

LOVING JESUS, LOVING PEOPLE, PLOWING A COUNTER-CULTURE

[Fall Season: September 27 – December 6 | Winter Season: January 11 – March 14]

LEADER TRAINING - SUNDAY OCT. 18 - 1:00PM TOTOWA - RSVP EMAILED

LEADER DETAILS

- **MAIN TEXT:** Mark 3:7-35 (supporting verse: Nehemiah 6:3)
 - **MAIN IDEA:** Jesus calls us to move beyond being part of the crowd and become genuine disciples who spend time with Him, go out for Him, and respond to His Spirit with surrendered obedience.
 - **GROWTH FOCUS:** Practice asking follow-up questions that move the conversation beyond surface-level answers toward personal reflection and application.
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ANNOUNCEMENTS (Full details at: emergence.church/digital-bulletin)

- **Applied Podcast - Subscribe Now!**
 - Applied is a weekly podcast from Emergence Church where Pastors Ryan Baitzel and Doug Becker (with others dropping in as well) provide additional context, insight, and application from the Scriptures behind each week's sermon. Available wherever you get your podcasts!
 - **Family Dedication - October 22 & 25 - Both Campuses**
 - **The Why** - By publicly declaring their intent to raise their kids to love Jesus, parents will be encouraged to keep that commitment in the highs and lows of parenting. A great opportunity for those families to invite family/friends to hear the Gospel. Sign up on the Digital Bulletin!
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GETTING STARTED:

- **Icebreaker:** What's a community that made you feel like you belonged? What made it that way?
 - **Pray:** This helps everyone prepare their heads and hearts as you turn to the discussion.
 - **Watch Community Extras Video** (length 2:22 – questions from video are included below)
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LAST WEEK'S GROWTH STEP FOLLOW-UP:

[Leaders: These follow-ups are meant to offer some accountability while being low-pressure. Keep it casual, "If you were able to try this last week, how did it go?" Sharing is optional; it's always okay to pass.]

- **Outward Action:** Reach out to someone this week who may seem far from God or difficult to love, and show them some of the grace Jesus has shown you.
- **Inward Prayer:** Ask God, "Where am I trying to patch up my old life instead of fully following You?" Ask Him to help you take one concrete step of trust and obedience.

SERMON DISCUSSION

Prioritize meaningful conversation over getting through every question.

From the Crowd to Discipleship

Read Mark 3:7–12

As Jesus' ministry grows, enormous crowds begin following Him, drawn by His teaching, healing, and miracles. Pastor Ryan pointed out that crowds aren't necessarily bad, but they aren't the goal. He said, "The crowd is an okay place to start, but a deadly place to remain." The danger is becoming a consumer of what Jesus offers rather than someone who genuinely follows Him.

- Why do you think it's possible for someone to be around Jesus and the church for years without ever really becoming a disciple?
- Pastor Ryan compared the difference between being served at a restaurant and being part of a family dinner, where everyone contributes. Where do you see the tendency to approach Jesus or church life primarily as a consumer in your own life? *[Leaders: This question is a bit vulnerable, and a good instance for you as the leader to go first!]*

With Jesus, Out for Jesus

Read Mark 3:13–19

Jesus appoints twelve apostles and calls them to two things: to be with Him and to be sent out to minister to others (v. 14). Pastor Ryan challenged us that these two things should characterize the life of every follower of Jesus. Discipleship isn't simply receiving from Jesus; it's developing a genuine relationship with Him that overflows into serving others.

- Why do you think Jesus called the disciples first to be with Him and then to go out for Him? What happens when we neglect either of these?
- If you honestly evaluate your own life right now, how are you doing in these two areas: spending time with Jesus through Scripture and prayer, and going out for Jesus through serving, generosity, and sharing the gospel? Which one needs more attention, and why?

Responding to Criticism

Read Mark 3:20–22; Nehemiah 6:3

As Jesus' ministry grows, so does criticism. His family thinks He's lost His marbles, while religious leaders accuse Him of being empowered by Satan. The sermon reminded us that criticism is an unavoidable part of faithfully following Jesus. Rather than being controlled or distracted by what everyone thinks, we need wisdom to know when to listen, when to respond, and when to simply keep doing the work God has given us (cf. Neh. 6:3).

- When you feel criticized, misunderstood, or unfairly judged, how do you typically respond? Why do you think criticism can have such a powerful effect on us?
- How can we discern the difference between criticism we should humbly listen to and criticism we should simply let go of? *[Leaders: Encourage the group to consider how humility, godly counsel, and self-reflection help us receive legitimate correction without becoming controlled by people's opinions.]*
- Have you ever had to continue doing something you believed God was calling you to do, despite misunderstanding or criticism? What was that experience like?

Resisting or Responding to the Spirit

Read Mark 3:23–30

The religious leaders attribute the works of Jesus to the power of Satan. Jesus exposes the foolishness of their accusation and warns them about blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Pastor Ryan explained that the Spirit works to reveal the truth about Jesus and convict people of sin, drawing them toward repentance and faith. The great danger is becoming so hardened that we continually reject the very One calling us to salvation.

- What does Jesus' illustration of the "strong man" teach us about His power and authority over Satan? How should this encourage us as followers of Jesus?
- What's the difference between honestly wrestling with questions or doubts about Jesus and hardening our hearts against what God is revealing to us?
- Is there an area of your life where you've sensed God's conviction but have been hesitant to respond? What might repentance and obedience look like?

Who Belongs to the Family of God?

Read Mark 3:31–35

Jesus closes with a statement about who truly belongs to His family. Neither being physically related to Jesus nor being deeply religious guarantees that someone belongs to God. Instead, Jesus points to those who respond to Him in faith and obedience. Genuine discipleship is more than religious association; it involves a relationship with Jesus that changes how we live.

- What does Jesus' definition of His family in v. 35 teach us about the relationship between faith and obedience?
- If we truly saw one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, rather than simply people who attend the same church or group, how might that change the way we love, serve, and care for one another?

GROWTH STEP THIS WEEK

- **Outward Action:** Make intentional time this week to be with Jesus in Scripture and prayer, and look for one opportunity to serve someone in His name.
- **Inward Prayer:** Ask God for the humility to receive correction, the wisdom to recognize unfair criticism, and the confidence to find your identity in Christ rather than people's opinions.

PRAYER PROMPTS

[Feel free to have yourself or someone else in the group just pray to end the time. However, these prompts are provided if some guidance is helpful].

- Thank Jesus for His power over Satan, sin, and death, and for calling us into His family.
- Ask God to deepen our desire to spend time with Jesus through Scripture and prayer.
- Pray for hearts that are responsive to the Holy Spirit's conviction, rather than resistant or hardened.
- Ask God to help us serve others generously instead of approaching church as consumers.
- Pray for wisdom, humility, and courage in the face of criticism or misunderstanding.
- Pray for those in our lives who are still exploring Jesus to come to repentance and faith in Him.

NEXT WEEK'S TEXT: Mark 4:1-20