

Leader's Guide
Called by Christ Chapters 1-12

Called by Christ
Chapter 1 – Followers Answer the Call

I. Introduction – Called

Do you think God calls everyone?

“Your calling will certainly affect others, yet it is yours alone to answer. Along with being unique, it is also costly and rewarding. It will likely lead you to places that frighten you now but will feel as natural as home when the time is right.” Charles Swindoll

What do you think of this quote?

“There are two great days in a person's life: the day you were born and the day you discover what you were born to do.”—
John Maxwell

II. Day 1

Read John 1:35-41

First thing – the first thing Andrew did was to and tell his brother Simon about Jesus.

How urgent are you to tell others about Jesus?

People need to know our Jesus.

Maybe they have heard about Him, but maybe they don't know our Jesus.

Mormon story in Christianity Today. The Jesus they thought they knew was not the Jesus we know and when she started studying the Bible she found a Jesus that she did not know.

Read John 1:42

Cephas, which means Peter and also means ‘Rock.’

What do you think Peter thought about having his name changed?

Why the name ‘Rock?’

What words would you use to describe someone who is called ‘Rock?’

Stable, strong, immovable, foundation, not easily swayed

“In the ancient Near East, a person’s name was intimately linked to his or her identity and reputation. *When God reoriented a person’s life, he also changed his name.*”

Lois Tverbreg, *Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus*

Has your life been reoriented by God?

Jesus changed Peter’s name not to describe the man he was, but to describe the man he would become.

He chooses us not for who we are, but for who we will become.

He can change us into the people we need and want to be.

We have had a name change - Christian

III. Day 3

“Each of us has a choice to make about whether we will answer the call that Jesus makes on our lives.”

Read Luke 5:1-5

“Put down into deep water and let down the nets.”

That was not a fisherman giving advice.

What do you think Peter may have been thinking when Jesus told him to go to deep water and let down the nets?

“This is never going to work.”

“He’s not a fisherman, but he is a Rabbi so maybe he is going to teach me something.”

I don’t think he expected to catch a lot of fish.

What does Peter’s response to Jesus’ instructions tell you about him and about what Peter thought about Jesus?

He obeyed Jesus.

He listened to Him.

Maybe he was curious about Jesus.

Read Luke 5:6-8

“Peter responded like a man who was in the presence of God.”

What does Peter’s confession tell you about him?

Peter knew God when he saw Him.

There would be many who saw Jesus do miracles and they did not respond like that.

It is possible to see God and not respond with confession.

Leaving Everything

Read Luke 5:9-11

What did they leave to follow Jesus?

“For followers, there has to be change when we answer the call to follow Jesus.”

What has changed in your life because you have answered Jesus’ call to be a follower?

“In Jesus, these men found someone worth losing everything for. In Christ, they encountered a love that surpassed comprehension, a satisfaction that superseded circumstances, and a purpose that transcended every other possible pursuit in this world. They eagerly, willingly, and gladly lost their lives in order to know, follow, and proclaim him. In the footsteps of Jesus, these first disciples discovered a path worth giving their lives to tread.” *Follow Me*, David Platt

When it says they left everything, what were some of the things they left?

Family, career, dreams, jobs, possessions

IV. Day 5

Luke 9:1-6

Why do you think Jesus sent the apostles out without Him?

Maybe Jesus was preparing them for the day when they would be without Him.

To gain confidence and courage

To see God work, provide, in their lives.

“This experience away from Jesus strengthened the apostles’ faith and allowed them to experience God’s provision. They learned that with God’s power they were able to do His work, even though Jesus was not with them.”

“We can stay in our comfortable church and study the Word in our comfortable home, but there comes a time when will call us to leave our comfort zones.”

“There will come a time when we must step out in faith and be God’s messengers to the world. When that time comes, we must rely on God to give us all we need for whatever He has called us to do.”

What did Jesus give them when he sent them out?

What did Jesus tell His apostles not to take with them?

How would you feel if you were sent out on a journey and told not to take anything?

Exposed; vulnerable; “What if...?”

Why do you think Jesus told His disciples to take nothing for their journey?

So that they would see God provide.

To provide opportunities for others to give to them.

“Their training included learning to depend on God for everything they needed. Learning to be a follower means learning to trust God to meet all of our needs. We are not to trust in clothes, food, or money, but in God, the One who meets all of our needs.”

When do you find trusting God to be difficult?

When the bank account is low

When things happen that are out of our control

When bad, difficult things happen

Dealing with those who reject the message.

There will always be people who will not accept the message of Jesus.

I love that Jesus tells us there will be a time when we can move on.

“Turning away from hard-hearted rejecters was not only an issue of judgment but also a question of priority. There is only so much time and opportunity available to evangelize, and that time is too precious to waste on those who have hardened themselves against the truth.” John MacArthur

Jesus sent them out in pairs.

It helps to have a friend when we go to minister to others.

V. Closing

Answering the call

Story in Write it Down, Make it Happen page 31

Girl doing her homework in library. Struggling with homework.

Call over the intercom says, “All students needing help with homework, please come to the second floor.”

She was the only student who answered the call – and had the head librarian all to herself in a conference room for exclusive tutoring.

While the call of God goes out to many, few answer the call.

And sometimes He calls us to do crazy things like, leave everything behind or don't take anything with us.

When God calls us we can be assured that it will not be easy and we will be called to step outside of our comfort zone.

Are you willing to answer God's call?

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Chapter 2 – Followers Learn to Trust

I. Introduction

“It may be a terrifying thought, but we have to trust God more than we trust ourselves.”

Francis Chan, *Multiply*

We have to trust God wherever He leads us.

We have to trust that He know what is best for His glory and for us than we do.

II. Day 1 – Storms of Life

Jesus’ Day:

Matthew 14:12 – John’s Death

Matthew 14:13-14 – Healing people

Matthew 14:19 – Miraculously feeding 5,000

John 6:15 – the people wanted to make him king; disciples hearts were hardened

Matthew 14:22-24 – Spending time alone; sending disciples on ahead

How do you think Jesus felt at the end of the day?

Tired, frustrated, sad, numb?, exhausted, overwhelmed,

Read Matthew 12:22-27

Verse 27 – “Take courage. It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

Seriously?

How could He expect them to not be afraid?

Why do you think He told them that?

As long as He was with them, they had nothing to fear.

How difficult is it to be courageous and not fear when you face storms?

Read Matthew 14:28-31

What do you think the other apostles in the boat thought as Peter stepped out of the boat and onto the water?

He’s going to die; what is he doing; did any of them think, “Man, I wish I had the faith to do that?”

“When we are in the midst of a storm we need to understand that being with Jesus is the best place to be....No matter how bad things get – even if you feel that you are about to drown from grief, loneliness, depression, disease, or whatever storm is raging around you – being with Jesus is always the best place to be.”

How would you describe Peter’s decision to get out of the boat?

Stupid; insane; brave; courageous; spontaneous

Is there some part of you that admires him for doing what no one else would do?

“Sometimes in a storm our reaction is to hold on to what is safe and comfortable.”

“Fear has the power to keep us in the boat.”

What keeps you in the boat?

Not liking the unknown; being in control; comfort

Peter steps out of the boat and walks on water.

How do you think Peter felt as he walked on water?

Like he could do anything; shocked; didn't he expect to walk on water?

To get out of the boat, Peter had to trust Jesus.

Learning to trust Jesus may take us to some crazy places. It may mean overcoming fear and letting go of control.

And then Peter began to sink.

What caused Peter to sink?

Took his eyes off Jesus; saw the winds and waves

Matthew 14:32-33

When Jesus got in the boat, the wind died down.

What was the apostles' reaction to Jesus?

“They had seen Him feed more than 5,000 people, but this time their reaction was to worship Him.”

What do you think had changed for the apostles?

Why was their reaction to worship Him?

He had rescued them; they experienced this miracle

III. Day 3 – The Challenge to Believe

Jesus fed 5,000 people and the next day there were many more people who chose to follow Him.

John 6:25-29

The people wanted to know, “What must we do?”

Why do you think they wanted to know what “works” they needed to do?

Their religion was based on works

What was Jesus’ answer?

Believe

Why do you think it is so hard for many to believe in Jesus?

In their times and in our times

Read John 6:41-59

What did Jesus call himself throughout this passage?

“Jesus wants His followers to look to Him as their source of life. He wants to fill people with Him, the Bread of Life.”

What does Jesus being the “bread of life” mean to you?

Read John 6:60-66

Why do you think so many people left?

Read John 6:67-71

What did Jesus ask His disciples?

What was Peter’s answer?

When so many left, why did the apostles stay?

Do you think His teaching was difficult for them?

I’m not sure they understood His teaching better than those who left, but they trusted Him.

III. Day 5 – The Confession

Read Matthew 16:13-16

Who did the apostles say people thought Jesus was?

John the Baptist; Elijah; Jeremiah or one of the prophets

Who was not listed?

Messiah

“People will often believe a far out, made-up story rather than believe the truth about Jesus.”

What are some modern-day lies that people choose to believe about Jesus?

Zealot

What did Jesus ask His disciples?

Importance of confessing Jesus as Lord

“If you confess with your mouth ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Romans 10:9

Read Matthew 16:17-20

Jesus gave them the keys to the kingdom.

Also told them, “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

“The expressions ‘bind’ and ‘loose’ were common to Jewish legal phraseology meaning to declare something forbidden or to declare it allowed.”

The apostles were going to be leaders in Christ’s church. They were going to be given a lot of power as they set up His church.

Why do you think it was so important to Jesus that He began talking about the church?

They had never heard of it.

First time the word was used.

“The church is God’s agenda for the world.” Rick Warren

IV. Closing

- ✦ Followers learn to trust when we:
- ✦ Walk with Him through the storms of life
- ✦ Believe even when many refuse to
- ✦ Confess Him as Lord

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Chapter 3

Followers Obey

I. Intro

Rick Warren quote

- ✦ “Every time you trust God’s wisdom and do whatever he says, even when you don’t understand it, you deepen your friendship with God... We obey God, not out of duty or fear or compulsion, but because we love him and trust that he knows what is best for us.”

Have you ever obeyed God out of duty, fear, or compulsion?

This journey of faith often begins out of duty, fear, or compulsion and as we grow we learn to obey out of love.

II. Day 1 – The Difficult Path

Background: Peter’s confession; talking to them about the church

Matthew 16:20 – Why did Jesus tell His apostles not to tell others about him?

Read Matthew 16:21

Details of Jesus’ death

Read Matthew 16:22-23

Why do you think Peter reacted so strongly?

Didn’t want Jesus to die; couldn’t believe that Jews would have a part in his killing; thought Jesus was going to be made King of the Jews; in shock

Who did Jesus say would have a hand in killing Him?

Jewish leaders

What if Jesus told them that the Romans were going to kill Him?

They would not have been as surprised; “That’s what we have been trying to tell you. That’s why we need to get this revolution going.”

What did Jesus say to Peter?

“In trying to defend Christ on the basis of his own understanding, he found himself standing against Christ?” John MacArthur

Why do you think Jesus reacted so strongly to Peter?

He was undergoing Satan’s temptation

How do you think Peter felt about Jesus calling him Satan?

Luke 4:13 – an opportune time

Read Matthew 16:24-28

Denying self

What does denying self mean to you?

“Self-denial is not denying to ourselves luxuries such as chocolates, cakes, cigarettes and cocktails (though it may include this); it is actually denying or disowning ourselves, renouncing our supposed right to go our own way.”

The Cross of Christ, John Stott

Self wants to:

Go our own way

Not go to church

Not serve others, serve self

Give in to depression, control, self-loathing, sinful nature,

A job that pays more

Cross carrying

What do you think the apostles thought when Jesus said that His followers must “take up his cross?”

This image would mean much more to these disciples when they saw Jesus carry His cross before He was crucified.

Where was Jesus carrying His cross?

To His death

We have to carry our cross to the death of our selves.

“As Bonhoeffer puts it, ‘When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.’ Our ‘cross,’ then, is not an irritable husband or cantankerous wife. It is instead the symbol of death to self.”

The Cross of Christ, John Stott

“Cross-bearing is widely misunderstood. It is not old age, poverty, taxes, illness or bad weather, or any other discomfiture of life that comes unavoidably into the lives of men. It is the acceptance, for the sake of the will of God, of some burden or burdens, otherwise avoidable, but which are undertaken out of a pure desire to fulfill the Master’s purposes.” James Burton Coffman

“Taking up one’s cross is service. It is service to others and service to God.”

Follow Me

Requires obedience to Him.

“This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world.” 1 John 5:3-4

What does it look like in our daily lives when we deny self, pick up our cross, and follow Jesus?

These commands all go together.

To be a follower of Christ we have to deny ourselves, pick up our cross, and then follow him.

litmus test *noun*

: something (such as an opinion about a political or moral issue) that is used to make a judgment about whether someone or something is acceptable

What if we used this scripture as our litmus test?

What if every day, we asked ourselves if we are denying self, picking up our cross and following.

You can't be a follower without denying yourself and picking up your cross.

Jesus' followers are cross bearers.

Day 3 – Witnessing His glory

Read Matthew 17:1-3

What do you think was Peter's state of mind after hearing Jesus talk about his death, being rebuked by him and then told to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Jesus?

Luke 9:28-31

What did Moses and Elijah talk to Jesus about?

Why do you think Moses and Elijah were sent to talk to Jesus?

What might they have said to encourage Jesus?

Read Matthew 17:4-8

Luke 9:32-36 “As the men were leaving Jesus...”

Mark 9:6

Why do you think Peter asked to build tents or shelters for Moses, Elijah and Jesus?

Going to the retreat

Many of us went to the retreat and sometimes you can come back from the retreat and be on a spiritual high.

Have you ever had a spiritual high?

“We see His glory on the mountain, but we never live for His glory there.”

Oswald Chambers

“The challenge is to take the experience on the mountain and allow it to transform our everyday lives.”

What was God’s response to Peter’s request?

Shema – listen or hear

“In the Bible the word *shema* is widely used to describe hearing and also its outcomes: understanding, taking heed, being obedient, doing what is asked....Almost every place we see the word “obey” in English in the Bible it has been translated from the word *shema*.”

Listening to the Language of the Bible

God’s instructions to the apostles were for them to obey Jesus.

Why was it important for Peter, James and John to obey Jesus?

2 Peter 1:16-18

How do you think this experience changed Peter?

Transformation

They witnessed Jesus transformation.

As followers of Jesus we too are being transformed into Jesus' likeness.

Day 5 – Paying Taxes

Matthew 17:24

Exodus 30:11-16

Exodus 30:12 – A ransom for his life

Jesus was expected to pay this tax.

Matthew 17:25-26

What do you think your response would have been if you, as prince, had been asked to pay the tax on your father, the king's house?

Matthew 17:27

Why did Jesus say he would pay this tax?

Have you ever had a time when it was difficult not to offend?

1 Peter 2:12 – “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”

Why do you think Jesus wanted Peter to go to the lake, catch a fish and have the money be in the mouth of the fish?

“Following requires obedience even when we do not understand.”

Romans 13:1-2, 5-7

What do you think of this scripture?

Oppressive government; high taxes; cheats; rulers were very wealthy

In addition to humility and obedience, what do you think Peter learned the day Jesus paid Peter’s taxes?

Trust – God will provide

Jesus calls His followers to walk in obedience as we learn to trust Him.

“Our goal as disciples is never just to believe God’s Word; our goal is to obey God’s Word.”

Follow Me, David Platt

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Chapter 4 – Followers Learn Humility

I. Introduction

Do you know someone you would consider a humble person?

If so, what are the qualities of a humble person?

“Humility – the **discipline** of putting others ahead of self, the **choice** to value others above self – is, at its core, a matter of faith. If we genuinely believe that “He cares for us,” then we need never worry about serving our own interests. We can afford to focus our entire attention on meeting the needs of others because we have every confidence that God will spare nothing of His infinite resources to meet ours.” Charles Swindoll, *So You Want to Be Like Christ*

Philippians 2:3-4

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, **4** not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”

It takes humility to forgive, sacrifice and serve others.

II. Day 1 – Forgiveness

Read Matthew 18:21-22

“Peter wanted to know where the line is for the number of times we must forgive.”

Peter suggested 7 times. More than twice the number the Rabbis taught one should forgive.

Jesus’ answer – “not 7 times but 77 times.”

Also, 70 times 7

Can you imagine forgiving someone that many times?

“Jesus made it clear that for His followers there is no limit to forgiveness.”

This is hard! No way, can I do that in my own power!

Read Matthew 18:23-27

How big was the debt?

10,000 talents was the equivalent of over a million dollars.

Huge debt!

What did the master order to be done as repayment for this debt?

Ordered that he, his wife, and children be sold.

What was the response of the servant?

Begged for mercy

The master gave mercy

“In his great mercy, the master cancelled the debt and allowed the servant to go free.”

How would you feel if you had been forgiven such a large debt?

Thankful; grateful; overwhelmed;

Is it possible that you would feel like you were owed forgiveness?

What had the servant done to receive such mercy?

“The master forgave not because the servant deserved it, but out of his great mercy.”

We are the servant in this story and God is the master.

We have immeasurable sin, debt, in our lives.

Worry, gossip, not forgiving, cheating, bitterness, anger – they all add to our sin debt.

“God has developed a new possibility for dealing with betrayal and hurt: You owe, I’ll pay. He forgives, but forgiveness does not come cheap.”

Read Matthew 18:28-31

What did the servant do to the one who owed him?

Why do you think he acted that way?

Was he just a cruel, callous person?

Or did he lose sight of what he had been given?

This man has lost sight of what he has been given.

Most likely, he has nothing and all he can think about is that he is owed by someone else.

We can get caught up in what someone owes us, or said to us, or the way they treated us, or what they did to someone we love, and lose sight of what has been done for us.

Satan wants us to focus on the wrongs done to us and not what we have done and the forgiveness we have received.

Read Matthew 18:32-35

“Jesus made it clear that the measure we use to forgive others is the measure God will use with us.”

Forgiveness is hard!

It is also a choice.

“To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.” C.S. Lewis

Day 3 – Leave Everything

Read Matthew 19:16-20

Why do you think this young ruler asked Jesus what he still lacked?

Was he looking for validation and a pat on the back?

Did he think there must be more?

Mark 10:21 tells us that Jesus loved this man.

“Jesus loved this man and wanted him to be more than a rule follower. Jesus wanted this young man to be a Jesus follower.”

What do you think this man might have said if Jesus said something like, “I know you are a good Jew and you give a tenth of everything you have. I would like for you to give another 10% to the poor.” Or what if he had said give 50%? But Jesus told him to give away everything and come follow me.

“He (the rich young ruler) wanted to say yes to following Jesus without saying no to himself. He wanted to be close enough to Jesus to have eternal life, but not so close that it required personal sacrifice.”

Not a Fan, by Kyle Idleman

This man allowed his possessions to keep him from following Jesus. What are some things that we allow to get in the way of following Jesus?

It may be different for each of us

“Jesus wants us to give up anything in our lives that keeps us from following Him wholeheartedly.”

Read Matthew 19:23-26

The apostles were “greatly astonished.”

Peter and the others were confused about who receives eternal life.

Receiving eternal life is not about what we do, it is all about what God had done and the grace he gives.

Read Matthew 19:27-30

“Peter’s statement is not a self-righteous statement, but a statement of fact – they had left everything to follow Jesus.”

The apostles would receive rewards.

Followers of Jesus have to sacrifice.

“The rich young ruler came to Jesus wanting another rule to follow and Jesus called him to sacrifice and live in relationship with Him. The young man was not willing to make sacrifices and live in a relationship with Jesus.”

Are you willing to sacrifice and live in relationship with Jesus?

Day 5 – Serving One Another

Read John 13:1-3

John 13:3 says Jesus knew:

1. The Father had put all things under His power
2. He had come from God
3. He was returning to God

Because He knew these things, Jesus could serve those He loved.

“Jesus confidently served because He knew who He was and He knew His purpose.”

We should confidently serve because we know who we are – God’s creation and we know we have been given His spirit and eternal life is promised for those who believe.

So, why do we often struggle with serving others?

The disciples are more concerned with glory, honor, power and prestigious positions than serving others.

“It is hard to serve when we are more concerned about receiving places of glory and honor.”

Read John 13:6-11

Why do you think it was so hard for Peter to accept Jesus’ service?

He knew who Jesus was – the Messiah, sent from God

He still expected an earthly king who would rule over his kingdom.

Kings don’t wash feet

“To the apostles, the role of servant did not fit alongside the role of Lord.”

What do you think about Jesus, the Son of God, serving in this way?

Washing

Wiersbe quote page 18 *Be Transformed*

“This basic truth of Christian living is beautifully illustrated in the Old Testament priesthood. When the priest was consecrated, he was bathed all over, and that experience was never repeated. However, during his daily ministry, he became defiled; so it was necessary that he wash his hands and feet at the brass laver in the courtyard.”

Why was Jesus giving forgiveness to Peter and the other apostles?

✦ **How do you think the apostles felt as they washed Jesus wash everyone’s feet?**

Humbled; were they thinking about forgiveness?

Appalled? Or embarrassed for Jesus?

What did Jesus tell the apostles they needed to do for one another?

“Jesus taught His followers to care for others such as the poor and the outcast, but this time He taught them to take care of one another.”

Why do you think Jesus commanded them to wash one another’s feet?

“This group needed to learn to get along, work together, forgive one another, love one another, and serve one another.”

“The church is made up of sinful people who must learn to love, forgive and serve one another in order to accomplish the mission God has set before us.”

Closing

Followers of Christ learn humility through forgiveness, sacrificing and by serving one another.

Called by Christ
Chapter 5 – Followers Fall

I. Introduction

“Jesus gave Peter some excellent teaching about betrayal and arrogance, but Peter didn’t understand what Jesus was talking about until he actually betrayed Jesus. Peter’s failure was the primary cause of his understanding and maturity. So do we encourage people to fail so they can grow? No, we encourage people to grow, which means they will fail.”

Peter became the man he became, the follower of Christ that Jesus called him to be *because* of what he learned after he denied Christ.

Do you agree?

Do we give one another the grace to fail?

Does it sometimes look like we expect perfection from one another?

II. Day 1 – Warning

Read Matthew 26:31-35

Matthew 26:35 – “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.”

Mark 14:29 – “Even if all fall away, I will not.”

Luke 22:33 – “Lord, I am ready to go to prison and to death.”

John 13:37 – “I will lay down my life for you.”

Peter believed that he would never leave Jesus. He even thought that he was willing to die with or for Jesus.

Why do you think Peter was so adamant in his belief that he would die for Jesus?

Delusional; was this Satan working in Peter's life?; pride
Do you think Peter really believed that anyone was about to die?
Was he just saying this to make Jesus feel better, or maybe make himself feel better?

“Peter believed he would die for Jesus when what Peter needed was for someone, a Savior to die for him.”

Peter thought he could be Jesus' savior, not understanding that Jesus was His savior.

When we read this, we see how ridiculous it was for Peter to argue with Jesus.

Have you ever argued with God?
How or when have you argued or disagreed with God?

“Pride leads us to believe that we know what is best.”

Followers of Jesus have to accept God's will, listen and obey.

Read Luke 22:31-32

Sifting – purify grain; separating good wheat from rubbish

Satan believed that if the disciples were sifted then their faith would sift out like rubbish from wheat.

“This sifting process that Satan was about to put Peter and the other apostles through was an intense assault on their faith. The sifting process in the lives of followers is a life-changing, faith-testing time.”

I believe the sifting process is much more intense than a more typical time of testing.

While believers all under go trials and testing, do you think all believers go through a time of sifting?

Not sure that everyone does

Job and Peter – we are told that Satan sought permission

“Satan sifts in order to destroy, but God allows the sifting process to refine our faith.”

What are some characteristics or qualities that you see in Peter’s life that needed to be sifted?

Pride; arrogance; control; giving up control to God’s will; trying to lead rather than follow

We need to examine our own lives and see what needs to be sifted.

“These (trials) have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

I Peter 1:7

Verse 32

Jesus told Peter that He was praying for him.

“Strengthen your brothers.”

Why do you think it was important for Peter to encourage the other disciples?

They all suffered through Jesus’ death;

Have you ever strengthened and encouraged someone because of something you have been through?

We need to learn from the things we go through and encourage others.

“The first step to spiritual strength is the sincere, humble acknowledgement of one’s own spiritual weakness.”

John MacArthur

We need to acknowledge and own weakness and understand that our strength comes from God and His spirit and not anything we do on our own.

III. Day 3 – Watch and Pray

Read Matthew 36:36-39

Prayer was an important part of Jesus’ life.

Mark 1:35 – Jesus prayed early in the morning

Luke 5:16 – Jesus prayed alone; in lonely places

Luke 6:12 – Jesus prayed all night

Luke 11:1 – The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray

As Jesus neared the end of His life, His deepest desire was to spend time in prayer. He wanted His 3 closest friends to spend time with Him praying.

“On reaching the place, he said to them, ‘Pray that you will not fall into temptation.’”

Luke 22:40

“Jesus did not instruct His apostles to pray for Him. He encouraged them to pray for themselves so that they would not fall into temptations.”

What do you pray for the most?

Do you ever pray not to fall into temptation?

We must spend time praying for our spiritual health, not only our physical health.

“Jesus was teaching the disciples that spiritual victory goes to those who are alert in prayer and depend on their heavenly Father. The other side of that lesson, and the one the disciples would learn first, was that self-confidence and unpreparedness are the way to certain spiritual defeat.”

John MacArthur

Self-confidence and unpreparedness

Read Matthew 26:40-46

3 times Jesus went to pray and 3 times he returned to find Peter, James, and John sleeping

Luke 22:45

“Jesus’ sorrow led Him to prayer while the disciples’ sorrow led them to sleep.”

How do you think they felt about not staying awake and doing what Jesus asked them to do?

Mark 14:40 – “They did not know what to say to Him.”

Matthew 26:42 – “May your will be done.”

“A primary purpose of prayer is connecting with God in order to transfer His will into your life. It’s collaborating with God to accomplish His goals.”

Charles Swindoll

Praying for God’s will to be done in our lives.

Do you find that easy to do?

Why or why not?

Jesus showed His disciples, and He shows us how important prayer is in the life of followers.

IV. Day 5 - Jesus’ Arrest

Read Matthew 26:47-50

Why do you think Judas chose to betray Jesus?

Jesus was not leading the revolution that Judas wanted;

Do you think that maybe Judas betrayed Jesus thinking that it would cause Jesus to get on with this revolution never expecting that it would lead to Jesus’ death?

Killing Jesus quotes (ipad) pages 279, 361 & 365

Some people want to follow Jesus as long as it fits their agenda. When things don’t go the way they want, or it gets hard, they will quit.

Large crowd

Chief priests, officers of the temple guard, elders, and a large detachment of soldiers.

100's maybe 1,000 men came to arrest Jesus.

What do you think Peter and the other apostles thought as they saw this crowd coming toward Jesus?

Did they think about Jesus telling them he was going to die?

Matthew 26:51-54

What do you think Peter was thinking when he drew his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant?

Ephesians 6:12

“Christians must open their spiritual eyes to see that the battle we are fighting is against the “powers of this dark world,” and the only way we can fight that battle is with the weapons God has given us.”

Matthew 26:55-56

Why do you think the apostles abandoned Jesus?

If we try to fight this spiritual battle in our own strength, or relying on anything except God, we will end up running for our lives – just like Peter.

Followers of Jesus need to be aware of Satan and his desire to destroy us.

We have to heed Jesus' warning.

We need to pray about the spiritual battle.

We need to prepare ourselves with His weapons.

Ephesians 6:11-18

Called by Christ

Chapter 6 – Followers Get Up After They Fall

I. Introduction

“Peter’s greatest spiritual danger was that he might never forgive himself for his human weakness and destroy himself like Judas did...When Christians do not freely and joyfully accept God’s forgiveness, Satan uses their guilt to beat them to a spiritual pulp.”

Footsteps of the Fisherman by Scott Walker

We all fall, we all make mistakes, in our Christian walk. But we all have to get up after we fall and part of that is forgiving ourselves for our fall.

We also have to own our mistakes.

II. Day 1- The Denial

Read Luke 22:54-57

Why do you think Peter followed at a distance?

To see what was going on; maybe he thought they would let Jesus go and he wanted to be there

- ✦ “Peter was staying close enough to see what was going on but far enough away to keep from getting involved.”

What might it look like when followers “follow at a distance?”

“Some believers stay close enough to look the part of a follower, but they keep far enough away so that their lives are not changed.”

Why might some believers “follow at a distance?”

Don't want to change their lives; think they will have to change if they get too close; don't want accountability;

Denial

Read Luke 22:58

Why do you think Peter denied knowing Jesus?

Fear

“Fear can keep us from being the follower that God calls us to be. Fear can keep us from serving. Fear can keep us from being a part of the ministry we are called to. Fear can keep us from talking to others about Christ.”

In what ways does fear hinder your walk with God?

Read Luke 22:59-62

For over an hour Peter stands in the courtyard and 3 times he denies Jesus. It didn't happen quickly. Peter had time to think about what he was doing.

Why do you think Peter continued to deny Jesus after the first and second times?

Why didn't he leave?

Peter still believed he was in control of this situation.

“When we try to face Satan in our pride and self-sufficiency we will find ourselves doing things we never thought we would do.”

Denying Christ

Followers today can also deny Christ.

“They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him.”

Titus 1:16

What are some things we can do that deny Christ?

The Look

As Peter was denying Jesus for the third time, the rooster crows and Jesus looks at Peter.

How do you think Peter felt when Jesus looked at him?

Ashamed; shocked; sorry

“Peter found himself far from Christ not only in physical distance, but also in spiritual distance. His pride and unwillingness to listen to Jesus led him to a place where his sin separated him from Jesus.”

When Jesus looked at Peter, Peter understood how far he was from being the follower that Jesus called him to be.

Wept bitterly.

III. Day 3 – He Has Risen!

Peter has left the courtyard weeping bitterly.

Jesus was tried, crucified, and buried.

We don't know where Peter was throughout this time.

Read Mark 16:1-8

Read John 20:1-2

Peter is the only one mentioned by name.

Mark 16:7; John 20:2

Why do you think Peter is mentioned specifically in both Mark and John?

He was the leader; his sin, denial, was specifically mentioned

What were the apostles doing when Mary Magdalene went and told them that Jesus had risen?

Mourning & weeping

Of course they were. Jesus was dead and everything they had invested their lives in for 3 years was over. They believed that their dreams died alongside Jesus.

Read Mark 16:9-11

Read John 20:3-9

The apostles did not believe Mary.

Not unusual, she is a woman.

What do you think Peter thought as he discovered the empty tomb?

Read John 20:10-18

Luke 24:34 and 1 Corinthians 15:5 tell us that Jesus appeared to Peter.

What do you think Jesus might have said to Peter when He appeared to him?

We don't know exactly, but we know Jesus' character and we can be assured that Jesus did not come to condemn Peter.

“Jesus gave Peter what he needed the most at that time – encouragement, comfort, forgiveness, and grace.”

Read John 20:19-20

The disciples are hiding in fear.

Jesus has appeared to numerous people and the disciples are still hiding in fear.

“Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who has seen Him after He had risen.”

Mark 16:14

Fear, lack of faith and refusal to believe

Jesus calls His followers to leave behind the fear and lack of faith. He calls us to believe in Him.

IV. Day 5 – Follow Me

Read John 21:1-6

Jesus was risen, but they were not spending their days with Him.

He was coming and going. He appeared to over 500 people.

The apostles were back to what was familiar and comfortable.

How do you think they are feeling in these days after Jesus' resurrection?

What do we do now?

John 21:7-14

“This is the second time Peter decided to leave the safety of a boat to get closer to Jesus...Peter was determined to get to Jesus quickly.”

Peter made it a priority to get to Jesus.

Read John 21:15-17

“Peter denied Jesus three times, but Jesus gave Peter the opportunity to state publicly that he loved Him three times.”

✦ **Why do you think Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him “more than these?”**

Had Peter’s love for Jesus changed after everything he had been through?

“We have to love Jesus more than anything or anyone else to be the follower He calls us to be.”

What did Jesus tell Peter to do?

Follow Me

John 21:18-19

A lot the same about the first calling, on the lake.

The call has changed.

How do you think Peter felt when Jesus called him to follow Him the second time?

Relieved; given a second chance

What are some things Peter knew the second time when Jesus called him to follow that he did not know when he was first called?

Following Jesus means denying self; Satan's attacks will be fierce; more convinced that Jesus was the Messiah.

Peter's time with Jesus has come full circle. His journey began with 'follow me' and as his time with Jesus on this earth nears its end, Jesus again commands Peter to 'follow me.'

We all need reminders to follow Jesus and sometimes we need second chances.

As followers of Jesus, we will all fall but Jesus calls us to get up and 'follow Him.'

Called by Christ

Chapter 7 – Followers Live by the Spirit

I. Introduction

“You don’t need the Holy Spirit if you are merely seeking to live a semi-moral life and attend church regularly... You only need the Holy Spirit’s guidance and help if you truly want to follow the Way of Jesus Christ. You only need Him if you desire to “obey everything” He commanded and to teach others to do the same.”

Forgotten God by Frances Chan

II. Day 1 – Witnesses

“Peter looked unqualified when Jesus chose him and when he denied Christ he looked even less qualified to continue Jesus’ ministry.”

Read Acts 1:1-2

Jesus was still giving instructions to His followers.

Read Matthew 28:18-20

Instructions for us as well as for the apostles.

How do you think the apostles felt about these instructions?

Gave them purpose; they know what Jesus expects

“When you get a vision for what God has in mind for your life, things change. A lot.”

Chazown, by Craig Groeschel

I think women struggle with this because so much of our identity and purpose is in their family. That is not bad, but...

If you struggle with knowing your purpose, with knowing God's vision for your life, then start with this scripture.

Read Acts 1:3-5

Why was it important that Jesus prove He was alive?

The faith of Jesus' followers was dependent on the fact that He had risen

Matthew 28:11-15

What was the story that some were spreading about what happened to Jesus' body?

Holy Spirit

The followers were told to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the gift promised by God – the Holy Spirit.

John 14:6 – Teach and Remind

John 15:26 – Testify about Jesus

John 16:8 – Convict

John 16:13 – Guide you into all truth

Read Acts 1:6-8

The apostles wanted to know if Jesus was going to “restore the kingdom to Israel.” What does that question tell you about what the disciples were thinking?

Witnesses

Jesus told His followers to witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

Witness where you are and then go out from there.

Home, neighbors, city, ...

Read Acts 1:9-11

“The apostles desire was for Jesus to stay with them. The eternal plan was for Jesus to return to the Father and for the apostles to carry out the mission.”

Read Luke 24:50-53

“The apostles did not mourn His leaving, they rejoiced and worshipped Him.”

There was still a lot that they did not get, yet they understood that Jesus was returning to the Father.

III. Day 3 – Unity

Read Acts 1:12-14

What do you think changed the apostles from men who were concerned about their own positions to a group who was united in prayer and purpose?

This group was given a purpose and a plan by Jesus before He left, go and make disciples, be witnesses.

“How great to have everyone sharing a common purpose, traveling a common path, striving toward a common goal, that path and purpose being God.”

A Long Obedience in the Same Direction, Eugene Peterson

This purpose united them.

What does unity mean to you?

Agreement on everything?

Unity “refers to a oneness of heart, a similarity of purpose, and an agreement on *major* points of doctrine.”

Charles Swindoll

Do you think that we are united like these believers were united?

Acts 1:14

Along with the apostles, who was gathered in Jerusalem waiting for the “gift from the Father?”

Women, Mary, & Jesus’ brothers

John 7:5 – Jesus’ brothers did not believe in Him

1 Corinthians 15:7 – Jesus appeared to James, His brother, after His resurrection

Remember, it’s never too late for people to become followers.

Prayer

Acts 1:14

They were praying constantly.

What do you think this group of followers prayed for as they awaited the gift of the Holy Spirit?

Guidance, wisdom, to know God’s will; strength to do whatever God calls them to do

Judas

Read Acts 1:15-20

Peter stepped up as leader.

How do you think the apostles may have felt about Judas?

Upset, sad; angry; shocked that one of their own played a part in Jesus' death

Read Matthew 27:1-10

Judas, Peter comparison

<u>Judas</u>	<u>Peter</u>
Sin – Betrayal	Sin - Denial
Remorse – return money	Remorse – Wept
Guilt	Guilt

What do you think was the difference between Judas and Peter that caused them to react so differently in their remorse?

Judas did not forgive or seek forgiveness;
Peter sought & received forgiveness & repented

“Repentance is not an emotion. It is not feeling sorry for your sins. It is a decision. It is deciding that you have been wrong is supposing that you could manage your own life and be your own god; it is deciding that you were wrong in thinking that you had, or could get, the strength, education and training to make it on your own...Repentance is a decision to follow Jesus Christ.”

Eugene Peterson

Read Acts 1:21-26

Requirements for one to replace Judas – been with Jesus from the time of his baptism to His ascension

We see the unity of the believers.

“They were focused on Jesus Christ and spreading the message about Him. They were united in prayer and in purpose and they would change the world.”

IV. Day 5 – The Holy Spirit

Acts 2:1-4

“It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”

John 16:7

What do you think the apostles thought when Jesus told them that it would be better for them when He went away?

Read John 14:16-17

How do you feel knowing that God’s Spirit can live in you?

Relieved; empowered

Read Acts 2:5-13

Sound; wind; tongues of fire; speaking in tongues

A crowd gathered; speaking various languages

Map

Filled with the Spirit – v. 4

Ephesians 5:15-21

Living a life filled with the Spirit means:

Speak encouraging and Words of the Lord to one another

Give thanks for everything

Submit

“In order to be filled with the Holy Spirit we must first empty ourselves of anything that keeps the Holy Spirit from working in our lives.”

Is your life Spirit filled?

“When the Holy Spirit descended and in dwelt (the apostles), a radical changed occurred. From that point on, none of these disciples was ever the same. They were no longer timid or confused; they were bold and inspired and began to declare and live the gospel of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Forgotten God, by Frances Chan

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit there should be a difference in our lives. We should not walk around with worry or fear. We should live as witnesses of Jesus Christ in this world.

Called by Christ

Chapter 8 – Followers are a Part of Christ’s Church

I. Introduction

“The church is a group of redeemed people that live and serve together in such a way that their lives and communities are transformed...The church is God’s strategy in reaching the world.”

Francis Chan, *Multiply*

Has your life been transformed by the church?

Is this church transforming this community?

II. Day 1- Peter’s Message

Read Acts 2:14-15

Peter was in Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified. There are people from all over the world. Many speak different languages. Many of these people were there when Pilate asked them who should he release, Jesus or Barabas. Many of these people wanted to see Jesus crucified. There is power in this large group to have someone sentenced to death.

“The courage that Peter displayed on this day was unlike anything he had ever done in his life. This courage and boldness was only accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Peter before the Spirit vs. Peter after the Spirit

“This same Spirit that equipped Peter with the courage to stand before a group of murderers and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah is the same Spirit that will equip us with the courage to do whatever God calls us to do.”

Does it take courage to follow God’s calling, to “do what God calls us to do”?

“Whatever it is that God has called you to do, He has provided His Spirit to accomplish that task. Our job is to rely on the Spirit rather than relying on ourselves.”

In my self, in my own power I do not have courage. I do not have power. I do not have the strength, perseverance, to carry out God’s mission in this world.

Read Acts 2:16-21

Peter tells the people in that large crowd that the power, the Spirit, he has received is available to everyone.

God’s Spirit is available to all of us.

If you had been in that crowd that day what do you think you may have thought when you heard that the power of the Holy Spirit was available to you?

Read Acts 2:22-36

Preaching Jesus

David was not talking about himself, he was prophesying about Jesus.

“Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter stood before this crowd and proclaimed the same truths that had sentenced Jesus to death.”

Verse 23

Verse 36

Facts that Peter gives about Jesus:

He was raised from the dead

Exalted to the right hand of God

He is pouring out His Spirit on people

Jesus is Lord

Read Acts 2:37-41

They were convicted.

Asked, “What shall we do?”

Verse 38 – “Repent and be baptized.”

“Peter made it clear that in addition to belief, followers of Jesus must demonstrate their faith through repentance and baptism.”

Peter’s message made clear that the Spirit was available to all, including you and me.

3,000 people were baptized. Can you imagine?

The logistics of baptizing that many people.

How would we do it today? Who would baptize?

It wasn’t about who was doing the baptizing.

What started with 120 people now included over 3,000 people.

“When you become a Christian you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit...So it’s not a question of whether or not you have access to this power of the Holy Spirit; the question is have you accessed it?”

When you became a Christian you received the Holy Spirit, are you allowing the Holy Spirit to work in your life?

Day 3 – Christ’s Church

Read Acts 2:42-44

2:42

The believers devoted themselves to:

Apostles teaching

Fellowship

Breaking of bread

Prayer

Apostles Teaching

Why do you think it was important for these followers to devote themselves to the apostles' teaching?

What were the apostles teaching?

“Followers today need to commit themselves to learning about Jesus. In order to be like Him and show Jesus to the world, we have to continue to learn and grow in Him.”

Fellowship

Fellowship is “the spiritual duty of believers to stimulate each other to holiness and faithfulness.”

John MacArthur

Why do you think it was important for these followers to devote themselves to fellowship?

This group was made up of followers from all over the world; various languages; different cultures;

“Real fellowship is so much more than just showing up at services. It is *experiencing life together*. It includes unselfish loving, honest sharing, practical serving, sacrificial giving, sympathetic comforting, and all the other “one another” commands found in the New Testament.”

Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*

Hebrews 10:24-25

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another...”

When do you have fellowship that results in stimulating and encouraging fellow Christians to live faithful lives?

Breaking of Bread

This was the fulfillment of Passover for Jews.

I Corinthians 11:26

“For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”

What does the “breaking of bread” mean to you and how important is it for you to share with other followers?

Prayer

What do you think the believers may have prayed about?

Direction; guidance; wisdom; desperate for God to work in their midst

“A church that is devoted to prayer is a church that knows God’s mission is the most important pursuit on earth. It is a church that knows it cannot succeed without God.”

Francis Chan, *Multiply*

How do we treat prayer in our fellowship?

Are we “devoted to prayer” in our fellowship?

Have you ever been to an extended prayer time?

A Caring Church

Read Acts 2:45-47

How were they caring for those in need?

What does the fact that this group of believers sold their possessions and gave to those in need tell you about them?

Can you see that happening today in our church?

Should it happen today?

Acts 2:46

What was the result?

Disciple making became easier when this group devoted themselves to:
apostles teaching; fellowship; breaking of bread; prayer; and caring for others.

Maybe it was because Christianity was the new thing, but people were becoming followers without programs. They weren't out knocking doors or doing other programs.

What can we, as a church learn from this?

Maybe we need to be more Spirit led

How does it change our daily lives?

Day 5 – The Power of the Holy Spirit

Read Acts 3:1-10

This man was brought to this place everyday. It had not been that long that Jesus was on this earth, going to the Temple, healing people. But Jesus did not heal this man.

How many times did this man call out to Jesus?

Did he wonder why Jesus did not heal him?

God's purpose and God's timing

His reaction and the reaction of those who saw this miracle.

“The work of the Spirit is always to glorify God, and the Spirit will act in powerful ways when God can be glorified.”

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

I Corinthians 10:31

How can you glorify God in everything you do?

Read Acts 3:11-16

What did Peter want to talk about when this crowd gathered?

Jesus

“Peter did not want anyone to focus on the healed man, himself, or John, but he wanted them to focus on Jesus.”

Acts 3:16

Peter could not always heal. When Jesus was on this earth the apostles could not always heal.

Jesus told them that it was good for them that he would leave.

The Spirit is working in their lives in powerful ways and they are able to heal people.

“No course was taught. No cheerleader led the disciples in mind-bending chants that gave them a positive attitude. No change in environment brought about their transformation. It was the Spirit of God and nothing else. It was the life-changing, attitude altering, dynamic power of the living Lord that swept over them and became permanently resident within them.”

Charles Swindoll

Repentance

Read Act 3:17-26

Peter called people to repent.

He did it on Pentecost and he does it again on this day.

“Repentance must be a change toward God.”

Closing

I see how the Spirit working powerfully in Peter’s life but also in the church.

I see these people being very invested in their church and it was changing many lives.

How important is Christ’s church to you?

Called by Christ

Chapter 9 – Followers are Persecuted

I. Introduction

“We often think persecution is horrible, and certainly in many ways it is. But persecution is often a sign that the gospel is progressing. As long as the gospel lies dormant in a country or amid a people, and as long as no one is coming to Christ, then no one cares about Christianity. It’s only when the gospel spreads and people are converted to Christ that opposition begins to rise against Christianity. It makes you wonder then: Though we don’t seek after persecution, in a sense don’t we want it to come?”

II. Day 1 – The Test

Read Acts 4:1-4

What had just happened before they were arrested?

They had healed a crippled man and preached to the crowd.

Matthew 10:17-18

“Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles.”

Jesus had warned them about times when they would be arrested.

How do you think Peter and John felt about spending the night in jail?

Surprised? Honored?

We will all go through trials and we will have times of testing in our lives.

“No one enjoys being tested, but we can be assured that God uses the trials in our lives to grow our faith.”

Why do you think so many would want to be a part of the church even after seeing Peter and John arrested?

They had seen the miracle; they had heard about this group of believers

Sanhedrin

Read Acts 4:5-12

The Sanhedrin was the ruling body of the nation under the direct authority of the Romans. They were made up of Chief Priests, elders, and legal experts who were mostly Pharisees.

The Sanhedrin played a significant part in Jesus’ death.

Matthew 26:14-16: Judas was paid by chief priests to betray Jesus

Matthew 26:47: Sent the group of people to arrest Jesus

Matthew 26:57-66: Looked for false evidence to sentence Jesus to death

Matthew 26:67-68: Mocked, hit and spit on Jesus

Matthew 27:20: Persuaded the crowd to ask to have Jesus executed

Matthew 27:62-66: Asked Pilate to secure tomb

Matthew 28:12-13: Bribed soldiers after Jesus’ resurrection; came up with a story

This group who did all of this to Jesus was the same group who arrested Peter and John.

What do you think Peter felt as he faced the same group who was so cruel to Jesus and sentenced Him to death?

He knew they had the power to kill him; was he determined to stand up for Jesus? Was he anxious to talk about Jesus to this group?

Acts 4:8: “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit said...”

“The filling of the Spirit occurs when the believer walks in obedience to the Word and Spirit. Yielding His control releases His power in the believer’s life.” John MacArthur

Matthew 10:19-20

“But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”

They relied on the Spirit to speak through them.

Acts 4:12 – “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”

The Sanhedrin did not want to hear this and people today do not want to hear that salvation is found only in Jesus.

Read Acts 4:13-17

The Sanhedrin was astounded by the courage of Peter and John.

What was so courageous about what Peter and John did?

Jesus taught Peter to have courage, not fear, and have faith.

Walking on water

Followers are called to be courageous.

“Courage can be displayed in our lives when we talk to others about Jesus. It can be displayed when we choose to follow Jesus. Courage can be displayed

when we stand up for the truth. We also display courage when we choose to use our gifts in God's service."

Read Acts 4:18-22

What was Peter and John's reply to the warning to stop speaking about Jesus?

Why were they so willing to keep speaking about Jesus even when their lives were in danger?

They believed that even if they died, the Spirit would keep working

III. Day 3 – Ananias and Sapphira

Read Acts 4:32-37

Acts 4:32 – "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had."

Why do you think giving and taking care of others was so important to these followers?

They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and the apostles must have been teaching what Jesus taught about giving to the poor.

"The Bible offers 500 verses on prayer, less than 500 verses on faith, but more than 2,000 verses on money and possessions."

Taking care of the poor has always been important to God.

"Jesus calls followers today to handle their money and possessions differently than those who are not believers. He calls us to live differently than unbelievers."

Do you think Christians deal with their money differently than the rest of the world?

Barnabas in Acts 4:36-37

Ananias and Sapphira

Read Acts 5:1-4

They were seeking glory for themselves.

Verse 3: Satan filled Ananias' heart

Satan was working on these new believers.

Living a life filled with the Spirit or living controlled by Satan

Early church was characterized by devoting themselves to apostles teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer, and taking care of others.

The Spirit was working through Peter by giving him words and through healing.

What are some characteristics of a Holy Spirit-filled life?

Courage; wisdom; discernment; apostles teaching +; love, joy, peace, etc

Read Acts 5:5-11

Peter's responsibility as a leader of the church.

As a leader of the church, Peter had to also do what was difficult by holding the people of the church to a high standard.

Why do you think God's reaction to Ananias and Sapphira was so quick and severe?

“God paid a high price for the church, His Son’s life. He is not going to take lightly anything within the church that allows it to be blemished.”

We have to live differently. It is an insult to God when we continue our sinful ways and act like His followers.

“As members of Christ’s church we should take seriously the church’s purity. Fighting, gossiping, complaining and lying can all tarnish the church. Sin, either blatant or hidden, always corrupts Christ’s church.”

Acts 5:11 – “Great fear seized the whole church all who heard about these events.”

“This fear was a respect for God and helped those followers understand how God values His church.”

IV. Day 5 – Rejoicing Through Persecution

Read Acts 5:12-16

Verse 13 & 14

Contradiction?

“The presence of the living God, whether manifest through preaching or miracles or both, is alarming to some and appealing to others. Some are frightened away, while others are drawn to faith”

John Stott

“As persecution rose and people witnessed the power of God, there were some who wanted to make this commitment while others did not.”

I don't think you would be a half-hearted follower in this church.

Persecution

Read Acts 5:17-26

Jealousy

What do you think these powerful men were jealous of?

Healing; power; respect; attention

The angel of the Lord told the apostles to go and tell people about this “new life.”

How do you think they were describing this “new life?”

“Come join us and you might get to see the inside of a jail cell.”

“In this new life there are blessings, but there will also be trials along the way.”

How do we describe this new life to others?

Acts 5:27-39

5:29

The top priority for Peter and the other apostles was to obey God.

They were not seeking the approval of man.

“How different our lives would be if we all sought to obey God rather than man!”

Acts 5:40-42

Flogged

Left rejoicing

Matthew 5:11-12

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

V. Closing

Week 3 we talked about obedience.

Matthew 16:24 – “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

We see Peter deny himself, take up his cross and follow. He is not doing the easy thing. He is speaking the truth and saying those things leads to persecution.

They were willing to do the hard things because taking up your cross is never easy.

Called by Christ

Chapter 10 - Followers Make Disciples

I. Introduction

The mission - making disciples

“The church has one mission. It is the mission that characterized Jesus’ ministry on earth, and it is the mission that He left to the church when He returned to the His Father. Our mission on this planet is spelled out in the “Great Commission.” We are called to spread Christ’s rule on earth through making disciples.”

“God chose to fulfill His purposes on earth through His church, and He does not have a backup plan.”

Do you agree?

Is this the focus here at this church?

What would you say is the mission of the Northside Church of Christ?

If this is our mission, why are we not baptizing and making more disciples?

II. Day 1 – Spiritual Gifts

Read Acts 6:1-7

Problem: Grecian widows being overlooked.

The apostles wanted to focus on “prayer and the ministry of the word” so they chose others to handle the problem.

“The apostles needed to focus on serving in the ways they had been gifted.”

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

“Followers of Jesus are given gifts so that Christ’s church will be edified and the message of Jesus will reach others.”

Have you ever struggled with knowing what your gift is?
Do you know what gift of the Spirit you have been given?

1 Corinthians 12:11 – “...he gives to each one...”

What helped you find your spiritual gift?

“God would not give you abilities, interests, talents, gifts, personality and life experiences unless He intended to use them for His glory.”

Rick Warren

God has gifted each of us in ways that will glorify Him.

Gifts also help in spreading His word and edifying His church.

After the apostles appointed seven men to help take care of the widows, what happened to the church?

“When followers of Jesus are using their gifts to serve Him, then His church will be more effective in serving others and spreading the message of Jesus.”

We need to all use the gifts we have been given to fulfill the mission of making disciples.

Stephen

One of the men chosen to serve the widows

Had other gifts

Read Acts 6:8-15

Stephen was using the gifts he was given and it made some very angry.

“Using our gifts for God is not always easy, safe, or comfortable.”

Stephen’s speech

Listen to this as if you were a Jew hearing these words.

Stephen is talking about your history.

Read Acts 7:1-53

Everything is good until verse 51.

He accused them of resisting the Holy Spirit.

How can we resist the Holy Spirit?

“When we don’t follow God’s leading or continue in sin, we are resisting the Holy Spirit. When we are unwilling to change our lives and live the way God calls us to live we are resisting the Holy Spirit.”

Read Acts 7:54-60.

Stephen was the first martyr.

How do you see the Spirit working in Stephen’s life?

Used his gifts; forgave; he spoke boldly and courageously

“When we live our lives filled with the Spirit we will be given the courage to face whatever trials come our way.”

Trials in our lives may not be as life threatening as what Stephen faced but they can still require courage.

Forgiveness; speaking boldly about Jesus; using your gifts when it requires sacrificing time and money;

III. Day 3 – Simon the Sorcerer
Read Acts 8:1-4

Persecution

Followers were scattered

What did the scattered believers do?

Preached the Word

“The believers who were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria did not allow discouragement, frustration, or disappointment to keep them from making disciples. The persecution may have changed some plans, but they went where God sent them and they preached the Word.”

How do you handle the discouragement, frustration and disappointment in your life?

Do you allow changes in your circumstances to keep you from your mission as a follower of Christ?

“When unplanned and often unwelcome events happen in our lives they should not keep us from living out the mission that Jesus gave us, to make disciples.”

Read Acts 8:5-8

The word of God is spreading to Samaria.

Simon

Read Acts 8:9-13

“It was a mix of science and superstition, combining astrology, divination, and occult practices with history, mathematics, and agriculture. It could be trickery or demonic.” John MacArthur

“All the people” were following Simon until Philip came to town and taught them about Jesus.

What do you think was the difference between Simon’s and Philip’s message?

Philip preached Jesus while Simon preached Simon.

“Philip, unlike Simon, was not promoting himself. Philip pointed people to Jesus.”

Read Acts 8:14-19

What did Simon do when he saw Peter and John give the Holy Spirit to the believers?

“Simon viewed the power of the Holy Spirit as another way to make money and promote himself.”

Read Acts 8:20-25

Why did Peter say that Simon had “no part or share” in this ministry?

His heart was not right

Peter also told Simon that he needed to repent.

He needed to change the way he was going and begin following God.

“Following Jesus Christ requires a change in our motives, actions, and speech. The way we treat people and the way we think of ourselves should be different. If there is not a change in our lives, then, like Simon, we have “no part” in the ministry of Jesus Christ.

IV. Day 5 – Power

Read Acts 9:32-35

Peter was always pointing people to Jesus.

I Peter 4:11 – “If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that *in all things God may be praised.*”

John 20:30-31 – “Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written *that you may believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

“Miracles were always done to point people to Jesus so that they would believe in Him. Peter performed miracles not to show his power, or even to make someone’s life easier, but to bring people to Jesus.”

After Peter healed Aeneas, what did the people of Lydda and Sharon do?

What do you think it would be like to live in a town where everyone was a follower of Jesus Christ?

Tabitha

Read Acts 9:36-39

How is Tabitha described?

Always doing good and helping the poor

Followers of Jesus are called to do good deeds.

Matthew 5:16 – “In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Ephesians 2:10 – “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

1 Peter 2:12 – “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”

1 Peter 2:15 – “For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.”

Titus 2:7 – “In everything set them an example by doing what is good.”

Titus 3:1 – “Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good...”

Titus 3:8 – “This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote

themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.”

Peter arrives at Tabitha’s house and her friends are there to show him Tabitha’s hand work.

Can’t you hear them going on and on about how she served others?

Why do you think the disciples in Joppa sent for Peter?

“The disciples in Joppa called for Peter and expected him to do something. Maybe they expected a miracle.”

Read Acts 9:40-43

After Peter sent everyone out of the room, what did he do before he told Tabitha to get up?

Prayed

Once again we see the importance of prayer in Peter’s life.

“When we believe in the power of God and rely on Him through prayer, He can work powerfully in this world.”

Do we pray for things that only God can do?

Do you pray boldly or are your prayers ‘safe’ prayers?

Tabitha

“Tabitha was a follower of Christ who had a great reward awaiting her in heaven, but she also had a purpose and mission while here on earth.”

How serious do we take our mission?

Why do we say pray, “Lord, come quickly?”

We should be more concerned about those who don’t know Him.

We should be concerned that His mission is not complete and there are many in this world who do not know Him.

God used Peter to spread the gospel and make disciples through his teaching and through healing.

How do you think Peter felt after raising Tabitha from the dead?

In awe of God’s power and the Holy Spirit; humbled that God is using him;

“Peter knew that only God could work so powerfully in his life. Only God could change the hearts of so many, heal the paralytic, and raise the dead. Only God can work through His followers today to reach a world that so desperately needs Him.”

God’s mission to us remains – go and make disciples.

To fulfill the mission we must rely on God’s spirit to work in us, believe that He can work powerfully in our world and be devoted to prayer.

Called by Christ

Chapter 11 – Followers Are Changed

I. Introduction

Changed

Peter has changed.

The believers are changed.

Quote

“When Jesus told us to go and make disciples, he meant that we would begin a new way of life. Yet most of us do not feel made new. Many of us feel like we’re on the hamster wheel of spiritual formation and nothing is changing. We’re learning a lot, but we’re not experiencing an equal amount of transformation.”

Barefoot Church, by Brandon Hatmaker

II. Cornelius

Read Acts 10:1-4

How does Acts 10:2 describe Cornelius?

Devout and God-fearing; gave generously to those in need; prayed to God regularly

“Cornelius was a good man, but he needed Jesus.”

Tanners

Read Acts 10:5-8

“The hairs were removed by a combination of scraping, soaking, and the application of lime. The hides were then soaked in water containing oak galls and sumac

leaves, rubbed with dog manure, and hammered. The smell of the work was so bad that the tanner had to work outside the town in the direction of the prevailing wind, and it was so bad personally that it could become grounds for divorce.”

Manners and Customs of Bible Times

Jews considered the work of tanners unclean.

Acts 9:43 – Peter stayed with Simon for “some time.”

Why do you think Peter chose to stay in Simon the tanner’s home?

Outsider; outcast

“Gradually God was teaching Peter that God’s plan of salvation was not only for Jews, but for everyone, including Samaritans and tanners.”

Vision

Read Acts 10:9-16

Describe the vision.

“The vision Peter had on Simon the tanner’s rooftop was about more than food. Peter and every other Jew believed they could not eat certain foods and they also believed that God’s redemptive plan did not include Gentiles.”

“The vision had exposed the hypocrisy in his heart and in the heart of his beliefs. He had avoided ‘unclean’ people like the forbidden foods he had been raised to loathe.”

Michael Card

Barriers

Read Acts 10:17-23

Why do you think the men stopped at the gate and did not enter?

Gentiles did not go into Jewish homes.

“Gentiles were not welcomed by Jews and these men knew that while they were acting under Cornelius’ orders, they might not be welcomed by Peter.”

Peter is following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit told him to go with the men.

“Peter was open to the Spirit’s leading even when it led him in surprising and uncomfortable directions.”

Acts 10:23 – invites the men to come in the house.

What do you think Peter was thinking as he thought about the vision he had received and then invited the Gentiles into his home?

Something different is going on; not sure where God is leading

We still have barriers and biases today.

What are some barriers that stand between people today?

Economic; religious

III. Day 3 – A New Church

Read Acts 10:23-26

How do you think Cornelius felt as he waited for Peter to arrive?

Peter’s response.

Read Acts 10:27-29

What does the account of Peter going to Cornelius' house, even though it was against the Jewish law, tell you about Peter?

Peter chose obedience to God over tradition; also obeyed even when he did not have all of the details

“Followers of God are willing to go when God leads, even when we do not have all of the details.”

Have you ever found it difficult to obey when you did not know the details?

Read Acts 10:30-43

What did Peter tell everyone in Cornelius' house that he realized?

So, Peter must have believed that God did show favoritism.

“When God chose the Jewish nation to be His chosen people it was not because He loved them more than all the other people on earth. He chose them to be the nation through whom He delivered His message and plan of redemption to the world.”

10:43

Read Acts 10:44-48

The Holy Spirit

Why do you think the Spirit came in this way to the Gentiles gathered in Cornelius' home?

To show that the Holy Spirit was from God and not from Peter; to show God's power; to show Peter and the others that the Holy Spirit was for the Gentiles as well as the Jews

Peter could have refused to go to the home of a Gentile. And if he had, God would have used someone else.

God has a plan for this world. He is working in this world.

Will you join Him?

It may require a change in the way you think about things.

III. Day 4 – Traditions

Mark 7:1-8; 14-23

Have you ever seen traditions become more important than the commands of God?

We have a lot of traditions – most religions do.

We can't let those traditions become more important than God's commands.

IV. Day 5 – A Strong Leader

Read Acts 11:1-3

What were the Jews upset about?

“Even though they were believers in Jesus Christ, such an obvious breach of Jewish custom outraged them. Acknowledging that Jesus was their Messiah and Lord was one thing, accepting that He was equally Lord of Gentiles was another.”

John MacArthur

Read Acts 11:4-18

After they heard Peter’s story, what was their reaction?

If you were listening to Peter’s story for the first time what do you think your reaction would have been?

11:17

Leader

Why do you think God chose Peter to take the message of Jesus to the Gentiles?

“Peter was arguably the most animated character in Scripture. He was passionate about everything – even the wrong things at times. But Peter eventually learned where to focus his passion. He learned what needed to take precedence in his life. And when that happened, he was able to lead with effectiveness....Once Peter understood that his mission was to spread Christianity – and nothing else – that became the foundation of his decisions.”

John C. Maxwell

How would you describe Peter’s leadership in the early church?

Discerning; wisdom; teacher; gave God the glory; pointed others to Jesus; prayerful; patient

V. Closing

Peter has had some dramatic changes in his life since he met Jesus. At this point in his life, Peter is a mature follower of Jesus but he is still changing.

I Corinthians 3:18 – “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

As followers of Jesus we should be changing to look more like Him. It doesn’t matter how long you have been a Christian we should still be changing and growing in our Christ likeness.

Called by Christ

Chapter 12 – Followers Live Under God’s Grace

I. Introduction

Grace: We are saved by God’s grace. That is great news!

But it is where our journey begins, not ends.

Being a follower of Jesus Christ begins with God’s grace and His grace gives us the freedom to follow.

Titus 2:11-12

II. Day 1 – The Escape

Read Acts 12:1-4

Herod Agrippa I

Herod the Great – had baby boys killed when Jesus was born

Herod Antipas – beheaded John the Baptist

Grandson to Herod the Great

Nephew of Herod Antipas

Herods viewed themselves as gods

Had James, the brother of John, killed.

Acts 5:19 – last time Peter was arrested

How many soldiers were sent to guard Peter? 16

Seems like a lot for one person

Read Acts 12:5-7

What do you think the believers were thinking as they gathered to pray for Peter?

The believers experienced persecution. They saw James killed. They may have been meeting in secret.

They have met together to pray for Peter.

Persistent Prayer

Luke 8:1-5

Pray and never give up.

Do you pray like this? Do you pray like the persistent widow?

Why do you think we often give up praying?

What was Peter doing while the believers prayed?

Sleeping

Night before he has to face Herod and possible death.

“Peter, the night before his trial, slept so soundly that the angel had to hit him to wake him up. Peter was at peace in this dire situation. Peter rested, knowing that God was in control and not Herod Agrippa.”

Peace

Do you think you would have that peace in that situation?

Read Acts 12:8-17

When Rhoda saw Peter and told the others that Peter was there, what was their response?

“You’re out of your mind”

Wasn’t their prayer just answered?

Why do you think they responded that way?

Did they expect something else to happen?

When have you had a prayer answered in an unexpected or surprising ways?

Read Acts 12:18-24

Why did an angel of the Lord strike down Herod?

Do you think this was the first time Herod did not give praise to God?

“The chapter opens with James dead, Peter in prison and Herod triumphing; it closes with Herod dead, Peter free, and the word of God triumphing. Such is the power of God to overthrow hostile human plans and to establish his own in their place.”

John Stott

III. Day 3 – The Conflict

Read Acts 15:1

5 years after his escape from prison

What were the Jews upset about?

Read Acts 15:2-6

Read Galatians 2:11-14

Why does Galatians 2:12 state that Peter separated himself from the Gentiles?

Why do you think he did that?

Have you ever made a decision based on what others might think or say?

Obeying God rather than man can be very difficult.

“The church is a community of Christians who care for one another enough to discipline one another in sin and restore one another in Christ...

Paul was willing to do that to Peter.

Are we willing to do that for one another?

But if we're honest, we are extremely hesitant to share our lives like this. As a result, Christians today are slow to make any commitment to meaningful membership in the church.”

Follow Me, page 161

“It took courage on Paul's part to stand up to Peter and admonish him.”

Read Acts 15:7-11

The Jews were putting on a yoke they could not bear.

I wonder how many people have left the church because of a yoke they could not bear.

A yoke of perfection

“We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

Acts 15:11

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

2 Peter 3:18

Peter’s final words to us are about God’s grace.

Why do you think that Peter’s final recorded words are about grace?

He understood God’s grace.

What does it mean to grow in God’s grace?

III. Day 5 – Study Summary

Followers:

Answer the Call

Peter’s name change and call to follow Jesus

Learn to Trust

Peter walks on water; confesses Jesus as Lord

Learn Obedience

Jesus calls His followers to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him. Transfiguration

Learn Humility

Forgive; rich young ruler; washing feet

Fall

Sifting; watch and pray; apostles abandon Jesus

Get Up After They Fall

Peter deny Jesus; resurrection; calls Peter again to follow Him

Live by the Spirit

Followers receive the Holy Spirit;

Are a Part of Christ's Church

Peter preaches on Pentecost; learn about this church, new community where they are devoting themselves to...

Are Persecuted

Persecution begins by Sanhedrin; Ananias and Sapphira; persecution shapes and defines this group of people

Make Disciples

Jesus' instructions to his followers were, and are now, to make disciples; Peter and others using the spiritual gifts they have been given; Stephen's death

Are Changed

Cornelius; the church changed to include Gentiles

Live Under God's Grace

What have you learned from Peter about being a follower of Jesus?

What lessons have helped you become a better follower of Jesus?

"I often forget that the only way I can follow someone is if we are both moving, not sitting still. If we want to follow Jesus we must remain in motion, hiking behind Him as He walks forward in a chosen direction."

Pilgrimage by Lynn Austin, page 141

I hope you have been challenged to go to the scriptures and continue to grow as a follower.

