

"FOLLOW ME" – TRAINING GROUPS START-UP CLASS (2 Hours)

THE RESURRECTION

SESSION 1 (Version 3.2)

[Group learns each other's names. Leaders briefly introduce themselves.]

COURSE INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this course is for you to be able to successfully answer these questions...

1. Why do I need to be discipled?
2. What *is* discipleship, exactly?
3. What does discipleship require from me?
4. Do I accept Jesus' challenge to be discipled in this church?

SECTION 1 – WHY DO I NEED TO BE DISCIPLLED?

In this section, we will begin to discover our deep need for discipleship. For most people, it is an *unfelt need*, meaning we don't realize how badly we need it. While we'll learn much more about what discipleship is soon, let's begin with a definition: *Discipleship means being trained by Jesus and other Christians.*¹

Prayer: Pray that God will help us to see our need for discipleship

1A - Christians believe the Gospel: Faith in Jesus

So you are a *Christian*? That's wonderful! Becoming a **Christian**² is the most important transformation that can ever happen to a person.

People become Christians when they first have faith in the **Gospel (Good News)** about Jesus. At the Resurrection, we summarize the Bible's teaching on the Gospel like this: Order to be **saved** (to receive **forgiveness** for our **sin** and **eternal life**) we must trust in Jesus' Authority, Jesus' Finished Work, and Jesus' Love. This helps us see that the Gospel is all about **Jesus!** Being a Christian is all about *trusting Jesus in a relationship*, which is what it means to have **faith**.

¹ At the Resurrection, we use the words *discipleship* and *training* interchangeably. Our "Training Groups" are discipleship groups. Training is one of the core values of our church: "The Resurrection is a Gospel-Centered Church, Trusting God in Worship, Training and Mission."

² See definitions for these **bold** words in the Glossary at the end of this packet.

To “believe the Gospel,” means to trust in all that Jesus *is* and *does* for us. This happens in a growing relationship with him. Jesus is God the creator, and yet he is a real, living human being, too. He’s a person we can know, love and trust. The Gospel focuses a spotlight on Jesus in specific ways, so we can get to know and trust him well:

1) Jesus’ Authority refers both to his wise leadership and godly power. Jesus is the sole ruler of the world. He has every right to tell us how to live and change. But he also has the insight to lead us in the best way, and the power to move the mountains of struggle in our life. He knows exactly what he’s doing when he gets very involved in the details of our life. He’s God! God wants us to submit to and appreciate Jesus’ leadership over us. *Christians believe that Jesus-in-charge-of-us is Good News, and that pretending we can be in charge of ourselves is very Bad News.*

2) Jesus’ Finished Work refers to the fact that he accomplished the work of salvation on behalf of Christians, as our substitute. Jesus actually earned our forgiveness, acceptance, and transformation. He lived the perfect life we should have lived, but have failed at. He died the criminal’s death we should have died, paying our sin-debt. Jesus rose from the grave in our place, overcoming sin and death on our behalf. For everyone who trusts in Him, Jesus did 100% of what it takes to earn forgiveness as sinners. We earn 0% of our salvation. (It’s impossible for us to do!) Jesus earned forgiveness for our past, present and future sins. “It is *finished!*” he said as he died on the cross. God wants us to trust in Jesus alone for our salvation. *Christians believe that Jesus voluntarily paying our punishment as our substitute is Good News, and that trying to stand before God based on our own track record is Terrible News.*

3) Jesus’ Love refers to his desire to have a real relationship with us, where we learn to value him most. He wants a relationship with us that is not based on our behavior, but is based simply on his personal, unstoppable love. He likes us. He wants to be with us all day, every day, forever. He wants our whole heart. Real love requires us to trust his heart, to be convinced that God is *for* us. God wants us to learn to value a relationship with Jesus above all other things, because he actually *is* more valuable. *Christians believe that a real, love-based relationship with the living Jesus is Good News, and that going through this life (or the next) without Jesus would be the Worst News imaginable.*

These three parts of the Gospel work together to give us a very good picture of the whole person who we need most, and who alone can save us: Jesus.

This is a course about *discipleship*. So the basic point we want you to see here is that forgiveness and eternal life don't automatically happen for people. In fact, Jesus says with sadness that forgiveness and eternal life *never do* happen for most people (Matthew 7:14). Salvation only happens when people begin to believe the Gospel. And that means beginning to trust Jesus, personally: What he says. What he did in our place. What he promises he will yet do for us. *Christians trust Jesus*. That's how we become Christians! *Do you trust Jesus?*

1B – Christians KEEP Believing the Gospel: *Saving Faith*

The big idea for this next section is very simple, but very important. The way we become Christians is the same way we stay Christians: We keep believing the Gospel. We keep trusting Jesus. Simple! But this idea is often misunderstood...

For example, it's not true that the pressure is all *on us* to believe. We must keep trusting Jesus to be saved. But the Bible teaches that God actually causes us to first believe, and so too he helps us to keep on believing! This happens in a relationship with Him, where we keep seeking and learning to trust him more. *Faith is a grace, a free gift from God*, that he will give to those who desire it. In fact, even that desire is a gift from God! This free help from God is necessary and wonderful!

Another misunderstanding is when people believe you can lose your salvation by sinning. It is true that Jesus wants us to **repent** of our sin, and that people who refuse to repent of their sins are *not* saved. But the real issue is that their unwillingness to change shows that these people really never have trusted Jesus to begin with. They have never received *the grace of faith*. They don't think Jesus is better than their sin. You cannot lose the salvation Jesus earns. But you can fail to ever really trust in the Jesus who earns it. We all fall down and make mistakes, but Christians choose Jesus over our sin, because we keep believing that he is better. He is the Best News.

Finally, some misunderstand what faith actually is. Many who are deeply convinced that they are Christians discover that they are not, when they die. These people have an intellectual belief in facts about Jesus, and are often regular churchgoers. But they do not have an real trust-based love-relationship with Jesus. They are deceived that *faith* just means *to think Jesus exists*, or *to know facts about him*. But they have never really experienced trusting Jesus personally, in ways that cost them something. These people have a kind of faith that doesn't save, what the Bible calls a **dead faith**, which turns out to be no faith at all. If you don't trust Jesus, you don't believe the Gospel.

So we can see that trusting Jesus is really, really important! Our salvation depends on whether or not we really do trust him. What every person needs is **saving faith**: the kind of faith that comes from God, which enables people to trust him in a supernatural way. Saving faith doesn't just believe in Jesus once, on the day we "get saved." Saving faith continues to believe the Gospel. Saving faith keeps on learning to trust Jesus more, all the way to the end of our lives.

Group discussion: ***What is saving faith in the Gospel?***

1C – Why we need discipleship.

All this leads back to our original question. What do you think....?

Group Discussion: **Why do I need to be disciplined?**

There are many good answers to this question. Perhaps several were offered in the group discussion. But the basic answer we want you to see is that **discipleship is necessary in order to have our faith tested, so that we know our faith is genuine saving faith.**

Peter, one of Jesus very first disciples says this in 1 Peter 1:6-9. Read those verses, individually.

1. What does Peter say we need to know about our faith in v. 7?
2. What does the right kind of faith produce in v. 9?
3. Do you have this kind of faith in Jesus? How do you know?

Many times, it is in the difficulties of life that we discover the most about our faith. When hard things come, we have to stop and reflect if we really trust Jesus, or if we're even thinking about him at all. Many people discover they do not, *which often means that they do not have saving faith!* We need to know this about ourselves, right?

Also, many only *realize* that they don't really trust Jesus once they come to understand that he is commanding them to change in ways that they don't want to. Instead of

believing that what-he-wants is better for them, and will make them happier in the long run, they only hear Jesus' commands as Bad News. Again, this likely means that they are *not actually Christians*, because saving faith trusts Jesus, and they don't trust him.

On the other hand, how wonderful would it be to face the challenges to obey God in Scripture, and even difficult life-circumstances, and discover that you really do trust Jesus to help you? How wonderful would it be to know that God has planted inside of you the undying free gift of saving faith in Jesus?

The same faith that saves us, changes us. There is no other kind of faith.

Group discussion: **What do the two sentences directly above mean?**

It is helpful, here, to understand the difference between *justification* and *sanctification*. Both of these are something good that God does to Christians, but they work differently. **Justification** is a one-time event that happens at the moment a person truly becomes a Christian. It is the irreversible instant that we are saved, and it is entirely based on what Jesus has done to save us, not what we do. **Sanctification** is not a one-time event. It is a process that starts in that moment, and lasts the rest of a Christian's life, where we desire and learn to obey God more, over time. *The basic point of this section is that both justification and sanctification are free gifts from God that happen by faith in the Gospel of Jesus.* The Bible tells us our salvation is grounded in our justification, not our sanctification. However, as time goes on, if we are not trusting Jesus to grow in sanctification, there is a very real possibility that we have never had saving faith to receive justification. We aren't saved. God wants us to know this, so that we can truly believe the Gospel and be saved! (And *transformed!*)

Group discussion:

- 1. What is the difference between justification and sanctification?***
- 2. Does discipleship happen during our justification, or our sanctification?***

Group discussion: **There are other important reasons to be discipled, that we'll discuss next week. But based on what we've seen today, what is the answer to the question: *Why do I need to be discipled?***

SECTION 2 – WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP, EXACTLY?

So what is discipleship, exactly? Let's find out together:

2A – An Invitation from God I: The Great Supper

Group Discussion: **Read the Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24)**

(A parable is a kind of analogy. It tells a story that is designed to help you understand a concept by making comparisons.)

Questions

1. *To whom should we compare the man throwing the banquet?*
2. *To what should we compare the great banquet?*
3. *To whom should we compare the invited guests?*
4. *What is this parable designed to help you understand?*

2B – An Invitation from God II: Following Jesus

Group Discussion: **Read Matthew 4:18-22 & Matthew 8:18-22**

Questions

1. *How does Jesus' invitation, "follow me," compare to the invitation portrayed in the parable of the great banquet?*
2. *Which people responded rightly to the invitation in Luke 14? In Matthew 4?*

Before we move on it is right to discuss the issue at heart, here. We all should be asking ourselves the same questions:

“Which person am I?”

“Do I trust Jesus enough to follow Him wherever He goes?”

“Do I make excuses to justify my faithlessness?”

It is good to begin contemplating these questions. Before we answer, let’s look and see exactly what Jesus is inviting us to. Jesus refers to this as “counting the cost.” He wants us to understand the cost (details & consequences) involved in the life that he’s inviting us into: the Christian life. After all, to be a Christian means being someone who *follows Christ*.

Let’s search the Scriptures, and read them as if Jesus is speaking directly to us (because *he is*).

3. What is Jesus asking of me?

4. Will I say yes?

2C – Jesus defines Discipleship I: The Life of a Disciple

According to each of these passages, *what is discipleship?*

1. Matthew 28:18-20

2. 2 Timothy 2:1-2

3. John 17:4-8

4. Colossians 1:27-29

5. 1 John 2:6

At the end of the day, ***discipleship means to be trained by Jesus***. He uses Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and other Christians to disciple us, and to train us how to disciple others, in turn.

2D – Jesus defines Discipleship II: The Characteristics of a Disciple

According to each of these passages, *what are the characteristics of a disciple?*

1. Luke 6:40
2. John 8:31-32
3. John 13:34-35
4. John 15:8

SECTION 3 – WHAT DOES DISCIPLESIP REQUIRE FROM ME?

3A – Jesus defines Discipleship III: The Cost of Discipleship

Read Luke 14:25-33. In the verses listed below, *what is the cost of being a disciple of Jesus?*

1. Luke 14: 26
2. Luke 14:27
3. Luke 14:28-31
4. Luke 14:33

3B – “Costly” Discipleship with a “Free” Gospel?

Let’s talk for a moment about two related (but opposite) mistakes that people often make regarding discipleship.

The first mistake is to start thinking that our efforts in discipleship cause God to accept us, save us, or to like us more. This wrong thinking usually goes something like this: *"If we do good, God likes us. If we do bad, God doesn't."* This thinking completely misses the point of the Gospel. Jesus doesn't save us because we are good, but because we are bad and need him. This wrong thinking is called "works-righteousness," or "self-righteousness." The gospel, instead, offers us "Jesus' righteousness" in our place as a gift. When we realize how hard it is to follow Jesus, he doesn't want us to despair, he wants us to keep receiving forgiveness and asking him to help us grow. *Discipleship requires faith to tap into God's power.* It's impossible without him.

The second (opposite) mistake people make is to start thinking that the struggle of discipleship is unnecessary, or even wrong, because it requires a lot of effort on our part. This wrong thinking basically starts with the truth of the Gospel, and then comes to a wrong conclusion about it. It looks something like this: *"Jesus died for us to save us because our efforts can never save us [true], so we shouldn't be trying so hard to obey him because he died for us so we don't have to [false]."* This thinking completely misses the point of Jesus saving us: God saved us from our failures so that we learn how to obey him even though we mess up.

Let's summarize: *You do not earn salvation by obeying Jesus!* But nor should we avoid obeying Jesus. Only Jesus can earn salvation. Obedience is a proof of our faith and belief in the Gospel (James 2:14-26). Salvation is by faith in the gospel. Transformation is by faith in the Gospel.

In your own words, please explain the relationship between the free Gospel, and the cost of discipleship:

(If you have trouble explaining this concept, maybe you need some more help understanding it. Please highlight this section and let a leader know if this is something you need to discuss further.)

3C – Count the Cost: *What is Jesus asking of me?*

It's time to start putting it all together. Based on the scriptures you've read..

What is Jesus asking of every Christian?

Now it is appropriate to ask...

What is Jesus asking of me, specifically?

We all have our own individual life full of complexities. Jesus warns us that we can be tempted to make excuses (remember the Great Banquet story). Based on Jesus requests of you, what are changes that you must make in order to live in faithful obedience? Please take the time to:

1. Pray and ask God to highlight the areas in your life that need to change in order to grow into faithful obedience.
2. Write down these areas, below.
3. Pray and think about practical steps in making these changes. Again, write them below.

HOMEWORK

The following homework is to be completed before attending *Session 2*, next week:

1. Please complete all portions of this document that were not completed today during Session 1 group discussion.
2. Read the Glossary of Terms at the end of this packet, and highlight any questions you have about them.
3. Please do your best to memorize two Bible verses before next week:
 - a. Matthew 4:19
 - b. Luke 14:27
4. Please bring this packet back for discussion.

NEXT WEEK

In Session 2, we will continue answering our main discipleship questions:

1. *Why do I need to be disciplined?*
2. *What is discipleship, exactly?*
3. *What does discipleship require from me?*

We will focus especially on the last question:

4. *Do I accept Jesus' challenge to be disciplined in this church?*

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Christian – A person who believes the Gospel of Jesus, and as a result has a saving relationship with God.

Disciple – A student. A Christian disciple is a student of Jesus, who studies Jesus and Jesus' teachings to find out how to live. This happens in a real relationship with Jesus, though the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus' family, the church. Disciples should be humble, hungry to learn, and willing to be challenged to walk out the life that God says should come when people have saving faith in the Gospel. Learning from Jesus as a disciple is often referred to as "following Jesus." People who are not disciples are not Christians.

Discipleship – Discipleship is the process where people who have already become Christians learn to mature. It's basically what happens after people first become a Christian. Discipleship doesn't just mean a formalized church program, though these are helpful. Discipleship means being a student of Jesus who learns from other Christians how to trust God, obey him, and apply the deep truths of the Gospel to all of life. Discipleship is God's plan to mature every person willing to take up the challenge. It is a necessary part of being a Christian. We often use the word *training* to talk about discipleship at the Resurrection. Same thing.

Dead Faith – Dead Faith is not actually faith at all. But people who have dead faith really do think they have saving faith, so it feels like a kind of faith. There are many kinds of dead faith, such as intellectual-only belief, belief-without-repentance, and faith in something other than the Gospel. What they all have in common is that they do not lead to, or come from, a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. People who have a dead faith are not saved, and are currently hell-bound. Dead faith is NOT a gift from God. It's something humans can muster up without God. The solution is to ask God for Saving Faith.

Eternal Life – While we often think (rightly) of heaven, eternal life means knowing Jesus in both this life *and* the next. It means experiencing life God's way, forever.

Forgiveness – This means that God has erased the punishment (hell) that a person should receive for their guilt, because Jesus paid the full punishment for them in advance. Forgiveness applies to all the past, present, and future sins of Christians!

Faith – Faith means trusting in Jesus through the Gospel. The words *faith, belief* and *trust* all mean basically the same thing. Faith is the one thing *humans do* in order to be saved. And yet faith doesn't earn our salvation. (Jesus does!) Faith connects us to what Jesus has done for us in his life, death, and resurrection.

God – The creator of the world, who is one God in 3 persons: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit. God is the whole point of your life.

Gospel – The Good News of Jesus that alone saves when a person believes it. The gospel focuses on Jesus' Authority, Finished Work, and Love.

Grace – Grace is a gift that you don't earn. Salvation and Faith are both free Gifts from God. Grace also means free power from God to be transformed by trusting him.

Holy Spirit – The Holy Spirit is one of the persons who makes up the Only God. He is invisible. But he is truly present in the lives and internal experience of Christians. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit from the moment we first believe the Gospel and are saved. He teaches us the Bible, and shows us how to live and change. He can speak to us and help encourage, correct, and empower us to live the life God wants for us.

Jesus – Jesus is one of the persons who makes up the Only God. He is the Son of God, which means he is God, the Son. Yet he is also a human being, exactly as we are. Jesus is exactly God, and he is how we can know God. Getting to know and love Jesus is getting to know and love God. Trusting Jesus is trusting God.

Justification – Justification means to receive forgiveness for all our sins (past, present, and future), in an instant. It's the gift of God where at the moment we first believe the Gospel, our eternal destiny changes from hell to heaven, forever. We are "saved." "It is finished." Justification is irreversible (which is really good)! Justification does NOT happen through our efforts or godliness. Only Jesus can earn our justification (through his *finished work* on in our place), and we receive it freely from God as grace. Justification only happens *by faith*, which means we can only be saved if we trust in what Jesus did in our place, rather than trusting in our own abilities, goodness, or track-record. The *instant of justification* is then followed immediately by *the process of sanctification*, where we start to become more mature.

Repentance – Repentance means turning from our sin. We “turn around,” and then think and live in a way that trusts, appreciates, and honors God. Repentance is the moment when we turn from sin to faith. It often involves outward Godly actions that go with the inward change of heart. Repentance is not just a feeling of sorrow or regret, but a change of heart and behavior. Repentance is only possible *by faith*.

Sanctification – Sanctification, unlike justification, is a process where we learn to become more mature and godly. It starts the moment after justification happens, and lasts the rest of our earthly lives. *We cooperate with God in this process* where he sanctifies us. Again, this is unlike justification, where God does not use our actions at all to save us, only Jesus’ Finished Work. Like justification, though, sanctification is a free gift of God that all Christians get, and it is received *by faith*. All Christians experience ups-and-downs in our experience of sanctification, but in the long run all Christians experience real growth in godliness, love, mature living, and pointing others to Jesus’ Gospel. Sanctification is, in many ways, another name for discipleship. If over time there is no growth in sanctification, it is often because the person has never actually received saving faith from God, and has never actually been justified, either. They need to believe the Gospel and become a Christian.

Saved – This means a person’s eternal destiny is heaven not hell, because Jesus paid their punishment as their substitute. All Christians are saved. The word *saved* is short for the word *salvation*. No Christian can lose our salvation, if we truly have saving faith in the Gospel.

Saving Faith - This is the real-deal. Saving Faith is the kind of faith that trusts Jesus, no matter what. Saving faith grows, and isn’t perfect in this life. In other words, people with saving faith still sin. But they increasingly change! As they continue to trust Jesus more and more, they increasingly *want* to trust Jesus more and more. People can’t muster up saving faith. No one is born with it. It’s a free gift from God, so that we can believe the Gospel. Saving Faith saves in the first instant it is present, and it never leaves us.

Sin – Choosing to think or act in a way that is not what God wants. Sin ignores God and tries to find happiness, security, love, etc., without involving God and what he says in the Bible. Sin is the opposite of Faith. Sin is what happens when we don’t trust God, through the Gospel. The Gospel is the only and perfect solution to sin.