

Small Group Guide

What It Means to Be a Christ Follower

August 30, 2026

Overview

This session explores one of the most foundational questions every person must answer: Who or what are you following? Drawing from Luke 9:23-26 and other passages, we examine what it truly means to be a disciple of Jesus -- not by default, but by deliberate decision.

Key Takeaways

- Every person is a disciple of something. The question is not whether you are being formed by outside influences, but whether you are being intentional about what forms you.
 - Jesus gives three clear commands to anyone who wants to follow him: deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow him.
 - Discipleship is not about consuming religious programs or checking boxes. It is about orienting your entire life around the person of Christ.
 - You are being discipled either by decision or by default.
 - A disciple's life is satisfying, hard, transforming, content, focused, and purposeful.
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Discussion Questions

Opening

1. Think back to someone you naturally imitated growing up -- a parent, coach, older sibling, or mentor. What did you pick up from them, and how did it shape who you are today?
2. The sermon described three different frameworks people follow: policy (rules and regulations), product (consumer mindset), and the person of Christ. Which of these do you think most influences the way you approach your faith right now? Be honest.

Diving Deeper

3. Luke 9:23 records Jesus telling his followers that anyone who wants to come after him must deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow him. Which of those three commands feels most challenging to you personally, and why?
4. The sermon made the point that we are all disciples -- the only question is of whom or what. If someone examined your schedule, your phone usage, your spending, and your conversations over the past month, what would they conclude you are most devoted to?
5. The pastor noted that on average, young adults spend 47 hours a week on their phones -- roughly a full work week. Without guilt-tripping yourself, what does that number stir up in you when you consider what is actually shaping your thinking and values?
6. In Galatians 2:20, Paul describes a life so surrendered to Christ that he no longer considers himself the one living -- Christ lives through him. What would it look like practically for that kind of surrender to show up in your daily life?
7. The sermon described the difference between being a disciple by decision versus by default. Can you identify an area of your life where you have drifted into discipleship by default -- being formed by habit, culture, or convenience rather than intentional choice?

Reflecting on the Five Marks of a Disciple

The sermon outlined five ways to recognize whether you are living as a disciple of Jesus. Work through these together as a group:

- Receiving grace and extending grace to others
 - Pursuing a Jesus-saturated life -- heart, soul, mind, and strength
 - Accepting the cost of being aligned with Jesus
 - Actively making disciples and investing in others
 - Desiring God's glory more than personal recognition
8. Which of these five marks feels most alive in your life right now? Which one feels most underdeveloped?
 9. The pastor said that ego gets significantly in the way of desiring God's glory over personal recognition. He described a kind of stability where affirmation does not make you soar and critique does not make you crash. How close does that description feel to where you actually live emotionally and spiritually?
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Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice before your group meets again:

10. **Audit your attention.** For one week, track how you spend your discretionary time -- scrolling, entertainment, news, prayer, Scripture, meaningful conversation. At the end of the week, review it honestly. What does the data reveal about who or what is discipling you?
11. **Identify your "one more."** The sermon challenged each person to think about one person God has placed in their life who needs to know Christ -- at work, at home, in their neighborhood, or at school. Write that person's name down. Pray for them daily this week and look for one natural opportunity to show or share the love of Jesus with them.
12. **Pick up the cross in one specific area.** Prayerfully ask God to show you one place where you have been avoiding the cost of following him -- an attitude to change, a habit to break, a relationship to repair, or a step of obedience you have been putting off. Take one concrete step toward it this week.
13. **Memorize or meditate on a key verse.** Spend time this week reflecting on Galatians 2:20, where Paul describes his life as fully surrendered to Christ. Consider writing it out and placing it somewhere visible as a daily reminder of what discipleship looks like.
14. **Have a honest conversation.** Share with one trusted person -- a spouse, a close friend, or a group member -- one area where you know you are being disciplined by default rather than by decision. Ask them to pray for you and check in with you about it.

Closing Prayer Focus

As you close your time together, pray along these lines:

- Thank God for the grace he has extended to each person in the room.
 - Ask for the courage to deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow Jesus daily -- not just in feeling but in action.
 - Pray for the "one more" person each group member identified.
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to be the one who forms and shapes each person in the group, and to make that formation more powerful than any other influence competing for your attention.
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Looking Ahead

In the coming weeks, the sermon series will move into questions like these:

- Does God exist?
- Is Jesus really God?
- Why would a good God allow suffering?
- Why would a good God suffer for us?

Consider inviting someone who wrestles with those questions to join you for the next few sessions. These are conversations worth having together.