to hear about God's love (a different person than in previous weeks). Initiate conversation with this person this week as a step toward sharing about the love of God with them.

Prayer of Response

Close in prayer thanking God for your adoption as His child and the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in your life. Ask Him to make you more and more like Jesus.

Additional Resources

- The Pursuit of Holiness* by Jerry Bridges
- You Can Change* by Tim Chester
- Jesus Continued...* by J.D. Greear
- Good Good Father* by Chris Tomlin and Pat Barrett

For Next Week

Title

Imitate His Mission

Main Text

John 20:19-23; Matthew 28:16-20

Memory Verse:

For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing.
And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.
-John 5:20

Family Time - Review Romans 8:14-16

Kids

Becoming a Jesus Follower means that God has adopted you and made you part of His family. When God adopts you, He changes your name and He changes your future. You are His and He loves and protects you.

- ❓ What does the world learn about you when they find out that God has adopted you?
- ❓ How is your life different because God loves you?

Students

In John 10, Jesus taught about the dangers of “the thief.” Jesus warns, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.” But Jesus gave a promise as well: “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” Life. That is the promise of Jesus. But this is not just any life, this is an abundant life as a child of the King. The thief comes to destroy, but God protects. In John 10:29, Jesus taught that those who belong to God are safe, “and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.” As an adopted child of God, you are safe in the hands of your Father.

- ❓ What privileges come with being adopted as a child of God?
- ❓ What responsibilities come with being adopted as a child of God?

Extended Commentary

John 5:16-19

5:15-16 The man never thanked Jesus. He only reported him to the authorities.

5:17 While Gn 2:2-3 teaches that God rested (Hb shabath) on the seventh day of creation, Jewish rabbis agreed that God continually upheld the universe, yet without breaking the Sabbath. If God was above Sabbath regulations, so was Jesus (Mt 12:1-14). What is more, even the Jews made exceptions to the rule prohibiting work on the Sabbath, most notably in cases where circumcision occurred on a Sabbath (Jn 7:23).

5:18 Making himself equal to God seemed to violate the OT teaching that there is only one God (Dt 6:4). Thus the Jewish leaders accused Jesus of blasphemy, which became the primary charge leveled against Jesus before Pilate (Jn 19:7).

Romans 8:14-16

8:14 The leading of God's Spirit is his providential sanctification (Ps 23:3). It is common to all believers, it is constant, and it will bring the believer to glory (Rm 8:17). The leading of the Spirit is not mystical direction or ecstasy. It is the Spirit's empowerment for mortification of fleshly desires (v. 13).

8:15-16 The Holy Spirit is not an agent of bondage but is instead the means of our adoption into God's family. By the Spirit we have a consciousness that God is our Father. It is the mark of a Christian to cry out to his Father in prayer. The Spirit also gives us assurance of our status and therefore of our salvation. Abba is an Aramaic word meaning "father." Jesus used it in prayer to God the Father (Mk 14:36).

Jesus Follower: Session 7

Imitate His Mission

Summary and Goal

Just as the Father sent the Son and the Son sent the Spirit, we too are sent to tell the good news about what God has done for us in Christ.

Main Passages

John 20:19-23; Matthew 28:16-20

Session Outline

1. Jesus was sent to save the lost (Matt. 28:18, John 20:19-21).
2. The Holy Spirit was sent to empower Jesus Followers (John 20:22-23).
3. Jesus Followers are sent to share the gospel of Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19-20).

Theological Theme

The mission of God is to seek, save, and redeem the lost. Christians are called to join God in His mission and are empowered to do so by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

Christ Connection

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. His life is the embodiment of God's mission.

Missional Application

The Great Commission is an invitation (and command) to join God in His work. Christians do not get to decide if they will be on mission, they are called to be on mission by definition.



Jesus Follower

Led by the Holy Spirit to Show and Tell the Good News of Jesus

Introduction

- ❓ Do you have any questions or observations from your reading in the Gospel of John this week?
- ❓ How were you able to apply what you learned this past week?

Most believers understand they are supposed to tell people about Jesus. It's also true, however, that most believers struggle to do so. It's much easier to talk with coworkers and neighbors about last night's game or vacation plans than it is to share with them the gospel message. Yet, nothing is more important to talk about with others.

Not every testimony is dramatic, in an earthly sense. But in a spiritual sense, every testimony is equally important and shares the same dramatic elements: We were dead in our sin, and God brought us to life through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Remembering our encounter with Jesus, then, protects us against Satan's accusations.

1. Jesus was sent and He sends us (Matt. 28:18, John 20:19-21).

Jesus had been sent by the Father. In the same way, He was sending the disciples—both those gathered behind locked doors some two thousand years ago and all those in the intervening years. Jesus has not asked anything of us that was not asked of Him, or anything He has not already done. In the original language, the word translated “send” is in the present tense. This sending is not an accomplished fact of the past or a pending task of some future time. Rather, it is a right-now commission to be carried out in an ongoing manner. Living with resurrection attitudes means living sent, not secluded.

❓ How was Jesus sent by the Father? How was this reflected in His sending of the disciples?

❓ How are we sent in the same way today?

2. The Holy Spirit was sent to empower Jesus Followers (John 20:22-23).

We saw in our last study that the Holy Spirit is also called the Helper because He was sent to assist God's people. The Holy Spirit enables believers to forgive others, exercise spiritual discipline (Matt. 18:15-20), recall God's teaching (John 14:26), endure persecution (Matt. 10:19), and serve the church (1 Cor. 12). The Holy Spirit was sent so that Christians wouldn't be alone.

❓ How does the Holy Spirit enable you to serve God?

❓ How have you experienced the reality of the Holy Spirit being your Helper at a time when you were not powerful enough or wise enough on your own?

3. Jesus Followers are sent to declare the gospel of Jesus (Matt. 28:19-20).

If you are a follower of Jesus, then you have a testimony, or faith story, that tells how God has worked in your life. Your faith story is a great opportunity to tell people the difference that Jesus Christ has made in you. Chances are some aspect of God's work in your life will connect with others. Your testimony should clearly tell the story of how you became a follower of Jesus Christ and what God is doing in your life now. When we follow Jesus and live on mission for Him, our faith story continually has chapters added to it. Each chapter can be used by God to bless others.

❓ Have you ever had the opportunity to share the gospel with someone? How did the conversation go?

❓ How does it give you confidence to remember that Jesus has not sent you to share the gospel in your own power but by the power of His Holy Spirit?

The gospel is the power of God for salvation. Therefore, missions must always be more than good deeds or good words. Mission work must include gospel proclamation.

The Great Commission commands believers to make disciples. Disciples are made through gospel proclamation. The gospel is the power of God for salvation. Therefore, missions must always be more than good deeds or good words. Mission work must include gospel proclamation.

Walk It Out This Week

Christians are sent into the world to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ. In sending Christians, God doesn't expect anything from His followers that He hasn't done Himself. Also, in sending His followers, Christians are able to go into the world with the authority of the One who sent them. Christians bear the name of Christ, the Spirit of Christ, and the authority of Christ when they proclaim the gospel of Christ.

- ❓ Is there someone in your life you can have a faith conversation with this week? Pray for them by name.
- ❓ Memorize John 20:21. How do you relate to Jesus differently when you consider that you are sent like He was?
- ❓ Prepare your testimony on how you became a Jesus Follower and volunteer to share next week.

Prayer of Response

Close in prayer thanking God that He has sent you on His mission with the power of the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to help you be faithful to that calling.

Additional Resources

- *Let the Nations Be Glad!* by John Piper
- *Saturate* by Jeff Vanderstelt
- *Even Me* by Adrienne Camp

For Next Week

Title

Imitate His Mission - Part II

Main Text

John 1:14; Luke 4:14-30

Memory Verse:

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

-John 20:21

Family Time - Review Matthew 28:18-20

Kids

Everyone who is a follower of Jesus has the opportunity and responsibility to obey the Great Commission. You can be a Jesus Follower on your sports teams, at your school, and even among your family members. God sent Jesus to save you, and He sends you to share God's love with others.

- ❓ What are some ways you could share about Jesus with others this week?
- ❓ Everyone who believes in Jesus has the Holy Spirit. How can you trust the Holy Spirit to know what God wants you to do?

Students

Being a teenager can be an awkward time in life. You're not fully-grown, but you're not really a kid either. As a result, most of your life is lived following someone else's rules, plans, or schedule. As a teenager, you know what it means to be sent because you are often being sent somewhere or to do something based on the authority of your parents. Jesus is sending you somewhere as well, but not just as a teenager. He's sending you as His follower with His authority to fulfill His purposes.

- ❓ When you become a Christian, you get complete access to the Holy Spirit. In what ways do you need to rely more on the Holy Spirit to fulfill God's purpose for your life?
- ❓ When you understand that Jesus was sent to save the lost, it can change your view of missions. Where might God be sending you to share His hope with others?

Extended Commentary

John 20:19-23

20:19, 21, 26 The common Jewish greeting Peace to you (v. 21; representing Hb Shalom alekem) is still used today. Peace was Jesus' gift to his followers by virtue of his sacrificial death on the cross.

20:20 Jesus' scars proved that he was the very one who was crucified and prophesied his resurrection. Thus the disciples rejoiced.

20:21-22 These verses contain the Gospel of John's version of the Great Commission, which culminates in the presentation of Jesus as the one sent from the Father (see note at 3:16-18). Now the sent one (Jesus) had turned Sender, commissioning his followers to serve as his messengers and representatives (17:18). All three persons of the Godhead are involved in this commissioning. As Jesus was sent by God the Father, so he, the Son, was sending out his disciples (20:21), equipping them with the Holy Spirit (v. 22). John thus demonstrated that each member of the Godhead is involved in the redemption plan and the mission of spreading the gospel to the world. The Holy Spirit was given dramatically and permanently a short time later (Acts 2).

20:23 The reference to forgiveness or lack thereof may echo the reference to "the key of the House of David" in Is 22:22 (cp. Rv 3:7). Jesus bestowed on his followers authority to announce access or disbarment from God's kingdom based on reception or denial of the gospel message. For those who reject Jesus, his messengers are commissioned to say that they do not have forgiveness of sins.

Matthew 28:16-20

28:16-17 On the significance of the disciples' worship, see note at 28:8-10. The lingering confusion among them about Jesus' resurrection undermines the skeptical theory that the disciples shared a hallucination of Jesus' resurrection because they all expected him to arise.

28:18 Before the resurrection, Jesus had authority (7:29; 9:6, 8; 11:27; 21:23). However, through the resurrection, the Father granted him all authority over heaven and ... earth, an authority far greater than that which Satan had vainly promised him.

28:19 The command to extend their mission worldwide brings to a climax Matthew's repeated theme of Gentile participation in God's

salvation. The inclusion of four Gentile women in Jesus' genealogy and the summons of the magi to worship the infant Christ foreshadowed the disciples' mission of making disciples of all nations. Baptism marked a person's entrance into the faith community. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is a reference to the Trinity. Matthew's language shows that a clear understanding of Jesus' nature and identity as God was required before baptism.

28:20 The Great Commission (vv. 19–20) is preceded by a reference to Jesus' authority and followed by the promise of Jesus' spiritual presence among us. Both are necessary if we are to fulfill our God-given mission.

Jesus Follower: Session 8 Imitate His Mission—Part II

Summary and Goal

Like Jesus, we are sent in the power of the Holy Spirit to show and tell others about the kingdom of God.

Main Passages

John 1:14; Luke 4:14-30

Session Outline

1. Live as a member of God's kingdom (John 1:14).
2. Proclaim as an ambassador of God's kingdom (Luke 4:16-22).
3. Stand firm in the hope of God's kingdom (Luke 4:23-30).

Theological Theme

The kingdom of God is proclamational and incarnational. It was inaugurated with the arrival of Jesus and His preaching, but it will not reach its full consummation until Christ returns.

Christ Connection

Jesus made it His mission to live among hurting people, to minister to hurting people, and to proclaim the truth of the gospel.

Missional Application

Jesus followers are sent to both share and show the gospel with others.



Jesus Follower

Led by the Holy Spirit to Show
and Tell the Good News of Jesus

Introduction

- ❓ Do you have any questions or observations from your reading in the Gospel of John this week?
- ❓ How were you able to apply what you learned this past week?


Jesus, the Prince of Peace and the Lord of lords didn't consider His own privileges and honor. Instead, He considered the needs of others and came and lived among the hurting and the hopeless with a message of hope and salvation.

As followers of Jesus, we are to be on the same mission as Him. Being on mission with Jesus does not only impact one day of the week or simply change the way we think. This mission involves all of our lives and requires that we pattern our lives around Him. Though the needs of our communities may look different than those in Jesus' time, there are many people who are lost apart from Jesus who need to be freed by the good news of the gospel.

1. Live as a member of God's kingdom (John 1:14).


Jesus is the Savior for Christians, but He is also the perfect example of what it looks like to live a life that honors God. John 1:14 teaches that Jesus "became flesh and dwelt among us . . ." Jesus, the Prince of peace and the Lord of lords didn't consider His own privileges and honor. Instead, He considered the needs of others and came and lived among the hurting and the hopeless with a message of hope and salvation. Jesus didn't just speak about the kingdom of God; He lived as its preeminent citizen. Likewise, Christians are called to serve God incarnationally by living as members of God's kingdom.

- ❓ What can you learn about serving your own community by looking at the way Jesus, the Son of God, dwelt among us (John 1:14)?


-  The kingdom of God is sometimes described as “already, but not yet,” because the arrival of Jesus represents the arrival of God’s kingdom, but the fullness of God’s kingdom awaits Christ’s return. What does it look like to live as a member of God’s kingdom when there is still so much sin and brokenness in our world?

2. Proclaim as an ambassador of God’s kingdom (Luke 4:16-22)

Upon His return to Nazareth, Jesus didn’t waste time. The kingdom of God was at hand, and He intended to proclaim the good news to any and all who would hear it. But He didn’t merely proclaim the coming kingdom by reading from Isaiah. Jesus also provided commentary, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

-  Why were the people in the synagogue so shocked at Jesus’ words?

Everyone who heard Jesus that day understood what He was saying. He was telling them that the kingdom of God had arrived and that He was the promised Messiah to usher in God’s blessing. Jesus undertook a revolutionary type of ministry. His personal approach aimed to meet people’s various needs. Those needs included release from demonic control and healing from sickness. Foremost was the need to hear the good news of God’s kingdom.

-  What stands out to you about the fact that Jesus didn’t only meet spiritual needs but also physical ones? What does this mean for how we should live as His followers?

3. Stand firm in the hope of the kingdom to come (Luke 4:23-30).

When Jesus preached in His hometown, He was not welcomed with open arms. Instead, He was challenged and questioned. In the end, “All in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and drove him out of the town . . .” Even in the face of this kind of opposition, Jesus didn’t back down, and He didn’t change His message. Jesus stood firm with confidence in the kingdom to come because His hope was not rooted in this world. He was the citizen of a greater kingdom.

- ❓ Where do you find it difficult to stand firm as a Christian in a culture that is increasingly hostile to the Bible's teaching?
- ❓ How does involvement in a local church help you to stand firm as a follower of Jesus?

Walk It Out This Week

- ❓ Take time this week to talk with your group about how you can live out God's kingdom principles in your own community this week. If Jesus were to come to your community, where would He spend His time? What would He change?
- ❓ Memorize John 1:14. Reflect on the privilege of having Jesus come and live among us.
- ❓ Think about how your Life Group plans to serve together. Is there a need that you know of that you can help meet together? Or, you can choose from the list of service opportunities provided.

Prayer of Response

Close in prayer asking God to lead you to serve faithfully as a citizen of His kingdom.

Additional Resources

- *The Courage to Stand* by Russell Moore
- *Luke 1-12 for You* by Mike McKinley
- *The Bright Light and the Super Scary Darkness* by Dan DeWitt

For Next Week

Title

A Jesus Follower

Main Text

Matthew 22:36-40

Memory Verse:

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

-John 1:14

Family Time - Review John 1:14

Kids

The kingdom of God is upside down from the kingdoms of people. Most people look for others to serve them, but Jesus taught us that His kingdom is about serving others. The good news is, we aren't called to do this alone. We are called as a family to serve others as part of God's kingdom.

- ❓ What upside down thing can you do for someone else this week to show how God's kingdom is different from the kingdoms of people?
- ❓ Read (or have your parents read) Matthew 19:14. How would you have felt if you had been a child in the crowd to which Jesus spoke in that verse?

Students

The kingdom of God doesn't look like the kingdom of high school or middle school. In those arenas, the popular are elevated above the unpopular and the currency of social status can be bullying, gossip, and backbiting. Instead, in God's kingdom rulers are expected to care for their followers, and the King Himself binds up the broken and bruised. In God's kingdom, the Shepherd leaves the 99 and seeks out the one lost sheep. In God's kingdom, the prodigal son is welcomed home with open arms by a Father who loves without question.

- ❓ How would your school look differently if it were governed according to God's kingdom principles? How would your life look differently if you constantly lived according to God's kingdom principles?
- ❓ Do you know someone who is broken or bruised today? How can you behave as a member of God's kingdom and "bind up" their wounds this week?

Extended Commentary

John 1:14

1:14 The Word continues the theme of 1:1. Became flesh does not mean the Word stopped being God; rather, the Word was made flesh. Dwelt among us literally means “pitched his tent” (Gk skenoō), an allusion to God’s dwelling among the Israelites in the tabernacle (Ex 25:8–9; 33:7). In the past God demonstrated his presence to his people in the tabernacle and the temple. Now God has taken up residence among his people in the Word-made-flesh, Jesus Christ (Jn 1:17). The references to God’s glory hark back to OT passages that describe the manifestation of God’s presence and glory in theophanies (appearances of God), the tabernacle, or the temple (Ex 33:22; Nm 14:10; Dt 5:22). The Greek word monogenēs underlying one and only Son from the Father means “only child” (Jdg 11:34; Jr 6:26; Am 8:10; Zch 12:10). “Only” may mean “one of a kind,” as in the case of Isaac, who is called Abraham’s “one of a kind” son in Gn 22:2, 12, 16 (in contrast to Ishmael, cp. Heb 11:17). In the OT, Israel and the Son of David are called God’s “firstborn” son (see Ps 89:27). The reference to God’s “giving” of his “one and only Son” in Jn 3:16, 18 may allude to Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac (Gn 22).

Full of grace and truth recalls “faithful love (Hb chesed) and truth (Hb emet)” in Ex 34:6 (cp. Ex 33:18–19), where the expression refers to God’s covenant faithfulness to his people Israel. According to John, God’s covenant faithfulness found ultimate expression in his sending of his “one and only Son,” Jesus.

Luke 4:14–30

Jesus’ teaching and miracles dominate this section. Major teaching blocks include His declaration of the fulfillment of God’s promise in the synagogue and the Sermon on the Plain (6:17–49). Both passages are unique to Luke in that the synagogue speech represents Jesus’ self-description of His mission, while the sermon represents His fundamental ethic presented without concerns about Jewish tradition that Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount possesses.

The section’s fundamental question is, Who is Jesus? The unit pictures the growth of faith that comes to those whom Jesus gathered around Himself. Their discovery is the vehicle Luke used to answer the question of Jesus’ identity. The reader is to identify with the disciples and the crowds who witness and discuss Jesus. The reader is to share in the reflection their discussions and reactions raise. Jesus followed

up the disciples' response in faith with the first discussions of the hard road of discipleship. The section shows that following Jesus is full of blessing, but it is not easy.

In the synagogue speech, Jesus raised the note of fulfillment through the appeal to Isaiah 61:1 and 58:6. He said that the anointing of God promised in this passage is fulfilled today. In the context of Luke, the anointing looks back to the anointing with the Spirit in Luke 3:20-22. As such the appeal to Isaiah was not just to the picture of a prophet, as allusions to Elijah and Elisha in verses 24-28 suggest but also asserts Jesus' regal role. Jesus would bring salvation to all those in need: poor, blind, and captive. His presence means release from bondage, particularly bondage rooted in the activity of Satan, as His subsequent miracles in 4:31-44 show. Rejection, like that in Nazareth, will not be met with failure but with the taking of the message to others, an indirect allusion to the inclusion of Gentiles. The mission's scope is summarized here.

Jesus Follower: Session 9

A Jesus Follower

Summary and Goal

A Jesus follower is someone who loves God and loves others by abiding in relationship with Jesus and, through the Holy Spirit, imitates His life and His mission.

Main Passages

Matthew 22:36-40

Session Outline

1. Love God (John 1:1-14; 3:16)
2. Love Others (John 13:1-16, 34-35)
3. Go and Tell Others (John 20:19-23)

Theological Theme

A Jesus Follower is one who loves God and loves others, by abiding in relationship with Jesus and, through the Holy Spirit, imitating His life and His mission

Christ Connection

Jesus practiced what He preached. By obeying Christ's commands, Christians will find themselves imitating Christ's life.

Missional Application

Love of neighbor is one of the greatest apologetics in the twenty-first century.



Jesus Follower

A Jesus Follower

Introduction

- ❓ Do you have any questions or observations from your reading in the Gospel of John over the past 8 weeks?
- ❓ How have you been able to apply what you've learned over the past several weeks?

We must hear Him as He speaks to us, and then act in obedience, even if we've always done it another way, others advise us differently, or we think it doesn't make sense.

Living as a Jesus Follower requires more than just saying, "Jesus is Lord." We must come to Jesus and turn away from our own ways to walk with Him in authenticity. We must also listen to Him. That's different than simply memorizing some verses as a child in Vacation Bible School or reading along with some verses on the big screen in a worship service. It's not even the same thing as studying Scripture, as we know from Jesus' conversations with the religious leaders of His day. We must hear Him as He speaks to us, and then act in obedience, even if we've always done it another way, others advise us differently, or we think it doesn't make sense. Genuine faith requires acting on Jesus' commands in every situation.

We've defined a Jesus Follower as someone who loves God and loves others, by abiding in relationship with Jesus and, through the Holy Spirit, imitating His life and His mission. Today, we will review what we've studied over the last eight weeks.

1. Love God (John 1:1-14; 3:16)

The message of John 3 is as applicable today as it was two-thousand years ago. God so loved the world that He sent Jesus, and whoever believes in Jesus will experience eternal life with Him. We love God because He has first loved us.

We see this most clearly through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

- ❓ What have you learned about what it means to love God over the past several weeks? How has this impacted your daily life?
- ❓ How did Jesus display His love for God? How does the Holy Spirit help you to imitate Jesus by loving God with your whole heart, soul, and mind?

2. Love Others (John 13:1-16, 34-35)

In recent weeks, we have considered Jesus' expectation that His followers be servants. Jesus said, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." The greatest way for individual Christians and entire churches to advocate for the power of the gospel is to love each other the way that Jesus loves His followers.

- ❓ Why is it important that we abide in Jesus if we are to love others as Jesus has called us (see John 15)? Why do we need the power of the Holy Spirit to do this well?
- ❓ What practical steps did you take during this study to show love to your neighbors? Do you think it is easier or harder to love others as you get older? Explain your thoughts.

3. Go and Tell Others (John 20:19-23)

Christians are sent into the world to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ. In sending Christians, God doesn't expect anything from His followers that He hasn't done Himself. Also, in sending His followers, Christians are able to go into the world with the authority of the One who sent them. Christians bear the name of Christ, the Spirit of Christ, and the authority of Christ when they proclaim the gospel of Christ.

As followers of Jesus, we are to be on the same mission as Him. Being on mission with Jesus does not only impact one day of the week or simply change the way we think. This mission involves all of our lives and requires that we pattern our lives around Him. Though

Though the needs of our communities may look different than those in Jesus' time, there are many people who are lost apart from Jesus who need to be freed by the good news of the gospel.

the needs of our communities may look different than those in Jesus' time, there are many people who are lost apart from Jesus who need to be freed by the good news of the gospel.

- ❓ Where in your community do you see the greatest need for Christians to love their neighbors and share the hope of the gospel?
- ❓ How do we imitate the life and mission of Jesus when we faithfully seek to carry out the Great Commission?

Walk It Out This Week

Being a follower of Jesus is more than attending church. A Jesus Follower is a person who looks like Jesus and acts like Jesus. But he or she is also a person who has been empowered by the Holy Spirit, who makes it possible to look and act like Jesus. In other words, Jesus gives you what you need to do what He expects.

- ❓ Take a few moments to pray as a group. Thank God for sending His Holy Spirit to enable you to follow Him faithfully. Pray for God to give you a heart to desire following Jesus closer every day.
- ❓ Share one thing the Holy Spirit has shown you during this study.
- ❓ Write down the names of two people you could ask to go through this study with you. Ask them this week to join you as you follow Jesus.

Prayer of Response

Close in prayer asking God to lead you deeper into life as a Jesus Follower as someone who loves God and loves others by abiding in relationship with Jesus and, through the Holy Spirit, imitates His life and His mission.

Additional Resources

- *Replicate* by Robby Gallaty, Chris Swain
- *Exalting Jesus in Matthew* by David Platt
- *The Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd-Jones

Family Time - Review John 13:34-35

Kids

No matter if you are a kid or an adult, the basic expectations for a Jesus Follower remain the same. Just like your parents, you are called to love God, love others, and share Jesus. But you might have different opportunities to do all of these things than your parents.

- ❓ How will you ask the Holy Spirit to help you impact the world this week?
- ❓ What steps should you take right now to act like Jesus?

Students

It can be easy for your love of God to fade when other passions and commitments get in the way of your Christian walk. This is especially true during the teen years. To faithfully pursue God with your whole heart there are often things that you need to stop doing so that you can spend more time with the Lord. Teenagers are also in a unique place to be used by the Lord. Throughout history, teenagers have often been the ones God uses to begin periods of revival. Why not you, why not now?

- ❓ What are some activities that get in the way of your Christian discipleship?
- ❓ Teenagers have often been on the front edge of spiritual revivals and awakenings in the United States. Will you begin praying right now for God to use you to change the world through obeying the Great Commission?

Extended Commentary

Matthew 22:36-40

22:34-36. The Pharisees had regrouped after Jesus turned their first trap against them in 22:15-22. Seeing the same thing happen to the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together, seeking power and courage in numbers. The one expert in the law whom they chose to ask the testing question must have approached Jesus with some trepidation. For the third time in three challenges, the questioner addressed Jesus as Teacher.

This time the question was simple but profound: Which is the greatest commandment in the Law? Matthew used the simple adjective “great” (megas), but it carried superlative force (“greatest”) in this context. The question demonstrated the way the religious leaders looked at the law. In their tradition, they had reduced the law to 365 negative and 248 positive commandments. They spent much time trying to prioritize these innumerable technicalities. They thought they could trap the Lord of the law.

22:37-38. Jesus drew his answer from the most memorized and recited passage in all the Jewish Scriptures: Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deut. 6:4-5).

Jesus quoted the Septuagint almost verbatim, but he substituted mind (dianoia) for the similar sounding “might” (dunameos). We are to take this list as an emphatic way of saying, “Love God with everything you are in every way possible.” But it was not without significance that our Lord deliberately substituted “mind” here rather than some other term. Christians need to take a lesson from this. We should learn to think critically and biblically.

Jesus emphasized his answer by identifying this commandment as the first and greatest commandment. This commandment was greatest because of the statement in Deuteronomy 6:4 which preceded it: “Yahweh is your God, Yahweh alone” (paraphrased). To honor Yahweh as the one true God is to love him exclusively, from among all others who claim to be gods.

22:39. But Jesus went beyond the critics question and added a second command, which is like (homoios, “resembling”) the first, this time drawing from Leviticus 19:18 (cf. Matt. 19:19): love your neighbor as

yourself. This commandment and the first complement each other, so Jesus mentioned them together. They are not to be separated. It is impossible to love God without loving people, for his law and heart's desire is to love others. The measure by which we know if we are truly loving people is if we love them as much as we love ourselves (cf. Eph. 5:28–31).

22:40. Finally, Jesus defended his choice of these two commandments by observing that all the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments (or “depends” on them). Every Old Testament commandment and teaching fulfilled the commands to love God and to love people.

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