



Following Jesus 2

LEARNING TO ABIDE

LEADER GUIDE

The purpose of this material is to help someone take their next spiritual step. It is not intended to be handed to someone to do on their own. Each session corresponds to a meeting where you discuss the material in a 1:1 or small group setting. The objective for each session is to help someone engage the Scripture and listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit by putting into practice what they learned.

EVERY MEETING SHOULD INCLUDE 4 COMPONENTS

Care → Learn → Apply → Share

CARE

Start each meeting by asking about their week and follow up on any takeaways or action steps from the previous week.

- What has been going well for you and do you have any stressors?
- This week I was praying for your _____. How's that been going? Anything else I can be praying for?
- Is there any way you were able to put what we discussed last week into practice?

LEARN

The second part of your meeting should be used to discuss the material by sharing answers about the passages and utilizing discussion questions at the end of each session. If they seemed to misunderstand something about the session, go through that Scripture passage and the corresponding questions together to clarify their understanding.

APPLY

Use the last part of your time together to help them get specific about putting their learning into practice. Make sure you pray for them and their action steps.

SHARE

Take time each session to ask about who else God has placed around them and what steps can be taken to:

- Share their story or the gospel
- Offer to help someone else take a next spiritual step

Following Jesus 2:

LEARNING TO ABIDE

Jesus called His followers “disciples” and they called Him “Rabbi” and “Lord.” In the previous series, we explored one characteristic of Jesus’ followers. They do what he says; they obey Him. In this series, we look at what it means to abide in Him.

Introduction

DISCUSS

What have your past experiences or impressions been about following Jesus?

Have your thoughts changed over time?

A STORY ABOUT ABIDING

Jesus did much of his teaching through metaphors, parables and stories. Let’s look at one of them.

READ John 15:1-17

- What stood out to you from this passage?

- What did Jesus’ metaphor show you about Him and His Father?

- What did it show about people and what it means to be His disciple?

PRACTICE

Journal your thoughts on the following: What comes to your mind when you think about “abiding in” Jesus? What questions does that expression raise for you?

WORSHIP TOGETHER

For many people, the word worship means “go to church” but that phrase only scratches the surface. This week, we discuss what it means for followers of Jesus to gather together and worship Him. Why do we do this? Is it necessary?

DISCUSS

What comes to mind when you think of worship? What value do you find in worship with other people? What are your habits regarding worship?

A STORY ABOUT CORPORATE WORSHIP

As you read, take your time; engage your mind as well as your imagination.

The Early Church

READ: Acts 2:37-47

- What do we learn about God/Jesus?

- What do we learn from the people in the story?

- Is there a sin to avoid, promise to claim, example to follow, or command to obey?

- Who do you most identify with in the story and why?

EXPLORE FURTHER

How do these passages help you better understand corporate worship:

- Psalm 95

- Matthew 18:20

- Colossians 3:15-17

- Hebrews 10:23-25

PRACTICE

Commit to gathering weekly with your church family:

- Engage as a participant, not a spectator or critic. Focus on the presence of God and your brothers and sisters in Christ rather than the performance of the preacher or musicians.
- Connect with people there. Make a point of meeting one new person each week.
- Ask yourself, “How can I help create an atmosphere for others to worship?” and do it.

PRAYER

For some of us, prayer looks like telling God what we want or need Him to do for us. For others it may look like repeating something written by someone else that we have memorized. Maybe your experience is that prayer is something reserved for special occasions that makes you uncomfortable. How does the Bible describe prayer?

DISCUSS

What comes to mind when you think of prayer? What value do you find in prayer? What are your personal prayer practices?

A STORY ABOUT PRAYER

As you read, take your time; engage your mind as well as your imagination.

Cornelius & Peter
READ: Acts 10

- What do we learn about God/Jesus?

- What do we learn from the people in the story?

- Is there a sin to avoid, promise to claim, example to follow, or command to obey?

- Who do you most identify with in the story and why?

EXPLORE FURTHER

How do these passages help you better understand prayer:

- Romans 8:26-27

- Ephesians 6:18

- 1 Timothy 2:1-8

- Philippians 4:6-7

PRACTICE

Establish a routine of daily prayer:

- Identify a time you will devote to prayer each day this week.
- If you are new to this practice, start slow-maybe 2-3 minutes each day.
- Don't worry about getting your words just right, just speak to God plainly as you would to a friend
- Keep a journal or other way of keeping track of your prayers.
- Include a FRANC list to help you pray for people in your life who are far from God (we discussed this in the previous series).

THE BIBLE

The Bible is often called God’s word. What does that mean...that it’s mystical and hard to understand? It may seem that way if you’re unfamiliar with it, but what we really mean is that through the Bible God communicates with people. Prayer is how we talk to God and the Bible is how He talks to us. For that reason, prayer and reflection on God’s word work together so that our focused time with God becomes a conversation that fosters intimacy.

DISCUSS

What comes to mind when you think of the Bible? What value do you find from time reading the Bible? How do you engage with the Bible personally?

A STORY ABOUT THE BIBLE

As you read, take your time; engage your mind as well as your imagination.

The Emmaus Road

READ: Luke 24:13-35

- What do we learn about God/Jesus?

- What do we learn from the people in the story?

- Is there a sin to avoid, promise to claim, example to follow, or command to obey?

- Who do you most identify with in the story and why?

EXPLORE FURTHER

How do these passages help you better understand the Bible:

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17

- Psalm 119

PRACTICE

Each day this week during your prayer time, focus on God's word.

The following are ways people have found to do this:

- Read (your discipler can help you decide on a reading plan—John's gospel is often a good place to start)
- Listen (online Bibles like YouVersion allow you to listen as well as read)
- Memorize (choose a verse that is relevant to an issue you struggle with)
- Reflect (ask yourself questions about how what you read impacts you)
- Respond (record what you discovered in your prayer journal)

Discuss your experiences with your discipler next time.

WORSHIP PRIVATELY

The daily practice of prayer and reading the Bible is sometimes called Devotions or a Quiet Time. It's the starting point for a habit of personal worship, but personal worship is about much more than praying and reading our Bibles. Personal practices of worship orient our lives around God and keep us continually aware of God's presence and love by engaging our emotions, our senses, and our imaginations.

DISCUSS

What comes to mind when you think of a Quiet Time? What value do you find from personal time alone with God? What are your current practices of personal worship?

A STORY ABOUT PERSONAL WORSHIP

As you read, take your time; engage your mind as well as your imagination.

Jesus Retreats

READ Mark 1:13-38

Two related passages are Luke 5:15-16 and John 6:15

- What do we learn about God/Jesus?

- What do we learn from the people in the story?

- Is there a sin to avoid, promise to claim, example to follow, or command to obey?

- Who do you most identify with in the story and why?

EXPLORE FURTHER

How do these passages help you better understand personal worship:

- Psalm 19:1-6

- Psalm 63

- I Thessalonians 5:16-18

PRACTICE

Try something new to take your quiet time from a chore to a source of joy.

- Go for a walk. Delight in God's creation, or pray for neighbors in the homes you pass.
- Make a gratitude list.
- Create a worship playlist on your phone.
- Be absolutely still and focus on the presence of God for 5 minutes each day.
- Breath-prayers can help keep you focused. These are prayers that can be repeated in one breath like, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening," or "Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy!"
- Link your Bible reading to your prayers, so that your quiet time is a conversation between you and God. Choose one sentence or verse that stands out from what you read each day, meditate on it, and turn it into the framework for your prayer.

LIVE IN COMMUNITY

Living in community with other followers of Jesus goes deeper than going to Church. The kind of community that Jesus prescribed for his followers can't be achieved by sitting in rows together one hour a week. It's time consuming and messy, but when we walk with Jesus together we truly identify ourselves as His followers.

DISCUSS

What comes to your mind when you think of Christian community? What value do you find in close relationship with other Christians? How do you routinely invest in those relationships?

A STORY ABOUT COMMUNITY

As you read, take your time; engage your mind as well as your imagination.

The Last Supper
READ John 13:1-35

- What do we learn about God/Jesus?

- What do we learn from the people in the story?

- Is there a sin to avoid, promise to claim, example to follow, or command to obey?

- Who do you most identify with in the story and why?

EXPLORE FURTHER

How do these passages help you better understand living in community:

- Acts 2:37-47

- Romans 12:9-21

- Philippians 2:1-5

PRACTICE

Pursue deepening community.

- If you don't have a community group, find one and commit to it.
- What can you do to deepen the way you live out Acts 2 in your community group?
- How could you help others get involved in a community group? Is there anyone you could welcome into your community group?
- If you are a veteran community group member, help start a new group so more people can experience Christian community.

TURNING FROM IDOLS

We've talked about worshipful practices that we engage in, alone and in community. Now let's turn our attention to defining worship. Most of us think of it as a religious activity (like prayer) or an environmental experience (like candles, incense, or a certain style of music). Worship is an attitude or orientation of the heart toward whatever we believe gives us ultimate meaning. Humans are worshipers by nature, and we all worship something or someone, whether we consider ourselves religious or not. When someone or something other than God is the object of our worship, we call that idolatry.

DISCUSS

What comes to your mind when you think of idolatry? Is idolatry something you personally struggle with? Why do you think so?

A STORY ABOUT IDOL WORSHIP

As you read, take your time; engage your mind as well as your imagination.

Paul in Athens

READ: Acts 17:15-34

- What do we learn about God/Jesus?

- What do we learn from the people in the story?

- Is there a sin to avoid, promise to claim, example to follow, or command to obey?

- Who do you most identify with in the story and why?

EXPLORE FURTHER

How do these passages help you better understand turning from idols:

- Jeremiah 2:5,11-14

- Exodus 20:1-4

- Galatians 4:8-9

- Colossians 3:5
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-

- 1 John 5:21
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PRACTICE

Do the activity found below. Take your time over it and journal your answers to the questions posed and any discoveries you make.

Identifying Idols Tool:

In *Counterfeit Gods*, Tim Keller expounds on this central definition:

A counterfeit god is anything so central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living. An idol has such a controlling position in your heart that you can spend most of your passion and energy, your emotional and financial resources, on it without a second thought. It can be family and children, or career and making money, or achievement and critical acclaim, or saving “face” and social standing. It can be a romantic relationship, peer approval, competence and skill, secure and comfortable circumstances, your beauty or your brains, a great political or social cause, your morality and virtue, or even success in the Christian ministry. When your meaning in life is to fix someone else’s life, we may call it “codependency” but it is really idolatry. An idol is whatever you look at and say, in your heart of hearts, “If I have that, then I’ll feel my life has meaning, then I’ll know I have value, then I’ll feel significant and secure.” There are many ways to describe that kind of relationship to something, but perhaps the best one is worship

Reflect and make notes on these statements to help identify potential idols in your life:

- What we spend time thinking about is our “ultimate concern.”
- What we spend our money on is our “ultimate concern.”
- What we fear losing is our “ultimate concern.”
- What we fear being discovered about ourselves is our “ultimate concern.”
- What we want others to think/know about us is our “ultimate concern.”

SURRENDER

One evidence that it is indeed God we worship is whether we have surrendered to His will for our lives. We surrender to God when we recognize He is sovereign and all-powerful, certainly. But surrender is not passive resignation or fatalistic cynicism. When we surrender to God, who is good and loves us beyond comprehension, we experience something beautiful and rich and sustaining. Trust and confidence don't begin to describe that kind of surrender...

DISCUSS

What comes to your mind when you think of surrender? Is it positive or negative? Why?

A STORY ABOUT SURRENDER

As you read, take your time; engage your mind as well as your imagination.

Jesus in Gethsemane

READ:

Matthew 26:36-56

- What do we learn about God/Jesus?

- What do we learn from the people in the story?

- Is there a sin to avoid, promise to claim, example to follow, or command to obey?

- Who do you most identify with in the story and why?

EXPLORE FURTHER

How do these passages help you better understand surrendering to God:

- 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

- Romans 10:1-3

- Proverbs 3:5-12

PRACTICE

Explore an area of your life you are reluctant to trust God with.

- Ponder: What am I afraid of? Why is this issue so important to me? How can I give it to God practically?
- As you pray over that area, imitate Jesus' prayer from the story above: "Nevertheless, not my will, but Yours."
- Record your experience in your prayer journal.

MARGIN

By now you may have realized that following Jesus can be time consuming, maybe all-consuming. As we grow in the practice of surrender and worship to the rule of our Lord Jesus we feel some tension. Often the problem is that we are trying to add Jesus to a very full life. Instead, we need to learn to reorient our lives around His reign and authority. That can be very difficult in a busy, noisy life...We must learn to eliminate hurry, busyness, noise, and distraction to be with and hear from God.

DISCUSS

What comes to your mind when you think of margin? Do you believe you have margin in your life? How do you gain or lose margin?

A STORY ABOUT MARGIN

As you read, take your time; engage your mind as well as your imagination.

Mary and Martha
READ Luke 10:38-42

- What do we learn about God/Jesus?

- What do we learn from the people in the story?

- Is there a sin to avoid, promise to claim, example to follow, or command to obey?

- Who do you most identify with in the story and why?

EXPLORE FURTHER

How do these passages help you better understand living life with a margin:

- Deuteronomy 5:15

- Psalm 127:1-2

- Matthew 11:28-30

PRACTICE

Assess and adjust how you use your time.

- Practices like Sabbath, Solitude, Silence, and Simplicity have been useful to Christians for millenia in creating and maintaining the space to be with God. Which of these could you begin to practice? How?