

Follow-up # 0: Introduction to Follow-up

Big Idea

God has called each believer to Himself in a different and unique way. Because of these differences some may believe that they are alone in the struggle to follow Jesus and others will not understand these struggles. Jesus has given us each other as a family to help us in the journey of following Him. This follow-up seeks to give new believers comfort in what God has given us with each other.

FOLLOWING JESUS TOGETHER

Exploring the Scripture

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus calls people to be His disciples with the simple command to “Follow Him” (e.g. Matthew 4:19; 8:22; 9:9). This is the distinguishing mark of Christians. We do not follow rules, teachings, or traditions. We follow Jesus.

Read John 10: 1-6

- Who are the characters of this passage?
 1. What characterizes the thief?
 2. What characterizes the shepherd?
 3. What characterizes the sheep?

Read John 10: 7-10

- How does Jesus characterize Himself?
 4. How is Jesus like the gate?
 5. How is Jesus different from the thief?

There are two principle players in the life of the sheep (the believer). They are Jesus and Satan. Both call out to the believer to get them to follow. Jesus offers life; Satan offers death.

Comparing Our Stories

Each of us has heard God’s call to follow Him differently, because He relates to each of us uniquely. (Have each to share their testimony.)

My experience...

Your experience...

- What questions or uncertainties have you had about Jesus’ calling to you?
 - How do I know it was Jesus?
 - How will I know if it is Satan?
 - Wasn’t it just a dream?
 - What am I supposed to do now?

Comparing Our Struggles

Consider the impact companionship has in the midst hardships. Imagine yourself alone as a soldier behind enemy lines. How easy will it be to...

Deny allegiance to your country?

Give up on the mission you were sent to do?

Blend to be just like the enemy?

How could being alone as a follower of Jesus bring similar results?

Summary

God has called each of us into a relationship with Himself through Jesus. He speaks to us personally and directly. What joy there is to know that Jesus is alive, and He still speaks to us. "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27).

Yet, there is another who also speaks. Where Jesus' words bring life, Satan's words bring death. We need to be in constant communion with Jesus through prayer and reading the Bible to recognize which voice we are hearing. We also need each other to encourage and motivate us to continue following the one true voice.

For Further Study

John chapter 17 records a lengthy prayer of Jesus before He went to cross. He prays for Himself, His disciples, and those who will believe in Him. Read this section. What does Jesus say about Himself? What does He pray for you? Write down any questions you have about the passage for next week.

Follow-up # 1: Being Sure of Your Salvation

Big Idea

Every believer has a genuine need for assurance. Yet many people experience different degrees of uncertainty. The new believer is particularly vulnerable to this struggle. This follow-up seeks to give the new believer confidence in what God's Word says about Jesus and eternal life.

Have him share with you his testimony as best as he can.

THE ASSURANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Comparing Our Stories

Everyone experiences uncertainties in their relationship with God at one time or another.

My experience...

Your experience...

- What questions or uncertainties have you had about Jesus Christ and your relationship with Him?
 - o Who is Jesus?
 - o Is He really who I think He is?
 - o What has happened to me?
 - o Did I do it right?
 - o Do I need to do it again?
 - o Was I sincere enough?
 - o What does He want to do in my life?
 - o What does He really want from me?
 - o Can I lose my relationship with Him?

Comparing Our Struggles

Consider the impact doubts and uncertainty have on relationships. Imagine a new marriage relationship that is filled with doubts...

- Doubts about the relationship – *will this really last?*
- Doubts about the partner – *is this the right person?*
- Doubts about themselves – *am I really committed?*

What impact would doubts like this have on a marriage? Why?

How could similar doubts have an impact on our relationship with Jesus? Why?

Exploring The Solution

Read 1 John 5:9-13

TESTIMONY

- Define testimony.
- What makes testimony trustworthy?
- What has God made testimony about in verse 9?

GOD'S TESTIMONY

- Since God has given us testimony, what are the two options in verse 10?
- What is true if we believe God?
- What is true if we don't believe God?
- God's testimony (verse 11) says two things are true. What are they?
- What two kinds of people are there (verse 12)?

- Is it possible to have the Son and not have the life?
- Is it possible to not have the Son and still have the life?
- Is it possible to think you have the life but don't?
- Is it possible to have the life but not be sure?

TO KNOW YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE

- To whom is John writing these things?
- Why does he write them? Does John believe we can know we have eternal life?

Additional Scripture

What can separate you from Jesus? (Romans 8:38-39)

Who can take you away from Jesus? (John 10:27-29)

Will God ever leave you? (Hebrews 13:5b)

Will God ever stop loving you? (Numbers 23:19; Romans 5:8)

Can you lose your salvation? (Ephesians 2:6-7; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Timothy 2:13)

Summary

Based on the promises of God and His character, everyone who has faith in Jesus, His Son, can be assured they have eternal life with God.

For Further Study

John wrote many other things to help give us confidence. Read his gospel looking for evidence that Jesus is the Son of God. Write down at least five questions you had while reading John.

Follow-up # 2: Experiencing God's Love and Forgiveness

Review

What questions do you have from your reading of the Gospel of John?

THE GRACE NEEDED TO LIVE FREELY

Comparing Our Stories

Though Christians are forgiven, we still struggle with sin and failure. Have you had any sense of falling short of what God desires for your life?

My experience...

Your experience...

- Your sins and struggles will affect how you experience your relationship with Jesus, for He is with you always (Hebrews 13:5).

Comparing Our Struggles

- How would you feel if you knew you had failed another person who was very important to you?
- How would these feelings affect your actions and responses in the relationship?
- How would it impact you if you didn't know that the other person had forgiven you?
- Do you think forgiveness is important?
- What difference does forgiveness make in a relationship?
- How does sin have a similar impact in our relationship with Christ?

Exploring The Solution

Read 1 John 1:5-2:2

- What does fellowship mean? (v.4,6,7)
- What does it look like to be in fellowship with God? (v.6)
- What is happening to our sin as we walk with God? (v.7)
- After sinning, how can we regain fellowship with God? (v.9)
- What does it mean to "confess" our sins? (v.9)
- What is the difference between confessing our sins and asking forgiveness for our sins? (v.9)
- What should we try to do about sin? (v.1)
- What is the ultimate solution to our sin? (v.2)

Summary

The Three Wrong Approaches:

1. My sin doesn't matter.
2. There is nothing wrong with me.
3. I've done nothing wrong.

The Three Right Responses:

1. Walk with God in light of who He is.
2. Openly agree with God about your sin.
3. Seek to avoid sin.

How Do I Respond to Sin?

What are the consequences of unconfessed sin?

Is it okay to sin after salvation as long as we confess it quickly? (1 John 2:1-2)

According to 1 John 1:2-3, why is it important to respond to the gospel ("what we have seen and heard")?

Why did they proclaim it?

What then is the point, and hopefully our motivation for confessing our sins immediately?

How then are we to walk in the light?

- to live in a love relationship with God in light of His character.
- to openly agree with God about my sin.
- to seek to avoid sin as I become more conscious of what is displeasing to God.

Summary

Since all of our sins are forgiven (past, present, and future), we no longer need to ask forgiveness. However, we do need to confess our sins to restore our fellowship with God and others. In order to maintain our fellowship with God we need the power of the Holy Spirit. The next follow-up we go in to more detail about the Holy Spirit, but for now these three steps will help you live these truths.

1. **Claim** Christ's cleansing.

In prayer, thank God for continuing to cleanse you from all sin.

2. **Confess** specific sins.

On your own, make a list on paper of any sin of which you are currently aware. Confess it to God, writing 1 John 1: 9 across the page. Tear up the list. This is a visual reminder that Jesus Christ has cleansed you from your sins by His death.

3. **Choose** to avoid sin.

Be aware that by ourselves, we lack the ability to change or avoid sin. We must rely on God's power.

For Further Study

Read 1 John, and list at least five questions you have while reading.

Follow-up # 3: Being Filled with the Spirit

Review

1. Since you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior...
 - a. where are you going when you die?
 - b. how do you know this?
 - c. will this ever change?
2. When you sin...
 - a. how is your relationship with God affected?
 - b. why confess it?
 - c. what should be your attitude to it?

THE POWER TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Comparing Our Stories

Because of our relationship with Christ, we have a genuine desire to live the Christian life. Yet we often find ourselves failing to do so. In fact the Christian life seems impossible to live.

My experience...

Your experience...

- Jesus Christ is the only one who ever perfectly lived the Christian life. We are to imitate Him (Ephesians 5:1-2)

Comparing Our Struggles

What thoughts and emotions occur when you are unable to do something you want to do?
Why?

When faced with our inability to live the Christian life, either...

1. we lack the necessary power or ability to live the Christian life.
2. we have the power and ability, but we don't know we have it.
3. we know we have the power and ability, but we don't know how to use it.
4. we know how to use the power and ability, but we choose not to use it.

Exploring The Solution

Read 1 Corinthians 2:9 – 3:3

- Who is the Spirit?
- The Spirit works in many ways in a believer's life.
 1. What is one purpose according to 2:12?
 2. Do you know what God has given to you?

- Three Spiritual Conditions

1. What is the spiritual condition of the person in 2:14?

How much spiritual truth does he comprehend? Why?

2. What is the spiritual condition of the person in 2:15-16?

How much spiritual truth does he comprehend? Why?

3. What is the spiritual condition of the person in 3:1-3?

How much spiritual truth does he comprehend? Why?



0% or 100%

Can you get back here?

How do you get here?



0% or 100%

How do you get back here?

How do you get here?



0% or 100%

Summary

When a person begins a relationship with Christ, it's important to grow in the experience of the Spirit in order to understand spiritual truth and have power to live the Christian life. God's design is for us to be filled (that is directed and empowered) by the Holy Spirit as an ongoing experience.

D – Desire – Do you desire to be filled with the Spirit?

R – Repent – Are you turning from any known sin and confessing it to God?

Y – Yield – Are you surrendering control of your life to God?

If so, pray in faith asking God to fill you with His Spirit (Ephesians 5:18)

thank Him that He will direct and empower your life as you trust Him.

Who has the Holy Spirit? (John 7:37-39; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 1 John 4:13; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22)

For Further Study

Read John 14-16

Follow-up # 4: How to Walk in the Spirit

Review



0% or 100%

Can you get back here?

How do you get here?



0% or 100%

How do you get back here?

How do you get here?



0% or 100%

THE POWER TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE 2

Comparing Our Stories

The Christian life isn't struggle-free. Yet most Christians are unprepared for the inner struggles they will experience. Since receiving Christ, to what degree have you experienced an inner struggle over conflicting desires— that is, wanting to please yourself versus wanting to please Christ?

My experience...

Your experience...

- Anyone can experience an inner struggle over conflicting desires to do what is right and wrong. But the believer will often experience this struggle more intensely. For the believer, it is not simply a matter of obeying the conscience or some rule. It involves our genuine desire to please our new Master which conflicts with the old ways we pleased ourselves. It can also involve a conflict between our desire to experience the life God wants to give us and the desire to live life our own way. The good news is that experiencing these struggles is evidence of a genuine change in our lives as a result of our new relationship with Christ.

Comparing Our Struggles

- Why do you think most believers are unprepared for these inner struggles?
- How do people feel when they are faced with a significant challenge for which they are not prepared? For example, how would you feel if you were enrolled in an upper level language course for a language in which you had never learned the basics?
- In a similar way, we must master the basics of the Christian life to prepare for the challenges that lie ahead.

Exploring The Solution

Read Galatians 5:16-26

- Who are the opponents of the conflict?
- The source of our desires will determine the nature of what is produced.
 3. What happens when the desires of the sinful nature go unchecked (5:19-21)?
 4. What is produced when we walk by the Spirit (5:22-23)?
 - ~ Notice the Spirit always leads us to do what is right.
- In conclusion
 - i. According to verse 24, how has our relationship to the sinful nature changed?
 - ii. Since we now live by the Spirit, what should characterize our relationship with the Spirit? (5: 25)

Additional Scripture

Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

1. What is the battle that we are waging?
2. How do we fight this battle?
3. Where does this battle take place?
4. How do we take every thought captive?

Summary

Recognize the conflict.

Remember the source of the conflict – the Spirit’s desires versus the desires of the sinful nature.

Reject the desires of the sinful nature.

Rely on the Spirit’s power to produce His fruit in our lives.

**INTRODUCE SPIRITUAL
BREATHING HERE!**

Consider the example

Recognize the conflict between your desire to be mad and get even and the Spirit’s desire to forgive and restore the relationship.

Remember the source of this inner struggle is between the sin nature and the Spirit.

Reject the desires of the sinful nature to be mad or get even.

Rely on the Spirit’s power to produce genuine love and forgiveness and provide wisdom in how to respond.

- ~ Is there an area where you are currently struggling? How would you apply these steps?

Follow-up # 5: How to Grow in Christ

Review

1. Who is the Holy Spirit?
2. What is the importance of the Holy Spirit in our lives?
3. How do we apply the Holy Spirit's power to our needs?
4. Explain Spiritual Breathing.

Big Idea

A life with Jesus is a more simple kind of life. It is a mutual, personal relationship with our God that shows God's splendor, which was demonstrated, to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. When someone first receives Christ, they are at the beginning of a new life. Maturity in this relationship with Christ is attained over time, not a one-time event.

PATHS TO MATURITY

Comparing Our Stories

Your observations... The world is full of immature people. What are two reasons for this immaturity?

My experience... Share a story of your experience of your spiritual growth. Share an appropriate example of your early immaturity. Be sure to talk about who and what God used and to bring about your maturity.

Comparing Our Struggles

- What do you see as hindrances to healthy growth in one's spiritual life?
- What might be some evidences of immaturity?
- How would you feel if, after many years, you looked back and realized you failed to grow in the most area of your life, your relationship with God?

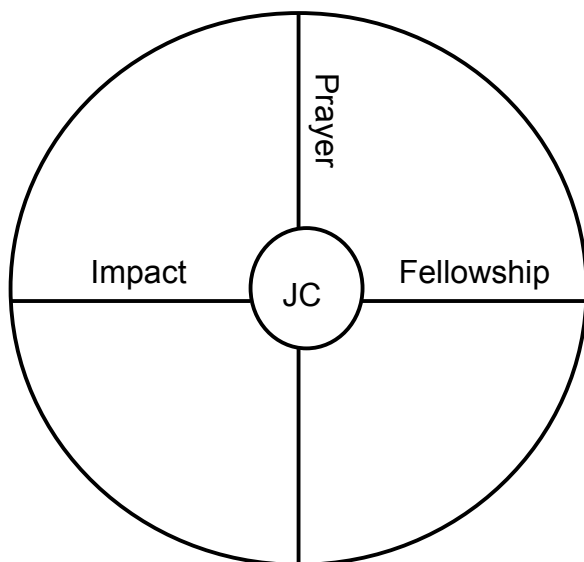
Exploring The Solution

Read Acts 2:42-47:

There are four characteristics of growing Christians found in this passage:

1. Devoted to the Word (2:42)

- What does it mean to be devoted to something?
- Who were the apostles?
- What did they teach? (See Matthew 28: 18- 20)



- How could we devote ourselves to this same teaching today?

2. Devoted to Fellowship (2:42)

- What is fellowship?
- What motivated the believers to gather together so often? (2: 46)
- How would close relationships like these help us in the Christian life?
- How can we experience this kind of fellowship today?

3. Devoted to Prayer (2:42)

- What is prayer?
- What motivated the believers to devote themselves to prayer?
- How can we devote ourselves to prayer today?

4. Having an Impact (2:47)

- Why did other people join them?
- Imagine how exciting it would be if God used your life to influence others to become true believers in Christ.

With Others in General

Consider a seed that is planted in poor soil with little water or nutrients and little sun. How well would it grow? What would happen if the same seed was placed in rich soil with plenty of nutrients, water and sun? The difference in growth would be caused by the environment. The same is true for us spiritually.

- A. The two primary ingredients that God uses to cause growth in our lives are grace and truth. Truth gives us the understanding we need to live the Christian life. Grace provides the acceptance and encouragement we need to keep on going. But growth doesn't happen all at once. It occurs as a process over time. Thus, the formula for an ideal growth environment is:

$$GRACE + TRUTH + TIME = GROWTH$$

Like the new believers in Acts, we experience "Grace + Truth + Time" in the context of relationships.

- B. The upward relationship is with God and is experienced through His Word and prayer.
- C. The inward relationships are with each other (believers) and are experienced in fellowship.

Summary

- ~ The key to growing in Christ is unconditional obedience to God's will. Knowing the importance of these elements and not continually applying it to our lives will not take any farther in our relationship with Christ.