



GRACE COMMUNION
INTERNATIONAL

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A FOLLOWER OF JESUS CHRIST



SESSION 1: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A FOLLOWER OF JESUS CHRIST?

LEADER SNAPSHOT

 **Big Idea:** Disciples follow Jesus by learning and living what he taught.

 **Key Scripture:** Luke 9:23–26

 **Session Goal:** Help participants reflect on what it means to follow Jesus with both their minds and lives.

 **Estimated Timing:**

- Icebreaker and Welcome: 10 minutes
- Scripture Reading and Discussion: 20 minutes
- Exploration of “Follow Me”: 20 minutes
- Application and Closing: 20 minutes
- Prayer: 5 minutes

 **Leader Tip:**
This session sets the tone for the series. Use a warm and invitational tone. Reassure participants that discipleship is a lifelong journey, not a one-time decision.

WHAT DO WE KNOW?



SESSION 2: WHAT DO WE KNOW?

LEADER SNAPSHOT

 **Big Idea:** Doctrine matters because it helps us know and worship God as he truly is. Our beliefs shape our relationship with God and how we live.

 **Key Scripture:** 2 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 3:16–17

 **Session Goal:** Help participants see that Christian doctrine is not dry or distant. It is relational, rooted in grace, and essential for healthy discipleship.

 **Estimated Timing:**

- Icebreaker: 10 minutes
- Scripture reading and discussion: 20 minutes
- Exploring the role of doctrine: 25 minutes
- Application and take-home practice: 15 minutes
- Closing prayer and reflection: 5 minutes

 **Leader Tip / Pastoral Note:**
Some participants may carry negative experiences with the word “doctrine.” They might be associating it with judgmentalism, legalism, or boredom. Your tone can help reshape that. Be warm, curious, and relational in how you frame the conversation. Emphasize that knowing God more deeply is like growing in love within a relationship. It takes time, and it’s worth it.



WHAT DO WE DO?



SESSION 3: WHAT DO WE DO?

LEADER SNAPSHOT

 **Big Idea:** We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Our good works do not earn us salvation, but they are the evidence of his life at work in us.

 **Key Scripture:** James 2:14–17; Ephesians 2:8–10

 **Session Goal:** Help participants understand that good works flow from grace, not guilt. Good works are a joyful response to the love and life we've received in Christ.

 **Estimated Timing:**

- Icebreaker: 10 minutes
- Scripture reading and discussion: 20 minutes
- Exploring grace and good works: 25 minutes
- Application and take-home practice: 15 minutes
- Closing prayer and reflection: 5 minutes

 **Leader Tip / Pastoral Note:**

This session walks a fine line, emphasizing good works without slipping into legalism. Keep bringing the group back to grace. When someone shares a story of serving, ask, “How did you see God’s love at work in that?” Let this session be about joyful alignment with Jesus, not performance.



Teaching: The Danger in Teaching Good Works

Here’s a critical question: What is the danger in teaching good works?

After his resurrection, Jesus gave the Great Commission. He told his disciples to teach others to obey all he had commanded. Discipleship must include good behavior, but it should not become a checklist.

Jesus did not bring a new list of rules to an already burdened people. He brought good news — the kingdom of God is near. And people came by the thousands to hear him, not because he enforced rules, but because he offered grace and hope.

Jesus accepted people, ate with them, healed them, and then guided them. His pattern was: forgiveness first, guidance next. This model shows us that while behavior matters, acceptance comes first.



Key Insight:

Jesus offers us acceptance before correction. His love leads us to change, not the other way around.



Prompt for reflection:

Have you ever experienced a time when someone showed you grace first, before expecting change?



Interactive Moment:

Write down one way you’ve experienced God’s acceptance and one way his Spirit has guided your behavior in response.



Transition:

Let’s look at how Jesus held both grace and truth together.



Notes

Horizontal lines for taking notes.



Teaching: Obedience and Forgiveness

Jesus forgave those who disobeyed, but he did not ignore their behavior. Think of the woman caught in adultery (**John 8:3-11**). He said, “I do not condemn you. Go and sin no more.”

The pattern continues in the epistles. Paul writes that we are saved by grace through faith (**Ephesians 2**), and then goes on to say, “Walk in a manner worthy of the calling” (**Ephesians 4:1**). Good behavior follows grace.

The apostles did not preach morality alone. Their message was centered on Jesus. They taught grace and guidance together.



Key Insight:

Obedience flows from love. Forgiveness is not the end. It’s the beginning of a new life.



Prompt for illustration:

Is there a story you can share of someone who turned their life around after experiencing forgiveness?



Interactive Moment:

In small groups, discuss: How can we hold grace and obedience together when discipling others?



Transition:

Let’s look at the heart of discipleship — how we live in response to who Jesus is.



Notes

Horizontal lines for taking notes.



WHAT DO WE FEEL?



SESSION 4: WHAT DO WE FEEL?

LEADER SNAPSHOT



Big Idea: God is invested in our hearts and emotions. Discipleship is not just about what we think or do, but it's also about what we feel and how we respond to God's love.



Key Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1–3; Philippians 4:4–8; 2 Peter 1:5–7



Session Goal: Help participants understand that loving God involves our emotions, and that we can grow in godly emotions through intentional focus, community, and grace.



Estimated Timing Breakdown:

- Icebreaker: 10 minutes
- Scripture reading and discussion: 20 minutes
- Exploring emotional discipleship: 25 minutes
- Application and take-home practice: 15 minutes
- Closing prayer and reflection: 5 minutes



Leader Tip / Pastoral Note:

Be aware that some group members may come from backgrounds that dismiss or suppress emotion. Others may feel shame for struggling with emotional pain. Reassure them that Jesus welcomes honest emotion. Emphasize that transformation is slow, and discipleship includes grief, doubt, and joy alike. Normalize lament and celebrate growth.



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DISCIPLESHIP AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD



SESSION 5: DISCIPLESHIP AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

LEADER SNAPSHOT

 **Big Idea:** Discipleship and kingdom life are deeply connected. Following Jesus means living as citizens of God's present and coming kingdom.

 **Key Scripture:** Luke 19:11–27
Supporting Scriptures: 2 Peter 1:4, Philippians 2:13, Hebrews 10:25

 **Session Goal:** Help participants connect discipleship to the kingdom of God by embracing their role in God's ongoing work and living in faithful response to King Jesus.

 **Estimated Timing Breakdown:**

- Welcome and Icebreaker: 10 minutes
- Scripture Reading and Parable Discussion: 20 minutes
- Exploring Kingdom Discipleship: 25 minutes
- Application and Take-home Practice: 15 minutes
- Closing Prayer and Reflection: 5 minutes

 **Leader Tip / Pastoral Note:**
This session includes a challenging parable. Keep the focus on the big picture: Jesus entrusts us with his kingdom work. Not to burden us, but to invite us into joy, transformation, and partnership. Avoid letting the “harsh” parts of the parable dominate the conversation. Emphasize the grace that undergirds the invitation to participate.



Discussion Prompt:

What does it mean to be a citizen of God’s kingdom right now? How does that shape your view of discipleship?



Optional real-life prompt:

Have you ever experienced a time when living as a follower of Jesus meant making a different choice than the world around you?

- The kingdom of God is both already here and not yet in its fullness. This tension shapes our discipleship.
- The kingdom is not a political system or place. It is the reign of Jesus in and through his people.
- The kingdom grows as people give their allegiance to Jesus and live out his ways.
- We do not build the kingdom by our own power. We participate with Jesus in what he is already doing.



Discipleship Happens in Community



Transition:

Although this parable focuses on individual servants, we know from the wider message of Scripture that discipleship is not something we do alone.

Jesus calls us into his Body, the Church. In community, shared growth, shared struggle, and shared mission shape us. It is not always easy. Real community challenges us to practice grace, patience, and love.

Bonhoeffer reminds us that if we love an ideal version of the Church more than the real people in it, we may miss the opportunity to grow in true discipleship. Jesus loves the Church as it is and invites us to do the same.

Notes
