

a list of requests for ourselves and other, or it may become the repetition of prayers we memorized long ago. But as you walk this narrow road as a disciple, explore ways to deepen and expand your prayer life.

Discuss with your group your experience with each type of prayer below. Are there some you haven't tried but would like to begin?

Talk to God-Many beautiful and powerful prayers have been written. Begin by thoughtfully reciting the Lord's prayer or a psalm (23rd?) or perhaps ponder the lyrics of a hymn or song that touches you as you talk to God.

Talk with God- these prayers are for you to share your mind and heart with God. Make it personal. Pray with gratitude, lament, petition and intercession. Listen to God – God wants to speak to us personally and directly, but we must learn to hear His voice. During this type of prayer see if you can discern God's still small voice. Watch for cues around you that guide your thoughts to hear God's heart. Being with God – this final type is a wordless prayer in which you still yourself and quiet the voices in your head and simply enjoy God's presence, gaze on His beauty and receive His love.

READING SCRIPTURE-feeding on God's Word. Find a new way to incorporate God's Word into your daily life. Remember, the goal isn't to read "X" number of pages, the goal is to spend time with God, hear His voice and be transformed into His image. Some possibilities are; bible reading plans, daily devotionals, both in written and digital versions. If you do a daily reading share what you use in your group.

WRAP-UP

Being a disciple of Jesus requires intentional effort to walk in His way, imitating His life through practices like Sabbath, prayer, and Scripture reading. Discipleship isn't limited to a select few but is a calling for all followers of Jesus, inviting us to be with Him, become like Him, and do what He did. As we reflect on the influences in our lives, we must choose to be transformed from the inside out, resisting the patterns of the culture that conform us to the world. By staying on the narrow road and embracing spiritual disciplines, we can experience the abundant, blessed life that Jesus offers.

MEMORY VERSE

13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it
- Matthew 7:13-14 NIV

Challenge- Check out some of these resources for following the Jesus Way- Practicing the Way by John Mark Comer, The Narrow Path: How the Subversive Way of Jesus Satisfies Our Souls by Rich Villodius

The Way of Jesus Cultivating Discipleship Week 2

INTRODUCTION

This week we will reflect on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus and how we can walk in the way of Jesus. Being a disciple was not limited to the 12 who accompanied Jesus, nor is it only for those whose vocation involves ministry. The word disciple refers to a learner, who is not only a pupil but an adherent or imitator of their teacher. All of us who follow Jesus should be His disciple. That means we must be with, become like, and do as Jesus did. But there are many obstacles to discipleship and so let's consider how we go about becoming a disciple of Jesus.

Ice Breaker

Has there ever been someone you admired so much that you imitated them in some way? Maybe you dressed in their style, or read what they read, or visited places you knew they had gone?

Key Passages

16 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 17 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." 18 At once they left their nets and followed him.

- Mark 1:16-18 NIV

40 The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.

- Luke 6:40 NIV

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Who am I becoming?

2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. - Romans 12:2 NIV

Paul told the people in Rome that they should not allow themselves to conform to the patterns of this world but rather be transformed. The difference is that being conformed to the world means we outwardly reflect the culture we live in, usually unintentionally. But being transformed means that the essence of our character or our nature, is being changed from the inside out to be more like Jesus. We need to be intentional about the way we live our lives daily for that to happen.

Pause for a moment to consider some of the things that have influenced your formation and the patterns of your life. Which of these has the greatest potential to conform you to the world/culture rather than to Jesus?

Habits • relationships • stories you believe about yourself or God • your environment • time • experiences

Now brainstorm some ideas to make a change to one of these areas to be less conformed by the world and more transformed by Jesus. (for example – Maybe there is a program/entertainer/speaker you regularly follow that you know isn't reflecting Christian values. Is there a better choice? Or do you know you spend too much time on social media? Can you plan to do something else instead like play worship music or open a bible app?)

2. Am I on the right road?

Many of Jesus most recognized teachings were given in His Sermon on the Mount. This is where He tells us there are two paths we can take, the broad road and the narrow road. Narrow has become a negative term in our culture. It's equated to closed-mindedness or stubbornness. But in these two short verses we see a different perspective. The narrow road has a far greater payoff – it leads to life, in Greek *zōē*, which is a full, active, vigorous and blessed life.

13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it . - Matthew 7:13-14 NIV

Here are three ways we might find ourselves on that broad path.

Moralism is the belief that righteousness can be attained thru proper behavior. Many people believe they are following the Jesus Way because they are "good moral people, and God knows their hearts are in the right place". In fact, this is part of the broad road that many follow.

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. - Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV

18 But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. - James 2:18 NIV

Although we can't attain righteousness, nor salvation, by works, based on the above verses, how would you respond to someone who says, "I am working hard to live a good moral life because what God really cares about is my behavior."

Successism – Some people may choose to avoid the narrow path because they think there is a better way to live that leads to "a successful life."

How would you define a successful life? What did the rich man in Luke 12:20 fail to realize about pursuing the "good life"?

20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' 21 "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God." - Luke 12:20-21 NIV

Individualism- Some believe that they can follow Jesus on their own, apart from anyone else. A Spiritual Lone Ranger.

37 Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' - Matthew 22:37-39 NIV

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. - 1 Corinthians 12:27 NIV

Why would it be wrong if we attempt to follow the Jesus Way in isolation?

Moralism, successism and individualism may be venerated traits in our culture, but they will not lead to the abundant life we find by following Jesus.

3. Walking the Narrow Road

40 The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher. - Luke 6:40 NIV

And so we have come round to how to be the disciple of Jesus. We walk the way of Jesus by practices, or disciplines, that are based on the lifestyle of Jesus. Here are three of those disciplines that will keep you on the narrow road as you practice being with Jesus, becoming like Jesus and doing what Jesus did.

SABBATH: stop, rest, delight, and worship. This is one discipline that we tend to neglect, but Jesus didn't. A Sabbath is a time set apart for God. You probably already attend a service on Sundays, but don't rush away from God's presence when you leave the church grounds. Allow yourself to be at rest, delighting in God's presence as you observe a time of Sabbath. What is it you can do that makes you come alive in God- pray, read Psalms, listen to worship music, take a walk? Whatever it is, be mindful of God's presence with you. Your Sabbath is your special time with God, but that doesn't mean you can't share it with others. Each week rest, delight and worship God in a time you have set aside for Him.

PRAYER- talking to God, talking with God, listening to God, being with God This may have been the first thing you thought of when you considered walking in Jesus' Way. For many of us prayer is a challenge, it can become