



Gospel Community Notes & Questions

Title: The Portal of Following Jesus

Text: Mark 1:14-20

Theme: Following Jesus begins by responding to the gospel with repentance and faith, and by taking the first steps that his grace calls you into.

Teaching Notes: You will never follow Jesus if you don't take the first step. He has provided a clear way into relationship and apprenticeship – and there is no other way than his. Being a Christian is not simply believing in God, going to church, or doing good deeds. It's a lifestyle of repentance and faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord. To put it differently, being a Christian means turning from sin, learning to think rightly about God, and fully depending on him for life and godliness.

Outline:

1. A central message.

- The core of Christianity is not advice or law, but gospel – good news that, in the life, death, resurrection, and reign of Christ, God has done for us what we could never do for ourselves.

2. A commanded response.

- “Repent and believe in the gospel.”

3. A compelling illustration.

- When Jesus called his first “disciples,” they immediately responded with actions that demonstrate repentance and faith.
- Key: We are not saved by our works, but genuine repentance and faith always bear the fruit of following Jesus.

4. A concluding word.

- You have the full assurance of God's salvation if you've repented of your sins, placed your trust in Jesus, and desire to do the will of God in following Jesus.



Questions to explore individually and with your group:

1. Assuming you self-identify as a Christian, what is your preferred word or expression to identify your faith? (e.g. Christian, believer, saved, Christ follower, disciple, saint, etc.) What do you like about that descriptor?
2. Did you know? Jesus never used the word "Christian" to describe his disciples. That term first appeared in Acts 11, and is how others referred to those who followed the way of Christ. What observations and reflections do you have about this fact?
3. How does our secular culture view Christianity today? What do non-Christians think it means to be a Christian? How do they think someone becomes a Christian in the first place?
4. Referring to #3, what do you think secular culture gets right? What do you think they get wrong? If you could only correct one perception, what would it be – and why?
5. Recent polls and surveys show that over 60% of Americans still self-identify as "Christian" as recently as 2022. In your interactions with a cross-section of this population, how do you think they're defining the concept of being Christian?
6. Jesus' first message was "the gospel (good news) of God." He said the kingdom of God was at hand (present). In your own words, what was he saying? How or why is this good news?
7. In the sermon, we defined the commands "repent" and "believe." What do you recall? How do these definitions differ from pop definitions of these same words and/or how the contemporary church talks about them?
8. One common summary of salvation is that we are not saved by our good works, but we are saved for good works. Is it possible to be genuinely saved by grace and not produce these good works in your life? (Can you be a Christian who believes in Jesus but isn't following Jesus?) Why or why not?
9. Summarizing what you've learned, in 2-3 sentences, how would you describe for someone else what is necessary to become a Christian and begin the journey of following Jesus?
10. What's one practical, specific thing you'll do with the message this week?