

# FOLLOWING JESUS FAITHFULLY IS COSTLY

YEAR: KNEEL / FOCUS: I AM AN AMBASSADOR  
SERIES: GOD IS THE MESSAGE - I AM THE MESSENGER

## BIG TRUTH: FOLLOWING JESUS FAITHFULLY IS COSTLY

John 12:42-43; 15:18-19; 2 Corinthians 5:15; Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27; Mark 8:35

## BIBLE VERSE: ACTS 7:59-60

*“And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”*

## BIG IDEAS

- Following Jesus faithfully means making Him known.
- Following Jesus faithfully means denying yourself.
- Following Jesus faithfully means loving and forgiving your enemies.

## BIBLE PASSAGE: ACTS 6:8-15; 7:1-60

### KNEEL - I AM AN AMBASSADOR

The Kneel Year is an exploration of what it means to worship God with our all (Luke 10:26-28). Worship is not something that is limited to a service once a week, but instead occurs every day, in all of life. We are unceasing worshipers. Worship never stops, it only changes directions. In order to worship God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind, we must embrace our identity as image bearers. It is out of that identity that we can begin to live for God’s glory in all of life (Colossians 3:17).

### SERIES AIMS



#### Every student should know that...

- The gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ that brings salvation to sinners.
- Salvation comes by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.
- Jesus followers have been trusted with the gospel in order to share it with others.



#### Every student should strive to...

- Share the gospel each month with at least one person who does not know Jesus.
- Practice sharing the gospel using multiple different tools or methods.



#### Every student should feel...

- Humbled that as believers we have been entrusted with the glorious gospel of our Savior.
- Satisfied in Jesus as the only true Savior



#### Every student should want...

- To grow in awareness of the false saviors they are tempted to put their hope in.
- To have a softened heart and love for people who are lost
- To take advantage of opportunities to share the gospel with people in their lives who need Christ

### GUIDES AND WORKOUTS

The Guide provides a commentary page on each week’s Bible verse and on each Big Idea that unpacks the Big Truth. Each week also includes a Student Workout as a resource to help the student pursue spiritual disciplines on their own. Additionally, each week has a Family Workout that helps equip parents and guardians to have spiritual conversations with their student.

# FOLLOWING JESUS FAITHFULLY IS COSTLY

## BIBLE VERSE: ACTS 7:59-60

*“And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”*

### Following Jesus will cost you your life.

*“And as they were stoning Stephen...”*

- Stephen followed Jesus faithfully. He lived his life for Christ and to make Jesus known in the world. Stephen did not consider his earthly life worth saving if it meant not telling others about Jesus. He willingly laid down his own life that others might know about Jesus and hear of the salvation offered through Him.
- As we seek to follow Jesus faithfully, it will cost us our lives. Following Jesus requires us to die to ourselves and our old nature in order to fully walk in obedience to God. We must become new people, made new and alive through God’s Spirit in order to truly be faithful to Jesus.

### Following Jesus will cost you your comforts.

*“And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’”*

- To truly follow Jesus, we must give up our dream of a comfortable life. We must be willing to go without, to be mistreated, to not receive due justice, and to lose everything in order to make Jesus known.
- Stephen was willing to give up his comforts to make Jesus known. He didn’t back down from telling the truth even when it cost him his life. We must be willing to live an uncomfortable life in order to truly follow Jesus.

### Following Jesus will cost you your control over your life.

*“And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”*

- Following Jesus cost Stephen everything. He didn’t get to decide the length of his life or even how he’d die. Because of his faithfulness to follow Christ, he lost his life earlier than what he expected most likely. It also cost him any control he might have felt he had over his life.
- When we follow Jesus, we give up control over our lives and submit our will to Jesus. We choose to obey His commands and to go where He sends us. We choose to do what He asks of us instead of what we want and desire. We even give up our desire for justice and to be treated fairly. Instead, we align ourselves with Jesus and suffer as He did during His earthly ministry.

# FOLLOWING JESUS FAITHFULLY IS COSTLY

## **BIG IDEA #1: FOLLOWING JESUS FAITHFULLY MEANS MAKING HIM KNOWN.<sup>1</sup>**

### [ THIS ]

In Acts 6:8-15, we see Stephen emerge as a great follower of Jesus. Stephen was the first person after the apostles to perform signs and wonders. He is described as a man full of grace and power. He boldly taught about Jesus, his power coming from the Holy Spirit. Stephen followed Jesus faithfully. He didn't turn back when things became difficult or hard. He pressed forward, boldly telling others about Jesus. Stephen made Jesus known to others. He walked in obedience to God and stood up for Jesus. He didn't shy away from being known as a follower of Christ, or from being persecuted for it. He was faithful to carry out his God-given purpose.

### [ THEREFORE ]

**What are some challenges that keep you from living boldly for Jesus?**

One of our biggest challenges to following Jesus boldly is fear. We fear losing things that we love. We fear being persecuted or ridiculed for our boldness. John 12:42-43 reminds us that men can desire the approval of other men rather than the approval of God. When we desire to be accepted and liked more than we desire to obey God, we will not live boldly for Christ.

**Steven was a man described as “full of grace and power” who also models boldness. How can these things become true of us?**

Few of us will have to take a stand for Christ so bold that it leads to our death like Stephen, yet all of us will have to determine if we are going to live sacrificially for Christ. In Ephesians 5:1-2, Paul instructs believers to live as Christ did, loving as He did and willingly sacrificing for Him. As we seek to live boldly, we will be called on to sacrifice for Him.

### [ THIS ]

Stephen's life is an example to all believers. He followed Jesus faithfully to the point of death. He suffered for the sake of making Jesus known. He shared the Gospel boldly and unashamedly. He suffered ridicule and rejection, yet he continued following Christ. To follow Jesus faithfully, we, too, will have to be willing to suffer for the sake of making the Gospel known. Our suffering may look like giving up material things to support those carrying the Gospel to unreached places. It may look like a willingness to stand out from the cultural norm. Regardless of what it looks like, to follow Jesus with our whole heart means making Him known in the world around us. As we seek to follow Jesus faithfully, we will make it our habit to study God's Word, engage in community with other believers, and seek to fulfill God's purpose for His people by telling others about Him.

### [ THEREFORE ]

**Practically, what is one way you can make Jesus known this week?**

In order to truly live in obedience to Jesus, we must make personal evangelism a part of our lives. In Romans 10:14, Paul writes of the importance and necessity of God's people sharing Him with others. It is God's design and plan that people hear the Gospel from His people.

**Stephen got into trouble for making Jesus known. Has that ever happened to you?**

Persecution is promised to those who desire to fully live for God. Matthew 5:10, 2 Timothy 3:12, and John 15:18 show us this is true. If we seek to blend in and not live boldly, then we may not face trouble.

1. Ephesians 2:10: God equips His people to share the gospel. When we follow Jesus, we will make Him known in the world.

# FOLLOWING JESUS FAITHFULLY IS COSTLY

## BIG IDEA #2: FOLLOWING JESUS FAITHFULLY MEANS DENYING YOURSELF.<sup>2</sup>

### [ THIS ]

In Acts 7, Stephen denied himself in order to tell others about Jesus. He set aside his own comfort and desires to make Jesus known in the world around him. To be like Christ and to live for Him requires us to deny ourselves, and means we will be uncomfortable as we stand out from others and as we choose to spend time with those who are different than us. God calls us to go into the world to make Jesus known. We will have to deny what makes us comfortable in order to put ourselves in a position to share the Gospel with lost people. Like Stephen, we will have to die to ourselves and sacrifice everything for the sake of Jesus.

### [ THEREFORE ]

**What desires and dreams do you find hard to deny or give up in order to make Jesus known?**

1 John 2:15-17 helps us understand the way our hearts can love the things of this world more than we love Jesus. Our flesh is at war with our new nature and we will have to die to our earthly, fleshly desires every day in order to live faithfully for Jesus. Often, we have ideas about what we want our futures to be and it's hard to die to those ideas in order to live more faithfully to Jesus.

**What is a specific way that you can leverage self-denial around your friends or family as means to share the gospel with them?**

Romans 12:1 tells us that we are to give our lives sacrificially to the Lord. When we live in a way that we serve others sacrificially and we put others first, we can leverage our self-denial to share the gospel with our friends.

### [ THIS ]

Stephen denied himself to the point of losing his life. He didn't consider his life on earth worthy keeping if it meant he would stop telling others about Jesus. Stephen died because of the Gospel. He was stoned to death because he boldly proclaimed Christ and told others of their need for the salvation He offers. Most of us will never be asked to die for the Gospel, but we must be willing to radically give up everything to make Him known in the world. This means we must live each day, dying to our desires and plans, that we might use our lives each day to make Jesus known to those around us.

### [ THEREFORE ]

**What does it mean to deny yourself? What are practical ways you can strive to deny yourself daily?**

2 Corinthians 5:15 teaches us that denying ourselves means we are no longer living for ourselves, but for Christ. Galatians 2:20 also reminds us once we know Jesus as our Savior, the way we live changes. We no longer live according to our fleshly desires, but instead live for Christ and seek to obey His Word.

**What gospel opportunities have you missed recently because you've been too focused on yourself?**

When we set aside our desires and wants and focus on what God wants, it helps us see the lost people in our lives. As we seek to obey God, our hearts will love the things that God loves. Luke 16:13 tells us that we cannot serve two masters, so when we die to mastering ourselves and submit to God, we will desire to tell others about Him.

2. Luke 9:23: In order to follow Christ, believers must die to themselves and follow after Him.

# FOLLOWING JESUS FAITHFULLY IS COSTLY

## BIG IDEA #3: FOLLOWING JESUS FAITHFULLY MEANS LOVING AND FORGIVING YOUR ENEMIES.<sup>3</sup>

### [ THIS ]

In Acts 7:54-60, we see a picture of what it means to really follow Jesus. Stephen denied himself, willingly putting his life on the line for Jesus to be known. Stephen loved Jesus, which meant he loved what Jesus loves. Though the Sanhedrin took his life, he loved them because Jesus loved them. Even as he died, he loved them. This is a picture of true devotion to Christ. When we follow Jesus faithfully, we will love the things and people He loves. Our desires will be for His glory and we will put His glory before the things we desire on earth. We will want to tell others about the Gospel. We will love unconditionally and in a sacrificial way because we will live in the understanding that Jesus loves us sacrificially and unconditionally. We will want people to know Jesus and to experience the salvation He offers to those who repent and believe. We will leverage our lives to make Him known.

### [ THEREFORE ]

**Do you love unbelievers? How can you grow in your love for them so that you love them like Jesus does?**

Following Jesus means our lives are transformed as the Holy Spirit works inside of us to make us more like Christ. As we grow to be like Christ, we will love what He loves. Jesus loved lost people. Matthew 9:37-28 teaches us the importance Jesus placed on reaching lost people. He tells His followers to pray for workers who will go into the world to find lost people and tell them about Him. As we grow in our knowledge of Jesus, our love for people who need Him will grow.

### [ THIS ]

Acts 7:60 shows us that Stephen practiced sacrificial and Christlike love for his enemies. He forgave the men stoning him to death and prayed that God would forgive them. Even as they were persecuting him to the point of death, Stephen's heart and love was Christlike. When Stephen prays that God would forgive the men killing him, he reveals his heart is devoted to God. He is a true and faithful follower of Jesus as shown by his response to his executors. He used his last breath to plead for their forgiveness and not for his own life. We must be like Stephen in loving the Lord so much that we willingly forgive our enemies. We must devote our hearts to Jesus in a way that leads us to care more for a person's soul than for our own comfort or even justice for ourselves. The Sanhedrin were wrong for killing Stephen and Stephen would have been justified in demanding justice, yet he was focused more on their souls and eternities than on himself. This is how we must live for Jesus—willingly loving and forgiving our enemies before they even ask for our forgiveness or if they never ask.

### [ THEREFORE ]

**Who is someone that is hard for you to forgive? How can you practically practice forgiveness this week?**

In our flesh, it is hard to love and forgive our enemies, but in the Spirit, it is what we can and should do. Matthew 5:44 and Luke 6:27 teach us that the way of Jesus is to forgive our enemies and to pray for them.

**How can you follow Jesus in a way that you care more for people's souls than your own rights?**

When we seek to obey God's Word and follow His example, we will grow in caring for people's souls above all else. In Romans 12:14-20, Paul teaches that we should bless our enemies, do good to them, and love them. When we seek to live like this, we will grow in our love for people and their souls will matter more than even our lives.

3. Acts 7:59-60: Stephen followed Jesus faithfully and willingly forgave his enemies, even as they stoned him to death.