



# *Following Jesus*

Discipleship Program

## What Does It Mean to Be “In Christ”?

Al Truesdale, Hal Cauthron, Floyd Cunningham,  
Linda Alexander, and Wes Eby

**BOOK TWO**

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**JESUS Film**<sup>™</sup>  
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# Preface

The *Following Jesus Discipleship Program*, also known as *Following Jesus*, is closely associated with the JESUS film. But it does not directly depend on the film. *Following Jesus* begins where the JESUS film concludes. It begins with the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The JESUS film is based mostly on the Gospel of Luke. The *Following Jesus Discipleship Program* uses the stories found in Luke for the lessons. This is called a narrative method.

*Following Jesus* is a Christ-centered discipleship program. This also means that *Following Jesus* is God-centered. The program concentrates on who Jesus Christ is. It concentrates on what following Jesus means. The program does this because we want to encourage worship of God in all things. This means that *Following Jesus* does not concentrate on being a new Christian. The program first emphasizes how the Christian is "in Christ." Then the program deals with how Christ is "in the Christian." The order is very important in the New Testament. Being a Christian means we turn away from being centered on ourselves. It means now we are centered in Christ.

*Following Jesus* asks and answers two questions: "Who is Jesus?" and "What does it mean to be His disciple?" *Following Jesus* shows the new Christian just how costly following Jesus will be. It openly presents the radical nature of discipleship.

*Following Jesus* is presented in three books:

**BOOK ONE.** The entry book introduces new Christians to the basic elements of Christian faith and Christian life. Completion of this book should prepare a person for baptism and for receiving the Lord's Supper.

**BOOK TWO.** In this book young Christians will advance to a higher level of understanding their new faith in Christ. They will learn what it means to be a part of the Church. They will learn what it means to live in the power of the Holy Spirit. And they will learn the importance of Christian service.

**BOOK THREE.** The third book helps new Christians get an overall picture of the biblical story. It introduces them to some of the most important parts of Christian history that affect Christian belief and practice. The three books together help prepare a person for church membership.

The material that follows can be converted to other formats. Hopefully "stick men" figures will be mobilized to tell the discipleship story for pre-literate peoples. Extensive illustrations can be used in conjunction with the material. The program can be placed in video and audio format. Picture books can be employed. The material is written at the fifth/sixth grade reading level (U.S.A. levels) and can therefore be readily translated into other languages.

Each book contains several lessons. A teacher will need a minimum of one to two hours to complete each lesson. More time should be taken if needed and if possible.

The lessons, including questions and activities, are purposely designed for oral instruction. Thus, books and paper are not necessary. However, if people in discipleship groups have copies of the lessons, learning may be facilitated.

The lessons are best used in groups of new Christians. But they can be used to instruct just one new Christian. All evangelical groups may use the lessons.

# Lesson 1: How Is Jesus Related to God?

## Introduction

One day Jesus was praying. His disciples were nearby. Jesus asked them, “Who do the people say that I am?” The disciples gave Him a number of answers. But then Jesus asked the disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Messiah of God.”

In this lesson we are going to discuss how Jesus is related to God.

### A. God Is Lord.

An angel appeared to Mary and told her she would become the mother of Jesus. The name Jesus means “Savior.” Savior is a title that is sometimes used for God in the Old Testament. God is called Savior because of His acts of redemption.

Mary then went to visit Elizabeth her cousin. While there, Mary sang a song to God her Savior. She spoke of God as Lord, which means “one who rules.” The Jews used the word *Lord* to speak of God. Mary said, “My soul praises the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (Luke 1:46).

After John the Baptist was born, his father sang a song of praise to God. He too spoke of God as Lord. Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel” (Luke 1:68). The words *Lord* and *God* mean the same thing in this verse.

On the night Jesus was born, angels told some shepherds about His birth. An angel of the Lord stood before them. The shepherds were surrounded by God’s presence. “The glory of the Lord shone around them” (Luke 2:9). Again, the words *Lord* and *God* mean the same. The glory of the Lord means the presence of God who alone is Creator and Redeemer.

Question: What do the names Lord and God mean?

Question: Why was there joy when Jesus was born?

Question: Why did Mary sing a song to God?

### B. Jesus Christ Is Lord.

At the time of Jesus’ birth, the presence of God frightened the shepherds. But the angel told them not to fear. The angel brought Good News that a Savior had been born. The angel called Him “the Messiah,” which means the anointed one. Jesus was anointed and appointed by God to bring salvation to all persons.

The angel also called Jesus “Savior,” which means the One who saves or delivers. Often Jesus is called Savior in the New Testament. As we said earlier, only God can be the Savior. Jesus is the Savior that God promised through the prophets He would send into the world. God made salvation possible to all persons through Jesus, His only Son. If God alone is Savior, and if Jesus is the Savior, then in Jesus we meet God himself. God the Savior has come to us in Jesus.

The angel also called Jesus “Lord.” This is the same word that Mary and the father of John the Baptist used to speak of God. Jews often used the word “Lord” to speak of God. He alone is Ruler over heaven and earth and over all things. God is the Creator and Redeemer. When the angel called Jesus “Lord,” the angel meant to tell us that in Jesus of Nazareth God himself had come to us. In Jesus, God the Savior and Lord is present with us. This is indeed Good News. That is why the angel rejoiced, and why we rejoice too.

Jesus’ early disciples called Him “Lord.” They came to understand that Jesus is one with God. So, the earliest creed or statement about Jesus was “Jesus is Lord.” Only God can be the Lord, the Savior.

Question: What was the Good News the angel brought to the shepherds?

Question: What do the names Lord and Savior mean?

### 1. Jesus is fully God.

God was present in the person of Jesus of Nazareth in a way that caused the angel to speak of Him as God. Christians believe that when they meet Jesus they meet God. To be in the presence of Jesus is to be in the presence of God. Only God is Savior. If Jesus Christ is the Lord and Savior, then He is God.

Many times Luke speaks of Jesus as “Lord.”

- Jesus is called “Lord” when He raises the son of a widow from the dead (Luke 7:13).
- He is called “Lord” when He sends some of His followers out in pairs to preach the Good News. When the followers returned, they called Jesus “Lord” (Luke 10:1, 17).
- Once the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. They called Him “Lord” (Luke 11:1).
- Zacchaeus called Jesus “Lord” when Jesus went to his house (Luke 19:8).
- Jesus speaks of himself as “Lord” when He tells the disciples to borrow a donkey (Luke 19:31).

After Jesus’ resurrection, the disciples speak of Jesus as “Lord” (Luke 24:34).

Jesus Christ is the Lord God come to us in human form. He is God incarnate. Incarnation is the event of God becoming man. The eternal Son of God entered history in the person of Jesus. Still He

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continued to be God. Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human. To call Jesus “Lord and Savior” is to recognize that He is God.

Question: Why is it important to know who Jesus is? Question: Why did the early Christians rejoice to know who Jesus is?

### 2. Jesus is fully human.

Jesus was born of a human mother and lived while on earth among oppressed people. He grew up as other children do, having fun and obeying His parents. He worked with His hands as a carpenter, building objects for people to use. Jesus grew tired as we do, and He experienced rejection as many people do today. He showed deep human compassion for people, and He wept because of human sadness and loss. Jesus also knew pain and temptation as we do. Finally, He died on the Cross. Jesus would have stayed dead, if His Heavenly Father had not raised Him from the grave.

It is very important for Christians to recognize that Jesus of Nazareth was fully human. God became one of us, so He could fully experience our humanity. God fully identified with us in Jesus. It is also very important that Christians recognize that Jesus is fully God. Yet, He is one person. He is Jesus Christ. Because of this and because Jesus is God, Christ can be our Savior also. He can be the Redeemer of the world.

Because Jesus Christ is fully human and fully God, He reveals the characteristics of both God and humanity. When we look at Jesus, we know who God is and what God is like. When we look at Jesus, we also know the meaning of being a human.

Question: When we see Jesus, we see God. What characteristics does God have that we can see in Jesus? Question: When we look at Jesus, we see a good model of the type of person we should be. How should we act and what should we do?

### C. Jesus Is Lord of all Things.

One Sabbath Jesus and His disciples were walking through a field of grain. The Sabbath was the seventh day of the week. Sabbath means “rest.” The Sabbath was the weekly day of rest and worship for the Jews. The Bible says God rested on the seventh day of creation (Genesis 2:1-3). Therefore, Saturday is the Jewish day of rest, which is their Sabbath.

On this particular Sabbath, Jesus’ disciples took some of the ripe grain and ate it. Some of Jesus’ critics accused His disciples of sinning by plucking and eating the grain. They said this because, by their law, the disciples were working on the Sabbath. They thought this violated the third commandment about honoring the Sabbath. Jesus responded, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath” (Luke 6:1-5). Jesus’ answer seems strange. What did He mean? The Sabbath was very important for Jews.

When God created the world, He rested from all His works on the Sabbath day. He commanded His people to honor the Sabbath by not working.

Just as Jesus said He is Lord of the Sabbath, so He is Lord over all things. He created all things, and all of creation is to serve Him. When Christians affirm Jesus is Lord, they mean that God has come to us in human flesh. We meet God himself in Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus Christ establishes the reign of God over all things. Nothing in the world can finally stand against Him as Lord. All earthly kingdoms one day will recognize He is Lord. All powers that stand against God's people must bow down to His will eventually.

Question: Of what is Jesus Lord? Question: Why must we honor the Sabbath?

### Conclusion

Christians must serve only one Lord. When a person becomes a Christian, he or she should permit Jesus Christ to become the Lord of their lives. No other way of being a Christian is satisfactory. To affirm that Jesus is Lord means that one is ready to place one's whole world and self in service to Jesus Christ. True followers of Jesus will throw out all of their old idols and service to false gods and serve the only true God.

Activity: What will you need to do to make Jesus Christ the Lord of your life? What will be necessary for God to rule in all things so that you may honor and worship Him? Discuss these questions with your discipleship group.

Activity: Is there anything in your home or work that keeps Jesus from being Lord of your life? If so, you need to get rid of it. Only then can be Jesus is Lord of your life.

## Lesson 2: How Did Jesus Establish the Kingdom of God?

### Introduction

Jesus judged and overcame all the powers that were opposed to God’s righteous reign. He established the Kingdom of God. Now Jesus calls us to live under the righteous reign of God.

#### A. Jesus Demonstrated the Authority of God’s Kingdom.

Jesus went to Jerusalem as the climax to His ministry. Early in His ministry, He had made that destiny plain to His disciples (see Luke 9:51-53). Jesus’ first action after He arrived in Jerusalem was symbolic. He borrowed a donkey and rode on it into Jerusalem. The disciples walked along with Him as He rode. A large crowd followed. They began to praise God out loud for Jesus’ powerful deeds that they had witnessed. They hailed Jesus as “the king who comes in the name of the Lord” (Luke 19:38).

Jesus chose to ride a donkey on purpose. His action reminded the people of the prophet Zechariah’s words: “Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9).

Jesus refused to silence His disciples when the Pharisees asked Him to do so (Luke 19:39-40). The shouts from the crowd claimed special authority for Jesus. They understood it to be authority like the ancient kings of the line of David. But Jesus rode a donkey, a symbol of lowliness. The authorities sent from Rome to govern the land in that time did not ride donkeys. They rode powerful and magnificent horses. They ruled by wrong power and force. By riding a donkey, Jesus gave an object lesson on the nature of His authority. His authority was very different from the authority of the current rulers of the world. He entered Jerusalem not as a powerful conqueror but as a humble servant.

At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, He had faced this very issue. In His temptations in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13), Jesus confronted other ways of exercising power. In one of the temptations, the devil offered Jesus the authority and splendor of all the kingdoms of the world. The devil claimed authority over all of those kingdoms. Thus, he could offer worldly recognition to Jesus, if Jesus would worship him. Jesus refused to do that. He made it clear that His way, which was God’s way, of using authority would not be as people in the kingdoms of the world do.

Question: Why did Jesus choose a donkey on which to ride when he entered Jerusalem?

Question: What was the difference in the way Jesus and Rome's leaders viewed "power"?  
How does this compare to today?

## B. Jesus Showed How the Kingdom of God Differs from the Kingdoms of the World.

The way Jesus responded to His temptation is consistent with what He declared about the Kingdom of God. On many occasions Jesus told His hearers that the Kingdom of God had come (see 9:27). The nature of the Kingdom Jesus announced contrasts directly with the kingdoms of this world. The poor are given special place in God's Kingdom (Luke 6:20). Hungry people are blessed in this Kingdom, and they will be filled. People who mourn are also blessed in this Kingdom. They will laugh (Luke 6:21). One can enter this Kingdom only by receiving it with the simplicity of a little child (Luke 18:16-17).

Often in Jesus' ministry, He showed just how different the Kingdom of God would be from what many people expected. Here are some examples:

1. In the Kingdom of God, humble people, not proud people, will be its citizens. At the beginning of the Gospel of Luke, the angel told Mary she would give birth to Jesus (Luke 1:26-38). Mary was just a humble, young girl. She went to visit her relative Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-40). While there she sang praises to God (Luke 1:46-55). A major affirmation of Mary's praise to God is that "He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things, but has sent the rich away empty" (Luke 1:52-53).
2. In the parable of the great dinner (Luke 14:15-24), Jesus told of some important people who had been invited to a feast. But they refused to come, so they lost their opportunity. Their places were filled by many that people thought were undesirable—the poor, crippled, and blind. They were brought in off the streets of the town and from the roads of the countryside to enjoy the feast the host had prepared.
3. The people who claimed to be the most religious should have quickly accepted Jesus. But many of them actually rejected Him. Instead, people who were thought to be religiously hopeless often accepted the Good News that Jesus offered. People who were publicly recognized as sinners often pressed close to Jesus to hear what He would say. What they heard gave them hope (see Luke 15:1-32; 18:9-14; Luke 19:1-10).

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4. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the angel announced it to an unlikely group. Shepherds, who were not often respected in society, were living out in the open with their flocks. To them the angel announced the Good News: “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11).
5. More than once Jesus received criticism for His willingness to associate with “tax collectors and sinners” (see Luke 5:30-32; 7:34; 15:1). He welcomed in God’s name those who were religious and social outcasts. Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). He pictured a social and religious outcast as fulfilling the command to love one’s neighbor.
6. Jesus responded to a dispute among His disciples over which of them was the greatest (Luke 22:24-27). He told them “the one who rules” among you must become “like the one who serves” (Luke 22:26). This quality of life is exactly opposite to the ways of worldly kingdoms. “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them,” Jesus told His disciples (Luke 22:25). But it must not be that way among Jesus’ followers. They are to follow His example. He said, “I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:27).
7. Jesus renounced and rejected all kingdoms that stand against God’s righteous reign. Mary’s song anticipated He would do just that (Luke 1:46-55). God’s ways are not the ways of the world. Jesus refused to accomplish His mission through the wrong use of power. He steadfastly refused to compromise with the methods of worldly power that are contrary to righteousness.
8. Jesus welcomed into fellowship all those who were powerless and insignificant by the world’s standards. They were far more ready to experience the reality of the Kingdom of God than were the strong and mighty people. The Kingdom of God would be a gift of divine grace, not an earned or merited reward. Those who had nothing, who were nobodies, and who recognized their complete dependence on God were in good position to receive God’s gracious gift. The powerful and mighty people were kept from that position because of their self-sufficient attitudes and lives. Their values and commitments were opposed to God. They would not yield to God’s authority over them. They refused to become dependent upon God by accepting God’s grace as a gift.

Question: What is the Kingdom of God?

Question: Give three examples of how the Kingdom of God differs from the kingdoms of the world.

### C. Jesus' Died to Establish the Kingdom of God.

Jesus' commitment to a very different understanding of power and authority led finally to his own crucifixion. The Jewish authorities in Jerusalem arrested Jesus (Luke 22:47-54). Then they met to question Him and reach a decision about what should happen to Him. The council of elders asked Jesus whether He was the Messiah (Luke 22:67). He replied: "If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God" (Luke 22:68-69).

In the Book of Luke, the title *Son of Man* refers to various activities of Jesus. Often it indicates His humility and lowliness. But in Luke 22:69 Jesus speaks of an exalted status alongside of God, which He would soon have after His death and resurrection. He claimed that His humble life as a servant would gain divine approval. His way of power was in fact God's own way. Jesus' claim resulted in a further question from the council of elders: "Are you then the Son of God?" (Luke 22:70). Jesus replied, "You are right in saying I am." The council then concluded that they needed no further testimony. Jesus' own words were self-incriminating (Luke 22:71). They were ready to crucify Him. Jesus had been obedient to His Father in all things He said and did. What He taught regarding the Kingdom of God directly contradicted the old kingdoms that were ruled by greed, hate, lust, and force. Jesus substituted lowliness and humility for wrong power. This was the threat that Jesus posed to the kingdoms of the world, whether represented by Jerusalem or Rome. This was why Jesus was crucified. He was killed by the method reserved for total outcasts.

Question: Why is Jesus referred to as the Son of Man?

Question: Why was Jesus crucified?

### Conclusion

Jesus' life and destiny provided a challenge to those who were His followers. He called each one to take up the Cross and follow Him (see Luke 9:23-25). They must live as those already dead to the wrong power and authority of the kingdoms of the present world. They were to live with one another as humble servants of each other. Today, disciples hear the same call for allegiance and loyalty. The kingdoms of the present world still operate by wrong power and control. Jesus challenges His followers to live today in ways that contradict the old values and ways of life. That is the high privilege of all who belong to Jesus.

Activity: Discuss with your teacher the differences between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of the world. Think about how you can let the Kingdom of God be seen in your life. Talk with someone about how you will make this happen.

# Lesson 3: How Is It Possible to Live as a Disciple of Jesus Christ?

## Introduction

One day Jesus and His disciples journeyed by boat across the Sea of Galilee. When they reached their destination, they stepped from the boat and were met by a dreadful sight. (See Luke 8:26-39.) A man met them who was possessed by demons. The demons had done him much harm. He wore no clothes and lived among tombs. He was so wild people had tried to bind him with shackles, but the man broke the bonds. The demons would then drive him into the wilderness. However, Jesus commanded the demons to leave the man. Because of Jesus’ authority, the demons obeyed, leaving the man and entering a large herd of pigs. The pigs quickly rushed down the hillside into a lake and drowned.

When people from a nearby town rushed out to see what had happened, what they saw surprised them. The man, from whom the demons departed, was clothed, and he was now at peace. The demons were gone, and the man was now in his right mind. When the people from the town arrived, the man was sitting at the feet of Jesus and learning from Him.

When Jesus and His disciples were ready to leave, the man asked Jesus’ permission to go too. He wanted to follow Jesus, just as he had seen the other disciples doing. Instead of granting the man’s request, Jesus told him to return to his home and tell all of his friends and family what God had done for him. The man obeyed Jesus, He went away, announcing throughout the town what Jesus had done.

Question: What did Jesus want the man who was free of demons to do?

Question: Why did Jesus not allow the man whom He healed to go with Him?

## A. It Is Possible to Live as a Disciple in Our Part of the World.

Today, none of us can follow Jesus around the countryside as some of His first disciples did. But we can do what He expects all of us to do. After Jesus touches and saves us, He expects us to return to the places where we work and live. Jesus wants us to live and witness for Him in our own homes, communities, and work places. He wants us to tell others what He has done for us. All of Jesus’ disciples are called to witness to other people for Him.

But it is not enough just to talk about Jesus. We can’t just talk about Him and think we have completed our witness about Him. We must also live for Him. Our lives must also proclaim that

Jesus is Lord and that He has authority over the powers of evil. We must be really changed by Jesus, not just in the words we say. Our old life of slavery to sin must be gone, and the new life Jesus gives must take its place.

In the story about the demon-possessed man, Jesus set the man free from the demons and sent him back into his own part of the world. Today, Jesus sends His followers back to their world. He sends us back to our families and communities. He expects us to be His faithful disciples in the everyday activities of life. Some people think being a Christian is just something we do at special times, such as Sunday. This is not true. Being Jesus' disciples happens in our everyday lives. If we can't be successful followers there, then nothing else matters. Jesus needs followers who live for Him among people who are not His friends.

Question: What does it mean to be a witness for Jesus?

Question: How can you be a witness for Jesus to your family and community?

### B. Disciples of Jesus Need to Rely Totally on God.

There are many questions new Christians have concerning being a disciple of Jesus Christ. Some of the questions are:

- How can we live for Jesus and be faithful to Him in the everyday activities of life?
- How can we live as Jesus' disciples when there are so many things that stand against it?
- How can we obey Jesus' command to live according to His will when there are voices around us that urge us to go back into our old life of sin?
- How can we overcome the temptations we face every day?
- What should we do when we fail to act and speak as Jesus' disciples?
- Does Jesus forgive us when we fail Him?
- How can we be strong as Jesus' disciples?

All of these are important questions. The answer is simple: No one can live as a faithful and victorious disciple of Jesus. The command is simply too great for any of us. Here is the reason why. No person can live for Jesus if he or she depends on his or her own strength and wisdom. None of us can follow Jesus if we have to do it by ourselves. Jesus knew this. He knew His disciples would be overcome by temptations and tests if they were left alone to rely on their own strength.

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Thankfully, Christians do have to rely on themselves. Before Jesus was crucified, He began to tell His disciples about the Holy Spirit. Jesus told His disciples that He would pray and ask His Heavenly Father to send the Holy Spirit to live in them (John 14:15-17). The Spirit of God would actually come and live in Jesus’ disciples. He would be there to give them power and teach them. He would help them overcome temptations. He would comfort them in times of sorrow and persecution. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come alongside all His disciples and be their Counselor. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would be our Advocate.

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would teach us. He would teach us the most important things we need to know to live as disciples (John 14:26). Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would give peace to His disciples in the midst of life’s problems. The early Christians confronted all kinds of persecution. The enemies of the gospel killed many of the early Christians. Stephen was first (Acts 6:8-15). But the Holy Spirit gave them peace even though they were persecuted.

Question: Who do we need to rely on to live as Jesus’ disciples?

Question: How does the Holy Spirit help Jesus’ disciples?

### C. Disciples of Jesus Need to Live in the Power of the Holy Spirit.

Did Jesus fulfill His promise to send the Holy Spirit to the disciples? Yes. The Book of Acts describes how the Holy Spirit came to the disciples. Before the Holy Spirit came, the disciples were discouraged and fearful. But when the promised Holy Spirit came to them, they became powerful witnesses for Jesus. Even the apostle Peter, who a few weeks before denied knowing Jesus, became a powerful witness for Jesus.

This is what the Holy Spirit did. Peter stood up to preach, and he rebuked those who had crucified Jesus. Boldly, Peter proclaimed that Jesus is the Lord. Peter became a powerful leader in the Church. Eventually, his faith in Christ cost him his life. Still, Peter remained faithful to his Lord. Here is what Peter told some Christians later in his life: “Therefore prepare your minds for action: be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written, ‘Be holy, because I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:13-16). The Holy Spirit living in Peter made it possible for him to live for Jesus and to be a great leader in the Church.

The apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Christians in Rome. These Roman Christians lived in a wicked city. There were many temptations. But Paul said the Spirit of God now lived in them. He said the Spirit of God was now leading them. Indeed, they were children of God (Romans 8:14). Paul wrote that the Spirit of God raised Jesus from the dead and that the same Spirit now lives in

Christians. The Spirit brings believers new life in Christ. He gives them power to walk as Christ's disciples. He makes it possible for them to live in victory over sin. He gives them power to be His witnesses in places where people do not believe in Jesus.

Christians are supposed to walk according to the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. Paul also wrote that the Holy Spirit assists us when we pray. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us according to the will of God (Romans 8:27).

Question: Who made it possible for Peter to become a great leader, even after he denied Jesus?

Question: In what other ways does the Holy Spirit help believers today?

### D. Disciples of Jesus Worship God with Their Lives.

Paul wrote that Christians should daily offer themselves as living sacrifices to God. He said we worship God by giving ourselves to God. We worship Him by yielding our lives to God's rule (Romans 12:1-2). Each day Christians should give themselves to the Holy Spirit. Each day we worship God by letting the Holy Spirit shape us completely. Paul told the Romans that they should give all parts of their lives to Jesus Christ, just as they used to give their lives to sin. "Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness" (Romans 6:19). What is the result of daily giving oneself to the Holy Spirit? Paul said that it is the peace of God, eternal life, and sanctification (Romans 6:21-22).

Question: How do we worship God *with* our lives?

Question: How do we worship God *through* our lives?

Question: How can we have the peace of God in our lives today?

### E. Disciples of Jesus Take up the Cross Daily.

Jesus said that each day a disciple should take up His cross and follow Him (Luke 9:23,27). Just like Jesus, the cross for Christians means that they will not live according to their selfish desires. They will cease treating themselves as though they were gods. Each day a disciple must place obedience to Jesus above obedience to anything competing with it. And each day, every minute of every hour, the Holy Spirit will live in us and give us power to obey and worship the Lord.

The good news for young Christians is the old slavery to sin comes to an end through Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit in us will give victory to all who will yield to the Spirit's instruction. We should depend completely upon Him for power and instruction. No Christian needs to fail. If Christ calls us to be His disciples, then we can be sure He will empower us. In the Book of Romans, Paul prays for

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the Christians in Rome. This prayer tells the secret for victorious discipleship, and it applies to us today. “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13).

Question: Who empowers believers to follow Jesus and obey Him?

Question: What does it mean to take up the Cross and follow Jesus?

### F. Disciples of Jesus Receive Life from Jesus the Vine.

Jesus told His early disciples that He would not leave them abandoned as orphans. Rather, He would ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit to be with them forever. Jesus fulfilled His promise. And the promise Jesus made so long ago, He makes to us today. Through the Holy Spirit, Christ gives himself to His disciples.

Christ gives himself to us in the way a vine gives life to its branches. Jesus used this language to describe the relationship between himself and His disciples. He told His disciples that He was the vine and they were the branches (John 15:1). He told them that just as a branch gets its life from the vine, even so His disciples would get their life from Him. By the Holy Spirit, God the Heavenly Father sends the vine’s life—Jesus Christ—into us who are the branches.

Question: Who is the vine and who are the branches?

Question: How can you get life from Christ, who is the Vine, this week?

### Conclusion

Living for Jesus really means that Jesus himself lives in us and through us. He calls us to be obedient and to marvel at the transformation His Spirit will accomplish in us. Jesus calls all Christians to a magnificent journey, the journey of victorious living. The apostle Paul said that one time sin ruled over us. But now God has shown that His grace is even more abundant than sin. Those who receive God’s abundant grace and His free gift of salvation will now have victory over sin through Jesus Christ.

Activity: Think about what it means to “live in the power of the Spirit.” Talk with your discipleship group about living in the Spirit’s power today. Activity: This week tell at least one person what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

# Lesson 4: What Does It Mean For Jesus to Reign as Lord of Our Lives?

## Introduction

One day as Jesus was teaching, a strange thing happened. (See Luke 18:18-25.) A man of social importance and success came to Jesus. He asked, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” People could almost feel the excitement and hope in his voice. He thought that as soon as Jesus instructed him, then he would go and do what Jesus said. Jesus told him to keep all of the commandments. The man responded, “I have kept all the commandments since I was a boy.”

Then Jesus told the man he still lacked one thing. Jesus told him to place the thing he cherished most, his innermost self, in God’s service. “Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and then you will have treasure in heaven,” Jesus said. “Then come and follow me.”

The man’s wealth represented the thing he valued most. To be Jesus’ disciple the man would have to let Jesus and His Kingdom become the most important value in his life. This is what Jesus requires of all His disciples.

What did the man do? He wanted so much to have eternal life. Surely he must have quickly obeyed Jesus. But, no, he did not. When the man heard Jesus’ instructions, he became very sad and went away. He rejected Jesus’ instruction. Why? Because he loved money far more than he wanted eternal life. This “important” man went away, just like many people do today who at first think they want to follow Jesus and then go away from Him.

Many people in the New Testament were just like this “important” man. They thought that they wanted to be Jesus’ disciples. They loved to see Him do miracles. They were amazed by the big crowds and by watching Jesus deal with His enemies. But when Jesus told them what discipleship really meant, many people turned back. They did not want discipleship to be so much of a burden to them. They wanted to follow Jesus as long as their old lives did not have to change very much. But for Jesus to be Lord of our lives requires change and hard work on our part.

### A. For Jesus to be Lord of our Lives, We Must Lose Our Lives to Jesus.

Jesus talked about what would happen when a person chooses to be Jesus’ disciples. Being a disciple would require much sacrifice and commitment. Jesus told His disciples that they, too, would have to be crucified if they expected to be His disciples. He really made some of His followers angry. He told them if any of them wanted to be His disciples they would have to deny themselves. They would have to take up their cross daily and follow Jesus.

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Jesus also told His followers if they wanted to save their lives they should not follow Him. He seemed to say some strange things (Luke 9:24). He said if people tried to save their own lives, they would actually lose them. But if people would lose their lives for Jesus, they would actually find them.

Jesus knew before long some of His disciples would be ashamed of Him. Some people would certainly be ashamed of Jesus when they saw Him helplessly hanging on the Cross. To their disappointment, Jesus wouldn't even try to save himself. But Jesus said that anyone who was ashamed of Him would not be His friend. In fact, Jesus said that He would be ashamed of that person.

To lose one's life for Jesus means entering fully into the life He gives. It means completely giving up, or crucifying, the “old life,” which was really a way of death. Trying to have life apart from Jesus is, in fact, eternal death. But, for those who are set free from the old slavery to the kingdom of evil, the result is sanctification and eternal life (Romans 6:21-23).

What are some of the ways that Christians show they have lost their lives for Christ and have been changed by Him? First, things that are valued most change. Next, Christians show their love for God by a change in their habits. The old habits that were evil and destructive change because Jesus lives in us and we now belong to Him. We want Him to control our habits. Jesus also expects us to speak about Him to our friends and family members. We will allow Jesus to rule over our attitudes and secret thoughts. People will now see because of the way we live that we belong to Christ. We want Him to change us so our thoughts, words, and actions reflect His character.

Question: If we are ashamed of Jesus, how will Jesus react to us?

Question: What does it mean to lose our life to Jesus?

### B. For Jesus to Be Lord of Our Lives, We Must Be Sanctified by Jesus.

*Sanctify* means to set apart someone or something for a holy purpose. It means to separate from the old sinful self and actions and to give oneself completely to God. The only acceptable way for disciples to follow Jesus is to give themselves completely to Him. Jesus must rule as Lord alone. Then Christ sanctifies the believer. Christ sanctifies the person who completely surrenders to His lordship.

*Sanctify* also means “to make holy.” Jesus Christ sanctifies or makes holy the people who completely give themselves to God. This is the only correct way to be Jesus' disciples. And that is why Jesus said that people who lose their lives for Him will surely find them (Luke 9:24-25).

The Bible calls this way of radical obedience to Christ “sanctification.” It is a big word that simply means “belonging to God.” The disciples who allow the Lord to reign completely in their lives are

sanctified completely. Through the sanctified person's whole being, Jesus reveals that He is the the unquestioned Lord of all things.

Question: What does *sanctify* mean? Question: What does it mean for Jesus to sanctify believers?

### 1. Sanctification includes being crucified with Jesus.

Jesus told His disciples to take up their crosses and follow Him. Being crucified with Jesus is strange language (Luke 14:27; Galatians 2:20). Jesus' disciples were not literally crucified with Him. Today, Christians are not actually placed on crosses and crucified. So what did Jesus mean?

Jesus meant that they would have to live just as completely in faith and obedience before God as He did. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, He trusted the word of His Father. He completely renounced all the kingdoms the devil represented. Jesus totally trusted and obeyed His Heavenly Father. His trust and obedience finally took Him to the Cross.

Sooner or later, anyone who sets out to be Jesus' disciple will realize the old kingdom of sin and darkness will have to die. All that the old kingdoms represent must be crucified. Jesus clearly tells His followers that the old kingdom has to be crucified if they follow Him.

The place where the old kingdom of sin rests is in one's heart. The heart means the center of our will. It means the center of our control over our past, present, and future. It includes our thinking, our deepest desires, and our emotions. At the center of our hearts and self-centeredness is the kingdom of darkness. There, the old kingdom of sin must be destroyed. Christ must reign in our hearts as Lord. Only then can people say they have been truly crucified with Christ.

Question: What does it mean to be crucified with Jesus?

Question: What is the meaning of *heart*?

### 2. Sanctification includes living obediently.

Jesus lived in obedience to His Heavenly Father. Likewise, His disciples must live in obedience to Him. Those who love Christ will want to obey Him more than they want to do anything else. Obedience to Christ is the way we show our worship for God. The apostle Paul spoke to the Christians in Rome about living obediently. He urged them to offer themselves as living sacrifices to God. They were to present themselves as holy and pleasing to Him. Their complete obedience to God would be their most important act of worship (Romans 12:1).

### 3. Sanctification includes living in a new reality.

Sinners live according to an old reality that lets rebellion against God have the final say in what they do. They give themselves to an evil mind. Destructive habits, words, and actions rule them. Their lives show hatred for all that God really wants His world and people to be. They are truly children of darkness, and they do the works of darkness.

Sinners are dead in their sins. They do not have the life of God in them. Jesus is their only hope for ending their evil desires. He is the Redeemer who can remove the sin of darkness and bring the light of forgiveness. He can forgive sins. Jesus can remove the hatred and bring peace.

After God saves us, then we no longer follow our evil desires. We want to live a new life, with a new reality. God’s reality is a realm of forgiveness, peace, and righteousness. The Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of light and grace. The Kingdom of God and the kingdom of sin cannot exist together. People who try to live in both kingdoms will fail completely.

The Kingdom of God requires total allegiance. Anyone who wants to be Jesus’ disciple must understand anything that stands against God will have to die. It will have to disappear and be replaced by the reign of Jesus Christ in every part of one’s life.

Question: What is the difference between the “old reality” and the “new reality”?

Question: What does “total allegiance” to God mean?

### 4. Sanctification means living in resurrection power.

Only after the old kingdom has been destroyed in our inner being can we know the full meaning of Jesus’ resurrection. Resurrection power destroys the power of the kingdom of darkness. Anyone who holds on to some part of the old kingdom of evil can never know the full power of Christ’s resurrection.

The apostle Paul said that we must first be crucified with Christ before we can be raised with Christ in the power of His resurrection. Paul said, Christians have been “buried with him [Jesus] through baptism into death” (Romans 6:14). Christ was raised from the dead by the Father to live a new resurrected life. In the same way Jesus’ disciples must now be resurrected by God’s power and now walk in the newness of Christ’s life.

To live in the newness of Christ’s life is what the apostle Paul describes as living in the power of His Resurrection (Romans 6:5-10; 8:1-17). No person can conquer the old kingdom of evil. This only happens when the Spirit of God freely and without challenge controls our lives. The Spirit of the resurrected Christ lives in us and wants to rule us completely. All of this happens through the grace of God that He has expressed in Jesus.

Those who live in the power of the Holy Spirit will let the Holy Spirit shape their minds and lives completely. Disciples of Jesus will now bring glory to the Kingdom of God.

It is very important to remember this is impossible through human strength. No human being can live for the glory of God unless God makes that possible. No human being can live in the newness of resurrected life unless the Spirit of the living Christ reigns in them. Jesus taught His disciples they must rely on the Holy Spirit if they are to live and witness for Him. (See Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:6-11; 2:1-4.)

Question: What does living in the power of the Resurrection mean?

### Conclusion

When Jesus told His followers that they must take up their crosses if they intend to follow Him, He was on the way to His own crucifixion. He did not argue with His Father about going to Jerusalem. He did not sit around and waste time. He did not try find a way to stop His death. He felt an urgency to fulfill His Father's will.

The same is true of Jesus' call for our complete sanctification today. Persons who understand what it means to follow Jesus will not argue with Him. Because they want to be exactly what Jesus wants, they will not waste any time. Jesus said, "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it" (Luke 9:24).

Activity: Think carefully about this lesson. Consider these questions: Have you lost your life for Jesus' sake? Have you surrendered your life completely to God? Have you allowed God to sanctify you completely?

Activity: Talk with another person about what it means for Jesus to be Lord of our lives.

Activity: Is there anything in your old kingdom of sin that must be crucified to be able to live as Jesus wants? Ask God to take away your evil desires and to sanctify you, so that you can live for Jesus Christ as His disciple.

# Lesson 5: How Does the Holy Spirit Make Jesus Present to Us Now?

## Introduction

To be a follower of Jesus means to be a part of the body of Christ. That is, to be a part of the new community of His followers. It means being part of His Church. The “body” of Christ—the Church—continues the ministry of Jesus in the world. Just like Jesus, the Church proclaims the Gospel, teaches what Jesus taught, and heals. The risen Christ continues His ministry through the Church.

To do this, God has given His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit produces spiritual “fruit” in the lives of Jesus’ followers. This is the fruit of Jesus, the result of His living in us (Galatians 5:22).

In addition, God also gives particular gifts to believers for the “common good” (1 Corinthians 12:7) to make the Church grow and to bring honor to God. The gifts are Jesus’ gifts to His Church. Through these gifts, God calls and appoints specific people for ministry in the body of Christ. These include full-time pastors and many other types of ministry too.

### A. Fruit of the Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22). All of these are characteristics of Jesus. Through the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life, Jesus demonstrates these qualities. The fruits of the Spirit are evidences of Christlikeness in our lives. This means we will be like Christ. The fruits of the Spirit are attitudes that all followers of Jesus should manifest.

Paul wrote about his own life. He experienced troubles, hardships, distress, beatings, imprisonments, riots, hard work, sleepless nights, and hunger. But, he said, he had endured. He had remained pure, understanding, patient and kind “in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love” (2 Corinthians 6:6). His heart had remained open to people who disappointed him. In other words, he had been able to display the fruits of the Spirit in his life. (See 2 Corinthians 6:3-13).

Question: What is the fruit of the Spirit? Can you name them? Question: When we have the fruit of the Spirit, who will we be like?

### 1. Love

The quality of love Jesus gives is one that enables a person to love his or her enemies. It is doing good to those who hate you, blessing those who curse you, praying for those who mistreat you (Luke 6:27). “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?” Jesus asked. “Anybody can do that” (Luke 6:32, paraphrased). But does this include love for those who are different from us? Yes, that is truly a fruit only Jesus can give by His Spirit. There can be no “tribalism” in the love of God. There is no limit to it. It crosses social, political, and economic boundaries. We love those of cultural groups different from our own. We love those who live in other countries. We love those who are richer or poorer than we are.

This is the way God loves us. It did not matter who we were. This should be the same quality of love that we give to others. We love others even when they don’t love us in return. Love wants to destroy barriers between people. (Read 1 Corinthians 13).

Question: How does love show itself as the fruit of Christ in our lives?

### 2. Joy

One time Jesus sent out 72 disciples to preach the Good News of the Kingdom. When they returned, they reported they had cast out demons in Jesus’ name. Jesus was “full of joy through the Holy Spirit” when He heard what they had been able to do (Luke 10:21). Today, He gives that same kind of joy to His disciples.

After the resurrection Jesus appeared to the disciples. They were filled with “joy and amazement” (Luke 24:41). Soon after, Jesus ascended into heaven. Then the disciples returned to Jerusalem “with great joy” (Luke 24:52).

Later, Paul and Silas were in prison for preaching the Good News. When an earthquake came, they did not escape. The jailor was impressed. He asked them, “What must I do to be saved?” They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus.” After he did so, “he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God” (See Acts 16:16-40). People are filled with joy when they become new Christians.

Deep joy is the result of salvation. A person may have joy even when conditions are bad. One time, Paul and Barnabas were evicted from a place where they were preaching. Nevertheless, they were “filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 13:52). They knew that God was still working, and people were still being saved. Joy comes especially to followers of Jesus when they see those who were once “lost,” those who are far away from God and salvation, being “found.” (See Luke 15:6, 9, 24.)

Question: How can Jesus’ disciples have joy in any situation?

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### 3. Peace

Jesus brings peace. The angels appeared to the shepherds when Jesus was born. They sang, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests” (Luke 2:14). Later, when baby Jesus was presented at the temple, old Simeon said now that he had seen Jesus, God could now let him die in peace (Luke 2:29).

Peace is the presence of God to help and to save. God gives His strength and hope to us even in difficult times. Jesus told the prostitute He had just forgiven, “Go in peace” (Luke 7:50). He told the women with a blood disease He healed: “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace” (Luke 8:48). Jesus gives peace to each one who comes to Him. He gives himself to us.

Jesus Christ taught His disciples to give “peace.” When He sent out the 72 disciples, He told them to say “Peace to this house” when they entered a house (Luke 10:5). Peace within the followers of Jesus leads them to try to bring peace when people around them are arguing or fighting. They try to stop anything that destroys peace on earth.

*Shalom* is the Hebrew word for peace. It is used as a greeting. But it was much more than that. After Jesus’ death and resurrection, the disciples were frightened and confused. He appeared to them and said “Peace be with you” (Luke 24:36). Jesus is and gives the peace of God.

Question: What is one way you can offer God’s peace to others?

### 4. Patience

Patience is the ability to wait when it would be easier to act. Many times God has been patient with us. Jesus was patient when His disciples fell asleep while He was praying in the garden (Luke 22:45). He was patient when Peter denied three times that he knew Him (Luke 22:54-62).

Followers of Jesus are patient even when they suffer. This shows their faith in God and hope for the future. (See also Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 6:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 1 Timothy 1:16.)

### 5. Kindness

Jesus’ kindness was evident to all those who knew Him. He was kind to the poor and the rich alike. His followers also were supposed to do the same. Strangely, the world does not always appreciate kindness. Peter and John were criticized for their “kindness” when they healed a crippled man beside the temple gate. (See Acts 3:6-9, 4:9.)

### 6. Goodness

One time a ruler called Jesus a “good teacher.” Jesus asked him, “Why do you call me good?” “There is no one good ‘except God alone,’” Jesus declared. There was goodness in Jesus. It was a re-

lection of God in Him. If there is any good in us, it is because we are reflecting God. What was so “good” in Jesus? It was not that He kept more laws than the Pharisees. It was that He loved others. Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath. To some Jews, this was unlawful because it was the Sabbath (Luke 6:9). But for Jesus, people were more important than laws. He put others first in His priorities. Goodness is a deep care for the needs of others. Its desire is to help others, whenever and whatever the cost.

Question: Why are patience, kindness, and goodness called “fruit of the Spirit”?

Question: What was “good” in Jesus?

### 7. Faithfulness

Faithfulness is the quality of a person who trusts and believes. The “faithful manager,” Jesus once said, “remains ready for the coming of his master” (Luke 12:42-43). He does not know when his master will return. He does not know when a thief might break in. But he remains dressed and ready. He keeps the lamps burning. He does not give up hope. He remains patient. He does the best with what he has. He does not wish for more. That is faithfulness. If he is faithful, the Master will give him more—more responsibilities in the Master’s house. (See Luke 12:35-48.)

### 8. Gentleness

Gentleness is like a mother caring for her children (1 Thessalonians 2:7). It is the opposite of being violent (1 Timothy 3:3). As followers of Jesus, we are to treat others with “gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15-16).

### 9. Self-control

Self-control means governing our desires, emotions, and actions. Paul told Titus, a young preacher, to be “self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined” (Titus 1:8). If Titus could live that way, he would be able to “teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance” (Titus 2:2).

Question: Why are faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control “fruit of the Spirit”?

Question: Name the fruit of the Spirit. Tell what each one means in one sentence.

### B. Gifts of the Spirit.

The Bible speaks of gifts of the Spirit. The gifts are abilities and talents that God gives to people so the gifts can be used for the good of the Church. The Bible makes it clear not all followers of Jesus have the same gifts (see 1 Corinthians 12:8-11, 28-30; Hebrews 2:4). Not every follower has all of these gifts, but all followers have at least one gift. The

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gifts the Bible mentions are prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing to the needs of others, leading (or governing), and showing mercy (Romans 12:6-8). There are also the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, the ability to distinguish between spirits, the ability to speak in different languages, and the ability to interpret languages (1 Corinthians 12:4-10).

### 1. Prophesying

To prophesy is to deliver a message from God to those who need to hear it. In Bible times, prophets spoke for God and urged people to repent and obey the Lord. Jeremiah prophesied when his country was in great danger. Many of the people had sinned against God. Jeremiah said if people continued to sin, then God would punish them.

In the Church, the pastor often preaches like this. He warns people about what will happen if they continue to sin. In the Church’s beginning days, women often prophesied. (See Acts 2:17-18, 21:9.)

### 2. Serving

The gift of serving is that of humbly giving and caring for other people’s needs. In the Church’s early days, it chose certain men to “wait on tables.” Seven men, “full of the Spirit and wisdom” distributed food to widows in the church. (See Acts 6:1-7.)

### 3. Teaching

Jesus constantly taught the people when He was on earth. That is why He was called *Rabbi*, which means “teacher.” His lessons were practical and meaningful. He used stories they could easily understand. He taught the people about the Kingdom of God. (See Luke 6:17-49.) Like Jesus, His followers often teach. (See Acts 5:21 and Acts 11:26.)

### 4. Encouraging

Encouragers are people who urge discouraged Christians to rejoice and trust in God. In the beginning days of the Church, it needed many encouragers. One of them was Barnabas. He encouraged people to “remain true to the Lord with all their hearts” (Acts 11:23). Barnabas encouraged Paul (Acts 11:25-26). In turn, Paul encouraged other people. (See Acts 16:40; 20:1-2. See also Acts 15:32.)

### 5. Providing for the needs of others

Jesus always was concerned about the needs of others. He told the rich ruler to give everything he had to the poor. Then he could follow Him (Luke 18:22). In the beginning days of the Church, they took offerings to take care of the poor people in the church in Jerusalem (Romans 15:26).

## 6. Leading or governing

After the Last Supper ended, the disciples began arguing. Each wanted to be considered the “greatest.” Jesus told them not to be like those kings who “lord it over them.” Rather, He said, the greatest should be like the youngest, and “the one who rules like the one who serves.” He reminded them He was “among you as one who serves.” That was Jesus’ idea of leadership. (See Luke 22:24-27.)

## 7. Showing mercy

Jesus revealed God’s mercy. Mercy is God’s compassion on those who cannot defend or care for themselves. Jesus showed mercy throughout His ministry. A prostitute came into Simon’s house where Jesus was eating. Jesus did not drive her away. (See Luke 7:36-50). He showed His mercy in feeding the hungry, casting out demons, healing the blind man, and associating with “sinners” (Luke 15:2). On the Cross, He cried out for His heavenly Father to forgive even those who made Him suffer. Jesus expects this same kind of mercy in His followers. “Be merciful,” Jesus told His followers, “just as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36).

Question: How can you show mercy to or encourage someone this week? Question:  
What are some ways the gifts of the Spirit serve the Church?

## 8. Exercising wisdom

Wisdom is knowing the right thing to do. Wisdom is a gift that comes from God. Some intelligent people are not wise. Wisdom is reverence for and obedience to God. Human wisdom apart from the revelation of God is foolish and of little value. (See 1 Corinthians 2:6-7.)

## 9. Exercising knowledge

Jesus gave knowledge of the Kingdom especially to His followers (Luke 8:10). This knowledge was different than that of the Pharisees. Followers of Jesus have the true “key to knowledge” for understanding the ways of God (Luke 11:52). Some people may be intelligent, but not know how to use their knowledge to serve God.

Question: What is the difference between the gifts of wisdom and knowledge?

## 10. Exercising faith

When Jesus and His disciples were on the sea and the storm came, the disciples were afraid. “Where is your faith?” Jesus asked (Luke 8:25). Faith is totally depending on God and His promises. It shows itself in obedience to God (Romans 1:5; Galatians 5:6; James 2:14-26). But some people have more faith than others. The disciples did not believe the women who told them about Jesus

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not being in the tomb. They thought it nonsense (Luke 24:11). Those who are able to have strong faith can use it to help others in the Church.

### 11. Healing

Healing is the act or process of returning people to health. Healing makes better the bodies, minds, or spirits of people who are ill. Healing comes from God, whether the healing is natural or is a miracle. The Bible does not promise every illness will be healed. Some followers of Jesus may have the gift of praying for someone, and the person is healed. Other followers of Jesus may have the gift of healing in another way. They are able to use medicine to heal others.

### 12. Displaying miraculous powers

God “accredited” (approved of) Jesus through the miracles, wonders, and signs that He did (Acts 2:22). A miracle is an event that cannot be explained naturally. It shows the power of God. Miracles today continue the work of Jesus—healing the sick and blind, feeding the hungry, and setting people free from the power of demons.

### 13. Distinguishing between spirits

When Jesus sent out the 72 followers, they found that even the demons submitted to them (Luke 10:17). Some of His followers have a special gift of telling the difference between evil spirits and good ones. This is called discernment. Sometimes Satan disguises evil as good. Sometimes, it is hard to tell the difference.

### 14. Speaking in different languages

Those who received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost spoke in a language they had not learned. They proclaimed the good news of Jesus in another language. This showed the Gospel was for the whole world—for every nation. Those who heard them speaking began to take the Gospel to other parts of the world. (See Acts 2:4-11.) The ability to tell the Gospel through another language is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

In some places, such as Corinth, early followers of Jesus spoke in what they called the tongues or language of angels (1 Corinthians 13:1). Others could not understand them; they could not even understand themselves. The apostle Paul tried to limit this kind of speaking in “tongues.” He told them it would be much better if they prophesied. Speaking in tongues was not one of the most important gifts. Not everyone who received the Holy Spirit would speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 12:27-30).

## 15. Interpreting different languages

Some of Jesus' followers are given the power to understand and translate other languages. In this way they are able to tell the Gospel so others can understand it. (See 1 Corinthians 14:5, 28).

Question: What gifts of the Spirit has God given to you?

Question: How can the gifts of the Spirit benefit Jesus Christ, His Church, and the world?

## Conclusion

Spiritual gifts are related to useful positions in the Church. God appointed apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, those able to heal, those able to help, those able to administer, and those able to speak different languages (1 Corinthians 12:27-28). There are also evangelists and pastors (Ephesians 4:11-14). These people in the Church are responsible to "prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12-13).

In a way similar to that in which Jesus called His 12 apostles, He calls people today to serve Him. They do so in a wide variety of ministries inside and outside the Church. The ministries of all Christians result from the fruit and gifts of the Spirit.

Activity: Examine your life and identify the fruit of the Spirit in you. Choose two fruit of the Spirit and tell your discipleship group how you can develop them in your life during the next week.

Activity: Talk with another person in your discipleship group about the fruit of the Spirit you see in them.

Activity: Think about the gifts of the Spirit. Which ones has God given you? How do you know which gift you have received? Talk with your pastor about your gift.

Activity: Explain to someone else how you can strengthen the Church through the use of your gifts and fruit of the Spirit.

## Lesson 6: What Does It Mean to Follow Jesus as a Way of Life?

### Introduction

Once there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was not very tall. He collected taxes among the Jews for the Roman government. He may have even cheated some people. The people in his own town did not like him. One day Zacchaeus learned that Jesus was coming to the town where he lived. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus. As Jesus came near, people pushed Zacchaeus aside. Being short, Zacchaeus could not see Jesus.

So, Zacchaeus ran ahead of the crowd and climbed a tree. He could see Jesus from there and then go home. Soon Jesus came under the tree where Zacchaeus was sitting. Jesus stopped, looked up, and said, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today” (Luke 19:6). Zacchaeus was happy. He came down and led Jesus to his house where they enjoyed a meal together. Jesus brought the Good News of the Gospel to Zacchaeus, who received it gladly. Jesus said on that day salvation had come to the house of Zacchaeus. Jesus also said He had come to find and save the lost (Luke 19:10).

Out of joy and thanksgiving, Zacchaeus said to Jesus, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount” (Luke 19:8). This was a dramatic change from what Zacchaeus had been before Jesus came to him. What caused the difference?

Question: Why did the people of the town not like Zacchaeus?

Question: Why did Jesus go to Zacchaeus’s house?

### A. Following Jesus Means Living as a Forgiven Person.

The difference was that Zacchaeus was a forgiven man. He was a sinner who had been forgiven and received by Jesus. Jesus, who was the Gospel in flesh, changed the way Zacchaeus thought about himself and others. In the past, Zacchaeus was selfish, but that changed when God forgave him. Before he met Jesus, Zacchaeus was selfish. But God’s forgiveness, changed him. Zacchaeus now thinks of the poor and anyone he might have cheated. He wanted his actions to show his thanks for God’s forgiveness. He began to act toward others as Jesus had acted toward him. Zacchaeus wanted the Gospel to shape his whole life. He was a changed person because of God’s forgiveness.

Question: What caused a change in Zacchaeus? Question: What does being forgiven mean to you?

## B. Following Jesus Means Living as a Changed Person.

Receiving forgiveness changes a person. Zacchaeus rejoiced that Jesus had forgiven him and restored him to God's favor. Zacchaeus was a changed person. Immediately he wanted to do something that would show how grateful he was for God's forgiveness and restoration. So, without being forced to do so, Zacchaeus gladly told Jesus he would give half of his possessions to the poor. If he had cheated anybody out of anything, he would pay back four times the amount (Luke 19:8).

This is exactly what must happen if a person truly understands what God's forgiveness means. If God's love and forgiveness reach into a person's heart, then God's love will change the person. A disciple of Jesus will want his or her words and actions to show they have received God's love. They have been forgiven, restored, and changed. Now, more than anything else, they should want to express God's love to others in all they do, just as Zacchaeus did.

Question: How did Zacchaeus show that he had changed?

Question: How has your life changed since you became a Christian?

## C. Following Jesus Means Being Shaped by God's Story.

Jesus told many stories. He told stories so His hearers could learn about God. The stories Jesus told are parts of one big story we call the story of God. This big story is the full account of who God is and what He has done. The big story is also the full account of what God wants for those who love and obey Him.

The story of God includes all He did to create the world. It includes His call and promises to Abraham. The story continues through Moses, Joseph, King David, the prophets, and all of the Old Testament. In Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God fully tells the story of who He is. He also tells the story of who He wants His children to be. In Jesus, God tells us how we are to live among our families and neighbors. In Jesus, we learn how God wants us to treat His creation and the things that are ours.

Jesus also told stories because He wanted stories to shape His followers. All of us have been formed by stories. Many of the stories that have formed us are not pleasing to God. Being a Christian means we will now be shaped by a new story, God's story. For example, Jesus told the story of the good Samaritan. The Samaritan used his possessions to give aid to a wounded man, who was a Jew. He bandaged the man's wounds. Some Jews, who thought they were very religious, refused to help the wounded man. But the Samaritan man helped the Jew. The Jews hated the Samaritans. The Samaritan actually used his possessions and money to assist someone who hated him.

## Book Two: What Does It Mean to Be “In Christ”?

Now, that is quite a story. After telling the story, Jesus said, “Now you go and live just like this” (Luke 10:25-37). So, Christians are persons who are being shaped by the story of God that Jesus told. A very important part of God’s story is that we come to know Him in fellowship with other Christians. No one learns and lives God’s story alone. The community of God, which we call the Church, is the community in which we learn and live God’s story. The

New Testament sometimes speaks of the Church as Christ’s body (1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 1:22-23; 3:6; 4:4, 16; 5:30; Colossians 1:18; 3:15). This does not mean Christ had a physical body like ours. Rather, the apostle Paul compares our relationship to our own bodies to Christ’s relationship with His Church. Just as our physical bodies have many parts, so the Church has many parts. Christians make up the parts of the Church. The apostle Paul said, “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it” (1 Corinthians 12:27).

Our physical bodies have a head that gives directions to the whole body. Likewise, Jesus is the head of the Church and He instructs it (Ephesians 5:23). Paul even says that as the body of Christ, the church is a part of Christ’s fullness or completeness. Paul says that God made Christ the head of the Church and the head over all things (Ephesians 1:22-23). The Church is the fullness or completeness of Christ who gives life to the Church. He fills the Church with himself. Or, He gives himself completely to the Church. Paul uses this language to show just how closely related Christ and His Church are.

Paul also speaks of the Church as Christ’s body to teach us how closely related we are to one another. He uses this language to help us see how important each member of Christ’s Church is to all of the other members. No single part of our physical body can say to the others, “I am more important than you are.” And no one part can say to the other parts, “You are not needed.” Indeed not. We know all the parts of our bodies work together.

This is the way God made us. And that is the way the Church is (1 Corinthians 12:21-26). Paul even says that just in our physical bodies, so in the Church “God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it” (1 Corinthians 12:24). Christ is the head of the Church and all of the members serve Him, including those that don’t seem to receive much recognition. With Christ as the head, the members of the Church also serve each other. Just as the Church is beautifully fitted together, so is the Church. Paul says the many members of the Church should have “equal concern for each other.”

Now, just as our physical bodies are beautifully fitted according to God’s plan, just so Christ must form the Church. Our fingers don’t decide by themselves what they want to be and do. Nor do our eyes. All of our body parts serve one unified purpose. Likewise, Christ shapes the Church according to His will. The whole beautiful story of God, as fulfilled in Jesus, must shape the Church and all of

its members. So we learn how to be Christ's Church by hearing, receiving, and living God's whole story. It forms the community of Christ, and we learn of Him in community.

There are no lone, isolated, independent members in Christ's body. We learn together. We grow together. Together we should learn how to serve and minister to the world that Jesus came to save. In fact, our lives are supposed to retell the story of God that we see in Jesus. But this cannot happen unless we have been changed by Jesus. Actually, the Christian life means that Jesus is living His story through us. He is living himself through His Church. This is what it means to say we are members of His body.

Question: What is the story of God?

Question: How is our physical body like the body of Christ?

Question: What does it mean to be shaped by God's story?

### Conclusion

The apostle Paul summarized the way Christians should live. He said to some early Christians: "Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Philippians 1:27). Paul meant that the Good News of Christ should completely form our lives. All of our thoughts, actions, and habits should be brought under Christ's rule. How we act and speak in our families is included. So, too, is the way we speak and act when we are working. Nothing is excluded from being changed and formed by Christ. Paul added, "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (Philippians 4:8).

Activity: Describe what you were like before God saved you.

Activity: Tell someone about a time God forgave you.

Activity: Think about this question: Is there anything you need to do to show God's forgiveness to other people? If so, go and do it this week.

Activity: Think about this question: Are you living as a changed person? If your answer is yes, praise the Lord for what He has done in your life. If your answer is no, talk with your pastor or discipleship leader. Let them pray and talk with you.

# Lesson 7: How Do We Stay Close to Jesus?

## Introduction

Several times, Jesus gave His followers instructions about how to stay close to Him. Many people listened to His words. Jesus was concerned that people should also do what He said. One time Jesus told a story about wise and foolish builders. The wise builder dug deep. He laid a foundation for his house on rock. A flood came and struck the house. But it was well built. The flood did not destroy it. Another person built a house that did not have a foundation. When a flood came, it was completely destroyed. (See Luke 6:46-49.)

Jesus wants us to build our lives on a firm foundation. How do we do that? What are some of the foundation stones?

### A. We Stay Close to Jesus by Worshiping Him.

Worship is the reverence, honor, and service we show or express to God. Worship of God is a form of ministry or service to Him. It is one way of affirming that God is the Creator and all people are His creation. Worship reminds people they depend totally on God. Worship is a way for people to show their complete faith in God.

Worship of God can happen in private. It also occurs when members of the Church come together to worship God through adoration, prayers, thanksgiving, songs, preaching, and the sacraments. When the members of the Church worship God, He prepares them to serve Him in the world. Other forms of worship include service to God in our homes, in places of employment and recreation, and in our care for needy people.

Worship with God’s people is very important for our growth as Jesus’ disciples. “Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth,” the writer of the Psalm 100 exclaims. He continues, “Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.”

Question: What is worship?

## 1. Worship is enjoying and being aware of the presence of God.

Worship is both awe and joy in the presence of the Holy God. We say, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.” We sense His glory and His holiness. We know He only is God.

We have access to God’s holy presence through Jesus. Through Jesus’ death and resurrection, God has opened His heart to us. Jesus with us enables us to open our hearts to God. We come into His presence with praise and thankfulness. We sense our smallness when we come before Him. We lose ourselves. We become centered in Him. Miraculously, God’s presence descends upon His people. Whenever God comes, we are going to be transformed.

This does not happen unless we are ready for the presence of God to come. We enter worship rejoicing. We enter worship expecting His presence. We enter worship inviting Him to speak to us.

Question: How can we be aware of the presence of God as we worship?

## 2. We worship God through the spoken Word.

In worship, God speaks again. God communicates with us, and we communicate with Him. That is why Scripture reading and preaching are essential to worship. When Jesus was on earth, the Scriptures were always read in the synagogue. Someone then explained what the Scriptures meant. Jesus himself did that. Early in His ministry, He was in the synagogue in Nazareth. He read from Isaiah (61:1-2). Then He declared, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). Jesus meant that in himself and in His ministry He would fulfill God’s ancient promise to Israel.

Question: How is God’s Word used in worship?

## 3. We worship God through music and song.

Music is another important means for worshiping God. Songs make our heart glad and give us a means for expressing our love for God. The Bible includes many songs of worship. The Book of Psalms contains many of the songs or hymns the Jews used to worship God. The New Testament includes some poetry that may have been early Christian hymns. (See 1 Corinthians 13; Philippians 2:6-11; Colossians 1:15-20).

Throughout the history of the Church, Christians have written and sung hymns that express worship of God. Christians have used many kinds of musical instruments, and their songs have taken many forms. Songs of worship will often reflect the culture in which Christians write and sing hymns of worship.

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One beautiful hymn of worship the Church sings around the world is: “Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty! / All Thy works shall praise Thy name in earth, and sky, and sea. / Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty! / God in three persons, blessed Trinity!”

Question: What part does music have in the worship of God?

### 4. We worship God in prayer.

Prayer is talking with God. Prayer includes worship of God and meditation on God. Christians pray when they worship together. They also pray in private. Always, the purpose of prayer is to worship God and to show our love for Him.

Question: Why is prayer important in worship?

### 5. We worship God through Christian fellowship.

It is important for us to worship God regularly together with other followers. Our fellow followers strengthen us also when we worship. We know that we are not alone. We pray together. We hear the Word together. We sing together. We rejoice together in God’s presence. Ever since the Resurrection the followers of Jesus have worshiped on Sunday. Jesus was raised from the dead on Sunday. Every worship time becomes a celebration of His resurrection.

Question: How does Christian fellowship help us to worship?

### 6. Worship leads to transformation.

Worship is useless unless it leads to a transformed life. We are strengthened by His presence. We are transformed by His presence. The presence of God touches us and heals us inwardly. We are strengthened for service by His touch. More sensitive to His voice, we become more obedient to His will. We have a renewed sense He is with us in this world. Often near the end of worship services, we are given the opportunity to respond.

Question: How does worship transform worshipers?

## B. We Stay Close to Jesus Through the Word.

When we read or hear the Scriptures, we should do so carefully and with a sense of worship. The Scriptures teach us about God. We ask the Holy Spirit to teach us from them. From the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit teaches us what we should be, what we should know, and what we should do.

Followers of Jesus have found it helpful to have a time each day to read (or hear) the Bible. The Bible gives balance to our lives. We should come to the Bible prayerfully, asking God to speak to us through His Word. We ask for correction and rebuke when it is needed. At other times, we ask for

comfort or guidance. Many times the Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts through the Bible. The Bible is a balanced whole. It is good to read all sections of the Bible. Many followers of Jesus have found it helpful to memorize verses or sections of the Bible.

The Bible is what tells us about Jesus. Even the Old Testament helps us understand the life and meaning of Jesus more clearly. When we read the Bible, we sense that we are reentering Jesus' world. It may help to use our imagination when we read the Bible.

Perhaps we can imagine what it would have been like to see and hear Jesus. Using the stories of the Bible, we can use our imagination to see, touch, and hear Jesus again.

Question: How does reading the Bible help us stay close to Jesus?

### C. We Stay Close to Jesus Through Prayer.

Prayer is talking with God. It includes worship of God and meditation on God. Prayer often includes a request that God would help someone who is in need. Christians pray in the name of Christ. They pray with the aid of the Holy Spirit. Prayer is a Christian right and duty.

Jesus prayed often (Mark 6:46; 14:32; John 17:1-26). His disciples saw how important prayer was for Jesus. So, they asked Him to teach them how to pray (Luke 11:2-4). He taught them to pray the prayer that follows. We call the prayer "The Lord's Prayer." In the prayer we learn what prayer should include.

"Our Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation."

Jesus' prayer begins with "Our Father." When we pray publicly with others we say "our." We are including others. We are representing their prayers and not just our own. It is not the time or place for our personal prayer. Like Jesus did, we say "Father." We are not praying only to Jesus or to the Holy Spirit. "Father" represents the whole fatherhood or person of God.

The prayer contains two petitions: Let your name be hallowed, and let your kingdom come. "Hallowed" means holy. We pray this, as Jesus intended, because of the importance of the Name of God. The Hebrews had blasphemed that Name through their sins. Today, we pray for God to act in us to save His name from the shame we have caused. (See Ezekiel 36:20-29.) This will be accomplished only when His Kingdom comes and His will is done.

We pray that God's Kingdom will come on earth. We know it will not completely come until Christ returns. We also know His Kingdom will never come without our obedience to His will.

We pray for our daily necessities, our "daily bread."

## Book Two: What Does It Mean to Be “In Christ”?

We pray that God will forgive us, knowing that we still have much for which to be forgiven. We promise God that we also will forgive other people who sin against us, just as He has forgiven us.

Finally, we pray that we will not be tempted.

The Lord’s Prayer is not the only way for us to pray. It is a model prayer because it teaches us the elements of prayer. Many other prayers have been written that are still used today in the Church. In times of prayer, Christians create their own prayers. They may be praying to God when not actually speaking. They may just be thinking intensely of their love for God. Or they may cry out to God in times of distress or temptation. A prayer may be simply giving thanks to God, or even a word of joy directed to God.

Daily prayer is important for the followers of Jesus. It provides a means of our communicating to God and God to us.

Question: What is prayer?

Question: Why is praying each day so important for Jesus’ disciples?

### D. We Stay Close to Jesus by Living Obediently.

Blessed are “those who hear the word of God and obey it,” Jesus said. Jesus himself was obedient to the Father. We harm, and may even lose, our fellowship with Jesus when we disobey Him. People who have faith prove it by obeying Jesus. Peter, one of the disciples, later preached boldly. He said, “We must obey God rather than men!” He also said that God has given the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:29, 32).

Living obediently is the way in which we retain the grace we have received. Christ’s resurrection provides victory over sin. When we disobey, we are living short of what Christ enables. As we continue to obey, the presence of God draws closer and we become stronger.

Question: What happens when we disobey God?

Question: What happens when we obey God?

### Conclusion

Jesus wants all of His disciples to succeed by staying close to Him. So, He gives them all the help they will need to grow and become stronger. But Jesus’ disciples must take advantage of His rich resources. Growing as a disciple includes the Christian disciplines of worshiping God, receiving the sacraments, praying, studying the Bible, and living obediently. All Jesus’ disciples can trust the Holy Spirit to guide them and give them power.

# Following Jesus

*Following Jesus* is a discipleship program that asks and answers two questions: “Who is Jesus?” and “What does it mean to be His disciple?” *Following Jesus* shows the new Christian just how costly following Jesus will be. It openly presents the radical nature of discipleship. the program is divided into three books:

**BOOK ONE.** The entry book introduces new Christians to the basic elements of Christian faith and Christian life. Completion of this book should prepare a person for baptism and for receiving the Lord’s Supper.

**BOOK TWO.** With this book, the young Christians will advance to a higher level of understanding their new faith in Christ. They will learn what it means to be a part of the Church. They will learn what it means to live in the power of the Holy Spirit. And they will learn the importance of Christian service.

**BOOK THREE.** The third book helps new Christians get an overall picture of the biblical story. It introduces them to some of the most important parts of Christian history that affect Christian belief and practice. The three books together help prepare a person for church membership.

## BOOK TWO: What Does It Mean to Be “In Christ”?

Lesson 1 | How Is Jesus Related to God?

Lesson 2 | How Did Jesus Establish the Kingdom of God?

Lesson 3 | How Is It Possible to Live as a Disciple of Jesus Christ?

Lesson 4 | What Does It Mean for Jesus to Reign as Lord of Our Lives?

Lesson 5 | How Does the Holy Spirit Make Jesus Present to Us Now?

Lesson 6 | What Does It Mean to Follow Jesus as a Way of Life?

Lesson 7 | How Do We Stay Close to Jesus?

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