



GREETING/OPEN IN PRAYER

MISSION STATEMENT: In a loving and grace-filled environment we will share the transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ and explore its daily application in the lives of those struggling with addiction.

REVIEW:

Begin with a review of the previous week's topic. Discuss homework questions.

NEW TOPIC: Following Jesus

When you think about getting and staying sober, what is the "to do" list that comes to mind? What are the things that you think you need in order to gain and maintain sobriety?

When we think about sobriety and how to stay sober, usually our first thought is not about following Jesus. But when we look at our addiction struggle biblically, following Jesus is the most important piece in not only finding sobriety, but freedom.

What do you think it means to follow Jesus? What does this look like? What thoughts, emotions, reactions do you have?

Often times, we think that following Jesus is a list of rules – all the things we cannot do. But scripture actually portrays much more than rules to follow and an end to all of our fun.

Luke 5:1-11 *(have someone read)*

On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

Luke 5:27 *(have someone read)*

After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me." And leaving everything, he rose and followed him.

What we see in these passages is actually a loving invitation. It isn't a list of rules. It is Jesus inviting the disciples to follow Him. Notice Peter's response of humility. He recognized his brokenness. Levi was a tax collector. In that time, tax collectors were hated and considered the lowest of low. Yet, Jesus called him to follow. Jesus' called broken, sinful people and He did so with love, forgiveness and hope for a new life.

The two stages of receiving the gospel are wonderfully manifested in this story. First, it is necessary that we see ourselves clearly—as sinful and broken before the holy God—even as Peter did (Luke 5:8). But this alone will result in despair if the second stage is lacking—seeing Jesus as gracious, forgiving, and inviting us to follow (v. 10) -ESV Gospel Transformation Commentary, Luke 5

Following Jesus begins with seeing his great love and what he has done for us. We understand the magnitude of what he has done when we recognize our sinfulness. In our sin, we deserve God's judgement and wrath. Because of God's love for us, he sent Jesus to die and receive the punishment we deserve. Jesus died and was resurrected to give us a new life and set us free from sin. Following and obeying Christ is motivated by gratitude for what he has rescued us from – eternal punishment; and what he has rescued us for – living a life that glorifies God and proclaims the good news of Christ.

Have you ever thought about following Jesus in this way?

What do you think about this? Does this view change how you think about following Jesus?

Looking back at the passages in Luke, do you see the response of the disciples when they followed Jesus?

...they left everything and followed him. Luke 5:11

And leaving everything, he rose and followed him. Luke 5:27

The invitation to follow Jesus requires a response.

Luke 9:57-62 *(have someone read)*

As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

In this passage Jesus encounters three would-be disciples but Luke does not tell us how they responded once they realized the cost.

The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head is Jesus' challenge to a would-be follower, reminding him that the path of following Jesus is not easy and comfortable, for ultimately Jesus is not at home in this world. (Go and bury) The request seems reasonable on the surface, but this man's first response was not to obey Jesus immediately (as others did, Luke 5:21, 28) but to make an excuse for not following him. (I will follow you but...) this man's halfhearted discipleship begins with a "but." -ESV Study Bible Commentary, Luke 9

What are your "but first" reasons? The things you think you have to do before you follow Jesus?

Matthew 19:16, 21-22 *(have someone read)*

And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?"

Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

We see a very different response in these verses don't we? The disciples left everything and followed. Those in these accounts had excuses or things they were unwilling to leave behind to follow Jesus.

What things are you holding on to that keep you from following Jesus?

What things are holding you back from following Jesus?

What things are you afraid to leave behind?

Luke 18:28-29 *(have someone read)*

And Peter said, "See, we have left our homes and followed you." And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life."

1 Corinthians 2:9 *(have someone read)*

But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"

Following Jesus does have a cost, but the rewards are more than worth it. We can't even imagine all that God has prepared for those who love him. Let's look at just a few of God's promises for those who are followers of Christ:

- **We have forgiveness/redemption:** Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:13,14
- **We have God's love and we cannot lose it:** Romans 5:8, 1 John 4:9-10, 1 John 3:1, Psalm 86:5
- **We are adopted and accepted by God:** John 1:12, Ephesians 1:3-5
- **We have peace with God:** Romans 5:1
- **We are made new:** 2 Corinthians 5:17
- **We have an inheritance kept in heaven for us:** 1 Peter 1:3-5
- **Christ will return for us and make all things new, wipe away all our tears and there will be no more pain:** Revelation 21:4-5, Revelation 22:3-5

There IS a cost to following Jesus. It is taking time to know Him, to understand what He has done for us, and to obey him. We need Christian friends to help us follow him. Being part of a local, Bible-preaching church helps us understand who God is, his love for us and what it means to follow him.

Who do you have in your life that is helping you know God and how to follow Jesus?

Matthew 11:28-29 *(have someone read)*

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

We might be tempted to think that we must work very hard to follow Jesus, that in our own strength we have the ability to persevere in following after him. But that isn't the good news of the gospel. Following Jesus isn't simply a list of do's and don'ts. It is a relationship with the Lord who loves us, comforts us and gives us the power to change. Jesus is asking us to value Him as greater than anything else in our life. He is asking us to trust him and to follow him. The benefits are amazing and eternal.

CLOSE IN PRAYER.

Handout:

-God's Promises Bookmark

Homework:

-Think about the things that are holding you back from following Jesus. Talk to a Christian brother or sister about these. What are the next steps to leaving these behind?

-What area of your life do you need to leave behind and follow Jesus? Ask a Christian brother or sister to help you with a plan to obey.

-Listen to this sermon about the promises of God for those who are followers of Jesus.

(<https://centergilbert.com/sermon/easter-sunday/>)

-Sample prayer: Jesus, I want to follow you. There are things in my life that get in the way. Will you help me know you more? Will you help me give you (fill in the blank), so I can follow you? I don't want to keep making excuses. I want to leave them behind and follow you. Will you give me the strength to leave them and follow? -Amen

Scriptures Used:

-Luke 5:1-11

-Luke 5:27

-Luke 9:57-62

-Matthew 19:16, 21-22

-Luke 18:28-29

-1 Corinthians 2:9

-Matthew 11:28-29