

WEEK ONE: February 14, 2018 – February 20, 2018



HIS LIFE

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

Throughout the seven weeks of this introduction to The Way of Jesus you will have a weekly saying to memorize. The first saying is a statement of connection with the Life of Jesus.

This first saying begins with a declaration that each of us must be able to affirm if we have any hope of walking in the way of Jesus. We need the life of Jesus in us and this is ours as we believe in him. Beginning to follow Jesus means personal identification with him in his death and resurrection. When we accept God's judgment that we are sinners we can also accept the fact 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.

Who helped you begin to follow Jesus? Through this week you might want to contact that person and thank them for the love they showed you to bring you to him. If they have already gone to glory, thank the Lord for their influence.

Do you have people around you now who are helping you in your walk of dependence on the Spirit? Express your appreciation to them this week. If you don't have someone that you are helping to begin following Jesus or walking in dependence on the Spirit, find someone this week.



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Today is Ash Wednesday. This marks the first day of Lent. While our tradition does not make a lot of this period of the year as a time of penitence, we at Bethel believe it affords a good opportunity to reflect on the gift that God has given us in his Son, Jesus.

Today is also Valentine's Day. This is a day when love is celebrated. It is an interesting coincidence that the observance of Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day come together on this first day of The Way of Jesus. Given the love of God that we have experienced in Jesus, we have reason to spend time reflecting on who we really are and what God would have us believe about ourselves. This is what we intend to do with this introduction to The Way of Jesus.

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

Genesis 1:26-27

Ephesians 1:3-10

2 Corinthians 8:9

Let's Get Personal:

Starting a relationship with Jesus is simple.

God in His love has prepared the way.

For you to start, all you need to say is, 'Jesus, I want to get to know you.' His invitation has already been extended, 'Come and see.' (John 1:39). Be prepared for things to start changing inside you.

My Reflections

LISTEN – What did God say to me?

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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In our tradition we have emphasized making a personal decision in order to begin following Jesus. However, 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. We should also recognize that God used people to introduce us to Jesus. Today would be a good day to think about these people and, if possible, say thanks to them. We should also say thank you to God for inviting us into relationship with him and paying such an extraordinary price to make it possible for us to say yes.

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

You can record your reflections on the next page.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Matthew 22:34-40

Let's Get Personal:

"I have begun following Jesus" carries the idea for some people that Jesus serves as an example whom we should emulate.

In the message on Sunday you will hear a different emphasis. As we consider the life of Jesus we should understand that we are invited to participate in his life. This begins with an experience of death and resurrection and not just my need to try harder.

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Beginning to follow Jesus is described as a new birth (John 3). So, in some regard the beginning of this journey is to find the end, the rest. The Christian life is not a striving after righteousness but rest in the righteousness of Jesus. The walk of a follower starts in the victory of Jesus and experiences the effect of that victory in the life that follows.

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

2 Corinthians 5:17;

1 John 2:6;

1 John 3:2

Let's Get Personal:

What was the biggest obstacle you had to overcome in order to follow Jesus?

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

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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 ourselves. 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 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.

Luke 9:23-26

John 10:11-18

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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 of the church over the whole world regardless what name is on the door.

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, 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.

John 14:15-21

Galatians 2:20

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?

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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 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.

Hebrews 12:1-3

John 15:1-11

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.

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