

of Following Jesus

772
were walking along the road, a
to him. "I will follow you
you go."
plied, "Foxes have holes and
air have nests, but the Son of
place to lay his head."
to another man. "Follow me."

773
who rejects you rejects me; but he who re-
jects me rejects him who sent me."
The seventy-two returned with joy and
said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us
in your name."
He replied, "I saw Satan fall like light-
ning from heaven. ¹⁹I have given you au-
thority to trample on snakes and scorpions
and to overcome all the power of the ene-
my; nothing will harm you. ²⁰However, do

2017 STARTER KIT WEEK 8

A LONGING TO SHARE

FOR YOUR YOUTH GROUP OR SMALL GROUP MEETINGS

was about to go. "He told them,
est is plentiful, but the workers
k the Lord of the harvest, there-
nd out workers into his harvest
I am sending you out like lambs
ves. "Do not take a purse or bag
and do not greet anyone on the

you enter a house, first say,
his house." "If a man of peace is
peace will rest on him; if not, it
to you. "Stay in that house, eat-
inking whatever they give you,
ker deserves his wages. Do not
nd from house to house.

you enter a town and are wel-
what is set before you. "Heal the
re there and tell them, 'The king-
d is near you.' ¹⁰But when you
n and are not welcomed, go into
and say, ¹¹'Even the dust of your
sticks to our feet we wipe off
u. Yet be sure of this: The king-
d is near.' ¹²I tell you, it will be
able on that day for Sodom than
wn.

to you, Korazin! Woe to you,
For if the miracles that were
in you had been performed in
Sidon, they would have repented
sitting in sackcloth and ashes.
ll be more bearable for Tyre and
he judgment than for you. ¹⁵And
maum, will you be lifted up to the
you will go down to the depths. ¹⁶
ho listens to you listens to me; he

privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see
what you see. ²⁴For I tell you that many
prophets and kings wanted to see what you
see but did not see it, and to hear what you
hear but did not hear it."

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

²⁰On one occasion an expert in the law
stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he
asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal
life?"

²¹"What is written in the Law?" he re-
plied. "How do you read it?"

²²He answered: "'Love the Lord your
God with all your heart and with all your
soul and with all your strength and with all
your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as
yourself.'"

²³"You have answered correctly," Jesus
replied. "Do this and you will live."

²⁴But he wanted to justify himself, so he
asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

²⁵In reply Jesus said: "A man was going
down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he
fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped
him of his clothes, beat him and went away,
leaving him half dead. ²⁶A priest happened
to be going down the same road, and when
he saw the man, he passed by on the other
side. ²⁷So too, a Levite, when he came to
the place and saw him, passed by on the
other side. ²⁸But a Samaritan, as he trav-
eled, came where the man was; and when
he saw him, he took pity on him. ²⁹He went
on him and bandaged his wounds, pouring
on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his
own donkey, took him to an inn and took

HERE IS WHAT WE PROVIDE IN EACH SESSION:

1. A brief reading on the topic. This can be read, but of course should be shared instead in the leader's own words, adding or subtracting details that fit your group. Usually, there are Bible readings and questions worked into the text.
2. A short devotion that brings home the principles of the topic of the week. This is intended to be shared with the whole group.
3. An activity suggestion. These are simple, requiring few, if any, materials, but we all learn and retain better if we do something physical with what we've heard and seen.
4. A short skit. If you have time to rehearse and learn, these can be done on different weeks, or even for other meetings such as church services. But they can also be and done in impromptu fashion, each person reading his/her part expressively. Always allow time to discuss people's reactions after skits.
5. Very important: Each week's starter kit includes a page called "7 Days of Soul Food." Print these out and give copies to each person, or give each person the link if they have online access. These are personal applications that will carry the devotion through the whole week. It is highly recommended that each person begin some sort of prayer journal and use it all year. We general think of journals as being full of writing, but if you don't like to write, you can draw, doodle, paste in pictures that bring the lessons of the week to mind — anything that helps you draw closer to God.

INTRODUCTION

One of the things that happened when Martin Luther discovered a loving and gracious God in the Bible was that he wanted to share his exciting discoveries with everyone else. As he shared and others began to see the truth, they shared it, too. Before long, much of Europe was bursting into a flame, not only of righteousness by faith, but also of disagreement and opposition.

The thing is, realizing the truth about the gospel is not like realizing the truth about a fact. You may feel a huge sense of relief and even joy when you figure out calculus, or begin to understand your physics lesson, and at first, the intellectual understanding of what the Bible says may be the same. But the minute that you accept *that* truth, something inward happens. The Holy Spirit lights up your soul and you realize, “It’s not just a fact or a truth that Luther (and others) figured out and that I agree with—it’s a whole different *life* for *me*!”

Let’s take a brief look at how Luther relates what happened to his own understanding. At the time, Catholic theologians preached that the phrase “God’s righteousness” in the New Testament meant the actual perfection of God, with which God punished sinners and rewarded the righteous—that is, those who succeeded in being perfect (which no human can do). So Luther hated that term. Here’s how he describes it:

“I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God, and said, “As if, indeed, it is not enough, that miserable sinners, eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the Decalogue, without having God add pain to pain by the gospel and by the gospel threatening us with his righteousness and wrath!” Thus I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience. Nevertheless, I beat importunately upon Paul at that place, most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted.” (*Luther’s Works*, Volume 34, P336-337).

Clearly, Luther longed to understand, and felt that there was something else here to understand; besides, the Holy Spirit was still working hard to keep him from giving up in despair.

“At last,” Luther writes, “by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, ‘In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, “He who through faith is righteous shall live.”’ *There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. ... (ibid. emphasis added.)*

And what was the result in Luther's heart?

"I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me." (*ibid.*)

From: <http://christianity.stackexchange.com/questions/8742/when-and-how-did-martin-luther-arrive-at-the-justification-by-faith>

Have you had such an experience, so that what you were taught of an angry and vengeful God was turned on its head? If so, you know how Luther felt. If, on the other hand, you have been blessed to be taught about God's love and salvation your whole life, then you can be deeply grateful to God. In either case, as soon as true, heart-deep understanding arrives, you want to tell the world.

We can see examples of this in the Bible, too. The first chapters of John, telling of the time when Jesus first began His earthly ministry, are full of this longing to share. Read or have read the following verses, and in each case, ask who wanted to tell the world, what they wanted to tell, and why.

John 1:29-34

John 1:40-41

John 1:45

John 2:3-5 (and the result, in v. 11.)

Take just a look at John 3. You know the story. Who is sharing here, and why?

John 4:28-30

We will conclude with verses 39-42, because they are a wonderful example of the principle we have been talking about. Those who accepted what the woman said were not yet in a relationship of faith, but they wanted to hear more. Read those verses and discuss what the steps were between hearing the truth and having it come to the heart, then wanting to share it.

Do you have that longing to share? Don't be misled—the longing to share the good news is not necessarily about preaching. It's about your life. It's about how you respond when your friends are in trouble. It's about how you share their joys. It's about simply living your life with your hand in Christ's.

Francis of Assisi is credited with saying, "Preach the gospel at all times. When necessary, use words."

DEVOTION

What if you don't have a longing to share, or you do have a longing, but you are afraid? Chances are, there are two likely reasons.

First, it's possible you have not yet had the truth settle into your own heart and make a real difference in your life. If this is so, do not despair or judge yourself negatively (see 1 John 3:20). The first step, after all, especially if you have been raised in a Christian home, is just learning the truth, with a small t. In other words, knowing facts about the Bible, about God, about Jesus and His work for us. But that's not the whole Truth, with a capital T. Read John 14:6. What did Jesus say was the truth? *He* is! So you don't know the whole Truth unless you personally know Jesus. And that's the easy part. Here are three steps (we will dig into them more deeply during our seven days of soul food):

1. **Ask.** Tell God you want to get to know Him better.
2. **Read your Bible**, especially stories about Jesus, every day.
3. **Pray.** Pray morning, noon, and night, pray all day, pray in trouble, pray in joy.

As your friendship grows, that desire to share will come. It's automatic.

Secondly, if you do have that relationship and want to share but are afraid, you may have misunderstood what sharing is all about. Far too often, we Christians speak from the pulpit about specific ways of sharing—preaching, giving Bible studies, giving out literature, inviting people to church. These are all good methods. You should definitely ask God if He wants you to do any of them. But you should also be careful.

Not everyone is called or skilled to preach, (including in ordinary conversation).

Bible studies that are created for the purpose of convincing someone of some particular set of facts may (or may not) convince someone, but it's the heart that needs to be touched, and only the Holy Spirit can do that. The Holy Spirit often does it by helping you to study the Bible with a friend just as if it's a love letter from the Creator. Try that, and leave the fact-finding to be led by the Spirit. You might be surprised.

Handing out literature is a good thing if it's hand-in-hand with friendship. God has been known to sometimes lead people to randomly pick up a pamphlet or book from some place and lead them to Him through their reading of the book/pamphlet. It is equally certain that He will then lead them to

human friends who will support their Christian walk. It's simpler if the book or pamphlet was given by a friend to a friend to begin with, in response to a particular question or crisis or need that friend expressed.

You are unique. So is your friendship with God. You'll share the way *you* are meant to.

Fact: you already do share *something* all the time, whenever another human can see you. Be sure what you share is love.

THINGS TO DO

AN ACTIVITY ABOUT GROWING A FRIENDSHIP.

1. Divide the group into pairs and have them sit back-to-back so they can't see or touch each other. They are not allowed to speak out loud, either.
2. Have each pair find creative ways to learn about each other without being able to see or hear the other.
3. Discuss whether you learn anything that could help you in your friendship with God. Of course, it is not the same, since, He can see and hear us and could speak aloud to us if He wishes; sometimes He does. But it could give some good insights.

AN ACTIVITY ABOUT SHARING.

1. Divide into either pairs or small groups of three or four.
2. Think of things in your ordinary daily life, not necessarily spiritual things, that you are excited to tell each other. Then think of a spiritual thing to share.
3. Discuss in the whole group what kinds of spiritual things were easier to share and what kinds were harder, and why.

SEVEN DAYS OF SOUL FOOD

SEVEN DAYS' WORTH OF DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

You must love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind (Luke 10:27). To put it another way, body + heart + mind = one living soul.

We can't divide ourselves into different sections, but it's useful to look at these different aspects of ourselves and be sure we have a well-balanced faith that uses all the avenues of a soul. Each of these starter kits will include a week's worth of food for your soul in each of these four methods of understanding and expression.

Write about each of the following in your prayer journal this week. Each day strive to use language of emotions, thought, physical health and strength, or spirit on the given days.

DAY ONE: *Strength/body:* **Day 1:** This week we will spend some time on the three steps to friendship with Jesus. Begin today by prayerfully reading Matt. 7:7. Spend some time thinking, praying, and writing about those three specifics Jesus mentions—what is the same or different about asking, seeking, and knocking? What does Jesus promise?

DAY TWO: *Heart: Ask:* With your whole heart (including doubts and questions if any—He already knows they're there, and you can't deal with them if you don't look them in the eye) tell Jesus you would like to have a friendship with Him. He has already promised He will come to all who ask. Rev. 3:20; John 6:37; and you can find many more if you look. Write about how this makes you feel.

DAY THREE: *Mind:* Commit to reading your Bible every day, but not as something to check off on your To-Do -List. Read it like a letter from your new Friend. Start with the gospels; that's where you'll learn the most about Jesus and what He is really like. Try to put yourself in the story. Be a disciple. Listen, watch, follow, and imitate. List some ways that you are now learning that expand your thinking.

DAY FOUR: *Strength/body:* If you were physically, in our earthly reality, walking with Jesus, you would be walking miles and miles every day. Since He is no longer visible to us, we “walk” with Him in our ordinary daily activities. But He does want as much as possible of that activity to be physical and outdoors, because that’s how we were created. What are some ways your ordinary activities can become mission and ministry this week?

DAY FIVE: *Soul/spirit: Pray.* This is the most important way that we grow our own, personal, unique friendship with Jesus. Just talk, exactly like you talk to your friends. Tell Him your joys, your burdens, your sorrows. Express your doubts and questions and ask Him to show you how to find answers, and also how to trust even when there are no simple answers. Be sure to listen! You wouldn’t have a very good friendship with your earthly best friend if you did all the talking.

DAY SIX: Today, write in your prayer journal what changes you are beginning to see in the way you relate to your family, community, and church. Do you find yourself wanting to share? What kinds of things are you sharing, and what results do you see? Don’t worry if the changes are small—God does mighty miracles with tiny things.

DAY SEVEN: Use day 7 to create something beautiful that reflects what you have learned. Write a poem or song or story. Create a poster. Write a letter. Paint or draw a picture. Make a sign. Do some sidewalk chalk art or writings. Build something. Create a podcast or blog post or Twitter post(s). Make food and give it to someone in need. Use whatever creativity God has given *you*. We all have something. Share the love!

a short skit

JESUS AND THE DEMONIACS

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A SHORT SKIT (ABOUT 10 MINUTES)

One of the first missionaries Jesus had was probably not a Jew. He was a demon-possessed man who lived in the Ten Cities area across the Sea of Galilee. This story is told three times, in Matt. 8:28-34, Mark 5:1-20, Luke 8:26-39. An interesting thing is that in Matthew, there are two demoniacs. This may mean that there were two men, but one became known for his sharing of his story, because the Matthew story does not mention either of them sharing. It only tells that the pig herders reported what had happened in the city, and the people came and told Jesus to go away. We'll try to imagine this story from the point of view of the main demoniac, and the points of view of the disciples.

CHARACTERS

1. Jesus
2. Disciples (you don't need all 12 if you don't have enough people)
3. Man possessed by demons
4. 2 herders
5. At least a few townspeople

PROPS

1. A raggedy cloak or mantle for the demoniac to wear over his clothes; and pieces of broken rope or chain hanging from his wrists. (These can be imaginary.)
2. Garment or mantle; one of the disciples has it over his/her clothes.
3. You could have sticks for the herders.

4. Designate one area as the water and one as land, with a space that represents the graveyard.
5. The town can be one corner of the room, or outside the door.
6. You can think of something to represent a boat if you like, or simply have Jesus and His followers sitting in a row of chairs and pretending to row.
7. The townspeople wait in the corner or outside the door.
8. To one side on land, the herders are watching over their pigs.
9. In the graveyard, the demoniac is prowling around acting tormented, perhaps crawling, or tearing at his skin or hair, trying to gash himself with a sharp stone, and growling or wailing.
10. When Jesus and His disciples "arrive" (by stepping from their chairs, or simply pretending to wade to land), he rushes at them.
11. The disciples run back to the boat in fear, and the herders also act frightened, but Jesus stands still, looking lovingly at the demoniac.

Jesus: (sternly) Come out of him, you unclean spirit!

Man: Falls to his knees at Jesus' feet—if this is acted well, the person can show by his face that he really wants Jesus' help, even while screaming in a strange voice, *What do you have to do with me, Jesus, Son of the most high God? I beg you by God's name, don't torment me?*

Jesus: (still sternly) What is your name?

Man: (writhing and still speaking in a strange, screaming voice) *My name is Legion, for we are many. Please don't send us away!* (Looks over at the pigs, where the herders are staring at the scene.) *Let us go into those pigs.*

Jesus: (looks over toward the herders) *All right, but get out of this man!*

Man: Writhes on the ground and screams, then falls limp.

Herders: Oh, no, oh no! They're jumping in! (Act out watching the pigs run into the water, trying to stop them, and so on. Turn on Jesus, waving their sticks.) *You've ruined our whole livelihood! You haven't heard the last of this!* (Run out of the room or to the town corner.)

Man: (Gets up slowly to his knees and stares up with joy) Thank you, thank you, Lord, how can I thank you?!

Jesus: (Takes man's hands and helps him up, smiling. The disciples are moving slowly nearer, stunned. Jesus looks at them) *"Bring this man something to wear."*
(Jesus helps get the ropes off the man's wrists and takes off the ragged mantle. The disciple with the clean mantle takes it off and a couple of disciples help Jesus to get the man free and clothed. They sit down nearby and begin to talk together.)

Man: *I want to come with you, Lord! I want to be your follower!*

Just then the **herders** and **townspeople** run over. They stare at the newly healed man, but instead of being happy they shrink away in fear and shout at Jesus, *"Do you realize what you've done? You've lost this town a lot of money! Get away from here! And don't come back!"*

Jesus: **Jesus** stands up and looks sadly at them, then begins to turn back toward the boat.

Man: (jumping up and grabbing Jesus' arm)
Lord, please! Let me come with you!

Jesus: (looks at him a moment, then smiles and shakes His head) *You can help me more right here. Go home and tell all your people what God has done for you, and how He showed you mercy.*

Man: (watches Jesus and disciples get into boat; looks disappointed, then holds up his head and turns to the townspeople with a smile) *You are not going to believe this!* (He gathers the townspeople together and they start toward the town, and his voice trails away, saying,) *I was so lost and hopeless! I can't even describe to you how terrible it was before Jesus came. All I wanted was to hurt myself...*