



DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

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Series Introduction

They're the popular statements you'd find on an inspirational coffee cup:

"You need to forgive yourself."

"Follow your heart."

"God helps those who help themselves."

"They're in a better place."

"God and me have our own thing."

"God just wants me to be happy."

The list goes on and on. These statements sound pleasant, and may even contain a grain of truth, but the most important question for us to ask is, *"Are they biblical?"*

Join us as we set these well-meaning but errant statements next to Scripture, seeing how God's Word is more satisfying and hope-filled than even our best coffee cup theology.

"God helps those who help themselves."

MAIN POINT

As humans, we aren't helpless, but we aren't independent and autonomous either. God instead created us capable *and* dependent. But our capabilities have a limit, for we can't even help ourselves with our worst problem: slavery to sin.

GROUP INTRO

Have you ever thought something about God or the Bible that you later discovered isn't true? What was it? How did you learn the truth?

SCRIPTURE

1. Read Ephesians 2:1-9. How does this passage describe humanity before God works or, to put it another way, what problems do we face before God acts in grace to help us?
2. From the same passage, why can we not help ourselves? If we could help ourselves, what would that say about God?

3. Read Deuteronomy 7:6-8 and Mark 2:16-17. In both the Old and New Testaments, who does God help out of sin and death? Why? How does this disprove the statement, "God helps those who help themselves"?

APPLICATION

1. What are the personal and communal consequences of believing that "God helps those who help themselves"? In other words, what's at stake if we believe that God helps us after we've put in the right effort?
2. Read Romans 5:1-8. How can the truths of this passage help us to more freely admit sin and weaknesses and ask for help?

PRAYER

Thank God for acting to help and save before we even attempt to help and save ourselves.

Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Romans 8:32

Confess the specific ways your pride or unbelief have prevented you from asking for help.

Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Proverbs 20:9

"Follow your heart."

MAIN POINT

"Follow your heart" is modern culture's way of telling us that the best navigation for life is within us. It's our way of communicating that "You know best for yourself, and the path to happiness is inside of you, so run with your desires."

But Jesus tells us the truth about our heart:

"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander."¹

Following your heart eventually ends in disaster and death. Following Christ, though it begins with the death of our selfish desires, ends in wholeness and eternal life.

GROUP INTRO

Share about a time when you got lost - in a new building, hiking, or elsewhere. What was it like?

¹ Matthew 15:19

SCRIPTURE

1. Read Genesis 6:5, Genesis 8:20-21, and Romans 1:18-23. How would you summarize God's diagnosis of our inner self in our natural state? What are the results of people "following their heart"?
2. Read Hebrews 10:14-25. Describe God's solution to our wicked hearts and how He calls us now to follow Him. How exactly do we follow Jesus and not our hearts?

APPLICATION

1. God has made us followers, so we follow authorities and messengers we trust. What's some evidence that Christ has changed your heart? What about Him made you trust Him?
2. Read Hebrews 12:1-2. In your own life right now, what sin or weight needs to be set aside so you can follow Jesus? Is it distractions, selfishness, fear? Something else? How will you repent and lay this aside?
3. Take turns reading Jude 1:17-25. What is one practical action we can take from this passage and apply to our lives together?

PRAYER

Thank God for the gift of a new heart and for giving you the Holy Spirit and His Word.

Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Ezekiel 36:25-27

Ask God to help you and your group say “no” to selfishness desires and instead take up your cross daily to follow Jesus.

Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Luke 9:23-24

"Me and God have our own thing."

MAIN POINT

Individualism is often our default way of thinking. But God never intended us to follow Him by ourselves.

God's pattern is to save individuals and then place them into His church. It's in the church that we help others grow, are equipped for mission, and kept safe as we face the devil and sin.

GROUP INTRO

Name some events or experiences that would be ridiculous if they didn't include a group of people (like a Super Bowl played with only quarterbacks).

SCRIPTURE

1. If you're a Christian, you've been given a family and a mission. Read 1 Peter 2:9. *Who* does this passage say Christians are? *What* does this passage say Christians must do?

2. Read Romans 12:4-8, Hebrews 10:23-25, and 1 John 1:5-7. How do these verses show the necessity of the church in the Christian life? According to these verses, what can happen to us and the church if we neglect the church?
3. Read Acts 2:41-47. This is a description of the early church. What are they doing together and why? What are some differences between their cultural context and ours?

APPLICATION

1. What do you think contributes to Christians today believing that they can follow Jesus without belonging to a church?
2. Describe the differences between membership in a local church and other types of membership. What makes belonging to the church unique?
3. 1 John 1:6-7 tells us that by living in sin, we hinder our experience of community in the church. When have you been tempted to avoid the church, was it due to sin? Pain? Something else?

PRAYER

Celebrate God's gift of the church, thanking Him for the specific ways you've been helped by your local church.

Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Colossians 3:16-17

Pray for opportunities to proclaim the gospel and ask God to bring specific people from spiritual death to eternal life.

Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Matthew 28:18-20

"You need to forgive yourself."

MAIN POINT

This advice is often spoken when we or someone we love experiences painful guilt. But as theologian Chad Bird reminds us, by pursuing self-forgiveness *"we're seeking relief from our guilt in the last place we should be looking: ourselves. Forgiveness, like medicine, comes from outside of you, from the hand of a healer."*²

If we have repented of our sins and turned to Jesus in trust, instead of seeking self-forgiveness, we need God's help to more fully trust and rest in *His* forgiveness.

GROUP INTRO

Tell us about an injury you've gotten while doing something completely normal, how it happened, and whether or not we can laugh with you about it.

² Chad Bird, "Night Driving: Notes From a Prodigal Soul", page 65.

SCRIPTURE

1. Sin is always ultimately against God³. Read Mark 2:1-12. What truths are revealed about Jesus in this passage? What truths are revealed about sin?
2. Read 1 John 1:5-10 and Romans 3:21-26. According to this passage, how is a person forgiven? What is required to be forgiven? How do these passages prove wrong the statement, "You need to forgive yourself"?

APPLICATION

1. When we don't feel forgiven, it could be because we're actually guilty of a sin and haven't repented or it could be because we're struggling to truly accept God's love and grace. Read Psalm 139:23-24. How might this passage be applied to someone experiencing feelings of guilt? How is this an example of humbly following Jesus?
2. Read Romans 8:31-34. Why are these truths a comfort to Christians struggling to feel forgiven? How can we use these truths to help one another when we're burdened by guilt?

³ See Psalm 51:1-5, including the introduction before verse 1.

3. What are some consequences of believing that we have to forgive ourselves to feel better?

PRAYER

If you have repented of your sins and trusted Christ, praise God for graciously adopting you.

Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Romans 8:15-16

Ask God to bring you more assurance of His forgiveness.

Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Acts 10:43

Pray on behalf of those who actually do stand guilty before God because they don't trust Jesus. Ask God to save them.

Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Ecclesiastes 7:20

"Good people go to heaven."

MAIN POINT

The Reformers brought back to the light a crucial truth only to have it fade into the shadows over time. What was this truth? The apostle Paul summarized it when he wrote, *"you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked"*⁴.

In other words, every human - except Jesus - is totally corrupted; every part of us - mind, body, soul, and emotions - is corrupted by sin. We aren't born neutral, we're born loving and committing sin, and there is therefore no such thing as "good people." Our only hope is to be given a new nature or new birth, something that comes only through faith in Jesus.

GROUP INTRO

What are some popular concepts of heaven that you've seen in movies, books, or on social media? What's the most ridiculous concept of heaven you've seen?

⁴ Ephesians 2:1-2.

SCRIPTURE

1. Read Romans 3:9-18. Do these statements apply to all people everywhere? Why or why not?
2. Read 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10. Why does our sin deserve this kind of punishment? Is this an example of the Bible using fear to make people follow Jesus? Why or why not?
3. We get to heaven by good works, they're just not our good works. Read Romans 5:18-21 and Romans 8:1-4. How do these passages refute the lie that "good people go to heaven"?

APPLICATION

1. Every religion or spirituality apart from Christianity has some form of "works righteousness" - you get to heaven (or some variation) by being good or by performing certain tasks or rituals. Why are these beliefs so exhausting? How are these beliefs unloving and destructive?
2. Why do we resist the truth of our corruption and God's eternal punishment of sin?

3. How can we respectfully and lovingly refute the lie that “good people go to heaven”?

PRAYER

Repent for your self-righteousness and thinking that your good works make God love you.

Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Luke 18:13

Thank God for the free gift of grace. Ask Him to extend this grace to the unbelievers in your life.

Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Jude 1:20-23