A SIX-WEEK DISCIPLESHIP EXPERIENCE

FOLLOW

KNOW JESUS. FOLLOW JESUS. MAKE DISCIPLES.

WEEK 1

FOLLOW JESUS

The Gospel & Salvation

BIG QUESTION

What does it mean to truly follow Jesus?

CONNECT

Welcome to FOLLOW

Over the next six weeks, we are going to explore what it means to build your life around Jesus. Some people may be new to following Jesus. Others may have followed Him for years. Some may still be trying to understand exactly what they believe. Wherever you are starting, this experience is designed to help you know Jesus, follow Jesus, and make disciples.

> **Following Jesus isn't a six-week experience. FOLLOW is six weeks designed to help you build a life of following Jesus.**

Before we talk about spiritual growth, biblical community, mission, serving, or purpose, we begin here: What does it actually mean to follow Jesus? Share as you feel comfortable. You are welcome to listen, and honest questions are welcome.

"When someone says they're a Christian, what do people often assume that means? Does that necessarily mean they're following Jesus?"

WORD

1. KNOW THE GOSPEL

The word gospel means "good news." But we cannot fully understand why the Gospel is such good news until we understand our condition apart from Jesus.

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

In verses 1–7, what was our condition apart from Jesus, and what did God do for us?

According to verses 8–10, how are we saved, and what place do good works have in the life of someone who is saved?

The Gospel in Four Words

GOD

God created us to know Him, enjoy Him, represent Him, and live for His glory. We did not create ourselves; we belong to the God who made us. Humanity was created in God's image and designed for relationship with Him. (Genesis 1:1, 26–27; John 17:3)

SIN

We have all sinned against God. Sin is more than making mistakes; it is rebellion against our Creator and choosing our way instead of His. Our sin separates us from a holy God, and the consequence of sin is death and judgment. (Genesis 3; Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23; Isaiah 59:2)

JESUS

God did not leave us in our sin. Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man, lived the sinless life we could never live. He died on the cross in our place, bearing the judgment our sin deserved. He was buried and rose again on the third day. Because of Jesus, sinners can be forgiven, reconciled to God, and given eternal life. (John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1–4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Colossians 1:14)

> **The Gospel isn't good advice about what you need to do for God. It's good news about what God has done for you through Jesus.**

RESPONSE

Salvation is a personal response to what God has done for us in Jesus. We are not saved because our parents are Christians, because we attend church, because we are baptized, or because we do enough good things. We are saved by grace through faith in Christ.

Repentance means a change of heart and mind about sin that turns us from sin toward Jesus. Faith means trusting Jesus—who He is and what He has done—as our only hope of salvation. (Mark 1:15; Acts 3:19; Ephesians 2:8–9)

Write It in Your Own Words

> **GOD → SIN → JESUS → RESPONSE**

If someone asked you, "What is the Gospel?" how would you explain it using these four words?

DISCUSS

Which part of the Gospel is easiest for you to accept? Which part is hardest? Why?

What is the difference between knowing facts about Jesus and actually trusting Jesus?

2. RESPOND TO JESUS

Read Romans 6:22-23

Paul contrasts what sin earns with what God gives. Death is described as a wage; eternal life is described as a gift.

Following Jesus doesn't begin with becoming more religious. Following Jesus begins with surrendering to Jesus.

How do these verses help answer the question, "What does it mean to be saved?"

Have you personally responded to Jesus through repentance and faith? Share how you came to trust Him, or what questions you are still working through.

Saved FROM and Saved FOR

Jesus saves us from sin, condemnation, and eternal separation from God. He saves us for life with Him: to know God, walk in the good works He has prepared, and bring Him glory. Eternal life is not merely endless existence; it is knowing the true God through Jesus Christ. (John 10:10; John 17:3; Ephesians 2:10)

> **Jesus didn't only save you from death. He saved you for life with Him.**

Personal Reflection:

What has God saved you FROM, and what has God saved you FOR according to these passages?

John 17:3 reminds us that eternal life is not merely endless existence. At the heart of eternal life is knowing the true God through Jesus Christ.

> **Christianity isn't ultimately about knowing things about Jesus. It's about knowing Jesus.**

What Happened When God Saved Me?

Salvation has many beautiful dimensions. Everyone who is in Christ is:

Truth	What It Means
JUSTIFIED	God declares us righteous because of Christ. (Romans 5:1)
RECONCILED	Our broken relationship with God is restored. (Colossians 1:21–22)
REDEEMED	Jesus paid the price to set us free from slavery to sin. (Mark 10:45; Ephesians 1:7)
ADOPTED	We are welcomed into God's family as His sons and daughters. (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:4–5)
INDWELT	The Holy Spirit takes up residence in every believer. (John 14:23; Romans 8:9–11)

Which of these truths about salvation means the most to you right now? Why?

> **We aren't saved BY good works. We are saved FOR good works.**

3. KNOW YOU ARE HIS

Many followers of Jesus struggle at some point with assurance. They wonder, "Am I really saved?" Scripture does not tell us to build our confidence on how spiritual we feel on a particular day. It points us to Jesus and the promises of God.

Read 1 John 5:11·13

What gives us assurance that we belong to Jesus, and how should that assurance shape the way we live?

Have you ever struggled to know whether you belonged to Jesus? What contributed to that uncertainty—your feelings, your performance, or something else?

Facts, Faith, and Feelings

Our feelings are real, but they are not always reliable. Some days we may feel close to God; other days we may not. The promises of God do not change with our emotions.

Think of a train. The FACTS of God's Word are the engine. FAITH trusts those facts. FEELINGS are the caboose. The train should not be driven by the caboose.

> **Don't let your feelings determine what is true. Let God's truth shape what you believe.**

Does Genuine Faith Produce Evidence?

Yes. We are not saved by the fruit our lives produce, but genuine faith does not leave us unchanged. Jesus taught that fruit reveals what is happening at the root (Matthew 7:16). First John gives several signs that accompany genuine faith:

- We confess Jesus as Lord. (1 John 4:15)
- We increasingly desire to obey Christ. (1 John 5:3–4)
- Our relationship with sin changes—we no longer want to make peace with it. (1 John 3:9)

- We grow in love for other believers. (1 John 5:1)

> **The evidence of salvation isn't perfection. It's a new direction.**
>
> **Fruit doesn't produce salvation. Salvation produces fruit.**

Where do you see evidence of Jesus changing your desires, priorities, relationships, or obedience?

4. FOLLOW JESUS IN BAPTISM

Baptism does not save us, but it matters deeply because Jesus commands His followers to be baptized. For a believer, baptism is an important first step of public obedience.

Read Romans 6:3·4 (also see Matthew 28:18·20; Acts 2:38·41)

What does baptism picture according to Romans 6?

What is baptism?

Baptism is a public declaration that you belong to Jesus. It visibly identifies a believer with Jesus and pictures His death, burial, and resurrection.

Does baptism save me?

No. Jesus saves. Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ, not through a work we perform. Baptism is not something we do to earn salvation; it is an act of obedience that follows salvation.

> **Baptism isn't how you earn salvation. It's an act of obedience that publicly identifies you with the Savior.**

Why baptism by immersion?

Vision practices believer's baptism by immersion because this reflects the New Testament pattern of baptism following personal faith in Jesus and vividly pictures being buried and raised with Christ.

Why should I be baptized?

Because Jesus commanded it. Baptism is one of the first opportunities a follower of Jesus has to publicly declare, “I belong to Jesus.”

Have you trusted Jesus but never followed Him in believer’s baptism? If so, what questions or obstacles are keeping you from taking that step?

RESPOND

WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

FOLLOW is not simply about learning more information. Every week we will ask how God’s Word is calling us to respond.

- ☐ I need to trust Jesus.
- ☐ I have questions about what it means to trust Jesus.
- ☐ I have trusted Jesus, but I need to be baptized.
- ☐ I need assurance and want to talk with someone about my salvation.
- ☐ I want to learn to explain the Gospel clearly to someone else.
- ☐ I want to thank God for what He has already done for me in Jesus.

What is the clearest next step God is calling you to take?

PRAY

Take Time to Respond to God

Before your group closes, take a few quiet moments to reflect. If you realized you have never personally trusted Jesus, do not leave that unresolved—talk with your leader. If you have trusted Jesus but have not been baptized, identify that as your next step. If you belong to Jesus, thank Him that your salvation rests in what He has done, not in what you can do.

What would you like your group to pray with you about this week?

FOLLOW THIS WEEK

Following Jesus continues after the gathering. Use these simple practices during the week:

READ	Read Ephesians 2:1–10 again. Notice what was true of you apart from Christ, what God did, and what He has saved you for.
REMEMBER	Memorize Romans 6:23.
PRACTICE	Explain the Gospel out loud using GOD → SIN → JESUS → RESPONSE without looking at your notes. Who is one person you could explain it to this week? Pray for them and look for an opportunity to share.
ACT	Take your next step: trust Jesus, pursue baptism, talk with someone about assurance, or share what Jesus has done with someone else.

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Memory Verse

Romans 6:23 (ESV) — “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

A Preview of the FOLLOW Journey

You may be wondering, “If I have trusted Jesus, what now?” The rest of FOLLOW will help answer that question.

- Week 2 — ABIDE in Jesus — Build rhythms of Scripture and prayer.
- Week 3 — GROW in Jesus — Learn how the Holy Spirit transforms us as we obey Jesus.
- Week 4 — BELONG to His Family — Understand biblical community and committed belonging to a local church.
- **Week 5 — LIVE Your Purpose —** Use what God has entrusted to you to serve His Church and participate in His mission.
- **Week 6 — LIVE on Mission —** Share the Gospel and help make disciples.

My Notes