



## ***Followers of Jesus Christ***

### **Series Overview**

Following Christ involves a wholehearted commitment. Disciples become like the Master, learners become like the Teacher. Christianity is not simply a ticket to heaven. No self-serving version of Christianity will bring us to maturity in Christ, allowing the church to minister and serve God, others, and the world. No self-centered version of Christianity will let us enjoy the fullness of Christianity in full-faced relationship with Christ. Answering the call to follow Jesus turns our lives in a different direction. We can't follow unless we go where he leads. This series of small group discussions looks at centering our lives on Christ, weathering the storms of life, going where Jesus goes, caring for others, and focusing on God's grace.



**February 8, 2009**

### **Session One: Centering Our Lives on Jesus**

**Theme:** *Everyone who wants to follow Jesus is called to a whole-life commitment and change.*

**Texts:** Luke 9:57–62; 2 Peter 1:3–11

**Summary:** In this study, we investigate the wholeness (integrity) of biblical Christianity. What does it mean to center our lives on Jesus? How does one go about centering all of one's life on Jesus? Obviously, the question demands that we think about who is most important to us, what our lives are all about, and how we live 24/7. Centering on Jesus defines the focal point of life, that to which we return again and again to avoid Christian eccentricity (off-centeredness). Lives centered on Jesus are obvious—people live like Jesus, look like Jesus, and think like Jesus.

### **Ice Breaker**

Share the following exercise as a group.

- Take a moment (probably 30 seconds and no more than a minute) to let each group member do the exercise. Then discuss the results.
- Exercise: Think as quickly as you can of any person you know. Imagine that person's presence, face, features, characteristics, mannerisms. What is the center of that person's life?
- Discussion: Talk about the various 'centers' the group came up with (without identifying the people whom group members thought about).

What are some appropriate 'centers' for the Christian life?

*(You may want to think of Christians you have known who have focused on different aspects of the Christian life in their walk with God.)*

### **Bible Study**

Which of these 'centers' do you think of when you think of Paul?

- His identity as 'chief of sinners' -- forgiveness
- His clean break with his past in Judaism -- newness
- His care for the churches -- love/care
- His desire to share the gospel -- evangelism

Which of these 'centers' do you think of when you think of Peter?

- His denial of Jesus -- forgiveness
- His sermon on the Day of Pentecost -- proclamation
- His confession of Jesus as the Christ -- worship
- His commitment to spiritual growth -- teaching

What was Jesus saying to the man in Luke 9:57-58?

- You don't know what you are promising to do.
- Thank you for being willing to help me.
- Going will take you away from what is comfortable.

What was Jesus saying to the man in Luke 9:59-60?

- Why do you make excuses about things that don't matter?
- Following me requires that you get your priorities right.
- The best thing you can do is proclaim the kingdom.

What was Jesus saying to the man in Luke 9:61-62?

- You can't start and stop.
- Following me requires a commitment to work and service.
- To follow me is to be part of the kingdom of God.

Which of the three do you identify with most closely? Why?

- The willing volunteer who wanted to follow.
- The one whom Jesus asked to follow.
- The one who volunteered conditionally.

What would you say were the 'centers' of the lives of the three 'followers' in the text?

- The willing volunteer who wanted to follow.
- The one whom Jesus asked to follow.
- The one who volunteered conditionally.

Discuss the progression of 2 Peter 1:5-11.

- Which item in the list is the easiest for you?
- Which item in the list is the most difficult for you?
- What are the 'near-sighted' and 'blind' in this text centered on?
- What should they be centered on?
- What 'things' does Peter say we should 'do'?

### **Applying**

What are some of the greatest challenges you face in living out a wholehearted commitment to Christ?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you think the Christians you know are focused on Christianity as a ticket to heaven?

Describe the characteristics you believe are part of maturity in Christ?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you think most Christians enjoy full-faced relationship with Christ?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how different is your life now than before you became a Christian? [If you've been a Christian a while, how different do you think your life is than what it would otherwise have been?]

On a scale of 1-10, how willing are you to go where he leads?

### **Connecting**

How can the members of this group help one another focus on Jesus?

How can the members of this group connect with and serve specific people not in this group? [Lovingly discuss specific people, needs, and actions if possible.]

How can we demonstrate to others that our life is focused on Jesus?