

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

THE RESURRECTION

SESSION 2 (Version 3.3)

- *Group re-learns each other's names.*
- *Leaders briefly introduce themselves, again.*

COURSE REVIEW

Last week, in Session 1, we began to answer these 4 questions:

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

Prayer: **Ask Jesus to help us understand the answer to these questions.**

We talked extensively about *Question 1*, and learned that God wants us to know for sure that we have *saving faith* in the gospel. He wants us to actually *experience* and *practice* learning to trust Jesus in all of life, which is what is required of us in order to be saved and to grow.

The basic answer to *Question 2* is that discipleship is training in following Jesus. Your homework has taken you deeper into understanding this. *Question 3* is related, and was also dealt with in your homework.

We have not yet really addressed *Question 4*.

OVERVIEW: SESSION 2

Today we will:

1. Review your homework
2. Discover a few other important answers to Question 1.
3. Go much deeper in to Questions 3 & 4
4. Discuss your new homework, and learn about your next steps in this discipleship process, which we call Training Groups.

SECTION 1 – HOMEWORK REVIEW

1A – Memory Verses Quiz

- Break in to groups of 3.
- Quickly review each other's names.
- Quiz each other on the two memory verses from the Session 1 Packet.
- Discuss the meaning of the two verses, as the full group.

1B – Glossary Review

- Review people's questions from the glossary definitions in the Session 1 Packet.

1C – Homework Questions Review: The Meaning and Cost of Discipleship

- Review *all questions and material* (if possible) that was not covered in the Session 1 Packet during the Group Session 1.

1D – Session 1 Discipleship Summary

Let's recap what we've learned:

Group Discussion: **What is discipleship, exactly?**

Group Discussion: **What does discipleship require from me?
In other words, what is the cost?**

Group Discussion: **Is it worth the cost?**

SECTION 2 – THE NEED FOR DISCIPLESHIP: THE PATHWAY TO A TRANSFORMED LIFE

Group Discussion: **In the previous Session 1, we stressed heavily a *specific need* for the training that discipleship provides. *What was it? Why do we need discipleship?***

The answer to the question above is that we've learned we all have a need to test *the genuineness of our faith*. In this next section, however, we will emphasize that there are several other important reasons why we need to be disciplined, as well.

2A – Why do I need to be disciplined? Training in Life Transformation!

Jesus wants to completely change our life for the better. This process, called **sanctification**, is not a one-time event. Rome wasn't built in a day. Neither are we immediately transformed when we "get **saved**." Our thinking, choices, and gut-level reactions to life are still immature. Plus, just when we think we have some old stumbling block mastered, we discover a whole new area in life where little change has happened. We all have a lot of godly growing up to do.

Discipleship is God's plan to have us experience transformation in an ongoing, deep relationship with him. He wants to *train* us to change.

Group Discussion: **Have you ever seen an example of intensive training?
What are the advantages of training? Disadvantages?**

Group Discussion: **Have you ever been intensely trained, before?
Can you describe the experience to others?**

Group Discussion: **Can you imagine Jesus as a loving drill sergeant? *Is he?*
How does this change your thinking about following him?
Why do good drill sergeants act like they do, anyway?**

Discipleship is a lot like boot camp for the soul. We are trained by God to become what he wants us to be, for our good, and for the good of others. Training takes time, practice, long-term commitment, grace to fail and try again, and a great leader (Jesus).

When a person goes through a period of intense focus and practice on a specific skill, they learn to have a new, better, ingrained response. It's like learning to dribble in basketball practice. At first it feels awkward, but with practice it becomes second-nature. *This is how deep godliness is formed in us.* Godly skill is still given to us by God as a gift of grace. But godliness doesn't happen instantly, or without our effort and willful participation. It happens when we *practice* under Jesus' daily leadership.

Are you ready for boot camp? Is there really another way to overcome the highest mountains of failure and weakness in your life? Do you really believe those mountains can be overcome? This is how that happens.

For the sake of time we will cover the other parts of Section 2 briefly. But they are all very important for answering the question: *Why do I need discipleship?*

2B – Why do I need to be discipled? Training in Relationships

Having a personal experience of Jesus, alone, is very important. It should be a part of the life of every Christian. The Holy Spirit enlightens our minds and hearts, and directs our lives as we follow Jesus. *However, it can't be stressed enough that discipleship is VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE if it's only happening alone, with out other Christians deeply involved in our lives.*

The word church means people who believe in Jesus, not a building. Jesus' main plan for his church is that we go through the Christian life together.

Group discussion: **Why do you think the second sentence above is true?
Why do we need others, if we have the Holy Spirit?**

Group discussion: **Why do you think many are resistant to letting others into their life? What most scares you? Why is it worth it?**

2C – Why do I need to be discipled? Training in Practical Living

Much of discipleship involves growing in life skills such as learning about caring for our family, handling money well, growing in our romantic lives, etc. There is also training in the practical parts of our spiritual lives, such as how to pray, how to become more of a humble servant, etc.

Group Discussion: **What do practical skills like handling money have to do with following Jesus?**

Group Discussion: **Do you need help in practical living, or are you OK?
Do you have skills you can share with others?**

2D – Why do I need to be discipled? Training in the Word of God

Think about this: Jesus is God, and has always existed. But he became human, too, when he was conceived in Mary's womb. Since then, he has a body. Jesus was resurrected after death into a physical body. He will rule this earth with a physical body, when he returns. *He has a body now, while he's ruling from heaven.* But he's **NOT** physically here with us, on earth, to lead us as we "follow him."

So then, how exactly do we "follow him"? We learn every word he has to say to us, by learning every word in the Bible. (It's all from Jesus!) This process of learning to know, understand, and then apply what the Bible says to our lives is a vital part of discipleship. Apart from the Bible, there's no way to know for sure how to follow Jesus.

Group Discussion: **What are some examples of how learning Scripture, in a discipleship training group (rather than alone), can help you to learn to follow Jesus?**

2E – Why do I need to be discipled? Training to Disciple Others

One of the two verses you memorized for today was Matthew 4:19: “... Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Group Discussion: **What does the second half of this verse mean?
How does this clarify the meaning of “follow me”?**

If you progress in being a disciple, you will definitely be asked to disciple others. This is a pattern that the Lord wants to see in all Christians: passing along the training that we are receiving from Jesus to other people. Jesus can qualify every single faithful Christian to teach others about him. The world needs this desperately. We know that for many this idea seems intimidating, but it’s actually wonderful.

Group Discussion: **What would happen in our town if every Christian was trained and willing to train others to follow Jesus?**

SECTION 3 – THE COST AND CHALLENGE OF DISCIPLESHIP

3A – Self Assessment Overview

It’s time to assess ourselves, so that we can see more clearly how to answer *Question 3 (What does discipleship require from me?)*, and ultimately move on to the important *Question 4...*

Do I accept Jesus’ challenge to be discipled in this church?

This is a self-assessment based off of The Resurrection’s *Gospel Belief Questions* handout. (We use these 11 questions to help people first come to faith in Jesus and be baptized.) This assessment is designed to help us hold Jesus’ words up to the mirror of our heart, so that we can find out the truth about our own faith (or lack thereof).

In other words, do I really trust Jesus? Or is it an act? Or maybe my faith is only as deep as words but there’s no action to it. Let’s be honest with ourselves and God. It is not scary to search the depths of our hearts with God, because he is good and able to make them clean.

It's important to stress, here, that the goal isn't mostly just to see our sin and weaknesses. Everybody has sin and weakness both believers and unbelievers)! The goal is to see how we respond to Jesus. Do we want him to help us and change us? Do we believe he can overcome the mountains of difficulty in our lives? And most importantly, are we willing to take the actions that he says are required, in order to experience those changes, today and each day?

It is easy to say "yes," or to check a box, and say you believe something. But faith that saves is more than that. Saving, transforming faith is lived out daily. It desires to trust Jesus in every moment, every day. Let's look at these questions. Please do your best to be honest in answering them, and use them to assess your heart before the Lord.

Understanding the Gospel more deeply helps us to know whether we have the faith that saves us and changes us. Read the *Gospel Summary* below, and then begin the self-assessment in Sections 3B through 3E.

Gospel Summary

Saving, transforming faith in Jesus chooses to believe and live out of the basic truths of the Gospel. Christians believe the Gospel, which means "Good News."

The Gospel can be summarized as 3 things about Jesus:

- Jesus's Authority over our lives. (He is our Lord.)
- Jesus's Finished Work in our place. (He is our Savior.)
- Jesus's Love for us, personally.

3B - Jesus's Authority produces Repentance & Trust

1. Do you believe Jesus has the right to be the authority in your life?

(Romans 10:9, Matthew 28:18)

a. Yes or No?

b. If yes, then how has that changed the way you live? What are some examples?

c. *What are some examples of areas in your life where you know you need his power to change or grow? Do you believe he has that power?*

2. Are you learning how to trust Jesus, rather than yourself? (Mark 7:20-23)

a. *Yes or No?*

b. *In what ways are you aware that your will differs from Jesus' will? Have you chosen to be obedient to his will instead of yours in these areas?*

c. *Do you want to grow in your trust in Jesus in these areas of life? What would that look like?*

3. Are you willing to walk away from anything that stands between you and what Jesus wants for you, with God's help? (Matthew 4:17)

a. *Yes or No?*

b. *What are the things God wants you to walk away from? (Here are some common ones: drunkenness, sex outside of marriage, drug use, pride, obsession with money, cheating, stealing, romantic partnership with an unbeliever, having a live-in boyfriend or girlfriend, having a "secret faith" that others in your life don't know about, because you're afraid to tell them, etc.)*

- c. *Do you have unrepentant sin? (Sin that you refuse to quit?) If so, list them below.*

 - d. *What is your plan to walk away from the sin in your life, today? (If you don't have a plan, would you be willing to let a church-leader into your life, to help you make a plan?)*

 - e. *Jesus doesn't just want us to stop certain behaviors. What are some examples of things Jesus wants you to start doing, or do more faithfully?*
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4. **Have you asked him to take control of your life, and lead you, from now on? (Matthew 4:19)**
- a. *Yes or No?*

 - b. *When?*

 - c. *Where were you?*

 - d. *How did this decision make you feel?*

3C - Jesus's Finished Work produces Eternal Forgiveness

5. Do you believe you are guilty of sin before God? (Romans 3:23)

- a. Yes or No?

- b. How would you define sin? What is it?

- c. Does your sin deserve hell? Why?

6. Do you believe Jesus has paid 100% of the punishment you deserve for all your sins: past, present and future? (1 Corinthians 15:3; Romans 8:31-39)

- a. Yes or No?

- b. When did Jesus pay your punishment?

- c. How did he accomplish this great work?

- d. Do you feel guilty or condemned by your past sin, even though Jesus already took your punishment? Please, explain.

7. Have you asked him to forgive and save you? (Acts 2:37-41)

- a. Yes or No?

- b. When?

- c. Where were you?

- d. How did this decision make you feel?

3D - Jesus's Love invites us into a deep personal relationship with him.

8. Do you believe that Jesus loves you unconditionally, and that he is inviting you into an ever-growing relationship with him? (*John 3:16; Romans 8:35-37*)

a. *Yes or No?*

b. *What is your relationship with Him like? What are ways you interact with each other?*

c. *Do you talk to Jesus (pray to him) regularly?*

d. *Do you fast?*

e. *Do you read Jesus' words (the Bible) regularly?*

f. *Do you see Jesus as a treasure? How valuable is he to you?*

g. *Is this an area you would like to grow in?*

9. Are you beginning to experience real love towards Jesus, personally? (*Mark 12:30*)

a. *Yes or No?*

b. *What does it mean for you to love Him?*

c. *How do you show your love for Him?*

d. *When you think about God, do you relate to him as...?*

(Circle all that apply)

A. *Father?*

B. *Brother?*

C. *Bridegroom / Husband?*

D. *Friend?*

E. *Teacher?*

F. *Helper?*

e. *Is showing love for Jesus, or perhaps feeling his love for you, an area you would like to grow in?*

3E - The Gospel gives us a New Life in God's Family

10. Do you believe Jesus has given you the free gift of eternal life, which starts now? (John 3:36)

a. *Yes or No?*

b. *How does eternal life start now? In what ways are you experiencing it?*

c. *Does your life (your actions, your choices, your heart, your desires) look the same as it did before you were a Christian? Or different? Please explain.*

11. Are you ready to become a participating part of Jesus' family, the church? (Ephesians 5:23)

a. Yes or No?

b. Are you regularly attending a church for worship services?

c. Have you made the commitment of membership to a local church? Why or Why not?

d. Do you have friendships among Christians in your church congregation?

e. Are you open to letting other people into your life? Please, explain.

f. Are you holding contempt in your heart towards other Christians? Please explain?

g. Are you willing to be trained by the God-given leaders in your church? Please explain.

h. Are you willing to be corrected, instructed, rebuked and encouraged by all fellow Christians? Please explain?

- i. *Are you open to learning to disciple other people, in a humble, self-giving way?*

If you answered these questions honestly, they should give you a good indication of whether you have faith-that-saves, or if the faith you thought you had is empty. This is an aggressive way to put it, but we do so because this is such an important issue: life-transformation or being stuck, heaven or hell, hangs in the balance! And once again, the issue is not simply "Do I have sin?" Of course you do. We all do! The question is rather, "Do I trust Jesus to provide forgiveness for my sin, and do I trust Jesus to lead me out of my sin: right now, and daily."

So what do you think: ***Do you really trust Jesus? Yes or No? (circle one)***

Our hope and prayer for you is that these questions spur you on into conversations with God and your church leadership. We really do desire to help you to trust Jesus. We've been through all this. (We are still *going through* all this!) We are seeking to help you highlight specific areas where you need to grow in your faith.

Remember: Prior life-change IS NOT a requirement to begin discipleship, because discipleship is *how* the life change actually happens! What is required for discipleship is the willingness to follow Jesus into life change, *starting right now*.

SECTION 4 – WHAT'S NEXT?

4A - HOMEWORK

1. Please complete this assessment with honesty, as if before the Lord Himself.
2. Please be in prayer about the results you find and communicate with God about these questions, above. For example, speak with God about your reflections on the questions like this....
 - a. Am I saved?
 - b. Do I want to be saved?
 - c. Am I willing to grow in my faith in Jesus?
 - d. Can he really help me overcome the impossible?
 - e. Do I choose the cost of being Jesus' disciple?
 - f. Do I choose to learn from other Christians in a humble way?
 - g. Etc.
3. Please save this packet for further discussion.

4B – NEXT STEPS

The next step is to meet with a leader to discuss next steps in your Christian walk. In this one-on-one meeting, you and a leader will discuss your self-assessment. They will help you to find clarity on where you are at with Jesus, and what you should do next. If there are obstacles in your path to having saving faith in the Good News, the leader will help you make a plan for addressing these obstacles. If it's clear that the next step is for you to be discipled, the leader will explain our Training Requirements and you will be assigned to one of our new Training Groups, which will have it's first meeting in a few weeks.

1. You will arrange a meeting with a leader.
2. Go ahead and swap phone numbers with your leader.
3. They need to get your completed Session 1 and Session 2 packet in hand a few days before you meet, so they can have time to read it completely. (Perhaps you can hand it to them at church on Sunday.)
4. Then you will meet in person, so they can encourage and help you with next steps!

God bless you! Jesus loves you! So do we.

The Resurrection