**Bible Study Series (Summer\ Fall 2022) | The Follower of Jesus**

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**| #iFollowJ |#Followme\_Jesus |**

**LESSON 1:** WHAT IS A JESUS FOLLOWER?

**Scripture:** JOHN 21:15-17

**PURPOSE:**

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

**INTRODUCTION**

* **What comes to mind when you think of being a follower of Jesus?**
* **What does it mean that we are to follow Him? What does this include or exclude in our lives?**

A Jesus follower is someone who follows the mission of Jesus in the context of relationship with Jesus and others and through the power of the Holy Spirit. John’s Gospel provides many examples of what it means to follow Jesus, but the restoration of Peter offers one of the clearest snapshots.

**UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT**

**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 you view of Jesus been shaped by His grace in your life?**

\***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.

* **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.**

\***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. 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?**

**APPLICATION**

* Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.
* What concrete steps will you commit to in order to pursue following Jesus more closely through this series?
* How can meeting with this group regularly help with that?
* How does following Jesus closely encourage us to share about Him with others?

**PRAYER**

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

**LESSON 2:** LOVE GOD

**SCRIPTURE:** JOHN 1:1-14; 3:10-21

**PURPOSE:**

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

**INTRODUCTION**

* **What comes to mind when you think of the love of God?**
* **How have you experienced God’s love? What questions do you have about God’s love?**

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.

**UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT**

\*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.

* **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?**

**\*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?**

**\*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?**

**APPLICATION**

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.**

**PRAYER**

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

**LESSON 3:**  RECONCILED WITH GOD AND MAN

**SCRIPTURE:** 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-19; JOHN 3:16

**PURPOSE:**

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

**INTRODUCTION**

* **How would you define reconciliation?**
* **Where are some places you see a need for reconciliation or have experienced reconciliation?**

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.

**UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT**

**2 CORINTHIANS 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 CORINTHIANS 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?**

**JOHN 3:16**

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?**

**APPLICATION**

* **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.**

**PRAYER**

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.

**LESSON 4:** LOVING AS WE’VE BEEN LOVED

**SCRIPTURE:** JOHN 13:1-16, 34-35

**PURPOSE:**

The love of God is offered freely.

**INTRODUCTION**

* **When do you find it most difficult to love others? When do you find it the easiest?**
* **If you are a follower of Jesus, how does this inform your efforts to love others?**

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.

**UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT**

\***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 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.

* **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?**

\***JOHN 13:6-16.**

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?**

**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 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?**

**APPLICATION**

* **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**

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.

**LESSON 5:** GROWING IN JESUS

**SCRIPTURE:** JOHN 15:1-8; 2 CORINTHIANS 13:14

**PURPOSE:**

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.

**INTRODUCTION**

* **What comes to mind when you think of spiritual growth? Who is someone you know that shows a lot of spiritual maturity? What about this person makes you say that?**
* **What would you say is the most important factor in spiritual growth? Why?**

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.

**UNDERSTANDING**

**JOHN 15:1-4.**

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?**

**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?**

**2 CORINTHIANS 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.

* **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 climate of the world around us lead Christians to behave in ways that are un-loving and lacking in grace?**

**APPLICATION**

* **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 anoth**er.

**PRAYER**

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.

**LESSON 6: IMITATING JESUS**

**SCRIPTURE:** JOHN 5:16-19; ROMANS 8:14-16

**PURPOSE:**

Christians are enabled to reflect the life of Jesus to those around them because of their adoption as children of God.

**INTRODUCTION:**

* **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?**

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.

**UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT**

**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?

**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.

**ROM. 8:14-16.**

* **What reason did Paul give for not being afraid?**

The Bible makes no distinction between Jesus and Jesus**’ f**ollowers 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?

**APPLICATION**

* **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**

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.

**LESSON 7:** FOLLOWING ON MISSION

**SCRIPTURE:** JOHN 20:19-23; MATTHEW 28:16-20

**PURPOSE:**

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.

**INTRODUCTION**

* **What is your experience with missions? Have you ever been on a short or long term missions trip?**
* **Do you tend to think of missions as something for others “out there” or something meant for you? Explain.**

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. 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.

**UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT**

**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?**

**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?**

**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 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.

**APPLICATION**

* **Is there someone in your life you can have a faith conversation with this week? Pray for them by name.**
* **Work to 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**

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.

**LESSON 8:** POWER FOR THE MISSION

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 1:14; LUKE 4:14-30

**PURPOSE:**

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. Followers of Jesus are called to proclaim the good news of His Kingdom by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**INTRODUCTION**

* **When you think about the Great Commission, how do you typically feel (i.e. overwhelmed, excited, something else)?**
* **What leads you to feel this way? Where do you typrically seek motivation for obeying the Great Commission?**

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

**UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT**

**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?

**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?**

**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?**

**APPLICATION**

* **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?**
* **Work to memorize John 1:14. Reflect on the privilege of having Jesus come and live among us.**
* **Think about how your group plans to serve together. Is there a need that you know of that you can help meet together?**

PRAYER

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

**LESSON 9**: A FOLLOWER OF JESUS

**SCRIPTURE:** MATTHEW 22:36-40

**PURPOSE:**

We are called to follow Jesus by living as He did, loving God and others and living on mission by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**INTRODUCTION**

* **Do you have any questions or observations from our study over the past 8 weeks?**
* **How have you been able to apply what you’ve learned over the past several weeks?**

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.

**UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT**

\*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?**

**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.**

**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 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?**

**APPLICATION**

* **Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.**
* **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**

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.