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DISCIPLESHIP



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introduction

WELCOME TO RIVERSIDE DISCIPLESHIP, A SIMPLE GUIDE TO YOUR LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN, WHETHER YOU'RE NEW TO THE JOURNEY OR HAVE BEEN AT IT FOR A WHILE.

This booklet was put together by the leadership group at Riverside Community Church, and is designed to be best experienced with another follower of Jesus, though it could be done with someone who hasn't yet become a follower, or even by yourself, simply for the purpose of individual spiritual growth.

Its content largely comes from the New Testament in the Bible, from the book of Luke, chapter 5, the first eleven verses. This is an account of the encounter Jesus has with the people who become His very first followers, and contains much insight into what happened in their lives upon meeting him, and also observations about how their lives and behaviors changed because of that encounter.

This discipleship booklet also generously reflects the basic model of Discipleship that Riverside Community Church believes in: a group of people that are learning to live in the truth and reality of God's active, transforming presence in our lives, and a group of people who attempt to model a community of faith, love and warm acceptance – an actual spiritual 'family'.

We look forward to sharing this journey together and experiencing grace and hope in all of our life's circumstances. May God grant you a growing trust and courage on your ever-developing journey, into the beautiful depth of God's love for us!

old vs new

THE STARTING POINT OF YOUR WALK WITH JESUS IS A BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE GROUND RULES THAT GOD SETS REGARDING RELATIONSHIP WITH HIMSELF: HAPPILY FOR US, THE NEW AGREEMENT IS OURS TO ENJOY!

Before we start, there's something you need to know. It's something that is very simple, the starting point of life as a Christian, and yet it will take a lifetime to understand.

It has to do with the way we approach our walk with Jesus (in 'church' language, your 'Discipleship'). In effect, there are two lenses that we can view our journey with Jesus through: The lens of the Old Agreement (or Old Covenant or Old Way), or the lens of the New Agreement (or New Covenant or New Way). Let's explain by using a couple of Bible verses (you'll see this again in section 5+).

THE OLD AGREEMENT (sometimes called "The Law")

Because God is the ultimate authority, He sets the rules for relationship between people and Himself.

Deuteronomy 30:15-16 (the promise)

Now listen! Today I am giving you a choice between life and death, between prosperity and disaster. ¹⁶ For I command you this day to love the LORD your God and to keep His commands, decrees, and regulations by walking in His ways. If you do this, you will live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you and the land you are about to enter and occupy.

Deuteronomy 30:17-18a (the condition)

But if your heart turns away and you refuse to listen, and if you are drawn away to serve and worship other gods, ¹⁸ then I warn you now that you will certainly be destroyed.

Which as we can see, makes having a loving, personal relationship with God pretty tricky – actually impossible! It required perfect adherence, no mistakes allowed. Which is not very encouraging, because nobody is perfect, as the saying goes.

Unchanged in all of this, was God's longing to be in relationship with people. He loves people and His greatest joy is to be close to us, which presents the challenge. If the Old Agreement is not

able to bring about the beauty and joy of a relationship with God, perhaps a New Agreement is necessary, which is precisely what God did. He composed a new and better agreement, and it was delivered in the person of Jesus Christ.

THE NEW AGREEMENT

The essence of the New Agreement is captured in a verse like the one below:

Romans 8:3-4 (the promise)

The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent His own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving His Son as a sacrifice for our sins.
⁴ He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

This is why the gospel story of Jesus is called 'the Good News'. The question of relationship with God is no longer ours to figure out – Jesus did it for us! Even better, our part of the agreement is made astonishingly simple. Believe! This is shown in the verse below:

Romans 10:4 (the condition)

For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in Him are made right with God.

Now that we have met the condition of having genuine relationship with God (to believe), we are set to begin a new life as a Christian. Our life circumstances may still be the same, but how we approach them as a New Covenant believer changes dramatically, as does the freedom and joy we have in coming to our heavenly Father. This can be a challenge as we learn

to think and see through the new 'lens'. It is explained in the Bible like this, and it is often reflected in a choice or an inner understanding of how the Christian life works:

OLD LENS

Galatians 4:3,9

³ And that's the way it was with us before Christ came. We were like children; we were slaves to the basic spiritual principles of this world.

⁹ So now that you know God (or should I say, now that God knows you), why do you want to go back again and become slaves once more to the weak and useless spiritual principles of this world?

NEW LENS

Galatians 3:3,5

³ After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?

⁵ I ask you again, does God give you the Holy Spirit and work miracles among you because you obey the law? Of course not! It is because you believe the message you heard about Christ.

In short, there is something inside us that wants to 'prove' that we're worthy of God's love, that our behaviours are the best way to verify our faith. The New Covenant clearly shows us that the old approach is no longer necessary. Jesus' sacrifice bridged the gap between perfect God and imperfect man, and paved the way to uninterrupted friendship with God – a completely new way to live!

In a nutshell, that's the New Covenant and it is God's gift to us through Jesus. Once we begin to understand this, (and it will be a lifelong lesson of discovery as to how deeply we are loved by God), our walk with God becomes lighter and easier (Matthew 11:28-30), not without challenges, but now lived in the growing knowledge that the God of the Universe is 'on our side'!

Using this New Covenant lens, please join us for a journey into following Jesus, through the story of the very First Disciples.

listen

SECTION

1

listen

LUKE 5:1: ONE DAY AS JESUS WAS PREACHING ON THE SHORE OF THE SEA OF GALILEE, GREAT CROWDS PRESSED IN ON HIM TO LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD.



LEARN

The very first thing that we notice about the story in Luke 5 is that people wanted to be close to Jesus, to hear what He was saying. This is still true of followers of Jesus today – they love to be close to Him and to carefully listen to what He is saying, both through the Bible and by listening to the Holy Spirit.



CONNECT

- ▶ How would you describe yourself as a listener? How would others describe you as a listener?
- ▶ If you feel like you have heard from God, share some of the ways He spoke to you.

 **STUDY**

Read the following verses and look for information about listening to and hearing from God. Write it out in the space provided.

Proverbs 16:20

Matthew 13:9–12

James 1:22–25

 **OBSERVE AND APPLY**

We have seen that the experience of a follower of Jesus has much to do with listening. With what you have learned and read, how might you sharpen your listening skills?

“testimonies

Listening to Jesus changed for me once I understood in my heart that He wants to talk to me. At first, I didn't fully appreciate what that means. Once I grasped that the creator of everything wants to spend time with me the power and grace of that truth made me hungry to listen. — **GLENDAM.**

In a world full of social media, I have learned that to listen to God, I have to shut off my phone, quiet myself and open His Word (the Bible) which speaks truth, life and hope. — **ALEX N.**

I think it really involves intentionality. I believe Jesus is always speaking, but the loudness and busyness of my life often wants to drown out that 'still small voice'. I am learning to take time to quiet myself. — **TERRY J.**



FOR FURTHER STUDY

- ▶ 1 Samuel 3:1–10
- ▶ John 10:1–16



notes

partner

SECTION 2

partner

LUKE 5:3: STEPPING INTO ONE OF THE BOATS, JESUS ASKED SIMON, ITS OWNER, TO PUSH IT OUT INTO THE WATER. SO HE SAT IN THE BOAT AND TAUGHT THE CROWDS FROM THERE.



LEARN

A major discipleship lesson found in Luke 5, comes very quietly in verse 3 – so quietly that if we're not paying attention, we might miss it. It has to do with Jesus, Peter and the boat that belongs to Peter. As their friendship begins, Jesus steps directly into the centre of Peter's life – his boat. To a fisherman of that era, Peter's boat was his most valuable possession – it represented his livelihood, his identity, his status, his legacy, his provision. His boat and what it provided was the centre of his life – and Jesus knew that. And so, when Jesus begins his relationship with Peter, that's where He starts. Jesus does essentially the same thing in the life of every follower – He steps into the heart of our lives, with an expectation of being the centre Himself, of being the Lord of our lives.



CONNECT

- ▶ After reading that section, what is your initial reaction? In what way has Jesus stepped into the centre of your life?
 - ▶ Have you noticed any challenges in allowing Jesus to step into the centre of your life? Why do you think we struggle sometimes to allow Jesus to take His place at the centre of our lives?
-
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 **STUDY**

Look up the following verses and note what they say about the process of allowing Jesus to take His place at the centre of your life. Note that the two stories begin with virtually identical questions – the responses are quite different, however.

Mark 10:17–22

Acts 16:25–34

 **OBSERVE AND APPLY**

One of the keys to following Jesus is learning to allow Him to be at the centre of our lives (in the middle of the boat). How are you coming to understand this concept in your own life? What are some things that you can practice to experience the peace and joy that come from learning to do this well?

“testimonies

In the past, we struggled as Sam began to have this intense desire to be working in full time ministry. We realized, at that time in our lives, we had to decide which of our two businesses we'd have to let go in order to fulfill his desire. We believe that was the time that Jesus stepped in to take control of our desire to be successful in our worldly profession. In giving up one of our businesses, God proved His grace and as much as we love doing business, we find that our simplified life brought us more fulfillment and joy in Christ than there was before. We partnered with Jesus, and He is the “big boss” who orchestrates everything. To this day, He continues to take charge of our lives.

— LILY & SAM O.

Practise! Practise! Practise! I am a doer. I am learning to turn to God first. When I find I have jumped in head long, I catch myself and back up – turning back to Him. The more I practise, the quicker I catch myself the next time. — SHERYL S.



FOR FURTHER STUDY

- ▶ Revelation 3:20
- ▶ Matthew 28:18–20



notes

obey

SECTION 3

obey

LUKE 5:4-7: WHEN HE HAD FINISHED SPEAKING, HE SAID TO SIMON, "NOW GO OUT WHERE IT IS DEEPER, AND LET DOWN YOUR NETS TO CATCH SOME FISH."
⁵ "MASTER," SIMON REPLIED, "WE WORKED HARD ALL LAST NIGHT AND DIDN'T CATCH A THING. BUT IF YOU SAY SO, I'LL LET THE NETS DOWN AGAIN." ⁶ AND THIS TIME THEIR NETS WERE SO FULL OF FISH THEY BEGAN TO TEAR! ⁷ A SHOUT FOR HELP BROUGHT THEIR PARTNERS IN THE OTHER BOAT, AND SOON BOTH BOATS WERE FILLED WITH FISH AND ON THE VERGE OF SINKING.



LEARN

As we talk about discipleship, we cannot help but come to a conversation about obedience. Even the word obedience seems distasteful the bulk of the time, but it is a linchpin of discipleship. It doesn't matter how much we learn or know if we are unwilling to actually obey God. Beyond that, obedience is something that generally precedes understanding in our relationship with God. So often we want to understand before we make decisions and, in many ways, that is a responsible approach to life - but it is not an approach we can always apply to the Lord. Obedience means that we respond first, perhaps before we understand completely. The simple truth is that God wants us to be willing to step out and follow Him in faith and trust. Sometimes we will understand as we go, but whether we do or not, we are still called to obey the Lord.

CONNECT

How do you feel about the idea of obeying God without always understanding? What concerns do you have about that?

- ▶ Are there some areas of your life, some instances where you think this would be more difficult? What might those be?
-
-

STUDY

Take a look through these scriptures and see what they have to say about the importance of obedience.

John 14:15–26

James 1:19–27

OBSERVE AND APPLY

All through the Bible, we see again and again stories of how obedience is irreplaceable. We can often be tempted to try and replace obedience with something else, bargaining with God to somehow find a substitute for obedience. God's view of the world, and us, is so much bigger than our own; it makes sense to take His word for it and obey Him, possibly without full understanding. It's not an easy thing, and it constantly works against our base instincts, but it is worth more than we can ever know. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 and spend some time discussing how you will try to consistently decide to follow Jesus.

“testimonies

I was taught obedience and discipline in many different ways throughout my life. Obeying my parents or superiors didn't make me feel happy, but kept me safe. Obedience to God is different because it brings me joy and peace. Surrendering to Him gives me peace knowing He will protect, guide and watch over me always. — **ALEX M.**

When I was a student finishing my post-secondary education on Vancouver Island, I was given a choice: either go to a different country to study further, which sounded exciting, or go back home to India. I spent time praying with a keen desire to hear what God wanted me to. I remember clearly that the answer was to go back home. This was not what I expected, but I obeyed. I didn't realize that God was preparing me to meet this great guy shortly after I returned and that we would be married a couple years later! God always sees the big picture and asks that we simply trust Him and obey. — **PREETI V.**



FOR FURTHER STUDY

- ▶ 1 Samuel 15:22
- ▶ James 1:22
- ▶ Proverbs 22:17–19



notes

worship

SECTION 4

worship

LUKE 5:8-11 : WHEN SIMON PETER REALIZED WHAT HAD HAPPENED, HE FELL TO HIS KNEES BEFORE JESUS AND SAID, “OH, LORD, PLEASE LEAVE ME – I’M SUCH A SINFUL MAN.” ⁹ FOR HE WAS AWESTRUCK BY THE NUMBER OF FISH THEY HAD CAUGHT, AS WERE THE OTHERS WITH HIM. ¹⁰ HIS PARTNERS, JAMES AND JOHN, THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE, WERE ALSO AMAZED. JESUS REPLIED TO SIMON, “DON’T BE AFRAID! FROM NOW ON YOU’LL BE FISHING FOR PEOPLE!” ¹¹ AND AS SOON AS THEY LANDED, THEY LEFT EVERYTHING AND FOLLOWED JESUS.

LEARN

In the life of a disciple, we are called to worship our Lord and Saviour. It is not an option, as if we could worship Him if we feel like it. It is a vital part of being a disciple of Jesus. And God knew best when He made us this way. Worship is who a disciple IS, not what a disciple does! What we see in Luke 5:8-11 is that Peter comes to a place where he recognizes who he is, in relation to who Jesus is. Realizing the immense difference, Peter’s reaction is to drop to his knees in worship. What we get to see in reflecting on this part of the story is that while he worshipped, Peter received understanding and then had the opportunity to make application of that understanding.

CONNECT

- ▶ What does a life of worship look like? What does it look like in your life? In one word how would you describe your worship right now? (joyful, penitent, deep, restricted...)
 - ▶ Why would God choose to reveal things to us when we are worshipping? What are some new understandings that have come to you in the midst of worship?
 - ▶ In a moment of worship have you ever stopped to ask Jesus who you are in His eyes? What did He say?
-

STUDY

It is very important that we know who we are. When we are confident in who God made us to be, we are better able to be effective at the things that God has asked and prepared us to do. The act of worship helps clarify this. In the following verses, pull out the ideas of how God sees you and how it affects your worship.

Ephesians 2:10

Colossians 3:1-3

John 4:23-24

OBSERVE AND APPLY

How free do you feel in your worship of God? What holds you back? What calls you forward? Spend time practicing your worship of God this week. Remember: He knows you better than you know yourself and He loves you more deeply than you'll ever know. Now, work towards becoming more aware of His love, in order to become freer in your worship.

“testimonies

My oldest brother died over 6 years ago at age 32. One month later, my 25 year old cousin also died. I remember so clearly the moment I heard the news of another member of my family dying while still grieving the loss of my brother. I decided to worship. My cousin came over and played the guitar and together, my family sang, cried and worshiped God. That day was special because I learned in worship that God brings peace, hope, comfort and help because we give Him glory. We turn to Him in trust and freely worship in the good, bad and ugly.

— MANDELA N.

I remember a pastor sharing one time that often when we come to church, we think we are the audience, when really we are all performers and God is the audience. — SAM O.

Worship brings better perspective; it has a way of reducing the size of my problems in light of the size of the God I worship.

— COREY K.



FOR FURTHER STUDY

- ▶ John 4:21–26
- ▶ Psalm 100



notes

rescued

SECTION 5

rescued

LUKE 5:8: WHEN SIMON PETER REALIZED WHAT HAD HAPPENED, HE FELL TO HIS KNEES BEFORE JESUS AND SAID, "OH, LORD, PLEASE LEAVE ME – I'M SUCH A SINFUL MAN."



LEARN

A critical juncture in the life of a disciple is the moment (there could be several) when the potential follower of Jesus is confronted by the notion of sin – a concept that makes us aware of our separation from God. It's important to remember that God reveals this to us in absolute kindness – its revelation is not meant to condemn, but rather to invite us to participate in His wonderful solution to the sin question, Jesus Christ. Accepting God's offer of salvation, provided through Jesus, is essentially the starting point of becoming a follower, a disciple.



CONNECT

- ▶ Have you accepted Jesus as your Saviour? If so, what were the circumstances around it?
 - ▶ After all was said and done, was the actual decision to accept Jesus easy or difficult? How would you describe it to someone else who might be pondering the same decision?
-
-



STUDY

Have a look at the following verses and look to uncover what they say about the problem of sin, and its God-given solution.

Romans 3:23

Romans 6:23

Romans 10:9–11



OBSERVE AND APPLY

It is extremely important to understand that sin is primarily a condition that the entire human race is born into; sinful behaviours are simply a sad and costly result. Perhaps the most recognizable verse in the Bible is John 3:16 (and 17). Read that passage and insert your name in place of the phrase “the world”. What does that say to you?

“testimonies

While in my Buddhist faith, I never took sin seriously because I was taught that my good works would compensate for that. It was when I was born again that I learned that sin is a permanent mark and there's nothing that can undo them, except the act of Jesus' death on the cross. To this day, I am always filled with gratitude in my heart each time I recall how fortunate I am to be saved, without having to do it by tedious works! As I continue to enjoy the grace that I receive from Jesus, I find that I am becoming more and more grateful. — **LILY O.**

I never want to go back to my old life. My life with God gives me joy and renewed hope every day. — **JODY M.**

I was raised in a very challenging single parent family where the idea of God was rarely mentioned. I remember praying before bed a few times when I was very small but that was it. As a result, I lived most of my life apart from any relationship with God and was unaware of His love for me. Some years ago, I started attending a local church and was invited to attend the Alpha course. It was there that I accepted Jesus into my heart and since then, I have never looked back. Because of my deepening relationship with Christ, I have real joy today and hope for my future. — **KELLY W.**

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- ▶ 1 Peter 2:9–10
- ▶ Acts 16:22–34



notes

new

SECTION 5⁺

A CLOSER LOOK AT RESCUED

new

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17: ... THE OLD LIFE IS GONE; A NEW LIFE HAS BEGUN!

ROMANS 5:21: SO JUST AS SIN RULED OVER ALL PEOPLE AND BROUGHT THEM TO DEATH, NOW GOD'S WONDERFUL GRACE RULES INSTEAD, GIVING US RIGHT STANDING WITH GOD AND RESULTING IN ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.



LEARN

After a new disciple has accepted the free gift of salvation through Jesus' loving sacrifice, a profound shift occurs. No longer is life lived under the rules of the Old Covenant (often called the Law), it is now eligible to be lived under a dynamically different agreement – the New Covenant (often called 'Grace' or New Agreement). The terms of this New Agreement are clear and certain, but must be understood, embraced and applied to the living of life, with all the ups and downs that life contains. This New Covenant truth is the literal power and freedom that the Bible promises.



CONNECT

- ▶ What is your current understanding of the Old Covenant (Agreement), the New Covenant (Agreement) and the difference between them?
- ▶ If you have asked Jesus into your life, how has the actual living of life changed? What impact has His promise to forgive you, accept you and never leave you had on your life?



STUDY

To provide some clarity regarding the two covenants, have a look at the following passages and note the contrasts. Here's a hint: watch for things like demand, consequence, conditions, price of failure, human effort . . .

Old Covenant: (the Law) Deuteronomy 30:15–18

New Covenant: (Grace) Hebrews 9:11–15

The Contrast: Galatians 3:1–14

Bonus verse Acts 13:38–39



OBSERVE AND APPLY

A clear understanding of the New Covenant (Agreement) is absolutely critical to a healthy and fruitful Christian life. It is key to walking in freedom and faith. Many people have a vague understanding of its importance, but easily slip back into old ways of living and thinking, combining both Covenants, resulting in a confusing and contradictory Christian experience. May God lead us into His glorious freedom where "... the old life is gone; a new life has begun!"(2 Corinthians 5:17). What would the difference be between living under the Old Covenant (law) and the New Covenant (grace)?

““ testimonies

Following Jesus is not all rainbows and sunshine. Yes, it is the most rewarding journey of all, but when we become new in Christ, it means the old is gone. We often get tempted to hold on to the old habits and way of life. God made me new in Christ at age 18 but I was young and had lots of growing up to do. I would sometimes put on the old self again and give in to old habits and characteristics – that’s why I lean and hold on to grace, because grace keeps me new, not my actions but my faith in His work. I obtain the strength and desire to do good.

— MANDELA N.

I have been fighting grace in my life, by allowing fear of failure, striving for perfection, disappointing people, etc. to block my full embrace of God’s unconditional, unlimited grace. Realizing that has been a freeing revelation. — INGRID J.

I have struggled with guilt, and have to remind myself often that I don’t have to be perfect. Christ does not see me the way I see myself. Praise God! — KATHY V.



FOR FURTHER STUDY

- ▶ Colossians 2:13–14
- ▶ Romans 6:5–11



notes

follow

SECTION 6

follow

LUKE 5:8–11: WHEN SIMON PETER REALIZED WHAT HAD HAPPENED, HE FELL TO HIS KNEES BEFORE JESUS AND SAID, “OH, LORD, PLEASE LEAVE ME – I’M SUCH A SINFUL MAN.” ⁹ FOR HE WAS AWESTRUCK BY THE NUMBER OF FISH THEY HAD CAUGHT, AS WERE THE OTHERS WITH HIM. ¹⁰ HIS PARTNERS, JAMES AND JOHN, THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE, WERE ALSO AMAZED. JESUS REPLIED TO SIMON, “DON’T BE AFRAID! FROM NOW ON YOU’LL BE FISHING FOR PEOPLE!” ¹¹ AND AS SOON AS THEY LANDED, THEY LEFT EVERYTHING AND FOLLOWED JESUS.



LEARN

Jesus asks us all to follow Him, and how we respond dictates much of how our relationship with God goes. It is difficult to decide to hand over control of our lives to God, and difficult again to leave Him in control as time goes on, but it is important to remember that there are only two choices here. We can either decide to follow Jesus and let Him take the lead in our lives, or we can decide to lead ourselves. We can decide that God is worthy of our trust and submission, or that we must have control of our own lives. God is a God who loves us more than we could ever know, and has designed a plan for our lives. He is worthy of our trust, and He is worthy of taking the lead. Our task is to decide every day that we want to follow Jesus and see where He will lead us!

CONNECT

- ▶ What do you think the hardest parts of your life to hand over to God will be/are?
 - ▶ Why do you think giving up control is so difficult for us?
-
-

STUDY

Have a look at these verses and see what you can uncover about following Jesus, what it means to follow Him and how we can learn to follow Him.

John 10:1–18

John 8:12

John 12:23–26

OBSERVE AND APPLY

Following Jesus is absolutely essential and sometimes difficult. Now that you have had some time to go through the scriptures and think about what it means to follow Jesus, let's answer a few more questions. How do you think following Jesus will change your life? What are some real ways it will impact your day to day experience? What are you going to do to ensure you don't forget to let Him lead?

“testimonies

My experience has been (using a word picture of driving a car) that when I let Him drive, I will arrive safely. When I “wrestle the wheel” from Him, He allows me to drive, but inevitably I put the car in the ditch. — **BRAD M.**

Giving up control to God has been one of the hardest spiritual decisions for me. I was focusing on doing things by my own power, not allowing God to go before me. I wasn't following His plan for my life, I was trying to force my own will over His plans. The act of giving up control was and still is a hard lesson to learn, but it absolutely pays off. — **HARRISON P.**

It takes intentionality to choose to live God's way (not my way). It's not sustainable through guilt or obligation, only love.
— **CHRIS G.**



FOR FURTHER STUDY

- ▶ Matthew 16:24
- ▶ Psalm 23



notes

together

SECTION

7

together

LUKE 5:6-7: AND THIS TIME THEIR NETS WERE SO FULL OF FISH THEY BEGAN TO TEAR! ⁷ A SHOUT FOR HELP BROUGHT THEIR PARTNERS IN THE OTHER BOAT, AND SOON BOTH BOATS WERE FILLED WITH FISH AND ON THE VERGE OF SINKING.



LEARN

A very simple but often overlooked key to following Jesus is the idea of Christian community – getting together with other believers. This can be done in many forms, and in various sizes, but it is to be viewed as very important and worthy of prioritizing in our lives. Many people make the mistake of seeing it as inconvenient at best, and pointless at worst. While it is undeniably true that our lives seem to get busier and busier, nonetheless the vital principle of gathering together for the purpose of mutual strength and encouragement remains unchanged, be it 60 A.D. (approximately when the book of Luke was written) or 2018 (when this booklet was written).



CONNECT

- ▶ Admittedly, this could be a loaded question: Can you describe your personal experience of Christian community? (Remember, we're not here to criticize churches – every faith–community has its strengths and weaknesses – we're simply sharing experiences and observations). Generalities are probably helpful here.

- ▶ Are you able to define what you believe a healthy Christian community looks like? From what source do you derive that model?
 - ▶ Another potentially loaded question: What contribution do you bring to realizing the healthy community that you envision?
-

STUDY

Here are several passages from the Bible that help us to define Christian community. One is a metaphor, one is an actual report of a real-life church and one is a reminder of a vital truth.

1 Corinthians 12:12–27 (metaphor)

Acts 2:42–47 (an actual gathering of believers)

Hebrews 10:25 (an important reminder)

OBSERVE AND APPLY

Without question, the concept of getting together as Christians is vital to the growing health of a disciple, whether that gathering is larger (Sunday church) or smaller (Community Groups, home Bible study, etc.) This is true in spite of the knowledge that whenever groups of people gather, there is the potential for negative human behaviours. Our prayer is that we will each find the courage and hope to gather together in both large and small expressions and allow the grace of God and the truth and power of the biblical faith-community to be present and alive among us. What is your favourite part of the larger gathering of believers (Sunday morning)? If you have been part of a smaller gathering, what do you like about that?

“testimonies

I was nervous to join a community group because I did not want to be vulnerable. I was afraid to let people in and I had previously been hurt by other people. But once I started going, I never wanted to leave. I quickly learned that it is good to be in community. I am accepted just as I am. — **ALEX N.**

I always thought that the word ‘community’ was just a Christian buzz word. I have discovered that it’s actually the heart and soul of a genuine church experience. — **TGJ**

I’m a naturally shy person so going to church and meeting people doesn’t come easily. I have learned to pray and ask God to lead me in my interactions with people. Amazingly, I now find myself reaching out to people I haven’t met or who are sitting alone. — **ALEX M.**



FOR FURTHER STUDY

- ▶ Acts 4:32–35
- ▶ Hebrews 10:24–25
- ▶ 1 Timothy 4:11–16



notes

SECTION

7+

A CLOSER LOOK AT TOGETHER

filled

filled

LUKE 5:10: HIS PARTNERS, JAMES AND JOHN, THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE, WERE ALSO AMAZED. JESUS REPLIED TO SIMON, “DON’T BE AFRAID! FROM NOW ON YOU’LL BE FISHING FOR PEOPLE!”

ACTS 1:4-5: ONCE WHEN HE WAS EATING WITH THEM, HE COMMANDED THEM, “DO NOT LEAVE JERUSALEM UNTIL THE FATHER SENDS YOU THE GIFT HE PROMISED, AS I TOLD YOU BEFORE. JOHN BAPTIZED WITH WATER, BUT IN JUST A FEW DAYS YOU WILL BE BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.”

For this section, we go to the book of Acts, because the promise of the filling of the Holy Spirit had not yet happened in Luke 5.



LEARN

As Jesus began to mobilize His followers, He gave them an important instruction; don’t begin working on His behalf until you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Bible indicates that the Holy Spirit enters our life when we invite Jesus into our hearts to forgive us and live in us. When we request a further infilling of the Holy Spirit, He fills us to overflowing with the power of God. This power enables us to live victoriously in Christ and to help others know the same experience.



CONNECT

- ▶ What has been your understanding of the person and nature of the Holy Spirit?

- ▶ Much of this experience with God’s Spirit has to do with a “heart” attitude question: “Am I willing to experience as much as God wants to give me?” What is your response to that question?
-

STUDY

Here are several verses to read to help your understanding of this important part of living life as a believer:

Acts 1:4–5

Acts 2:1–4

Acts 2:16–18 (also in Joel 2:28–32)

Acts 19:1–7

OBSERVE AND APPLY

When I (Pastor Terry) was 16 years old, I went to Foursquare Youth Summer Camp. I was a Christian, raised in a fine Christian home, but I had not yet been filled with the Holy Spirit. At the end of one of the evening services, the guest speaker asked: “Is there anyone here who would like to have more of Jesus than they’ve ever had before?” This sounded very appealing to me and on the basis of that question and my desire, I responded... and I was wonderfully filled with God’s Spirit. And I can honestly say that it changed my life!

What’s been your experience? Have you ever been asked a similar question to the one I was asked at Youth Camp?

“testimonies

Jesus encouraged His disciples that it was better for them that He go, and that He would send the Holy Spirit – and I took that to heart. Walking everyday with the Holy Spirit as my encourager, motivator, convicter and comforter is indeed a great gift. — **TINA G.**

Being filled with the Holy Spirit has enhanced the reality of living in the presence of Jesus, and it equips me to experience this fullness and share that fullness with others. — **MARISSA H.**

Holy Spirit is so much more than just goosebumps and emotions – with Holy Spirit, we get to partner with God in our spiritual growth and we get access to His fullness. — **SARA K.**



FOR FURTHER STUDY

- ▶ Ephesians 5:18–20
- ▶ Galatians 5:16–26



notes

share

SECTION

8

share

LUKE 5:10–11: HIS PARTNERS, JAMES AND JOHN, THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE, WERE ALSO AMAZED. JESUS REPLIED TO SIMON, “DON’T BE AFRAID! FROM NOW ON YOU’LL BE FISHING FOR PEOPLE!” ¹¹ AND AS SOON AS THEY LANDED, THEY LEFT EVERYTHING AND FOLLOWED JESUS.



LEARN

The point of the passage in Luke 5 that we’ve been studying comes down to the last couple of verses: the illustration of “fishing for men”. In other words, all of the other lessons we’ve studied are for this purpose: to share the good news of Jesus with others who have not yet heard it or had a chance to receive it (in Jesus’ words, “fishing” for people). Far too many Christians miss this point, and live life as though the work of Jesus is completed at their own salvation. If that were the case, there’s very little hope for the world! Each one of us is called by the Lord to share our unique story of finding God, and through Jesus, trusting that God can use our story to reveal Himself to them.



CONNECT

- ▶ What’s the best news that you’ve ever had the joy to deliver? (birth of a child, a job promotion, a new home...)

- ▶ Have you ever struggled with sharing the good news of new life in Jesus? Why do you think that is?
 - ▶ How do you think that sharing your faith-story could be a more regular part of your life and experience? What might you do to make this more natural; more normal; more appealing?
-
-

 **STUDY**

Look up the following passages and jot down your observations about the significance of sharing your faith-story with others.

Romans 10:14–15

Jonah 3:1–5

Mark 5:18–20

 **OBSERVE AND APPLY**

Reading in the New Testament, it becomes very clear early on, how much importance is placed on telling others about God and His goodness, expressed through the gift of Jesus. Why do you think it is important to share the good news of Jesus? Try writing a one or two minute version of your story and the difference that Jesus has made in your life.

“testimonies

To this day, I am grateful to those who took the risk of friendship to share the gospel with me. Because of that, I was able to understand forgiveness through Jesus' death on the cross and the eternal life that He promised. And because I received the gift of God freely, I want to share it to everyone that Jesus brings to my life. — **SAM O.**

The more I know and love God's message of grace for me, the more drawn I am to share it. Jesus is for everyone – it's not my job to figure out if or how people need God, the fact is that we all do. — **TINA G.**

Sharing is being God's extension to show His unconditional love. It's really love in action and service to others.
— **DEBBIE B.**



FOR FURTHER STUDY

- ▶ John 1:40–49
- ▶ 2 Kings 7:3–11



notes

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