

why i follow jesus

sept 11 - oct 2

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

Week 1

1. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What did you find uncomfortable?
2. How would you respond to the question, "Why do you follow Jesus?"
3. What caused you to follow Jesus in the first place? Does this differ at all to your response to the previous question?
4. On Sunday Matthew shared about a journey of order, disorder and re-order (or creation, fall and new creation). Have you experienced anything like this in your own life? How have you struggled and grown through each of these phases?
5. Matthew also shared about aspects of faith that became troubling or disturbing and created the tension for change. What have been some challenges to your own faith over time, and how have you responded to them? How would you describe the outcomes—do you feel in a healthier place as a result, or less so?
6. As a church community this year we want to grow in our passion to follow Jesus and grow stronger together as a community. How could you help contribute to this growth? Where could you volunteer to serve? Who could you reach out to with care?
7. If you are discussing these questions as a group, break up into groups of 2 or 3 and share your story of faith with one another. If you are reflecting on these questions alone, take some time this week to meet with a trusted friend to share.
 - How has following Jesus changed you personally? How has your faith changed over time?
 - Share also how you feel about your faith now. Are you full of passion or feeling less so? What do you think you need to do about this?
 - After sharing, take a moment to pray for one another or sit together in silence and experience God's loving presence.

Prayer exercise for this week: Life Examen

Set aside some time this week to sit quietly in solitude. Center yourself to let go of distractions and be present in the moment. Use your imagination to walk through your spiritual journey of life. Go back to your first awareness of or awakening to what you would call spiritual or divine. Then progress through your life over time, focusing on moments and experiences that seem significant to you. Some may feel very positive, some may feel painful. How have they impacted you? How have they changed you? Don't judge your experience or respond to it, just notice it and open your heart and mind to God's love and acceptance. For the episodes on your journey (positive or negative) that particularly stand out to you, reflect on how you could respond to them today. For the ones that had positive outcomes, how can you build on these? For the ones where the outcomes have not been so helpful or healthy, what do you need to let go of, or is there any different response you could have to them now? Sit with this quietly for a moment and let God's presence guide you.

Week 2

1. What thoughts did the message this past Sunday trigger in you? Was there anything that resonated or was helpful? Was there anything you found uncomfortable?
2. In 1 Peter 3:15 we read: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."
 - How would you describe "the hope that you have"?
 - What is the reason for this hope?
3. On Sunday Ruth mentioned 4 areas that contribute to her reason for hope:
 - Rational reasons
 - Personal experience
 - The person of Jesus
 - No better alternativeHow do each of these areas contribute to your reason for hope?
4. Ruth and Sandy both shared about feeling angry at God or let down by God at certain times in their lives.
 - Have you ever felt that way, or do you feel that way now?
 - How comfortable are you with these kinds of feelings?
 - How does these feelings impact your reason for hope?
 - What ways have you found for processing feelings of anger or disappointment with God?
5. If you are discussing these questions as a group, take some time to pray for one another. If you are reflecting on these questions alone, take some time this week to meet with a trusted friend to share about your feelings.

Prayer exercise for this week: Be Still And Know That I Am God

Set aside some time this week to sit quietly in solitude. Sit with your back straight and feet flat on the floor. Rest your hands in a neutral position. Quiet your mind of distracting thoughts, and invite God into this moment.

Slowly repeat the decreasing lines of Psalm 46:10 below, pausing for a minute between each line:

Be still and know that I am God.

Be still and know that I am.

Be still and know that I.

Be still and know.

Be still.

Be.

Rest in God's presence.

Week 3

1. What thoughts did the message this past Sunday trigger in you? Was there anything that resonated or was helpful? Was there anything you found uncomfortable?
2. In Hebrews 12:2 we read, "Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who is the author of our faith and the one who brings it to its goal." Both Bryan and Deb shared about some practices that have helped them focus on Jesus. What practices have you found to be helpful to do so, and what insights you've gained?
3. On Sunday Bryan suggested that following Jesus is a lifelong journey of coming to see Jesus more clearly as he is, becoming more captivated by his way, and partnering with his Spirit to help us become more like him. How has your understanding and experience of Jesus changed over the years? How has this helped you grow as a person and as a follower of Jesus?
4. What "facet" of Jesus are you most captivated by right now? What "facets" do you want to explore more deeply?
5. On Sunday Deb shared about how learning to trust God is helping her overcome worry and anxious thinking. Have you struggled with similar feelings? How has or how might growing in trust help you handle worry and fear?
6. If you are discussing these questions as a group, take some time to pray for one another. If you are reflecting on these questions alone, take some time this week to meet with a trusted friend to share about your feelings.

Prayer exercise for this week: ACT prayer

Set aside some time this week to sit quietly in solitude. Read the words from Jeremiah 33:3: "Call to me and I will answer you. I'll tell you marvelous and wondrous things that you could never figure out on your own."

Call to God using the following prompts:

- Acknowledge God's presence—God is with you right here and now
- Commit to being present with God during this time
- Tell God what's on your heart—be honest about your concerns, desires, questions, joys or sorrows

Spend some time resting in God's presence.

Week 4

1. What resonated most with you in the discussion today? Was there anything you found uncomfortable?
2. Hubert shared about coming to a point in his faith journey of perpetual re-evaluation and change. How do you relate to that? What are the benefits and challenges of uncertainty and openness?
3. What are your reflections on Hubert's story about encounters with people and communities from different faith traditions? Have you had any similar experiences? How have they affected your own faith journey?
4. Both Hubert and Matthew shared about their changing engagement with scripture at various points in the discussion. Has your own engagement with the Bible changed at all over time? How have you found scripture helpful and how have you found it problematic? What role would you say scripture plays in your own life now?
5. Describe one way in which you feel following Jesus has brought about personal and positive transformation in your own life. What motivated this change and how did it happen?
6. If you are discussing these questions as a group break up into smaller groups of 2 or 3 and share about the questions below. If you are reflecting on these questions alone, take some time this week to meet with a trusted friend to share.
 - What role does following Jesus have in the trajectory of your life as a whole – your dreams, your career, your goals, your plans?
 - What is one part of your life that you feel needs transformation right now? How do you sense you need to respond to Jesus in this?

After sharing taking a moment to pray for one another or sit together in silence and experience God's loving presence.

Prayer exercise for this week: Letting go of fear

In the discussion on Sunday there was frequent talk about love vs. fear in how we experience God. This week, be especially conscious and tuned into this. In your encounters at work and leisure, with family and friendships, be aware of any personal fear or withdrawal. In the moment, open yourself to God's love. Try to let go of fear and lean into the encounter with love and openness. At the end of the day, spend some time in quiet reflection on these moments. Why were you afraid? What difference did "leaning into love" make? What would that situation look like if you had zero fear? Then spend a moment inviting God's love to empower you.