

Simple - Studies in Mark

Session One: Follow - Part 1 (including notes for leaders)

Welcome, opening prayer and worship

(5–15 minutes)

[Pray as you begin, asking God to be at work in your group, and enjoy a short time of worship together (e.g. singing, soaking, waiting on God in silence, praying through a Psalm, journaling, etc.).]

Introduction

(5 minutes)

[Read the paragraphs below aloud to introduce the session.]

In this series we will be looking at the teachings of Jesus through the eyes of the Gospel of Mark. In a time when religious leaders and a religious system made it increasingly complicated to connect with God, a teacher appeared whose message was profoundly... simple. To those who were considered most distant from God, Jesus offered this simple invitation, "Follow Me." People who accepted his offer found themselves captivated by an extraordinary faith leading them to adopt a lifestyle that turned the world upside down.

[Go round the group asking people to name a person they admire/value/respect and in whose 'footsteps they would like to follow'.]

Bible study

(15 minutes)

[Read Mark 1:14-20 and 2:13-14 aloud and work through the following questions.]

1. In the New Testament, tax collectors are often named together with sinners. What did the general public think of tax collectors like Levi (also known as Matthew). What do you think is a modern day equivalent for a tax collector?
2. Does it surprise you that Jesus would invite a tax collector to follow Him? What does this tell us about Jesus? What does this tell us about the people who are invited to follow Jesus?

Movie Clip

(15 minutes)

[Watch the clip from Andy Stanley's talk on the 'Simple' DVD. Go to 'Group Curriculum' -> 'Session 1' -> 'Continue'.]

Youtube link: <http://youtu.be/1L5uw4hNADs>

[Work through the questions below.]

1. Was there anything from the DVD that was new to you, or had an effect on you? Did you hear anything that raised more questions in your mind?
2. What images of God have you formed? How do your early images of God compare to the ones that Jesus puts forth: a perfect Heavenly Father, a vine and a branch, a shepherd and a sheep?
3. When have you felt alienated from God? What did you believe was required in order to connect with God during those times?
4. What causes people to believe that connecting with God is complex?
5. When did you first realize that God wants us to have a personal relationship with Him? How did this affect how you viewed God?
6. Levi (Matthew) got up from his chair and followed Jesus. What would it look like for you to follow Jesus?

[Close by reading the following prayer aloud.]

From Romans 15:5 - May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus extends His invitation to people who know something's wrong but aren't sure what to do about it. He invites people who know they are not all they out to be. He didn't ask Matthew to clean up his act before following Him, and Jesus doesn't ask that of us. In time, within the context of his relationship with Jesus, Matthew experienced incredible life transformation. But Jesus' initial request and his request from there on out is simply, "Follow me." Will you follow Jesus Christ?

[Ministry idea: Begin tomorrow morning with this prayer, "Lord, today I want to follow You."]