



International Baptist Church of Manila

LIFE OF A JESUS FOLLOWER • SESSION ONE: BURDENED •
2 CORINTHIANS 11:3; JOHN 13:34-35 • 8/16/2020

MAIN POINT

Following Jesus is all about relationships.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Welcome to week 1 of The Life of a Jesus Follower. Over the next eight sessions we're going to consider what it means to faithfully follow Jesus. Whether you've been following Jesus for decades, started following Him yesterday, or don't follow Jesus at all, you likely have some idea about what it means to follow Jesus, so let's begin by talking about those ideas.

How would you describe someone who follows Jesus? What should their life look like?

Has your understanding of what it means to follow Jesus changed since you first began that journey? Explain.

All of us have ideas about what it means to follow Jesus. We develop these ideas in a variety of ways—our family and friends, societal norms, and our church culture. The goal of this study is to help us cut through a cultural understanding of what it means to be a Christian and recover a biblical vision for what it means to follow Jesus.

To pursue that goal we're going to join Jesus in the Scriptures and learn from Him what it means to know and follow Him. So let's pause for a moment to pray and ask Jesus to bless our time as we pursue a deeper relationship with Him.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| WATCH THE VIDEO, "SESSION 1: BURDENED".

Vance began by saying we all have the tendency to make following Jesus about what we do or what we know. Why do we equate faithfulness with knowing and doing? Which tendency do you err towards most often?

What else stood out to you from the video session?

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 2 CORINTHIANS 11:3.

How do we miss the simplicity and purity of a relationship with Jesus when we reduce following Him to doing things for Him or knowing things about Him?

In our Christian journey, we gravitate towards doing and knowing because those things feel attainable to us. In our Christian life, pursuing activity and knowledge only leaves us weary and exhausted. Truly following Jesus is about entering into a relationship with Him. This is freeing because real relationships aren't defined by what we do for someone or know about them—it certainly includes those things—but the essence of a relationship is intimacy.

Following Jesus is about walking in the three relationships Jesus walked in (see John 15:5,12 and 17:18). What are these relationships, and where do we see them in the life of Jesus?

What can we learn about Jesus through relationships that we could never gain through knowing or doing?

Following Jesus means walking in the same relationships Jesus walked in: a love relationship with the Father, in fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ, and in relationships with the world—those who don't know God. We abide in Christ personally and daily, We connect in community through large and small groups. We share in the mission locally and globally.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 13:34-35.

How are the three relationships Jesus walked in interdependent?

All three relationships are interdependent and interrelated. As we begin to walk in the relationships Jesus walked in, His life will naturally flow out of us as He lives in and through us.

As we see God at work in the world, it will deepen our love for Him and our commitment to the church.

What is the difference between living for Jesus and allowing Jesus to live in and through us?

We opened this session asking what it looks like to follow Jesus. How has your original answer changed in light of the video teaching?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Do Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 11:3 describe your relationship with Jesus? Simple and pure? If not, why not?

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?

Which of the three relationships Jesus walked in is most challenging to you: a love relationship with the Father, in fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ, or in relationships with the world—those who don't know God? How is God speaking to you about that today?

PRAYER

Praise God for who He is. Ask Him to help you take hold of the freedom that comes from a relationship with Jesus. Invite the Spirit to work through the Scriptures and this study to grow your faith.

COMMENTARY

| 2 CORINTHIANS 11:3

As determined as he was to fulfill this promise, Paul was also afraid that the Corinthians might be led astray from ... sincere and pure devotion to Christ. Prior to Christ's return, the church is betrothed to him, but the possibility of infidelity and annulment still exist. Paul's responsibility was to help the church remain sincere and pure in its devotion so the marriage would eventually be consummated. Once again, Paul drew from the prophecies of Hosea, who spoke of Israel's apostasy as sexual infidelity (Hos. 2:2-13). This analogy was appropriate in the days of Hosea

because many Israelites expressed their apostasy by joining fertility rituals. In a similar way, the Corinthians were tempted by the immoral practices of Corinthian culture.

| JOHN 13:34-35

Jesus invited His followers to embrace His love and to express His love through their interactions with each other. His commandment to them was not new in the sense that it was different in substance. Rather, it was new in application—one's neighbor was anybody. It also was new in its model—Jesus' self-sacrificing love, especially displayed later on the cross. In an encounter with a scribe, Jesus summarized the commandments in the Mosaic law (Mark 12:28-31). Stated in two Old Testament passages (Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:4-5), the Mosaic commandments directed believers to love God wholeheartedly and to love one's neighbor as one's self.

As Jesus prepared His disciples for their future in His body, the church, He yearned for them to experience the new commandment in their relationships. He had corrected their earlier ambitions over position and greatness by His own humble service of washing their feet. As Judas left the Passover supper the disciples were eating with Jesus, He focused attention on their covenant commitments to one another. Three times in two verses, Jesus repeated the essence of His teaching. To love one another was the supreme means of identification for His disciples.

The kind of love Jesus commanded the disciples to give was not merely the brotherly love of human fellowship. Even unbelievers related to others on that level of love. Jesus wanted His followers to experience and to express God's love. Each of the four occurrences of the Greek word translated "love" and "loved" in John 13:34-35 uses a Greek word meaning God's kind of love. This love seeks the good of another rather than benefit for self. It sacrifices without condition and serves without motive of personal gain.

The source of such love is the Lord Himself. Jesus knew human nature does not love sacrificially and unconditionally as God loves. He reminded the eleven disciples of the way He loved them. The words Just as meant they were to love one another in the same way and to the same degree He loved them. Their only hope for success in loving this way lay in their relationship with Him. As they were channels, receiving and passing on Christ's love, they could fulfill His intention for their lives.

The object of the disciples' love was one another. Jesus certainly was not excusing the disciples from loving other people who were not His disciples. He was not suggesting they form an exclusive club in which they loved each other but not those outside their group. Rather, Jesus was setting a new standard for love among believers.

The disciples' purpose in showing godly love was to witness for Jesus. According to Him, only the disciples' love for one another showed the world they were His disciples. Only by love would they endure together and impact their world.

Jesus calls Christians to love one another, as He said, "Just as I have loved you." We who have received Christ's sacrificial love are to extend that same love to others. His love transforms our hearts so we cannot help but love. If we fail to love, we should examine ourselves to see if His love truly resides in our lives (1 John 4:7-8).

Love among believers provides the foundational testimony to the lost. Unbelievers may criticize Christians, but many do have high expectations of those who claim Christ's name. They look for holy lifestyles among believers and love in their relationships with one another. Weak love among believers results in weak witness to nonbelievers. Worse, when Christians argue and fight with one another, lost people use their bickering as an excuse to reject Christ. The world judges our love for God by the love we have for one another.

Christians should love one another to glorify God. Just as children's behavior reflects on parents' character, even so our love paints a portrait of our Heavenly Father. Just as you are glad when people comment on the good behavior and loving attitudes of your children, so our Heavenly Father rejoices to see His children living in harmony and love.