

Following Christ

Seven sessions exploring
the Christian Faith and
Life for Today



*'We are here to be and to make followers of Christ'
"Come, follow me" (Mk 1:17)*

Introduction

Following Jesus can be the most exciting adventure in life. But who was Jesus and what did he stand for? What did he achieve and how does his life affect our lives today? In this course we will explore these questions with the prayer that you will meet Jesus for yourself and start to hear him speak to you personally and guide you into the unique plan he has for your life!

Each session includes a fifteen-minute video talk based on a passage from the Bible. You will then have the opportunity to explore several questions to help you think more about the topic. Do feel free to add your own questions – the aim is for you to explore and develop your faith and that can only happen as you work through the issues for yourself. At the end of each session there is a further video pulling together the various threads of the discussion. The course is designed for a small group to study and discuss together but it can be worked through on your own if you prefer.

Do please get in touch with us at Christ Church if you want to discuss anything about the course or if we can be of help in any way.

May God bless you richly,

Richard

(Rev Dr Richard Mortimer, Vicar of Christ Church, Dartford)

Session 1 'Come, Follow Me'

READ: Mark Chapter 1 verses 14 to 20

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

¹⁶ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him.

¹⁹ When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him. [New International Version (NIV) bible.]

VIEW: Talk 1

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Jesus mean by 'The Kingdom of God'
2. What other people or things do we put in the place of God as King in our lives?
 3. What does it mean to 'repent'?
 4. Do we need to repent?
5. What things do you believe in at the centre of your life?
 6. In what ways is the Kingdom of God good news?
7. How does Jesus bring the Kingdom of God near to us?

VIEW: Follow-up Talk 1

Key Words 1

Kingdom of God - Wherever God is King i.e. in heaven and also anywhere on earth where people love and obey him. The Jews were expecting a new era in the world of justice and righteousness, when 'the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.' (Isaiah 11:9)

Christ – A Greek word that literally means 'the anointed one' and the equivalent Hebrew word is *Messiah*. The Jews were expecting someone chosen and set apart by God (which is what anointing symbolises) to lead and deliver God's people.

Jesus - The name means 'God saves'. In Matthew 1:21 Joseph is told to give the baby the name Jesus, 'because he will save his people from their sins.'

Repent – To change your attitude and thinking, change direction in life away from sin and selfishness and towards God.

Session 2 'Fishing for People'

READ: Mark Chapter 1 verses 14 to 20 (again!)

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

¹⁶ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him.

¹⁹ When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him. (NIV)

VIEW: Talk 2

QUESTIONS:

1. Simon and Andrew, were fishermen by trade. So why did Jesus say to them that they would 'fish for people'?
2. Why does Jesus say this to them straight away?
3. What things, or people, did Simon, Andrew, James and John leave behind and what might you have to leave behind if you are to follow Jesus?
4. Is it worth it?

(questions continue opposite)

5. Why did Simon, Andrew, James and John do this?
6. Has anyone in your life helped bring you closer to Christ – and how?
7. In what ways could you be God's fisherman, bringing people to him?

VIEW: Follow-up Talk 2

Key Words 2

Evangelism – Spreading the Good News of Jesus and encouraging people to take it on board for their own lives.

Missio Dei – The 'Mission of God'. Before God even made the world he had a plan for humans to know and love him and live in harmony with each other and with creation. That plan continues through the work of Jesus and through his church.

Five Marks of Mission – The Church of England recognises five aspects to the mission of God, revealed in Christ and continued by the church, namely: evangelism, discipleship, social action, social justice and care for creation, and all of these will be looked at in sessions 2 to 5 of this course.

Session 3 'Making Disciples'

READ: Matthew Chapter 28 verses 16 to 20

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (NIV)

VIEW: Talk 3

QUESTIONS:

1. What does it mean 'to be a disciple' and how do you 'make disciples'?
2. What is baptism and why do disciples have to be baptised?
3. Why are 'teaching' and 'obedience' important (v. 20)?
4. What things would you recommend to help someone grow as a disciple?
5. Which of those recommendations could you give more attention to yourself and how might you do that?
6. Where does Jesus' authority apply?
7. What difference does it make that Jesus is with us (v. 20)?

VIEW: Follow-up Talk 3

Key Words 3

Bible - 'All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness' (2Timothy 3:6)

Prayer – talking and listening to God

Worship – Telling God how much he means to us and showing that in the way we live

Church – Gathering with other people to worship, pray, learn, share life together and fulfil God's mission

Sacrament – An outward and visible sign of something invisible God is doing inside us.

Baptism –Immersion (or sprinkling) in water as a symbol of washing and of dying to self and then rising to new life in Christ.

Communion – To receive bread and wine as a symbol of Christ's body and blood given for us on the cross and in so doing to receive Christ into our lives afresh.

Confirmation – When the bishop lays their hand on your head and ask God's Holy Spirit to come upon you to strengthen your faith and empower your Christian life.

Holy Trinity ('Three-in-one') - The Bible shows us that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit (God our creator 'above us', God as Jesus, 'alongside us' and God's presence 'inside us').

Session 4 'Transforming Society'

READ: Isaiah Chapter 58 verses 1 to 8

- ¹ "Shout it aloud, do not hold back.
Raise your voice like a trumpet.
Declare to my people their rebellion
and to the descendants of Jacob their sins.
- ² For day after day they seek me out;
they seem eager to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that does what is right
and has not forsaken the commands of its God.
They ask me for just decisions
and seem eager for God to come near them.
- ³ 'Why have we fasted,' they say,
'and you have not seen it?
Why have we humbled ourselves,
and you have not noticed?'
"Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please
and exploit all your workers.
- ⁴ Your fasting ends in quarrelling and strife,
and in striking each other with wicked fists.
You cannot fast as you do today
and expect your voice to be heard on high.
- ⁵ Is this the kind of fast I have chosen,
only a day for people to humble themselves?
Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed
and for lying in sackcloth and ashes?
Is that what you call a fast,
a day acceptable to the LORD?
- ⁶ "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free

and break every yoke?

⁷ Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

⁸ Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness^(a) will go before you,
and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.

⁹ Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;
you will cry for help, and he will say: here am I.

"If you do away with the yoke of oppression,
with the pointing finger and malicious talk,

¹⁰ and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,
then your light will rise in the darkness,
and your night will become like the noonday.

¹¹ The LORD will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.

You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.

¹² Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins
and will raise up the age-old foundations;
you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,
Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

¹³ "If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath
and from doing as you please on my holy day,
if you call the Sabbath a delight
and the LORD's holy day honourable,

and if you honour it by not going your own way
and not doing as you please or speaking idle words,

¹⁴ then you will find your joy in the LORD,
and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land
and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob."

For the mouth of the LORD has spoken. (NIV)

VIEW: Talk 4

QUESTIONS:

1. What is 'fasting' and why is the prophet, Isaiah, criticizing it?
 2. What does he want instead?
 3. What does this tell us about God?
4. What practical steps for helping other people do we see in verses 7 and 10?
 5. What should be our motive for doing this?
6. In verses 6 and 9 it's not just practical needs but underlying social injustice that is mentioned. So, how can we tackle social injustice today in Britain and across the world?
7. What benefits come from this, according to the passage?
8. How does all this relate to the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached (see also Luke 4:14-21)?

VIEW: Follow-up Talk 4

Key Words 4

Social Action – Helping other people in practical ways

Social Justice – Working to change the things in society that cause people to be treated unfairly, identifying and correcting the root causes of poverty and other problems people face

Prophecy – Speaking on behalf of God

Session 5 'Caring for Creation'

READ: Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:8-25

Ch. 1 ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." ...

...**Ch. 2** ⁸ Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹ The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

¹⁸ The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

¹⁹ Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds

in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹ So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³ The man said,

"This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called 'woman,'
for she was taken out of man."

²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

²⁵ Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. (NIV)

VIEW: Talk 5

QUESTIONS:

1. In Genesis 2:15 Adam is tasked to work the garden and take care of it. Can you think of good examples of humans looking after creation?
2. In Genesis 2:19 Adam gives names to all the animals, which is a sign of his authority over them. In what ways are humans different to animals and in what ways are we similar?
3. In Genesis 1:26-28 twice humans are told to 'rule' the earth and once to 'subdue it'. If Christ is our role model for ruling and for authority what should this look like?

4. God makes Eve as a companion and co-worker with Adam (fulfilling 1:27). The term 'helper' in verses 18 and 20 is used elsewhere of God (e.g. Exodus 18:4, Deuteronomy 33:29, Psalm 10:14) so it's not hierarchical but collaborative. How do men and women depend on each other?
5. Looking ahead to Genesis chapter 3 we find this idyllic life goes wrong. What caused it to go wrong and what affects did this have?
6. How can being a Christian help us look after the planet?
7. What steps can we take to put that into practice?

VIEW: Follow-up Talk 5

Key Words 5

Image of God – Men and women are created in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27). This means we act as his representatives on earth and show qualities of love, wisdom, freedom and responsibility that come from God

Stewardship – To be in charge of the earth not as owners but on behalf of God and in his service.

Session 6 'In the Power of the Spirit'

READ: Acts 1:1-11 & 2:1-8

Ch. 1 ¹In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ²until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ⁴On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

⁶Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

⁹After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. ¹⁰They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." ...

...Ch. 2 ¹When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? (NIV)

VIEW: Talk 6

QUESTIONS:

1. What task was Jesus setting the disciples (Acts 1:8)?
2. Why did he tell them to wait for the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4,5,8)?
3. Look ahead to Acts 2:38-39. Who is the gift of the Holy Spirit for?
4. Look at Galatians 5:16-26. How does the Holy Spirit change us from within?
5. Look at 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. In what ways can the holy Spirit help us advance God's kingdom?
6. In John 14:15-18 the Spirit is referred to as the Advocate (Counsellor or Comforter in other translations) who will be with them forever. In what ways is that a help?
7. How did the disciples experience the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) and what ways do people experience the Holy Spirit today?
8. How can we experience the Holy Spirit for ourselves today (see also Luke 11:9-13)?

VIEW: Follow-up Talk 6

Key Words 6

Holy Spirit – God’s empowering, transforming presence in our lives by which Christ lives in us and works through us

Pentecost – Jewish festival, 50 days after the Passover, at which the Christians first received the Holy Spirit in power

Baptism in the Holy Spirit – To be immersed in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit

Paraklete – A Greek word for the Holy Spirit used by Jesus in John’s gospel meaning ‘advocate’, ‘counsellor’ or ‘comforter’.

Fruit of the Spirit – Christ like characteristics the Holy Spirit brings into our lives (See Galatians 5:22-23)

Gifts of the Spirit – Abilities that the Spirit gives Christians to help us serve God, some of which may be supernatural and others develop our natural talents. (See Romans 12:6-8, 1Corinthians 12:7-11; 27-30 and Ephesians 4:11-13)

Charismata – The Greek word for ‘gifts’ from which we get the word ‘charismatic’ for Christians who emphasise the gifts of the Spirit

Session 7 'The Way of the Cross'

READ: Mark chapter 10 verses 35 to 45

³⁵ Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

³⁶ "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

³⁷ They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

³⁸ "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

³⁹ "We can," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

⁴¹ When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. ⁴² Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (NIV)

VIEW: Talk 7

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did James and John speak to Jesus?
2. What did they get wrong?
3. How did Jesus' example differ from that?
4. What does a 'ransom' mean (verse 45) and how did Jesus ransom us? (See also Romans 3:22-26.)
5. What motivated Jesus to do this?
6. Verse 43 shows we express our love of Christ in serving others. How can you serve God at home or work/school or at church? (See also inside back page.)
7. Last session we looked at the gifts of the Spirit. What gifts has God have given you, or would you want to seek, in order to help build up the church community?
8. In John 3:16 the response Jesus wants is for us 'to believe in him' in the sense of putting our trust fully in him. How easy or hard is that and what could that look like in your life?

VIEW: Follow-up Talk 7

Key Words 7

Crucifixion – To die by being nailed to a cross and left to suffocate

Good Friday – The day that Jesus was crucified (called ‘good’ because he died for *our* sins)

Easter – The Sunday after Good Friday, on which Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to his followers alive

Atonement – To make one (‘at-one-ment’) i.e. to bring humans and God back into full, unbroken relationship

Justification – To make righteous (‘just-as-if-I’d never sinned’)

Sacrifice – To give up something for someone else or for something or someone to die for another

Grace – God’s love reaching out towards us giving us things we don’t deserve

Faith – Trusting in God. (God shows us his grace and wants us to trust him fully in return.)

The Body of Christ – 1. Christ’s body was killed on the cross and rose again. 2. We also receive Christ’s body when we take communion. 3. And the church as a community living in the power of the Spirit is Christ’s body here on earth.

A Prayer of Commitment

To become a Christian involves turning to Christ as our saviour and Lord. A prayer such as this is a good place to start:

Dear God,

Sorry for going my own way in life rather than putting you first.

Thank you that you sent your son Jesus to die for my sin and to bring me new life.

Please forgive me my sin, and come into my life by your Spirit.

Help me and guide me in your path for my life, so that Jesus may be my friend, my saviour and my Lord.

Amen.

This is the first step in a journey. To continue in that journey please look again at session 3 on discipleship and session 6 on the power of the Holy Spirit, so that you can seek to fulfill God's mission in your life.

Do get in touch with us here at Christ Church Dartford and we will help you on that journey.

Ways of Serving

God has a plan for each of our lives and that includes how we can serve others. Your main focus may be at home or at work or in the community but most Christians find serving at church is an important part of their discipleship and it strengthens the church in God's mission.

Here are some examples:

Helping look after the buildings, maintaining the church website, social media and communications, helping with the youth and children's work, helping in the finance team, visiting people who are unwell or isolated, helping run the church behind the scenes e.g. as warden or on the Parochial Church Council, helping with the admin, taking minutes of meetings, helping with our church services (anything from the sound system to the flowers) or with our community work.

As well as all that, people help through their financial giving and through their prayers as well as simply caring for each other as friends.

So do pray asking God how you can serve. Consider your gifts, your interests and your availability. Discuss it with other people and with someone in the church leadership. Your support is always appreciated in whatever form it takes.

May God guide you and bless you as you seek to serve him!

Additional Information

All Bible quotations are from the New International Version (2011, Anglicised edition).

The Five Marks of Mission can be found at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/MTAG%20The%205%20Marks%20Of%20Mission.pdf>

To find out more about Christ Church Dartford please look at:

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Our services may be viewed on YouTube or via Facebook or Twitter - just search for Christ Church Dartford on any of these platforms