

Leader's Guide

Strengthening the Family

Following Jesus: Embracing the Truth

John 11:45-57

Pastor Sebastiano Rosa

August 30, 2026

Conversation Goal

To help group members examine what it means to truly believe in Jesus; not simply agreeing with what He says, but depending on Him enough to let His truth shape our attitudes, relationships, decisions, and actions.

As the church transitions out of *Strengthening the Family* and back into John, this conversation gives people an opportunity to ask: What truths have I heard, and where is Jesus now asking me to trust Him enough to actually live them?

Synopsis

Returning to John 11, Sebastiano reminded us that Jesus raised Lazarus not only out of love for Lazarus, but so that those watching would believe that He had been sent by the Father. Yet the miracle produced two very different responses: many believed, while others resisted what was plainly before them because they trusted another story instead. Sebastiano challenged us to understand belief as more than intellectual agreement with Jesus. It is relying on and depending upon Him enough to follow His way, even when doing so requires surrendering our preferences, loving difficult people, and trusting that His way is better than our own.

The big question is: Do I trust Jesus enough to let His truth overrule what I want, think, or feel?

1. What does it mean to believe?

Discussion Question

Sebastiano described biblical belief as more than agreeing that something is true; it means relying on or depending upon Jesus. How does that understanding deepen or challenge the way you think about "believing in Jesus"?

Teaching Point

Jesus intentionally connected the raising of Lazarus with belief: *"I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."* The miracle wasn't simply something impressive to observe; it demanded a response.

In the same way, believing in Jesus is more than knowing the right things about Him. **What we truly believe is eventually revealed by what we're willing to trust and act upon.** Depending on Jesus means allowing who He is and what He says to shape how we actually live.

Follow-Up Prompts

- What's the difference between believing something *about* Jesus and depending *on* Jesus?
- Why can it be easier to agree with Jesus than to follow Him?
- Where do our actions reveal what we actually believe?
- Can you think of something Jesus teaches that is easy to affirm but difficult to practice?

Additional Scripture

John 8:31-32 — Remaining in Jesus' teaching marks genuine discipleship.

James 2:14-18 — Genuine faith produces action.

Matthew 7:24-27 — Hearing Jesus' words versus putting them into practice.

2. Have the truths we've heard changed how we're living?

Discussion Question

Looking back over the *Strengthening the Family* series, what truth has God been asking you not simply to agree with, but to depend on Jesus enough to actually put into practice?

Teaching Point

Over the summer we've heard truths about marriage, family, forgiveness, conflict, unity, relationships, spiritual health, and loving one another. But hearing truth is only the beginning. The real question is whether we **trust Jesus enough to live differently because of it.** Spiritual growth happens when truth moves from something we hear and affirm to something that shapes our actual relationships and choices.

Follow-Up Prompts

- What message or Scripture from the summer has stayed with you?

- Where have you already noticed God changing you?
- Is there something you know is true but still struggle to practice?
- Has God changed the way you approach a particular relationship?
- Where are you tempted to say, "I know what Jesus says, but..."?

Additional Scripture

James 1:22-25 — Don't merely listen to the Word; do what it says.

Luke 6:46-49 — "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

Philippians 2:12-13 — God works in us to desire and accomplish His purposes.

John 14:21 — Love for Jesus expresses itself through obedience.

3. What competes with the truth of Jesus?

Discussion Question

The religious leaders saw the same evidence everyone else saw, yet fear and self-interest shaped the story they chose to believe. What voices, fears, assumptions, or "half-truths" can make it difficult for us to trust and follow Jesus?

Teaching Point

The religious leaders didn't deny that Jesus was performing extraordinary signs. Their fear was about what might happen **if they allowed Jesus to continue**: *"The Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation."* Their fear of losing what they valued became more powerful than the truth standing in front of them.

We can do something similar. A lie doesn't always sound completely false; sometimes it contains enough truth to make it convincing. Fear, past experiences, cultural messages, personal preferences, or our desire to remain in control can become filters through which we interpret what Jesus says.

Following Jesus requires learning to ask: **"Am I responding to what is true or to something I am afraid might be true?"**

Follow-Up Prompts

- Why are half-truths sometimes more dangerous than obvious lies?
- What fears tend to make it difficult for people to trust Jesus?

- What lies do our culture commonly tell us about relationships, happiness, success, or identity?
- How can past experiences shape what we assume is true?
- How do we recognize when fear rather than faith is driving a decision?
- What role does Scripture play in exposing lies?
- Is there a "what if..." that regularly makes trusting Jesus difficult for you?

Additional Scripture

Romans 12:2 — Be transformed through the renewing of your mind.

2 Corinthians 10:5 — Take thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ.

Philippians 4:8 — Train our minds toward what is true.

4. Whose way will I trust?

Discussion Question

Where are you most tempted to trust your own preference, perspective, or desire rather than depending on Jesus and seeking what is best for His body and His mission?

Teaching Point

Personal preferences aren't necessarily wrong. But they become a problem when **getting what I want becomes more important than following Jesus, loving others, or pursuing His mission**. Sebastiano challenged the church to prayerfully examine whether our preferences have sometimes become more authoritative to us than what is best for the body.

Dependence on Jesus requires humility. Sometimes faithfulness means holding a conviction firmly; other times it means acknowledging, **"This matters to me, but it isn't ultimately about me."** Before reacting, criticizing, or withdrawing, we can pray, listen, ask questions, and seek understanding.

Follow-Up Prompts

- How can we distinguish a biblical conviction from a strong personal preference?
- Why can surrendering a preference feel like losing something?
- How do you normally react when something doesn't go the way you think it should?
- What does humility look like when you genuinely disagree?
- Why is asking questions often healthier than making assumptions?
- How can prayer change the way we respond to disagreement?

- Where might Jesus be asking you to say, **"Your way, not mine"**?

Additional Scripture

Philippians 2:3-5 — Value others above yourselves and adopt Christ's mindset.

Romans 12:3-5 — Think of yourself soberly as one part of Christ's body.

1 Corinthians 10:23-24 — Seek the good of others rather than your own good.

Proverbs 3:5-6 — Trust in the Lord rather than leaning on your own understanding.

5. What will dependence on Jesus look like this week?

Discussion Question

If believing means depending on Jesus enough to live His way, what is one specific action He may be asking you to take this week?

Teaching Point

Sebastiano ended the message with an intentionally concrete challenge: **love someone radically, even someone you don't particularly like or with whom you've experienced conflict.**

Dependence on Jesus is expressed through ordinary acts of obedience: forgiving, serving, listening, encouraging, surrendering a preference, pursuing reconciliation, showing kindness, or moving toward someone we'd rather avoid. That's where belief becomes visible.

Sometimes the clearest declaration that **"I trust Jesus"** is simply choosing to do what He says when another response would be easier.

Follow-Up Prompts

- Who might Jesus be asking you to move toward?
- Is there someone you have been avoiding?
- What would "radical kindness" look like toward that person?
- Is there something you need to forgive, apologize for, or release?
- Is there a preference you need to hold more loosely?
- What's one action you could take in the next seven days?
- What might keep you from following through?
- How can the group pray for you or encourage you?

Additional Scripture

Luke 6:27-36 — Love enemies and do good to those who mistreat you.

Romans 12:9-21 — Genuine love expressed through concrete action.

1 John 3:16-18 — Love not merely with words but with actions and truth.

Galatians 5:6 — Faith expresses itself through love.