

Life Small Groups – Big Impact Connections

THE LIFE OF A JESUS FOLLOWER

*STOP LIVING FOR JESUS
SO JESUS CAN
LIVE THROUGH YOU*

DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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WEEK 1

BURDENED

DAY 1

A JESUS FOLLOWER

EMBRACES RELATIONSHIPS

READ

Read the following passages slowly and carefully.

2 Corinthians 11:3

Deuteronomy 6:5–9

Matthew 22:36–40

EXAMINE

Answer the following questions:

What does the Bible say?

What do these passages teach me about following Jesus?

APPLY

Apply the teaching of Scripture to your life.

How did Jesus summarize the commands of God in Matthew 22?

We know the book of 2 Corinthians was originally a letter written from the apostle Paul to the church in the ancient city of Corinth. The church Paul had helped plant in that city was constantly under threat from internal struggles and strife. The Corinthians viewed information as their spiritual target, and they kept bickering with one another and creating division in their efforts to settle on the “correct” set of doctrines that would lead them to be faithful followers of Jesus.

In the middle of that immorality and strife, Paul wrote 2 Corinthians as a spiritual parent concerned for his children. And in that letter, he used a phrase that is both profoundly wise and incredibly relevant for Christians in our culture. Paul urged them to return to the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

Consider what Paul said. Do those words describe your relationship with Jesus? Simple and pure? If not, why not?

DO

Obey the teaching of Scripture with your life.

We often prefer a superficial system of religion over a genuine relationship with Jesus because the superficial system is easier to control. We have a built-in desire to measure our performance whenever possible—not really because we want to excel, but because it makes it easy for us to say, “I may not be perfect, but I’m doing much better than those people.” We’ve piled all these things on top of the simplicity and purity of simple devotion to Him.

That’s a big problem. But thankfully, there’s a solution. Love God and love others inside and outside of the church. Those two, straightforward, relationship driven commands are where we’re going to spend the rest of our week.

Where do you feel you’ve lost the simplicity and purity of what it means to follow Jesus and turned your relationship into a list of do’s and don’ts?

DAY 2

A JESUS FOLLOWER *ABIDES IN CHRIST*

READ

Read the following passages slowly and carefully.

John 8:28-29
John 14:10-11
John 15:5,19
John 17:3

EXAMINE

Answer the following questions:

What does the Bible say?

What do these passages teach me about following Jesus?

APPLY

Apply the teaching of Scripture to your life.

The Gospels are filled with stories about Jesus and His relationship with God the Father. In this study, we'll use the word ABIDE to describe this relationship.

When you read through the Gospels, it's clear Jesus placed the priority of spending time with the Father above all else. In fact, it's important for us to understand that everything Jesus accomplished flowed from His intimate fellowship with the Father.

When the people of Jesus' day saw Him perform some great miracle, it was because of the Father working in and through Him. When they heard Jesus speak, it was the Father speaking through His Son. Jesus went so far as to say that He can do nothing without the father (John 5:19). Everything about Jesus' life was produced by the power of the Holy Spirit, which was born from His intimacy with the Father and overflowed into the world.

Jesus demonstrated what it looks like to live in moment-by-moment relationship with the Father. Once again, we see this pattern emerge through careful study of the Gospels. He often slipped away into the wilderness to spend time with the Father, just the two of them. Many times He stopped to settle in a garden or go up a mountain to be alone with God.

How much more should the same thing be true of us? The ultimate pursuit of Jesus's life was an intimate love relationship with God the Father. What was true in Jesus's life will be true in our lives as we faithfully follow Him. We must pursue intimacy with the Father by abiding in Christ both personally and daily.

What do we gain by abiding in Christ?

DO

Obey the teaching of Scripture with your life.

How are you currently seeking to abide in Christ personally and daily?

If Jesus believed that apart from an intimate love relationship with Father He could do nothing, why do we often view it as something that is optional to faithfully follow Him?

DAY 3

A JESUS FOLLOWER *CONNECTS WITH OTHER BELIEVERS*

READ

Read the following passages slowly and carefully.

John 1:35-51

Mark 4:35-41

Luke 9:12-27

EXAMINE

Answer the following questions:

What does the Bible say?

What do these passages teach me about following Jesus?

APPLY

Apply the teaching of Scripture to your life.

The Gospels are filled with stories of Jesus actively and intentionally cultivating relationships with His disciples. And there are many of these stories. In this study, we'll use the word CONNECT to describe Jesus' relationship with His disciples and our relationship with other followers of Jesus.

Jesus started by calling His disciples away from their old lives so they could join Him in doing the work of His kingdom. Jesus prayed with His disciples. He taught them, cared for them, challenged them, and walked with each of them through the ups and downs of life.

Jesus devoted time, energy, and passion to His relationships with twelve men. He identified them and invited them to walk alongside Him (John 1:35–51). Jesus joined the disciples on what was supposed to be a quick sail across the Sea of Galilee—and He used the resulting storm to teach them about the power of faith in difficult times (Mark 4:35–41). Jesus challenged His disciples to feed a crowd of more than 5,000 people and then challenged them to trust God in every circumstance by using only five loaves and two fish to provide a feast for everyone (Luke 9:12–27).

The Gospels serve as historical records of the relationship and fellowship that existed between Jesus and His friends. Jesus poured His life into the disciples. Jesus' intimate relationship with the Father spilled into intentional relationships with His disciples.

Why are relationships with other Christians nonnegotiable for Jesus followers?

DO

Obey the teaching of Scripture with your life.

What do we gain by investing in relationships with other Jesus followers?

How are you currently investing in your relationships with other Jesus followers?

DAY 4

A JESUS FOLLOWER

SHARES WITH THE WORLD

READ

Read the following passages slowly and carefully.

John 3:1-17

John 4:7-29

Luke 19:1-10

Matthew 9:9-13

EXAMINE

Answer the following questions:

What does the Bible say?

What do these passages teach me about following Jesus?

APPLY

Apply the teaching of Scripture to your life.

What do you notice about the relationships Jesus cultivated with people who didn't yet follow Him?

The Gospels are filled with stories of Jesus pursuing relationships with the world—meaning, with those who didn't know God. As you journey through the Gospels, you'll read story after story of Jesus seeking out people who were in desperate need of His saving grace. Throughout this study, we'll use the word SHARE to describe Jesus' relationship with the world.

The religious leaders accused Jesus of being a friend of sinners because He joined the hated tax collectors for a meal (Matt. 9:10–12). The tax collector named Zacchaeus welcomed Jesus into his home (Luke 19:1–10). Whether it's those lost in the darkness of religion such as Nicodemus, or those trapped in the seduction of sexual sin such as the Samaritan woman—Jesus is constantly looking to engage with those who are far from God to bring to them the life-changing message of the gospel.

DO

Obey the teaching of Scripture with your life.

One of the key patterns of Jesus' life was building intentional, engaging, loving relationships with people who were far from God, so He could lead them back to God. If we seek to faithfully follow Jesus, we'll pursue the same kind of relationships Jesus pursued with the world.

What do we gain by investing in relationships with people outside of our faith?

How are you currently developing relationships with people who don't know Jesus?

DAY 5

A JESUS FOLLOWER

EMBRACES RELATIONSHIPS

READ

Read the following passages slowly and carefully.

John 13:34-35

EXAMINE

Answer the following questions:

What does the Bible say?

What does the passage teach me about following Jesus?

APPLY

Apply the teaching of Scripture to your life.

Over the next seven weeks of this study, we'll take a deeper look at the three relationships we've thought about this week. But here at the end of this first week, there's one crucial truth we need to think more deeply about. All three of these relationships are interdependent. Listen to the way Jesus describes it in John's Gospel:

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you [Abide], that you also love one another [Connect]. By this all men will know [Share] that you're My disciples, if you've love for one another.

John 13:34-35

Do you see how Jesus powerfully wove all three relationships together? It's out of the overflow of our love relationship with Him that God manifests through us the kind of love

He desires us to have for one another. Then those relationships become the greatest platform we have to authenticate the gospel to this world. It takes all three to function.

DO

Obey the teaching of Scripture with your life.

In Jesus' day, the defining mark of a disciple was the relationship they enjoyed with the one they were following. The same is true in our day. Being a follower of Jesus isn't simply conforming to a system of moral behavior, nor is it merely comprehending a set of doctrinal truths. Following Jesus is first and foremost a relationship. In fact, it's all about relationships.

How has your understanding of what it means to follow Jesus changed as you studied Scripture this week?

Where do you see the greatest opportunity for Jesus to work in your life through this study?