

WEEK ONE: February 26, 2020 – March 3, 2020



HIS LIFE

I have begun following Jesus and am depending on the Spirit of Jesus in my journey.

Throughout the seven weeks of emphasis on The Way of Jesus you will have a weekly saying to memorize which can be found at the top of the first page for each day. Try to memorize it.

Saying that you began following Jesus is affirming that you had a change point in your life. While you might have been raised in a home that you were taught the Way of Jesus, you discovered that the faith of your parents needed to be personalized in your own life. Jesus came into the world to save sinners. It is never comfortable to be convicted by the Holy Spirit of our sinfulness, but this is the experience that leads us to realize that our only hope is to rest on the finished work of Jesus which is that act of God's mercy that we need.

Beginning to follow Jesus means personal identification with him in his death and his resurrection. When we accept God's judgment that we are sinners we can also accept His solution which is that Jesus took our sin upon himself and died in our place. Beginning to follow Jesus is not a choice to try our best to be like him but to realize that our hope of abundant life is tied to his life.

Having begun to follow Jesus we continue to grow and experience the life of Jesus as we depend upon the Spirit whom Jesus sent to be with us and in us. Having died with Jesus we are also raised with Jesus.

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Today is Ash Wednesday. If you follow the readings in *Our Daily Bread* you might notice that the key verse, Philippians 4:4 does not particularly fit with the general idea of Ash Wednesday as it calls us to rejoice. Yet, even though we should be sobered by the fact that Jesus died for our sin, God's love that sent His Son gives us a great reason to rejoice.

The Psalmist wrote, "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities" (Psalm 103:8-10). That sounds like a good reason to rejoice.

Read and reflect on the following passages.

Psalm 51:1-17

John 3:1-21

You can record your reflections on the next page..

Let's Get Personal:

Starting a relationship with Jesus is simple.

God in His love has prepared the way.

The Way of Jesus is not a path to follow to try to be acceptable to God. The message of Scripture is clear, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). We need God's mercy. The good news is that God has shown us His mercy in Jesus. Beginning to follow Jesus is to accept His mercy/forgiveness as we acknowledge our sinfulness and accept the new life that He offers. Have you done that? If not, you can speak to Him right now and accept that gift.

My Reflections

LISTEN – What did God say to me in the readings for today?

TRUST – What do I have to believe in order to act on this?

OBEY – What are some ways that I should act on this?

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We typically emphasize making a personal decision in order to begin following Jesus. It is important to recognize that if God had not first made a personal decision to send his only son, Jesus, to die for us we would not have opportunity to choose life in Him. But He did and, as a result, we do. Our personal beginning of a new life found in Him is a life with Him which we describe as following Jesus. It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to follow and guides us in the path. The New Testament makes only two references to the Spirit of Jesus (Philippians 1:19, Acts 16:7) but, without confusing the persons of the Trinity we recognize that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to continue His work and so following the leading of the Spirit is following Jesus.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. “(Romans 8:16) The Spirit’s presence in our life gives confidence that a new life really began. Depending on the Spirit is the daily provision for that new life.

Read and reflect on the following passages. What do they say about starting out in your journey with the Lord? Record your reflections on the next page.

Jonah 3:1-10; Romans 1:1-7

Let’s Get Personal:

As we consider the life of Jesus, we should understand that we are invited to participate in Jesus’ life. What are some ways that you are seeing the Spirit at work in your life?

My Reflections

LISTEN – What did God say to me in the readings for today?

TRUST – What do I have to believe in order to act on this?

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The walk of a 'Jesus follower' starts in the victory of Jesus and experiences the effect of that victory in the life that follows. The Spirit leads us into experiences of the victory of Jesus by empowering us to serve but also by working in us to mould our attitudes, so they are more reflective of Jesus' attitude.

The idea of dependence on the Spirit is not difficult for the follower of Jesus because there are many points along the way that remind us of the need for the Spirit's aid. It is actually depending on the Spirit that is our challenge because we are trained in so many ways to be self dependent. Yet, it is when we do practice this dependence that we are liberated to be what Jesus has enabled us to be.

Read and reflect on the following passages. You can record your reflections on the next page.

Jonah 4:1-11

Romans 1:8-17

Let's Get Personal:

What was the biggest obstacle you had to overcome in order to become a follower of Jesus?

What are some challenges in which you find yourself depending on the Spirit of Jesus today?

My Reflections

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TRUST – What do I have to believe in order to act on this?

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The paradox of the life of a Jesus follower is that the more we become like Jesus, the more we become the person we were created to be. The more we surrender our will to His, the freer we become. The teaching of Jesus is not a constrictive series of rules laying down requirements for entrance to the kingdom but is instead a light to our path that reveals the liberating experience that is ours as we follow after Jesus and experience the life of the kingdom. (John 8:31,32)

Read and reflect on the following passage. You can record your reflections on the next page.

Isaiah 58:1-12

Matthew 18:1-7

Let's Get Personal:

Tomorrow is Sunday. One of the things that seems to be fading from Christian practice is the discipline of preparation for the Lord's Day. While preparations might be simpler than they once were, perhaps we should give more thought to how we should organize our schedule so that we are personally prepared to gather with God's people to listen to what the Spirit would say to us.

What are some ways that you prepare for corporate worship?

My Reflections

LISTEN – What did God say to me?

TRUST – What do I have to believe in order to act on this?

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The Anchor for the First Week

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father, Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth
And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary
Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried
The third day he rose again from the dead
He ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From there he shall come to judge the living and the dead
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy universal church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting
Amen.

A creed is a short statement of belief. Credo is Latin for I believe. The Apostle's Creed was not actually produced by the Apostles. It was an early formulation but not that early. There are a couple variations in this version compared to what might be familiar to those who have been part of a church that used this creed as a regular part of the service. This version does not include a reference to descending into hell after the reference to Jesus' death and the word catholic is replaced by the word universal. In the first variation the reason for the change is that this phrase was not in the earliest of manuscripts. The second variation is to avoid the confusion that many have with the word "catholic." The creed does not refer to a particular church (i.e. the Roman Catholic Church) but is referring to all 'Jesus Followers' over the whole world.

It is a worthwhile exercise to work on memorizing this creed. See how you do.

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The divine Spirit is usually referenced as “The Holy Spirit.” However, in Acts 16:7 and Philippians 1:19 we find the Spirit is also described as “the Spirit of Jesus.” From the very beginning the followers of Jesus understood that Jesus continues to be present through the Spirit Whom He has sent from the Father. We need the Spirit’s help if we are to follow Jesus. Without His help, our calling to follow Jesus becomes joyless and difficult / impossible. Jesus truly said, ‘Without me you can do nothing.’ (John 15:5). The Bible, the Word of God, teaches us what we need to know about living like Jesus. If we are to live like Jesus and for Jesus – if we are to find our identity and purpose in Jesus – we also need to ‘depend on the Spirit of Jesus.’ But more than this, we cannot receive Jesus except by receiving His Spirit. (Romans 8:9)

Read and reflect on the following passages. You can record your reflections on the next page.

Psalm 32; 1 Kings 19:1-8; Hebrews 2:10-18

Let’s Get Personal:

“I am depending on the Spirit of Jesus in my journey” speaks to the relationship that we continue to have with Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

What are some ways that you have seen the working of the Holy Spirit in your life this week? How does the present working of the Spirit of Jesus support the belief that you did in fact begin following Jesus?

My Reflections

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TRUST – What do I have to believe in order to act on this?

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Depending on the Spirit of Jesus in our journey is a descriptive way to talk about the Christian life. This perspective releases us from thinking that it is all about what we do and teaches us to lean on Jesus. This is the core discipline of The Way of Jesus. Spend some time today to make sure you have committed the first saying to memory. While it is helpful for your grasp of *The Way of Jesus* training to be able to recite this saying, it is crucial for your Christian life to be able to truly say that you have both begun following Jesus and that you are depending on the Spirit of Jesus as an ongoing experience.

Read and reflect on the following passages. You can record your reflections on the next page.

Psalm 32; Hebrews 4:14-5:10

Let's Get Personal:

The typical experience before someone begins following Jesus is that we have to face who we are apart from Jesus and see our need of a Saviour.

What was this experience like for you?

What are some ways that God has helped you to have a healthy image of the 'new you'?

What are some ways that the leading of the Spirit in your journey has surprised you?

My Reflections

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TRUST – What do I have to believe in order to act on this?

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