

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 2

CONVERSATION STARTER

If you could make one rule that everyone in the world had to follow, what would it be?

THE WAY JESUS WALKED

Twice in this week's reading John the Baptist sees Jesus walking toward him (1:29, 1:36). At first read, it seems like John is just taking note as Jesus passes him by. But actually, the verb tense used in the original Greek suggests there is much more going on. The verb more accurately refers to an action that is being repeated, not a one-time event. In other words, John saw the way Jesus walked. This is a metaphor for describing the way Jesus *lived*. It was the way Jesus went about his life—how he made decisions, what guided him, how he treated people, etc.—that revealed to John that he was the Messiah. The same is true for us today. How we live says a lot about who we are and what we value. If someone were to try and determine who we were based on how we lived, what would they find? Take a minute to talk this through together as a group.

A NEW KIND OF ISRAEL

Read John 1:43-51 together. Passages like this can seem confusing or random, but the author is using some key images from the Hebrew Bible to describe what Jesus is trying to do. Jesus greets Nathanael with, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" He's calling upon the story of Jacob from Genesis 25. Jacob's story is characterized by deceit; Jacob means "deceiver" in Hebrew. But Jacob's name would later be changed by God to Israel. Likewise, the Hebrew Prophets looked forward to a day when God's people would be changed, no longer defined by deceitfulness, but by their humility. Zephaniah 3:12-15 describes this new Israel as those who seek refuge in God, and in whose mouths are not found deceitful tongues. Zephaniah says these are people who tell no lies, instead they sing and rejoice, for God is in their midst.

Do you see what Jesus is doing when he draws on this story? He's teaching his followers about the kind of community they are to become. They will be a new kind of Israel, like the one promised in Zephaniah. His community will be one that values humility, loves justice, and finds strength in God. What do you think it would be like to live in this kind of community?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. John the Baptist viewed his purpose as preparing the way for Jesus. What would your life look like if you, too, thought of your purpose as preparing others to encounter Jesus?
2. In preparing the way for the Lord, John the Baptist was making it easier for Jesus to do his work in the people's lives. He got their "stuff" out of the way so Jesus could move in. What things in your life are making it more difficult for Jesus to break in? What would help "clear the way"?
3. After meeting Jesus, the first disciples in John immediately sought to bring others with them to Jesus. What is a practical way you could do the same this week and introduce someone you know to Jesus?
4. Even though he was doing the right thing, John the Baptist was frequently challenged by the priests for his actions. Are there any areas in your life where you feel like God is calling you to stand firm even in the face of challenge?
5. Jesus asks us to follow him in every area of our lives. In what area of your life do you find it difficult to surrender to God?

WEEKLY PRACTICE

Have you ever looked at the first four things Jesus says in John's Gospel? To his new disciples, Jesus asks a question, extends an invitation, offers a promise, then provides a next step. Four times Jesus speaks, and each is packed with meaning not just for the original readers but for us today. Take a moment to work through each of Jesus' statements in John 1:35-43 as if he were speaking directly to you.

The Question: "What do you want?"

What are you looking for, *really*? Spend five minutes asking yourself that question. What are you really after? What is the *more* you are looking for? Is what you're really looking for different than what you spend your time actually chasing after?

The Invitation: "Come and See"

You don't have to have it all together to accept this invitation to spend time with Jesus. Jesus wants you to come to him just as you are. Do you believe that Jesus is the more you are looking for? Why or why not?

The Promise: “You are... You will be”

Jesus knows who *you are now* and loves you. But that doesn't mean there isn't more Jesus has planned for you. God wants to shape you into the person you were created to be. Spend a few moments in prayer asking God to show you what that person looks like.

Next Step: “Follow me”

Following Jesus means knowing what Jesus knew, so you can do what Jesus did, and become more like Jesus in the process. What does it practically look like for you to begin following Jesus this week?