



FOUNDATIONS  
of FAITH  
Bible Study

## **Part 2 Followers**

Following Jesus means that what  
God says matters most to you.



# Introduction to the Foundations Bible Study

The Foundations of Faith Bible study walks through key Scripture passages that explain the foundational question of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. The intent is to answer this important question in a way that gets people engaging first hand with the Bible so they can understand the beliefs and practices that flow from it.

Foundations encourage people to explore the Bible in simple, honest, and engaging manner. You don't need prior knowledge or firm beliefs to participate—just a willingness to explore, ask honest questions, and consider what you encounter. At the same time these are not just beginner steps—they are lifelong rhythms. The most mature followers of Jesus don't move beyond them; they return to them again and again, going deeper over time.

Foundations has six parts that are arranged based on six identities of a Christian as a: Worshipper, Follower, Steward, Family Member, Helper and Witness. Each part consists of multiple Bible readings that develop and explain that identity, and each lesson focuses on one passage so that passage can be thoroughly understood before building on it.

The Foundations study will will provide some key components for your journey:

- **The Scripture passage.** This is the passage the lesson will focus on and we recommend reading it a few times. Most Bibles have a table of contents at the beginning in which you can find the books of the Old and New Testament. The first number is the chapter and the second number after the colon is the verse number.
- **Guide to the Word.** This provides background and insight into the Scripture passage to help uncover its meaning and significance. Questions are also provided to help guide your understanding of the passage and important details.
- **Guide to Response.** Offers thoughtful prompts to reflect on how the passage speaks into real life—beliefs, decisions, relationships, and priorities of today.
- **Guide to the Lesson.** This equips group facilitators with practical suggestions for leading discussions, fostering openness, and navigating common challenges.
- **Discovery Group Questions.** These questions are part of our Discovery Bible Studies and are good questions to work through for each passage.

We encourage people to go through the Foundations study with other believers and a group leader so they can learn from others and experience Christian community. Many people will begin the course on their own and independent of a group. If you start on your own we would love to know and support you and would be glad to connect you with a group at any point.

# **Journey 2 Table of Contents**

Overview for Journey 2 - Followers	5
Lesson 1: Matthew 4:12-22 - Jesus's Call to Follow	6
Lesson 2: Mark 8:31-38 - Denying Self and Following Jesus	10
Lesson 3: Matthew 7:15-29 - True and False Followers	14
Lesson 4: James 1:19-27 - Hearing and Doing the Word	18
Lesson 5: Ephesians 2:1-10 - Made Alive	22
Lesson 6: Colossians 3:1-11 - Raised with Christ	26
Lesson 7: 1 John 2:1-6 - Christ Our Advocate	30
Lesson 8: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 - Temples of the Holy Spirit	34
Lesson 9: Acts 2:29-42 - The Community of Believers	38
Lesson 10: Matthew 28:16-20 - The Great Commission	42

# Overview for Journey 2 - Followers

**Mantra:** Serving Jesus means that what God says matters most to you.

**Key Passage:** “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock” (Matt 7:24).

**Beginning Journey Questions:** Answer questions 1-4 below at the beginning of the journey, and review your answers at the end and answer number 5.

1. What does it mean to follow God?

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2. What is a follower of God?

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3. On a scale of 1-10 how would you rate yourself in following God?

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4. What do you hope to learn in this journey?

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5. After completing this journey, what stood out to you the most in this journey?

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## Key Points of Journey:

- Reading and obeying God’s word is essential to knowing and following Jesus.
- Following Jesus involves sacrifice, self denial, and overcoming many hardships.
- What we have in Jesus is greater than anything that is in the world.

# Lesson 1: Matthew 4:12-22 - Jesus's Call to Follow

## A. Guide to the Word

This is the beginning of Jesus's ministry, and it starts with him preaching about the coming kingdom of God. Jesus is the fulfillment of God's past promises to restore the fallen state of humanity and to bring light into the world's darkness. A day of great hope has come because God's kingdom has arrived with Jesus, but receiving this hope and the kingdom of God will come at a great cost. One must leave their previous ways and plans in order to follow Jesus.

Verses 15-19 are a quote of an Old Testament passage found in the book of Isaiah (chapter 9). In Isaiah's day the people had disobeyed and discarded God's commands, and as a result, God gave them over to their enemies. They were separated from God and conquered by other nations. It was indeed a dark time and would have felt like being in death's shadow. But God is doing something great for his people. In Jesus the kingdom of God is coming and with it great hope. Light has finally dawned.

Jesus' message for these people is one of hope but also of repentance. Repentance means to change direction. An example would be if you were heading north on the interstate and realized it was the wrong way, so you get off, turn around, and go the other way. That is repentance.

Jesus calls his people to this, and it is modeled by his disciples. When Jesus tells them to follow him, they stop what they are doing and immediately come follow him. These fishermen leave everything, including their nets, their businesses, their livelihoods, and even their families. It is clear that they leave those because what they have in Jesus is greater than anything else!

Leaving everything behind is the beginning of discipleship. It is also the essence of the daily faith and sacrifice Jesus calls his people to. This is not a one-time leaving but rather a pattern that is to be followed every day (Luke 9:23). Disciples are to push everything aside in order to follow Jesus. To them nothing is more important than putting God first. Just as Jesus is changing the disciples from fishermen to fishers of people, so too he is at work in your life.

## B. Going Deeper in the Word

1. How did the disciples respond to Jesus's calling to come follow him? What does this say about their trust in Jesus and what he is preaching?

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2. What does verse 15-19 tell you about the kind of people Jesus came to help?

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3. What does it mean that Jesus is going to transform these fishermen into fishers of men?

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### **C. Guide to Obeying**

1. Jesus draws people to himself in order to transform them.
2. Disciples value obedience to Jesus above everything and everyone else.
3. Obedience comes with a cost, but it is worth the cost.

### **D. Going Deeper**

1. How important is following Jesus to you? What do you value most in life?

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2. What might you need to “leave behind” in order to follow Jesus today? What are some achievements, opportunities, setbacks, disappointments, etc that you need to leave to follow Jesus?

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3. What prevents you from being a fisher of people?

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### **E. Guide to the Lesson**

This lesson may be familiar to many, but it is always challenging to see the disciples leave everything in order to follow Jesus. To have this as the first passage in a Journey called “Followers” highlights the important and inescapable conclusion that disciples of Jesus follow him above everything and everyone else. This leaving and following is not just an initial act of faith, but rather a way of life for a follower of Jesus.

You might ask people to share how seriously they have been following Jesus, or how much authority or weight they put on the words of Jesus. We live in a time and place where many people are familiar with Jesus's words, but they are not willing to actually live by his commands.

To become followers entails two important points. The first is to hear Jesus, to rest and reflect on his word and its implications. The second is that after taking it to heart, you follow him. It is to obey his words. It is trusting him above everyone else. Jesus tells us how to live, and after hearing his teaching a follower cannot continue to do whatever he wants. To do so is to reject Jesus.

Discuss with your group how to take time to know Jesus's words and how to follow his words, or possibly ask the questions: who do you say Jesus is, and what does your life say about who Jesus is.

Several passages in this journey contain teaching that is intentionally unsettling to passive or nominal followers of Christ. In these passages Jesus is seeking to rouse his people to see God's grace and how they are to respond appropriately to it. An intriguing question to ask in your time of Bible study that helps people see this and may help them talk honestly about their thoughts on the passage and faith is: "Does anything in this passage bother you?"

## Discovery Group Questions

**Building Community.** What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

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Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

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**Learning God’s Word.** What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

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**Obeying the Lord.** In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

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**Sharing Hope.** Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

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**Praying.** How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?

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## **Lesson 2: Mark 8:31-38 - Denying Self and Following Jesus**

### **A. Guide to the Word**

Jesus begins to teach his disciples more about the nature of his coming and the work that he will do, which consists of suffering and death. Peter rebukes him for this, thinking there is no way the Messiah, the Savior of the world, could or would suffer. Jesus teaches this is what he is called to do and that there is more suffering to come. He also says that his followers will follow him in walking the road of self denial and suffering.

Many come to Jesus hoping he will give them their dream life. Jesus turns this thinking on its head and says true life is found in laying our lives down. If you want to save your life it will require spending it in sacrificial service to Jesus. He makes it clear there are two ways people live. Either they live by denying themselves and following him or by rejecting him and living to gain the world. There is no middle ground.

Jesus also gives a great promise that those who live their lives for him will be rewarded when he comes in his glory. There is salvation in him, but he also says those who refuse him will lose their souls. The reward is great but so is the consequence of rejecting him. His followers will have to believe him and his words and practice the intentional obedience of following what he calls them to do.

This passage also highlights the grace and mercy of God. Jesus is resolute in following the commands of his heavenly Father. He is going to give his life for sinners. It is the only way for them to experience forgiveness and restoration and be brought into the kingdom of God. Nothing will deter him from it, and his followers must see that in doing this he meets their greatest need. There is nothing else they themselves could ever do to atone for their sin.

### **B. Going Deeper in the Word**

1. Why did Jesus rebuke Peter so strongly? What does this tell you about the role of suffering and sacrifice in Jesus's life and ministry?

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2. What is the warning for those who refuse to follow Jesus and do what he calls them to do?

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3. What is the reward and cost for those who follow Jesus? Who does Jesus offer his promise of salvation to (v34)?

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### **C. Guide to Obeying**

1. Following Jesus means renouncing the world in order to make Jesus known.
2. Followers give up things they love in order to gain what they love most.
3. A life of faithful obedience is more desirable than great fanfare and worldly gain.

### **D. Going Deeper in Obeying**

1. Is there anything in this passage that bothers you? In what ways might Jesus be calling you to sacrifice in order to follow him?

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2. How do people get lured away from following Jesus? What keeps you from hearing and heeding his word on a daily basis?

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3. How does his teaching lead one to find true life? How does Jesus sacrifice bring life?

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### **E. Guide to the Lesson**

This passage highlights the place of sacrifice in the life of the believer. If someone is living a life that does not involve sacrifice for Jesus then they are not living the life he calls them to live. Jesus gave his life to meet the needs of his people. They could never atone for their sin themselves. This is the greatest thing a person can receive. Recognizing this will also lead a person to follow Jesus in joyfully laying down their lives

for others. They will lose their lives, but the irony is that by losing their lives they find true life, both for the present life and the life to come.

This lesson can present a good opportunity to discuss what is most important to your life or what is your top priority. People will sacrifice less important things for that which is most important. If people consistently don't make time to read their Bibles, go to church, tithe, share their faith, serve and help others, then the logical question to be asked is who are they living for? Our Lord gave his life for us, and we are to follow him in giving our lives for others.

You might consider beginning the lesson with the ice breaker of what is the most important thing to you and your life? Or perhaps give people a few minutes to write down in order the top five things in their life. At the end of the lesson you might ask if their way of life truly reflects God being number one.

## Discovery Group Questions

**Building Community.** What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

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Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

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**Learning God’s Word.** What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

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**Obeying the Lord.** In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

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**Sharing Hope.** Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

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**Praying.** How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?

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## Lesson 3: Matthew 7:15-29 - True and False Followers

### A. Guide to the Word

This journey discusses what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, which is to trust in Jesus and follow him. Previous lessons have shown that following Jesus means turning away from the world. It's a great challenge and one that many fail at. Some will follow him. Some will refuse. This passage brings a third category, those who outwardly profess to follow but inwardly reject him.

Jesus teaches on the problem of false teachers and hypocrisy. These are people who on the surface appear to be his followers but in actuality are "ravenous wolves." They will feast on others. Jesus says we are to be on guard against such people. They will, at first appearance, look like his servants, but on further inspection they will be found to be something else. They are as dangerous as wolves and as problematic as thorns. He says that such people will be known by the fruit of their lives. With their mouths they may say one thing but the pattern of their lives demonstrate a different allegiance.

True followers are those who hear his word and put them into practice. They are not boastful or braggartly. They simply hear, trust, and obey. These are those who, even when the storms hit hard upon them (v25), their lives do not crumble or fall apart. They are firmly rooted in God's word. This is a beautiful picture of the security that comes to one who is truly building their life on the rock of Jesus's words.

This passage shows that Jesus is after the heart of his people. He demonstrates his love by dying for them, and he wants his people to love and follow him. Part of the joy in following him is being changed and healed in the core of who we are. Most people focus on superficial fruit and actions in their lives but Jesus wants to heal the root, deep down in the core of their being. While this passage presents a high and challenging calling on what it means to follow Jesus, it also gives a deeply encouraging picture of the change and healing he desires to bring to his people.

### B. Going Deeper in the Word

1. What is the outward and inward description of the false prophets?

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2. Do these people fool Jesus? What does he say to them?

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3. What does the wise man do that the foolish builder does not do?

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### **C. Guide to Obeying**

1. Followers of Jesus diligently study God’s word and prayerfully connect it to their lives.
2. True change is not just outward behavior and talk but rather involves the inward desires and cravings of the heart.
3. Storms and suffering lead us deeper into the knowledge of God.

### **D. Going Deeper in Obeying**

1. What instances have you seen of people who claimed to know God but contradicted it by the way they lived?

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2. How encouraging it is to know Jesus does not just want us to change our outward behavior but change the core of who we are? Are you more concerned with what people see and think of you or with serving Jesus from the heart?

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3. How intentionally are you taking time to read God’s word and pray through how to obey it or what to believe?

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### **E. Guide to the Lesson**

In the Bible belt, where we live, there are many who are familiar with church and Christian teachings, but many lack a desire to know the Bible and live it out. This passage confronts the superficial Christianity rampant here and in the world that knows about Jesus but doesn’t submit to him. It is sobering to read in the Bible that many who

profess to live and work in the name of Jesus are not even known by Jesus! They have no connection to him and will be condemned.

For those who have not taken their walk with God very seriously, this is a powerful passage to talk through. Will they continue to do this, or will they make changes? For these people the problem is not just to change their outward fruit and behavior, but to look deep down in their hearts and the core of who they are. Jesus wants to change people in the core of their being, what they desire, trust, hope and long for.

Many people also have had their faith shaken by false teachers and wolves. They have seen and experienced shocking things from people who were professors but not followers. They need to hear that Jesus spoke of such problems and warned his people and even more that those people will not escape his judgment. He sees and knows all things. Take some time to discuss if people have experienced this. Ask them if they are building their lives on God's word or something else. Don't let someone else's wrong cause you to do wrong.

One way people demonstrate a sincere faith is through a diligent pursuit of learning God's word and prayerfully asking God to help them live by it. Prayer is an expression of our inner longings. Are we longing for God to conform to our desires, or are we wanting our lives to conform to his desire? Encourage people to ask God to change them from the inside out. Make a habit to read God's word, reflect on what he has done for us, and pray about how this should guide your life.

## Discovery Group Questions

**Building Community.** What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

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Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

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**Learning God’s Word.** What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

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**Obedying the Lord.** In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

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**Sharing Hope.** Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

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**Praying.** How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?

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## **Lesson 4: James 1:19-27 - Hearing and Doing the Word**

### **A. Guide to the Word**

The book of James is a short book that packs a powerful punch. James addresses a number of practical issues in a very direct manner. Some of those are seen in this passage such as anger, speech, and caring for orphans and widows. The core issue of the book is people whose religion does not affect the way they live. He has strong statements for these people, saying things like, “Even the demons believe in God and shudder with fear” (James 2:19). James is jealous that such hypocrisy be removed and people are brought into a true and genuine faith.

This passage begins with the topic of anger. Man’s anger is ineffective in bringing the righteousness that God desires (1:20). God’s people are to live differently and put aside all filth and wickedness (v21). James will show that while people are justified by faith in Christ apart from works, works are a necessary evidence of true faith (Jam 2:24). They are saved by faith alone but saving faith is never truly alone. It will overflow into works of serving God.

Central to James’s message is 1:22 “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” He gives a hard hit to the folly of looking to the word but not allowing it to influence and direct how you live. Many people listen to God’s word week by week, but they do not act on it. James says that such a faith is not faith. These people are deceived in their understanding. The foolishness of this is just like a person who looks at themselves in a mirror, sees their hair unkept and out of place, and goes on making no change.

James’s sharp words may hurt, but they are not meant to hurt as the vengeful actions of a street thug but like the precise cut of a surgeon whose wounds bring healing. This passage shows the genuine faith that God intends his people to have. It is a faith that centers on Jesus, changes the heart, and proceeds outwardly changing how a person lives.

While James makes bold comments he also gives much encouragement for the grace of God. He mentions the “implanted word” also reminds how God’s grace works in our hearts. He puts in the hearts of his people both his law (Jer 31) and his Spirit (Ezek 36), which begins to work deep inside until it changes outward desires and behaviors. He also calls the word “the perfect law, the law of freedom.” God’s word is perfect and it contains a law that actually brings freedom and life. It is highly ironic that the law we think limits and confines actually brings freedom and life. The law of the Spirit of life has set us free (Rom 8:1), and this good news ought to motivate us and change the way we live, talk, think, and act.

### **B. Going Deeper in the Word**

1. What does this passage say about how a disciple should speak?

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2. What does this passage say about what followers are not to do?

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3. What does this passage say about how we are to approach the Word of God?

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4. What is the perfect law that brings freedom? How does this perfect law humble and encourage you?

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### **C. Guide to Obeying**

1. Followers' lives are to reflect the holiness of God and there is no place for anger, moral filth, and evil speech.
2. Grace leads to responding slowly and gently when disagreements arise.
3. Believers have a growing longing to look into and live out the perfect law of freedom.

### **D. Going Deeper in Obeying**

1. Are there any ways you are like the people in this passage who he says are only hearers of the word and not doers?

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2. In what ways have your actions brought reproach on the name of Jesus? Take time to confess your sins, ask God to change you, and give thanks for Jesus.

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3. How does this passage and discussion make you more aware of your need for Jesus and his death for sins?
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## **E. Guide to the Lesson**

This lesson contains a key part of the approach of Discovery Groups. Each lesson takes time to consider what does this passage mean to you and what ways might you respond to this passage? This is an important step for those who want to be doers of the word.

You might consider taking time to discuss this in the context of group. Many people are very familiar talking about Bible passages and what they mean, but they can be very reluctant to mention any shortcomings in reference to the word. Their pride keeps them from experiencing the healing effects of the word. Many others have simply never been in a context that takes God's word seriously enough to allow it to shape their lives. We believe it can and ought to shape how we live so we want to provide time for that. This lesson helps people understand this important step in groups and in their walk with God.

Many people act and talk differently outside of church than they do inside of church. This lesson confronts that head on and addresses the many "little sins" that people tend to overlook. There is no such thing as little sins. Sin is sin. This lesson will bring these into the light. Many people won't want to admit their struggles and failures. Leaders can set an example of being honest about their weaknesses and lean into the advice or encouragement the group might have for them.

You don't need to force conversation, but taking time to honestly reflect on the word and where change is desired can be a powerful time of growing closer to God. Allow time for this and allow time for people to take steps in it. Group leaders may take time to share personally or pray for others regarding ingrained habits that need to be broken. This can be a great opportunity to exhort members toward obedience and also remind each other of the gospel that brings hope, freedom, and perfection.

## Discovery Group Questions

**Building Community.** What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

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Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

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**Learning God’s Word.** What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

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**Obeying the Lord.** In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

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**Sharing Hope.** Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

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**Praying.** How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?

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## Lesson 5: Ephesians 2:1-10 - Made Alive

### A. Guide to the Word

As we continue on our journey of being followers of Christ, we have read various passages that anchor us in our responsibility to follow Christ. If we are not careful we might start to think that the Christian life is solely our responsibility and that we are here because of our own goodness and choosing. If the Christian life were all about our doings, it would be anchored in our works, which is not much of an anchor. Ephesians 2 takes us into the heart of the gospel to anchor our faith in God's grace and see that his grace was working well before we ever realized it.

Apart from Christ people are dead in their sins and transgression (2:1). We know all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and so if they sinned that means they are bound to die. We are all destined for death, but it also means we are spiritual dead. We were not following him, but rather "the ways of the world."

Even more importantly or problematically, dead things are not able to bring life to themselves. No one ever gives themselves CPR. This means people need new life. They do not primarily need counsel, nourishment, more education, encouragement, or a "pointing in the right direction." A full-on spiritual rebirth is needed. Life must come from outside themselves, and only God can do that.

This can be hard to understand and possibly seem harsh, but when someone repeatedly does something you ask them not to do it is very hard not to get mad. Their rejection of you is an affront to you, and hostilities will inevitably arise. In the same way our sins brought us into enmity with God, but the good news is God did not leave us there. He came to us and provided a way for reconciliation and new life.

Notice the big "but" in verse 4, "But God being rich in mercy... made us alive..." Our state apart from the work of God is death, but because of his grace and mercy he made us alive. God did what we could not do. This is the gospel! When you understand just how bad our situation was you begin to understand just how great God is. God opens blind eyes to the gospel and transforms dead people. This new life comes about because of the mercy of God. It is a gift and nobody earns it or deserves it and nobody can boast of what they have done. God simply had mercy! It is by grace (v5).

The benefits of God's work continue in this passage. God raises us with Christ, seats us in the heavenlies with him, and promises to show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness (v7). The new life is not like the old life we had but even better.

If one has now been raised with Christ, then they ought to live out their new position in Christ. Salvation is an incredible gift to receive and ought to cause marvel and celebration. It also means that God has work for each to do. We are a work of God's grace, and he has more work prepared for us to do for him (2:10). Our status as followers of Christ is made possible only because of God's work in us.

## **B. Going Deeper**

1. What words and phrases describe the condition people were in before being made alive?

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2. What does it mean to be objects of wrath?

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3. Verses 1-3 describe the general state of people, and in verse 4 the subject changes to God and what he has done. What are some of the things God has done?

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## **C. Guide to Obeying**

1. Salvation is by grace from first to last and ought to be received as a gift with much thanksgiving and humility.
2. All those called to Christ are equipped to serve Christ.

## **D. Going Deeper in Obeying**

1. How did God draw you out of darkness and death and bring you into the riches of his incomparable grace? Whom has he used in your life to help you know him better?

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2. How does this passage and teaching change your understanding of God's grace given to you through Jesus?

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3. What work do you think God has prepared for you to do for him? How can you grow and cultivate that?

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## **E. Guide to the Lesson**

This passage is another clear, concise, and powerful explanation of the gospel. You may want to draw people out on their spiritual condition before Christ. This becomes a backdrop that the grace of God shines onto. Ask about the particular words here like “dead in sins,” “objects of wrath,” “made us alive.” Ask them if this seems too harsh. If they think so then ask them what they think of the solution God provides.

Some people may feel that the language here is too strong. They may not agree that we are dead in sin or that sin would bring us into enmity with God (Gen 3). You may want to discuss what happens when someone repeatedly goes against your clearly expressed wishes and desires. When people begin to see this they begin to see the good news as it is truly meant to be. We don’t just want people to think about doing better in life, we want to see them trusting in the work of Christ. Help them to see what God has done for us and how that makes sense of our sin and the rich life we have in Christ.

A key piece to this passage is that God has work for all his people to do. Each person has to make a decision on if they are going to live for him. It requires submission. Ask about how God has gifted them and how they are growing in their gifts. A key way to grow and cultivate gifts is by being connected to Christ’s body, the church, and simply serving people as opportunities come up. God calls individuals to himself and connects these people into one body, which is his church. The church has a vital place in the life of a believer. If one is going to follow Jesus, they need to follow Jesus’s design for the church. This is the place that should lead to them growing in the gifts God gives to them.

A good ice breaker to open this lesson is to ask people to share the greatest Christmas or birthday present they ever received. Also ask them to explain why it was so significant. While those presents can be impacting, God has given us the greatest gift we could ever receive and that is the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. This gift has a profound effect on us and changes us in every way.

## Discovery Group Questions

**Building Community.** What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

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Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

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**Learning God’s Word.** What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

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**Obedying the Lord.** In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

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**Sharing Hope.** Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

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**Praying.** How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?

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## **Lesson 6: Colossians 3:1-11 - Raised with Christ**

### **A. Guide to the Word**

Whatever captures your heart is what you will live for. This passage shows that if Christ is raised and seated at the right hand of God, and if we have been raised with him by faith, then we are to fix our minds on what he has in store for us. We push aside the earthly distraction to contemplate the glory that is in Jesus. Peace is found in him, and we must be disciplined to apply it to our lives.

Jesus is seated at the right hand of God. Kings sit when they have conquered. Jesus came and lived a perfect life, died for sins, and was raised to new life. His work is complete. He now sits at the favored right hand of God. This takes us back to the gospel and what he has done for us. If we trust in what he has done for us then it means when he returns we will be brought into his glory. This is great news!

Following Jesus is not about the “do betters.” It is about being captivated by him and what he has done for us. When we recognize what he has done for us we set our minds on that. It transforms us from the inside out. We have something that is so much better to live for than what the world offers.

After beginning with a call to set our minds on things about verses 1-4, the passage breaks into two sections with verses 5-11 giving a list of things to “put off” and verse 12-17 giving a list of things we “put on” (clothe ourselves). There are things a follower of Christ casts aside and things he grabs on to. This lesson focuses on the things to put off listed in verses 5-11. Following Jesus and being raised with him means there are certain things that are out of bounds.

Verse 7 makes clear that the people of this church previously engaged in these things but now that they have turned to Christ they put these ways to death. That is a strong way to say don’t do these. In this list are things that the world is going after but followers of Christ must repent and turn away from them.

When the gospel is rightly understood it moves from our heads, to our heart, and through our arms and legs. It changes how we live. One must set their minds on his works and ways. Christ promises to bring us into his glory, and that makes it possible to push aside the things of this world. Followers of Jesus put off their old ways and old self in order to put on the new self that is being renewed in the image of the creator. The renewal we have in Jesus makes it possible to experience life as God intended it to be.

### **B. Going Deeper in the Word**

1. What does this passage point out that Christ has done? Why should one fix their thoughts on that?
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2. When it says to put to death whatever belongs to the earthly nature, what does that communicate about the attitude and mindset one should have in this endeavor?

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3. What does it mean to put on the “new self?” What does this look like?
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### **C. Guide to Obeying**

1. Those who are united to Christ and his coming glory do not unite with the practices of those destined for wrath.
2. God’s ways lead to glory; the world’s ways leads to destruction.

### **D. Going Deeper in Obeying**

1. How often do you dwell on what Christ has accomplished for you and what it means for you?

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2. Which of the areas of the earthly nature do you most need to work on putting to death? What does this passage communicate the importance of putting these to death?

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3. What do you need to put on or focus on? How do you focus on this?
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### **E. Guide to the Lesson**

This lesson gets at the attitude and mindset followers of Christ are to have. It roots us in the gospel of what Christ has done for us and the life he makes possible, but it also shows us the importance of putting behind us the old way of life. People cannot follow Christ and continue to do the things that arouse God's anger.

There are very likely people in your group still holding on to some of these old patterns. It's important to show them these ways need to be broken of and this is an important moment in their discipleship journey, and its important to talk about the issues and where they may need help. The specific actions of the "earthly nature" make it hard for people to avoid where they are not be honoring Christ. You might ask questions like, which of these are most tempting or which are most challenging to you? Discuss how it's not just behavior modification that is being sought after, but a new identity that has its roots in the work of Christ. All of this comes back to letting God rule us through his word, so that we are truly followers of him and not of the world.

Ask people to share their experience in living for earthly things. Inquire what their experience was, and if or when they had a break with such things. Ask them to share what life with Christ is like and where they found Christ better than old ways. Take time to confess sins, pray for those who need help, and see what action steps people want to take.

One thing about groups is we want to push into how we can change and live fully for God. One thing that can facilitate this is when talking about how to apply the passage, ask them for SMART goals: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely. Sometimes saying it like, what can you or should you do in the next 24-48 hours to apply this passage. This helps people get specific and allows them to bring others into their journey. If the group is reluctant to do this or just not there yet you might wait a bit. Sometimes questions like this help groups gel together and sometimes you want to wait for the right time to challenge people more.

## Discovery Group Questions

**Building Community.** What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

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Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

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**Learning God’s Word.** What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

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**Obeying the Lord.** In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

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**Sharing Hope.** Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

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**Praying.** How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?

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## Lesson 7: 1 John 2:1-6 - Christ Our Advocate

### A. Guide to the Word

This letter, written in the later years of the life of the disciple John, shows the tender, fatherly care that he had for the church and the people of God. His warm words show deep concern, which drives him to state the importance of following God's word.

The availability of forgiveness does not remove the obligation to obey God. John desires that his readers respond to God's mercy by living lives of sincere following. It does not mean that their following will be perfect. "If anybody does sin" (v1) is a conditional statement and means that if we do mess up and sin, there is an atoning sacrifice for those sins. Jesus is the only Savior of the world, and the one to whom we look for forgiveness at all times.

This word for "**atoning sacrifice**" can also be translated "**propitiation**," and it is loaded with theological meaning. Propitiation means to be favorably disposed to another, or in other words to remove wrath. Our sins aroused the wrath and anger of God and put us at enmity with him. Jesus's death atoned for our sins, appeased the wrath of God, and has now brought us into a propitious relationship with God in which he is now favorably disposed toward us. It is not that he is simply no longer mad. He now looks on us with favor. This is the reason we can be children of God who call God as our Father (2:1)!

This passage shows us the grace of God, but John doesn't beat around the bush on the importance of walking with Jesus. If you have trusted in him, then you should walk as he walks (v6). There should be noticeable parallels to your life and his. Many will give lip service to Jesus and then deny him with their actions. John says that those who do this are liars and the truth is not in them.

One way to gauge our pursuit of God is to consider how intently we are looking into his word to know his commands (v4). Those who do not take the time to know his commands cannot possibly be those who obey his commands. We need to know God's word, his law and his promises, and then reflect on how those shape what we think and what we do.

### B. Going Deeper in the Word

1. What does it mean that Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for sins?

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2. What is said of those who do not do what God commands?

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3. How does obeying God's word lead to God's love being made complete in us (v5)?

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### **C. Guide to Obeying**

1. True faith is not perfect, but it is sincere.
2. Followers seek to know God's word and truly live by it.
3. Believers confess their sins to one another (James 5:16).

### **D. Going Deeper In Obeying**

1. Have you known anyone that was a liar (says that they know Christ but does not do what he says)? Do you see this in any parts of your life?

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2. What does it mean to confess your sins (1 John 1:8-10, James 5:16)? Do you ever practice this with God or with other believers? Why does God say to do this?

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3. Do you desire to obey and keep God's word?
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### **D. Guide to the Lesson**

There are many people who are not sincere in following Jesus. This passage may make sense of many people's professed walk with the Lord, and certainly everyone can name a person who was a liar about their walk with the Lord (or who maybe wasn't lying but genuinely deceived in what it means to follow Jesus). We want to help people regain a biblical understanding of trusting in Jesus with the faith-filled allegiance he calls his people to.

Another thing to focus on is the practice of confessing sins. This is mentioned in 1 John 1:8 and also in James 5:16. Part of living in the light is confessing our sin. Take time to pray and confess sin. People may need some instruction on this. You can frame it by saying, “God, I’m sorry I ...” You may also encourage group members that because we have Jesus as an atoning sacrifice we confess sin and we also give thanks for the work of Christ. You can encourage them to also pray, “God, thank you for...” James instructs us to confess our sins and pray for one another. In your time of prayer pray for the things members are struggling with and ask God to help them. You may frame this by saying, “God help...” Confessing sin and praying for others is a deeply intimate and powerful time.

Many view confessing sin as a once in a lifetime event. They walked the aisle in first grade, confessed their sin and faith in Jesus, and now everything is fine. That is not a biblical understanding. Confessing sin is like taking out the trash. You need to do it regularly. You might also find time to talk through the specific things people confess. They may need prayer but they might also need counsel and direction. Take some time for this. Be aware that in a small group, if everyone shares a comment or two about another’s confessed sin, it may feel overwhelming, so try to limit or manage the number of responses a person receives. Not every confession needs a comment. Encourage people for stepping out and make sure you treat what is shared in the group with great care. You might want to encourage the group to keep what is shared there confidential. Encourage people to trust you by being trustworthy of what they shared.

## Discovery Group Questions

**Building Community.** What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

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Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

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**Learning God’s Word.** What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

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**Obeying the Lord.** In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

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**Sharing Hope.** Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

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**Praying.** How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?

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## Lesson 8: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 - Temples of the Holy Spirit

### A. Guide to the Word

There are many popular sayings that people say to justify doing whatever they want: “Follow your heart,” “you do you,” “live your life,” or “live your truth.” All of these relativize morals. In the city of Corinth, the expressions were “everything is permissible” and “food for the stomach and the stomach for food.” In other words, if it is possible to do, then it is permitted. The stomach was made for food so give it food, and then the next assumption was the body was made for sex, so give it sex. Paul brings this line of thinking to a screeching halt. This is not the case for a believer. Everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial. The body is meant for the Lord, and everything done should honor him and him alone.

You cannot profess to follow Christ and then live however you want. Paul shows here that one’s body is sacred, and it ought, therefore, to be devoted to holy things. Sexuality is an important part of how God made people, and it is to be used to honor him. The believer’s body is a member of Christ. How could the members of Christ be united to prostitutes? It’s unthinkable, yet people were doing it. There are spiritual consequences to physical actions.

Paul is so concerned with sexual immorality that he tells them to flee it, as though fleeing from great danger. He is speaking as if he were talking to a person inside a burning building. Immorality is not to be played with or belittled. Sexual sin has grave consequences. Followers of Jesus are to submit their entire life to the Lordship of Jesus.

Sex and sexuality is a big part of God’s design for people (Gen 1:28), and yet it is something that should be submitted to his design. How we view this important part of humanity reveals what we think about God and the extent to which we are submitted to him.

Many people will feel challenged if not condemned by the strong words in this passage on sexuality. Paul here is referencing the new life in Christ that these people are living, but referring to earlier verses leads to a powerful understanding of the redemption in Jesus. After mentioning several categories of sin that disqualifies people from the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9), Paul reminds the Corinthians that “such were some of you,” but in Christ they have been “washed, justified, and sanctified” (1 Corinthians 6:11). They were once disqualified, but because of the forgiveness in Jesus, they are able to come into the kingdom of God. It is all by grace and now they are to put on this new life in Christ. The old is gone and the new has come.

This passage says that in Christ we are sanctified, which means we are made holy. There is a sense in which believers are sanctified, and that work is completed, but there is also a sense in which we continue to grow in our sanctification and holiness. We are the temple of the holy spirit and need to continue putting sin to death. It is an ongoing work and fight. Sanctification and justification are both mentioned here and related.

Justification is a judicial decision made at a point in time in which we are declared righteous in Christ. We are clothed with his righteousness. We will never be more justified. Sanctification is the process of becoming more and more holy. We are justified and made holy in Christ, and after this we pursue a life of holiness devoted to glorifying God.

## **B. Going Deeper in the Word**

1. What is a temple? What is the significance that our bodies are a temple for the Lord? Does this show a significance of who you are?

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2. How is sexual sin different from other sins?

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3. How can God dictate what we should and shouldn't do with our sexuality (v20)?

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## **C. Guide to Obeying**

1. People's bodies and sexuality are not for themselves but for the Lord and ought to be submitted to him.
2. The body is a temple to the Lord and is to reflect that sacred purpose in everything.
3. Sexual immorality, in all its forms, is to be resisted and fled from.

## **D. Going Deeper in Obeying**

1. Do you view sexual sins in the same way the Bible views them?

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2. Do you flee from sin as though it were a great danger that could cost you your life?

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3. How does this passage show you the grace of God? How does that fill you with hope and gratitude?

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## **E. Guide to the Lesson**

In our culture sexual sin is all around. It is pursued, joked about, and even boasted about. Sexual sin is unacceptable for the believer. It is a great danger to our souls and to those we might defile with it. It is to be fled like a life threatening evil coming toward us. A follower of Christ must push aside the world's view of sex and sexuality in order to honor Christ. If one is going to follow Christ, then you have to follow him in every part of life, including sexuality.

Sexuality is a hot topic today, and there are impassioned views on the topic. If different views are expressed in your group, be sure to go back to what the passage says. Dig into God's word on this. This passage speaks of the dangers of sexual immorality, but it does so because there is a higher purpose and calling for people than their sexuality. There is something bigger and better! Our bodies were created to be a temple of the Holy Spirit. Bodies are sacred and ought to be used to bring glory to Jesus.

Also remember that many live with guilt and shame in regards to sexuality and sin. Some need to hear what happened to them or what they did was wrong. The good news with that is God has a better design. But the best news is that God cleanses us of all our sin! In Christ there is forgiveness, justification, and sanctification.

This is a passage that you might ask the question, "does anything bother you in this passage?" This question helps people deal honestly with the passage and get things in the open. It will also allow you to see how you can help, encourage, teach, or list to various people. Asking it also helps people see you are not afraid or ashamed to talk about the things that they have experienced.

## Discovery Group Questions

**Building Community.** What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

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Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

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**Learning God’s Word.** What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

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**Obeying the Lord.** In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

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**Sharing Hope.** Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

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**Praying.** How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?

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## Lesson 9: Acts 2:29-42 - The Community of Believers

### A. Guide to the Word

Acts 2 contains the first sermon Peter preaches after experiencing the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Peter boldly speaks of the death and resurrection of Jesus with the implication that this Jesus is both Lord and Christ (v36). Peter then goes on to connect the importance of people hearing this message and believing in it. This belief will be characterized by repentance, baptism, and participation in the community of believers.

In order to be saved people must repent and be baptized. Repentance means to change direction. Here it refers to one's disposition toward Jesus. It is recognizing that Jesus is the Lord and Savior of the world and that we must serve him. When you believe someone is your Lord you rightly turn away from other allegiances in your life. It is very clear that if people do not repent they will perish.

Repentance is closely connected to following Jesus in baptism. **Baptism** is a sacrament instituted by Jesus that reminds of his work and is also a public profession of one who has trusted in him. Baptism signifies the death and resurrection of Jesus and is a way for a person to identify with Jesus as their Lord (Rom 6:1-5). It is the first thing new believers were told to do, and it is closely connected to following Jesus. Those who follow Jesus are to follow the command to be baptized. If one is not willing to be obedient in this first command then they will probably reject Jesus's other commands. Baptism is a necessary profession and first step of faith that one has trusted in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. It is a powerful declaration that one has turned from the world and is now following Jesus, and as such it is a source of great celebration and spiritual encouragement.

In verse 42 these baptized believers then devote themselves to the community of believers– the **church**. The church is an organized and committed gathering of believers who are seeking to honor and make Jesus known. Here they gather primarily to read God's word, pray, share, and take the message of salvation to others. Verses 42-47 are key verses on the Christian life that will be covered more in Journey 4- Family Members. For now it is important to see that the faith of these believers was not a once-in-a-lifetime event, nor was it merely a one day a week meeting; it was a way of life.

Many today get baptized, but do not commit to the body of believers. Scripture does not know such separation. Repentant believers are baptized and then committed to the church. Baptism and church participation are not optional but rather essential aspects of following Jesus.

### B. Going Deeper in the Word

1. What is the difference between Jesus and the great patriarch David? How is Jesus better?

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2. What does it mean to be cut to the heart?

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3. What did Peter tell the people to do in order to be saved? Why are these so important?

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4. What did these new believers do after they were baptized (v42)? Are you currently doing these things?

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### **C. Guide to Obeying**

1. Salvation is experienced through faith and repentance, and this new faith is first demonstrated in baptism.
2. Followers of Christ will follow initially in baptism and then continually through participation in the church community.
3. The Christian faith cannot be lived in isolation and that is why believers are found in community with one another.

### **D. Going Deeper in Obeying**

1. Have you been baptized? What does that say about your faith in Jesus and commitment to following him?

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2. Who are you praying for to be cut to the heart and experience the salvation in Jesus?

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3. How would you describe your ongoing participation in the community of believers? Does it seem to be lacking or overflowing?

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## **E. Guide to the Lesson**

A key part of this lesson is showing that following Jesus includes following him in baptism and commitment to the church. Many today brush aside baptism as not a big deal. Others get baptized but see no need to connect with the church. Scripture speaks of the importance of both of these. You can't cherry pick what parts of the Bible to obey. Believers are to be baptized upon their trusting in Jesus. This is a one time initiation into the faith. After this, they are to find their place in the church where they grow in knowing God's word, serving others, and making Jesus known (Acts 2:42).

This lesson touches on the importance of following Jesus in baptism. If people profess to follow Jesus but have not been baptized they should pursue baptism. They should connect with a local church about what it means to be baptized. If they have been baptized then be sure to talk about participation in the gathering of believers. This is an essential part of the Christian life that many treat as options.

Peter's sermon also gives great reason for why one would trust in and submit to Jesus. You might also discuss who the group members most want to know Jesus and what they can do to help that person come to know Christ and the salvation in him.

## Discovery Group Questions

**Building Community.** What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

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Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

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**Learning God’s Word.** What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

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**Obeying the Lord.** In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

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**Sharing Hope.** Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

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**Praying.** How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?

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## Lesson 10: Matthew 28:16-20 - The Great Commission

### A. Guide to the Word

We come now to a climatic passage in the New Testament. Jesus has accomplished the work the Father sent him to do. He lived a perfect life, died upon the cross for the sins of the world, was resurrected from the dead, and now before he ascends to heaven he gives his disciples some very important final instruction. In this powerful moment with his disciples in which some are worshipping and some are doubting what is happening, he gives them the **great commission** for their lives.

This commission is about making disciples and it is expressed in two main parts. First, they are to baptize. Baptism is a sacrament one observes when they have believed in Jesus. So the disciples are to give themselves to the work of sharing the gospel with those who do not know Jesus.

The second part of their commission is to teach people to obey all that Jesus has commanded. Their work doesn't stop at baptism. They are to help people obey everything he commands in every part of life. It means the primary aim of disciples is honoring Jesus in all of life. They are to be followers of Jesus who are helping others follow Jesus.

If you are going to follow Jesus then you cannot ignore his commission. Making and maturing disciples is the task of every Christian. They devote time, energy and everything they have to helping people know and obey Jesus.

The book of Matthew ends here, but the rest of the New Testament further explains, illustrates, and exhorts the completion of this commission. It is a daunting task, and it means believers ought to position themselves as learners so that they might be faithful with what is given to them. Following Jesus means being obedient to his commission, and the commission cannot be done alone. This is why throughout the New Testament believers are gathered into organized assemblies with the purpose of making and maturing disciples. This is the church at work.

The commission is a daunting task that will present many challenges, but the great encouragement that we have in the task, as in all of life, is that Jesus is with us (v20). All authority in heaven and earth has been given to him (v18) and he is with us in the task. That means no matter what we go through, or what those around us go through, he is present and we can turn to him for help.

### B. Going Deeper in the Word

1. What are the different responses of the eleven to seeing Jesus?
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2. Jesus tells his disciples that he has all authority and that he is with them wherever they go. Why would this be encouraging for the disciples?

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3. What does Jesus command his disciples to do? How does this get done?
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### **C. Guide to Obeying**

1. Everyone called to Christ is also sent on mission.
2. Everything we do and experience is done under the authority of Jesus and with his presence.
3. Followers of Jesus are to gather with other believers in order to make and mature believers.

### **D. Going Deeper in Obeying**

1. How are you giving yourself in obedience to Jesus's commission? Why is it so important to be connected to the church and other believers in this?

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2. Whom might you seek out to help them know who Jesus is and what he has done for you? Who could you seek out to help you mature in your walk with Jesus?

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3. How does this commission give meaning and purpose to your life? What can you do to be more effective in Jesus' commission?
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4. Does the calling to make disciples make sense of an inner call you have to give yourself to helping and shaping people in significant ways?
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## **E. Guide to the Lesson**

It is always surprising that so many people know the great commission, and yet it has very little bearing on their lives. They have not seen or experienced people turning to Jesus, and they are not even looking for it to happen. They seldom even talk about how they are doing in the call to make disciples and help others grow in maturity. With this being such an important part of what disciples are called to do it only seems logical that followers of Jesus would discuss what they are doing to make and mature disciples.

We want this to be a regular part of our life as a church and that is why our groups have an emphasis on looking for people who have needs and sharing what we are learning with others. We want to create habits of sharing with others and the only way to do that is to consistently ask each other about it and to seek out advice on how we might share our faith.

As this is the last lesson of the journey, take time to reflect on how this study has helped people grow. Ask about the insights, changes, or help people experienced in the time together. Be sure to encourage those who want to continue growing to join in going through another journey.

## Discovery Group Questions

**Building Community.** What are you thankful for? What is stressing you out?

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Do you have any updates to share from the last meeting—action steps taken, or people you encouraged? How is God working in your life?

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**Learning God’s Word.** What stood out in the passage? How would you summarize this passage and its main points? What does this passage teach about God, yourself, and the world you live in?

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**Obedying the Lord.** In what ways does this passage encourage, challenge, or inform you? Where do you see God’s grace? What action steps should you take to respond to this passage?

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**Sharing Hope.** Who else might benefit from hearing this passage or what you are learning? What would you say to them?

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**Praying.** How does this passage guide your prayers for yourself, your group, or others?

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