

Leader's Guide

Following Jesus

Set Your Face

John 12:12-19

Pastor Ian Edwards

September 13, 2026

Conversation Goal

To help group members look beneath their actions to the motivations of their hearts, recognize where fear, wounds, or false beliefs may be influencing the way they live, and invite the Holy Spirit to replace those lies with His truth so that obedience increasingly flows from trust rather than fear.

Synopsis

As Jesus approached Jerusalem, He knew what awaited Him: betrayal, denial, suffering, and death. Yet Luke tells us that Jesus “**resolutely set out for Jerusalem.**” He didn't merely do the right thing; His actions flowed from a heart fully surrendered to and trusting the Father.

Building on last week's challenge to *Observe, Embrace, and Become*, this message asks us to look beneath our behavior. We can do many of the right things while still being motivated by fear, self-protection, approval, obligation, or unresolved hurt. Sometimes wounds give way to lies, lies shape the promises we make to protect ourselves, and those patterns eventually keep us from becoming who God is calling us to be. Jesus invites us to trust Him enough to let Him into those places, replace lies with truth, and lead us toward freedom.

1. What is motivating what I do?

Discussion Question

Why does it matter not only that we do what Jesus did, but that we increasingly become motivated by what motivated Jesus?

Teaching Point

Discipleship isn't simply learning to reproduce Jesus' behaviors. Jesus wants to transform our hearts so that our actions increasingly flow from the same kind of love, trust, compassion, and surrender we see in Him.

We can do the right thing for the wrong reason—serve because we want approval, forgive because we feel obligated, avoid sin because we're afraid of punishment, or invite someone to

church because we feel guilty. Jesus isn't only interested in changing what we do; He wants to transform what drives us.

Follow-Up Prompts

- Why is changing behavior sometimes easier than examining motivation?
- What are some unhealthy motivations that can hide underneath otherwise good actions?
- How can fear, guilt, approval, control, or obligation motivate us?

Additional Scripture

Philippians 2:5-8 — Jesus' obedience and humility.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 — Even impressive actions are empty without love.

Psalms 51:10 — “Create in me a pure heart, O God.”

2. Am I being motivated by fear or trust?

Discussion Question

When you face something difficult, uncomfortable, or costly, how can you recognize whether fear or trust is driving your response?

Teaching Point

Fear isn't always obvious. Sometimes it looks like avoidance, control, people-pleasing, defensiveness, overworking, withdrawal, or simply refusing to take a risk. Fear asks, “How do I keep myself safe?” Trust asks, “What is God asking of me, and can I trust Him with what happens next?” Courage isn't the absence of fear. It's choosing to trust God enough to obey Him even when fear is present.

Follow-Up Prompts

- What does fear tend to make you do, or avoid doing?
- Where are you most tempted to protect yourself?
- How can fear disguise itself as wisdom or practicality?
- What's the difference between healthy caution and fear-driven avoidance?
- Where is fear currently making obedience difficult for you?
- What truth about God's character helps you trust Him when obedience feels risky?
- What might change if your first question became, “God, what would trusting You look like here?”

Additional Scripture

2 Timothy 1:7 — God has not given us a spirit of fear.

Proverbs 3:5-6 — Trust in the Lord rather than your own understanding.

Psalms 56:3-4 — “When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.”

Joshua 1:9 — Be strong and courageous because God is with you.

3. What have I come to believe that may not be true?

Discussion Question

How can painful experiences or wounds shape what we believe about ourselves, other people, or God? And how might those beliefs continue influencing us long after the original hurt?

Teaching Point

Pain doesn't automatically produce unhealthy patterns, but the conclusions we draw from painful experiences can shape us deeply.

We may begin telling ourselves things like:

I can't trust anyone.

I have to take care of myself.

I'm not lovable.

If people really knew me, they'd reject me.

I can't fail.

I have to keep everyone happy.

God won't really come through for me.

Over time, those beliefs can influence our relationships and decisions without us even realizing it. Healing begins when we're willing to bring those conclusions into God's presence and ask, “Is this actually true?”

Follow-Up Prompts

- Why can a lie feel completely true to the person who believes it?
- How might a painful experience shape the way someone interprets later experiences?
- What kinds of self-protective promises do people make after they've been hurt?

- Is there a recurring thought about yourself, others, or God that might need to be examined?
- Who are trusted people who can help us discern truth when our own perspective is clouded?

Additional Scripture

Psalms 139:23-24 — Invite God to search the heart.

John 8:31-32 — God's truth brings freedom.

Romans 12:2 — Transformation through renewed thinking.

2 Corinthians 10:5 — Take thoughts captive to Christ.

4. What does God say instead?

Discussion Question

When we recognize a lie that has shaped us, how do we move beyond simply identifying it and begin allowing God's truth to reshape us?

Teaching Point

Recognizing a lie is important, but freedom comes as God's truth begins replacing it. If the lie says, *"I'm unlovable,"* God's truth says we are loved and chosen in Christ. If the lie says, *"I'm alone,"* God promises His presence. If the lie says, *"I have to control everything,"* God invites us to trust Him. If the lie says, *"My past defines me,"* Jesus says we are being made new. This isn't simply positive thinking. We bring what we've believed into the light of who God is and what He has actually said. Then, with the Spirit's help, we begin living as though His truth is more trustworthy than the lie.

Follow-Up Prompts

- Why isn't it enough simply to tell ourselves, "Stop believing that"?
- What truth do you need to rehearse more intentionally right now?
- How can Scripture, prayer, and Christian community help truth take deeper root?
- If you genuinely believed what God says about this situation, what might change about the way you live?

Additional Scripture

Romans 8:31-39 — Nothing can separate us from God's love.

Ephesians 1:3-14 — Our identity and inheritance in Christ.

Colossians 3:1-17 — Put off the old and put on the new.

John 16:13 — The Holy Spirit guides us into truth.

5. What would trusting obedience look like?

Discussion Question

Where might God be asking you to “set your face” toward something you’ve been avoiding and take one step forward in trust?

Teaching Point

Jesus knew Jerusalem would be costly, yet He moved toward what the Father had called Him to do. Following Him will sometimes mean moving toward something we’d rather avoid: a difficult conversation, vulnerability, reconciliation, sharing our faith, asking for help, changing a habit, confronting something unhealthy, or allowing God into an area we’ve kept hidden.

We don’t have to resolve everything at once. Trust may simply mean taking the next faithful step instead of continuing to run away.

Follow-Up Prompts

- What have you been tempted to avoid because it feels uncomfortable or painful?
- Is there an area where you already know what obedience looks like?
- What fear makes taking that step difficult?
- What would trusting God look like instead?
- Do you need to have a conversation, ask for forgiveness, seek help, establish a new habit, or tell someone what you’re struggling with?
- Who could walk with you rather than letting you face it alone?
- What specific step will you take this week?

Additional Scripture

Galatians 5:1 — Christ has set us free for freedom.

Hebrews 12:1-3 — Fix our eyes on Jesus and run with perseverance.

Philippians 2:12-13 — God works within us to desire and act according to His purposes.