

/IM-PAKT/

Leader Guide

THE WIN

The group member understands the essence of the Christian life. In order to demonstrate their understanding, they will truthfully complete a response card and exchange it with another group member for accountability.

Tip: Keep this in mind as you plan out your session and your time as a group will be much more focused.

3-5
minutes

SERMON RECAP: WHAT DID THE TEXT MEAN? WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Tip: Don't spend too much time on this section, you basically want to refresh their memory and then move on to the Warm UP.

READ THIS ALOUD:

The essence of the Christian life is following Jesus. We are here in this place because others heard Jesus' call and chose to follow Him wherever He led. Followers of Jesus have been doing that for 2000 yrs. We stand on their shoulders.

We learned in the message on Sunday that a true follower of Jesus:

- 1) Is empowered by the Spirit
- 2) Is captivated by the call
- 3) Has surrendered it all

ASK THIS:

What was one thing Pastor Russ said or didn't say that interested you?

20
minutes

WARM UP

READ THIS ALOUD:

Tip: The key here is to read this story with emotion and help the listeners get a sense of what the scene may have felt and sounded like. Also consider splitting the story up in parts.

"You are unsettling the worship of our gods. And not only that, you have perverted my own brother!" the king of Armenia shouted at Bartholomew. But Bartholomew did not back down.

One of the original twelve disciples, he had boldly preached Jesus Christ for 37 years. Starting in the heathen cities throughout what is now Turkey, he then traveled to India. Here, after he learned the language, he translated the gospel of Matthew and taught the Indians in the native tongue. Later he preached in twelve different cities in

the country of Armenia (located between the present-day countries of Turkey and Iran). Many people turned from idolatry to worship Jesus, including the king of Armenia's brother and his family.

Bartholomew boldly answered the king, saying, "I have preached the true worship of God throughout your country. I have not *perverted* your brother and his family, but rather have *converted* them to the truth."

King Astyages threatened Bartholomew, "Unless you stop preaching Christ and make sacrifices to the god Ashtaroth, you will be put to death."

"You can be sure of this, King Astyages, I will never sacrifice to your idol. I would rather seal my testimony with my blood than do the smallest act against my faith or conscience."

Upon hearing this, the king ordered, "I want this man to suffer severe torture. First, beat him with rods. After that, suspend him upside down on a cross and skin him alive!"

Following the king's command, Bartholomew was beaten, crucified, and flayed (skinned alive). Despite all this, he was still conscious and continued to exhort the people to believe in Jesus and worship the true God.

Finally, to prevent him from saying anything else, the king's men took an axe and cut off his head. Bartholomew was united with Jesus, his Lord.

-pg. 205 Jesus Freaks, Voice of the Martyrs, Alsbury publishing

ASK & DISCUSS:

Tip: These questions are designed to really encourage the group member to think about the cost of following Jesus. This will help them when you work through the text. Remember the Win! (see top of leader guide)

While not every Christ-follower will be confronted with losing their physical life for following Christ, every Christ-follower is called to follow Christ in every aspect of their life. **What area of your life do you find the most difficult to navigate? How have you involved Christ in this area? What have been the results?**

How does being made aware of stories of following Christ from the early Christian era impact your intensity level in following Christ?

SAY THIS:

With each new morning every Christ-follower is faced with a decision whether or not to increase the intensity level of their walk with God or stagnate and make no progress. For many this is an easy decision but often difficult to follow through on.

Develop your own transition leading in to the below activity.

DO THIS:

Tip: Encourage your group members to be honest with themselves. For many group members this activity will be an impactful moment as they wrestle with their devotion to Jesus.

Leader:

Pass out a 3x5 index card to every group member

Directions:

On one side of the card please answer the following statement using only one word:

My level of intensity in following Christ is _____ (ex. weak, strong, robust, stuttering, collapsing, thriving, paralyzed).

Now flip the card over and please answer the following statement using only one word:

I hope one day soon my level of intensity in following Christ will be described as _____. Hold onto your card until the end of the session.

THE TEXT: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

Tip: Keep in mind your job is not to explain the Scripture passage, this was already done in the sermon. You want to provide an environment where people can engage the text and then wrestle with how it affects them. Use these questions of your own. Lastly, the goal is not to complete all of the questions, but rather to provide a safe environment and then facilitate a conversation.

Have someone in the group read the text aloud:

Acts 1:6-8

DISCUSS and CHALLENGE:

1. **When one hears the phrase ‘receive power’, as in verse 7, what type of power do you think Jesus was referring to? What does Jesus say will be the outcome of this new power?**
2. Have a group member read Acts 1:1-5. It is apparent that leading up to their meeting with Jesus the disciples were anxious to ask him questions. Finally, they met with him and immediately ask Him about their homeland, Israel. They were interested in everything that affected themselves and the land they love so dearly. However Jesus surprised them with news that His mission was not just for them but for everyone.
 - a. **When Jesus told his disciples they shall be His witnesses in all the Earth, what was He saying about the mission He has in store for His followers?**
 - b. **What type of commitment was needed for Jesus’ mission to be successful?**
3. Using our imaginations for a minute, do you believe the disciples had weaknesses in their character? You know, blind spots that caused them to slip up in their devotion to Christ? Of course they did, just read some of Paul’s writings! However, the annals of history along with Scripture paint a picture of men and women who were devoted to Christ and passionately pursued Him no matter the cost. Their weaknesses didn’t define them or stop them from pursuing Christ.
 - a. **Do you think Christ-followers today get concerned about their devotion to Christ? Why or why not?**
 - b. **Give an example of someone you know that has let their blind spots paralyze their walk with Christ.**
4. When Jesus finally revealed to the disciples that they would be going into all the world proclaiming Jesus surely they struggled with their emotions. (fear, excitement, uncertainty, confusion, wonder, humility, anxiety)
 - a. **Knowing what Jesus has called each Christ-follower to do what emotions do you wrestle with each day? How do you accept and/or overcome those emotions?**
5. Consider this quote by George Bernard Shaw, *“This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.”*
 - a. **What sticks out to you in this quote? Is there anything about this quote that inspires you towards something?**
 - b. **Jesus called his disciples to a ‘mighty purpose’, a purpose that has literally impacted the world. Share with the group how you feel about your participation in this ‘mighty purpose’ Jesus has set before His followers.**
6. We learned from the message this week that a disciple has ‘surrendered it all’ to follow Christ.
 - a. **How is this difficult for you? How is this easy for you?**
 - b. **What words of advice could you give to someone struggling with ‘surrendering it all’ to follow Christ?**

CONNECT:

Tip: This is probably the most important part of facilitating the learning process for your group members during this session. Lead those who seem resistant through this last step. It's a scary thing to open up in this manner. It will be a first step for some and no big deal for others. Handle this time with care.

SAY THIS:

Please take out the card you filled out earlier in the session and then choose someone in the group to give your index card and then give them one avenue (not prayer-they should be praying for you anyway) by which they can encourage you in your walk with Christ.

5
minutes

DIGGING DEEPER

Tip: If you have time left over discuss the quote below.

READ ALOUD:

"Attitudes that define the disciple cannot be realized today by leaving family and business to accompany Jesus on his travels about the countryside. But discipleship can be made concrete by actively learning how to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, walk the second mile with an oppressor-in general, living out the gracious inward transformations of faith, hope, and love. Such acts-carried out by the disciplined person with manifest grace, peace, and joy-make discipleship no less tangible and shocking today than were those desertions of long ago."

Dallas Willard, The Great Omission p. 8

ASK THIS:

These tangible expressions of discipleship can be seen as indicators of Christlikeness, in your view what do you think your role as a group member should be regarding the above quote from Dallas Willard?

CLOSING THOUGHT

Tip: Encourage your group members to really ponder this thought this week. You might consider texting or calling them later in the week and seeing what they think about this thought. Share with them your thoughts.

Since Jesus went through everything you're going through and more, learn to think like Him. Think of your sufferings as a weaning from that old sinful habit of always expecting to get your own way. Then you'll be able to live out your days free to pursue what God wants instead of being tyrannized by what you want.

-Peter the Apostle (1 Peter 4:1,2 The Message) Crucified upside-down in Rome 65 AD

STUDY NOTES

Ephesians 5:18 (from the message on Sunday)

Paul's imperatives contrast the differences between being under the influence of wine, which leads to reckless actions, and being under the influence of the Spirit, which results in joyful living. The commands are plural, thus the commands refer not merely to individuals, but to the corporate community of faith.

Colossians 3:2 (from the message on Sunday)

'So if' resumes the implications of believers' identification with Christ begun in 2:20. It signals a shift in the epistle from doctrinal instructions (chaps. 1-2) to practical application (3:1-4:6). The objects of believers' efforts and thoughts are the heavenly places where Christ dwells (Ps 110:1). These commands contrast true spiritual living with the false spirituality promoted by earthly "philosophy."

Luke 9:23 (from the message on Sunday)

To be a true disciple of Jesus requires self-denial. The cross was the most painful and humiliating form of execution of the Roman era. Thus, to take up one's cross daily is to expect painful situations every day because of allegiance to Christ.