



Lesson 1 Looking Closely at Jesus' Life

Who is Your Leader?

They are the topics of many books and studies. They become examples for countless people hundreds and even thousands of years after they lived. They are the leaders, both good and bad, that changed the course of history.

1. Pick out several prominent leaders (past or present) and discuss why they attracted a following. What were their followers hoping for? What was the long-term result?

Among all the leaders and notable people of all time, Jesus stands out as unique. During his life on earth, large crowds followed him. Today over two billion people around the globe claim to follow him. What is so special about him? "Come Follow Me" traces Peter's life-changing journey of discovery about himself and what Jesus really came to do.

[Watch scene: In the Upper Room. Observe Peter's reactions.]

- *What struck home most as you watched?*
- *What questions emerge for you (to be considered later)?*

False expectations

Jesus called Peter and others to follow him (Matthew 4:18-25). They called him "Teacher" and "Lord," but had a long ways to grow. While they were eating the annual Jewish Passover meal, a quarrel broke out among them about who was the most important (Luke 22:24). This wasn't the first time.

2. Look this earlier request of James and John (and their mother).

Mark 10:15-37, 41 *Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."* ³⁶ *"What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.* ³⁷ *They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." ...⁴¹ When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.*

- What does it reveal was most important to them at the time or about their understanding and expectations of Jesus?

Peter once said to Jesus, "We left everything to follow you...what's in it for us?" (Matthew 19:27). What was he hoping for? It is our nature to be absorbed with "self" thinking "what's in it for me?" We get consumed with meeting "my" needs, fulfilling "my" desires, pushing "my" agenda. It is a life turned inward. But the purpose of life is not to live for and spend on ourselves.

3. Discuss how the self-centered mindset affects our world today.

- What impact does it have on a person's expectations of God...of others ...of Christianity?
- Where is self-centeredness showing up in your life? What things does it make you treasure?

Disciple

A person who follows a teacher or master to learn his ways and follow his lifestyle

"Self - ..."

Putting yourself at the center of your life and decisions

1 John 2:15-17

Jesus' Surprising Example

Jesus' lifestyle and teachings were a radical departure from what people expected. His followers would watch and listen so they could be fully trained to be like their teacher.


4. Look at Jesus' response to the request of James and John.

Matthew 20:25-28 *Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – ²⁸just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

- Contrast the attitude Jesus expected of his followers with the way of the world.

- Where in your life does this convict you?

Being a disciple wasn't so much about following a system, but about a relationship with the master – receiving what he had to offer and becoming like him.

5.  Read or recount the account of Jesus washing feet: John 13:1-17, 34-35.

- What jumps out for you?

- Why did Jesus washing feet surprise and confuse Peter?

6. Like Peter, we need washing more than we want to accept. In what ways do all of us need washing? Discuss how he effectively washes us.

Titus 3:3-6 *At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. ⁴But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior*

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 *Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

1 Peter 3:21-22 *and this water (Flood waters that saved Noah's family) symbolizes baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.*

Washing Feet

Read the Account:

John 13:1-17,
34-35

Washed Clean

Hebrews 10:5-22

Made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus

Jesus' Ultimate Act of Humble Service

Many people of Jesus' day were longing for a better life. They hoped for a Messiah who would restore the glory and riches of King David and his kingdom. They looked to him to become a "bread king" who would fill their stomachs, or a valiant warrior who would crush their physical enemies (like the Roman occupation). They were hoping for the things that would bring them worldly happiness and earthly advantages. What they missed were the prophecies that revealed Jesus would be a suffering servant (cf. Isaiah 53, Psalm 22). He came not in pomp and circumstance but humility. What they failed to grasp was the real enemy that drove Jesus to "give his life as a ransom for many."

7. Read how Jesus clothed himself in humility.

Philippians 2:6-11 *Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross! ⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

- Describe the path of Jesus toward his ultimate act of humble service. How do those steps show the extent of his love for us?
- What was the result?

Humility
has a FACE:
JESUS

During his last Passover before he died, Jesus took the bread and wine and gave it new meaning – tied to his sacrificial death on the cross. He said, "This is my body; eat it in remembrance of me." "This cup is my blood of the new covenant poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins." The offering of his body as a sacrifice for us and the shedding of his blood washed away sin – making us completely clean. The new meal he instituted that night continues to be celebrated by followers uniting them with his death and providing the forgiveness and freedom it gives to those who believe.

Passover
Exodus 12:1-30
Matthew 26:17-30
The meal remembering the event that brought freedom from slavery and death

The Response of the Followers

In his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-12) Jesus identified some of the attitudes that emerge in those who follow him – "poor in spirit...meek...pure in heart...peacemakers." They are in sharp contrast with the worldview that clamors for "what's in it for me" (a self-centered, self-absorbed perspective).

After washing feet at the Passover, Jesus told his disciples, "You call me Teacher and Lord...I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you...As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples" (John 13:15, 34-35).

8. How will our lives look different by being united with Christ?

Philippians 2:1-5 *Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ²then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. ⁵In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.*

- Describe this attitude that comes from being connected to Jesus.
- Discuss how your life would be different if others treated you like Jesus treated others.
- Now apply that mindset to your way of dealing with others. Where have you fallen short? What would change if you showed a greater servant's heart toward your children, spouse, co-worker, neighbor...or other drivers on the road?

Jesus' life

Read more in
the book of
Mark.

9. Once when the disciples were arguing about who was the greatest, Jesus used a child to make his point:

Matthew 18:1-5 *At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"² He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them.³ And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.⁴ Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of (humbles himself like) this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.⁵ And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. (cf. Mark 9:33-35; 10:14-15)*

- How does Jesus' illustration of a little child help define what it means to be a follower of Jesus, a disciple?

Pride, greed and other facets of selfishness separate us from a life with God. Only God can fix it. That is what Jesus came to do. Think about it. The God of the universe who orchestrates the stars and causes the earth to flourish with vegetation...that God comes to serve - to wash feet...to die. Then by his resurrection he transforms his followers into ones who serve - loving others because he first loved us (1 John 4:19).

Put it into Practice:

- Take inventory. Walk through the details of your daily life. How much does self-centeredness drive your decisions, actions, and reactions? How has it affected your relationships with God and people?
- Daily remember how Jesus humbled himself by stepping from his glory into your world - ultimately giving you life through his death. Who needs you? List those you are willing to stoop to serve because of what Jesus did for you.

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