



WEEK 6

# **HOW SHOULD WE LIVE?**

# WEEK 6 • OVERVIEW

In our discussions last week we learned about the ways the Holy Spirit permanently dwells in us from the moment we place our faith in Jesus. This week, we examine the marks of our new life as disciples of Christ as we walk with Him and grow in His likeness.

## DAYS

1. Follow
2. Stay in the Word
3. Love
4. Bear Fruit
5. Make Disciples

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand what it means to follow Jesus.
- Learn the marks that will always be in the life of a disciple.

## MEMORY VERSE

*Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."*

(Matthew 16:24-25)

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## WEEKLY PRAYER *(write down your prayers for this week)*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

*Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.*  
(Colossians 4:2).

# DAY 1 • FOLLOW

Let's start by reviewing our memory verse:

*Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."  
(Matthew 16:24-25)*

Every day of our lives we are invited to follow others. We're told to be like this successful business celebrity who has built a great company and written a best-seller. If you do what she does in your business, you'll be more successful. Start this diet. Do this workout. Try these tips to redecorate your living room. Follow this plan for financial success. There is no shortage of voices that call us to follow this trend or fad. But the greatest call on our lives as Christians is to follow Jesus.

The simple definition of a disciple is a "follower" or a "learner." A disciple is one who learns from another and endeavors to replicate the teaching and pattern of living given by the teacher. A disciple of Jesus, then, is one who follows His teaching and emulates His life. Jesus calls us to follow Him—to love what He loves, to see the world and the meaning of our lives as He does. Not surprisingly, the early Christians in the Bible were sometimes (disparagingly) called "little Christs"!

As Christ-followers we listen to the voice of Jesus, who said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). To follow Jesus is to walk in His steps; to mimic His life, His love, and His example. It is a high calling, and comes with some challenging decisions.

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First, to follow Jesus implies a change in direction: "Come after me." It's a new direction, a new path. Discipleship requires a modification to the path we've been on when we were following our own plan for life. There is a fork in the road, and we have to choose to follow the trail charted by our Savior and Lord.

Second, denial has to occur to follow Jesus—a denial of our own self-directed life. To be a disciple is to say no to self-will and to let some self-oriented aspirations die. That's what it means to take up our cross—a death occurs to our former passions and some of our prior life aims and priorities. The cost of discipleship is reorienting our lives toward Jesus and away from ourselves.

But the rewards for following Jesus are overwhelmingly beautiful, both now and eternally: "For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 16:25) Discipleship is the good life, the blessed life. In John 7 Jesus invites us to come to Him, believe in Him, follow Him, and out of our lives will flow rivers of living water—abundant life as God intended us to experience. Discipleship is a lifelong endeavor of learning, growing, and loving the Master we follow. It's a life of wisdom and reward and blessing for ourselves and for others.

## JOURNAL

How has your life changed since you began following Jesus? Write down some ways you've had to die to yourself to follow Him.

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Is there anything you sense God calling you to leave behind today in order to follow Him more closely?

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List some of the rewards you've experienced since following Jesus.

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## DAY 2 • STAY IN THE WORD

Take a moment to read this week's memory verse:

*Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 16:24-25)*

The second clear mark of a disciple is a love for the Word of God. Jesus said, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32).

"You truly are my disciples if you remain in my word." How clear is that? Disciples stay near the words of Christ and are guided by them through every experience of life. Being a student of the words God has spoken, and believing them by faith, has always been a mark of those who follow God.

But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night (Psalm 1:2)

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. (Colossians 3:16)

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. (Joshua 1:8)

It makes perfect sense that to follow Jesus we need to know what He has said. We must let the Word of God saturate our minds in order to walk closely with Him. Simply put, this means time alone with our Bible. Through consistent time in the Scriptures we grow in faith and we get our marching orders.

Meditation and memorization of Scripture leads to an internalized knowledge of His truth, which in turn leads to living in freedom: "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). Freedom from sin. Freedom from faulty thinking. True disciples are marked by their love of the Bible.

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# JOURNAL

What is one aspect of Jesus' moral example that challenges you in your own life?

What do the following verses promise regarding the Word of God?

Psalm 19:7-11

Psalm 119:9-16

Psalm 119:33-40

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## DAY 3 • LOVE

Start with trying to recite our verse from memory:

*Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (Matthew 16:24-25)*

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

Jesus loves me, this I know—He loves all people. He loves the broken, the religious, the put-together, and the pretender. That is the reason He came to this world. To demonstrate His love toward us, even while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:8). Not surprising then, is His description of those who follow Him: By this will all people know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. Followers of Jesus love other people. It is another hallmark of what it truly means to be a disciple: we care about others, we love them, we serve them. Loving people the way Jesus does is a defining feature of a Christian’s life.

Love is the initiative to seek the welfare of another without necessarily expecting reciprocation. It is the choice to value the well-being of another and to meet their needs as we’re able, even at times to the point of sacrifice.

We’re frequently inclined to think first of our own needs, but love moves us out of the sphere of our self-interests to seek the interests of others. This is what God did for us when He sent His Son to give His life on our behalf. We were far from Him, but His love for us drew us near. Is it an unexpected idea, then, that God would ask us to love in the way we have been loved by God? We follow Him, so we love as He loves.

We never do this flawlessly, but it is our ambition. Some people God places in our lives are harder to love. They think differently than we do, or they don’t return our love. But they are drawn to love.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? (Matthew 5:43-46)

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Loving others demonstrates that our faith is real, and that we truly are children of God. John asks the rhetorical question:

But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? (1 John 3:17)

Calvary's mission is to build Christ-centered communities of people fully devoted to loving God and loving others. As we increasingly become this kind of loving community, we demonstrate our true identity as followers of the One who always loves perfectly. It makes no sense for someone who has experienced the love of God to withhold love from someone else. To be a disciple is to be a lover of people who need to know the One we follow.

## JOURNAL

Describe the kind of love Jesus has for you.

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What kind of person is easy for you to love?

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What kind of person is more difficult for you to love?

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## DAY 4 • BEAR FRUIT

Let's begin again with our memory verse:

*Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 16:24-25)*

When a garden is planted, the tomato plants produces tomatoes. Pumpkin seeds will grow pumpkins. A good tree bears good fruit (Matthew 7:17). It can't help but do so. In a similar way we, as disciples of Jesus, produce a life of good works that reflect the new life God has given us in Christ. If we are followers of Jesus, we can't help but produce the kind of good fruit that His life in us is meant to produce. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. (John 15:8)

The "much fruit" that Jesus refers to in John 15:8 can be seen in two ways. First, it is the evidence of a transformed life. Following Jesus and walking in the Spirit will produce love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22- 23). We grow in His likeness as we follow Him; we become conformed to His image in virtue and godly character.

Second, the fruit Jesus refers to is a life of good works. As we follow Him, we learn to do the very things He did while He was in the world. He was kind and winsome and served others throughout His life. Serving others in love is another distinguishing characteristic of the life and ethic of Jesus. When He washed His disciples' feet in humility and service, He stated:

"You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. 16Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." (John 13:13-17)

Disciples do what the Teacher does. We share His mission to be gracious in serving others.

*"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10)*

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## JOURNAL

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)

As you examine this list, which one or two would you want to ask God to increase in you? Write out a prayer asking God to develop that virtue in your heart this week.

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What do you think are the good works that God has prepared for you to do in this season of your life?

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## DAY 5 • MAKE DISCIPLES

Recite our verse from memory if you can:

*Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 16:24-25)*

The final mark of discipleship we will examine this week is that disciples make other disciples. It is not sufficient that we have come to follow Jesus. He asks us to share the good news of His gospel with others that they too might come to know the Savior.

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)*

Jesus promised His presence with us to the end of all time. This is what enables and empowers all followers of Christ to grow more confident in their ability to give witness to the love and grace we have come to know in Jesus. When He called his very first disciples, Jesus invited them to leave their profession as fishermen and take up a new profession: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men," (Matthew 4:19).

We may not all leave our professional vocation to become full-time evangelists, but we're all called to be confident witnesses of His saving gospel. Followers of Jesus invite others to follow Him. Disciples make disciples who make other disciples. Often we can get intimidated at the thought of asking others to follow Jesus. Will we have all the answers? Will we be rejected? Will we know what to say? These fears are usually rooted in an unhealthy sense of pride!

It is helpful to know that the response of others is not up to us. Our responsibility is to simply share our story (how has Jesus transformed my life) and point them to the good news that God loves them immeasurably in Christ (He gave His love and His life to save us eternally). What happens next is between God and the ones we're sharing with.

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9)

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Because we follow Jesus, let's grow in confidence to tell how great He is!

## JOURNAL

Who helped you become a disciple of Jesus? What did they do that helped you understand your need of Christ?

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What is your biggest fear about sharing your faith story with others? How can you overcome that fear?

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**WEEKLY PRAYER** *(write down your prayers for this week)*

- 1.
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*Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.  
(Colossians 4:2).*