



Life Is Complicated. We Can Help.

Identity

#nplifeiscomplicated

Week 17

January 3, 2021

Bottom Line: You must define your relationship in order to grow.

Icebreaker: Would you describe yourself as generic or brand name? Do have any foods that are brand name? If so, what are they? What is something you really want to be brand name?

Key Verse: Jesus: *"If anyone wishes to follow Me [as My disciple], he must deny himself [set aside selfish interests], and take up his cross daily [expressing a willingness to endure whatever may come] and follow Me [believing in Me, conforming to My example in living and, if need be, suffering or perhaps dying because of faith in Me]. Luke 9:23 AMP*

Our culture is big on brand recognition. Scripture actually talks about brand recognition too. "Christian" is a brand, but it only occurs three times in the New Testament and was not a term Jesus-followers used to describe themselves. Jesus certainly didn't use it. Today it is the common term used to describe us, but the challenge is defining what it means. You can hide behind the term "Christian" because there are so many different opinions on how you become one and what it means. Jesus didn't call people to be Christians. He called them to be His disciples, which means followers or learners. A follower is one who wanted to do life as Jesus did. A disciple always starts with "Yes" and then, "What is it you want me to do?" No matter the size of the crowd, Jesus would always make a "filter statement" that required those listening to define their relationship with Him. He made it clear that there could be no growth until they defined the relationship. It caused anxiety and causes anxiety today when He asks it. To have a growing relationship with Jesus as defined is to **DENY YOURSELF**. His priorities become your priorities. He controls every part of your life. **TAKE UP YOUR CROSS DAILY**. It is about Christ and His mission, not about you. You are willing to endure whatever may come. Unfortunately, many of us are ready to wear a cross but not bear the cross. There is a difference between knowledge and intimacy. Many of us have had a once-a-week-on-Sunday relationship, and the pandemic has interrupted that, and so our faith is being challenged. The objective of the gospel is to not just fine-tune you but transform you. God will turn your life upside down. Denial and crosses are not comfortable. **THEN FOLLOW HIM**. When Jesus said "Follow Me" to His disciples, He was using a Hebrew term that literally meant, "Follow in My footsteps. Go where I go, do what I do. Whatever I ask, I will give you complete ability to accomplish." There is no way to follow Jesus without giving Him complete and total control. Following Jesus is the most difficult thing you will ever do because you will spend your life not knowing what the next step is. But that is where life is—following Christ; being His church.

THINK IT OVER >>>

What was your most significant takeaway from today's message?

Why do you think brand recognition can be so important to people? Why is it important to Jesus?

What are some of the different ways to describe what it takes to be a Christian?

A disciple is someone who is earnestly saying, "Give me direction—show me how to live my life." That's much different than just calling yourself a Christian. Jesus is not just a vitamin supplement in your life. He wants to change your DNA. Reflect on those statements and then honestly answer this question: Is there an area of my life where the evidence shows that I am more a fan than a follower?

What does it mean to deny yourself? How does that impact your priorities and plans? How well do you know His priorities? How does your daily life reflect the priorities of Jesus?

LOOK IT OVER >>>

We tend to think of our "cross" as a specific difficulty that is hard, like a physical difficulty. But our cross is enduring whatever it takes to follow Christ and live like Him. The cross means dying to myself. Reflect and discuss.

For some of us, the only way we know how to relate to Jesus effectively is in church on Sunday. Why is that a problem?

We think that we need just a little touchup; Jesus wants total transformation. Where have you seen the greatest change in your life? Where is Jesus wanting to change you now?

Following Jesus is the most difficult but fulfilling thing you will ever do. How are you finding that to be true?

God is calling us to BE His church--not just go to church. That should be our focus right now, especially during COVID-19. Discuss how we can do that.

NEXT STEPS

1. Carefully look at your life and priorities for evidence that you ARE a Jesus-follower, not just a cultural Christian. Are you a fan or a follower?
2. Make the adjustments and surrender areas that Jesus points out to you.
3. Commit to BE the Church this week. How can you do that, beginning now?

EVALUTION/ACTION

Realizing and reaching your full potential in Christ

Bottom Line: You must define your relationship in order to grow.

Rate yourself from 1 to 10 1 (never), 10 (always)	1	2	3	4		6	7	8	9	10
Why did you give yourself this rating?										
What benefits will you obtain by raising your rating?										
Do you know someone who demonstrates this bottom line well? What do you admire about that person?										
What specific action can you put into practice to raise your rating?										
At the end of this week, reflect - where did you see the bottom line show up in your actions throughout the week?										

PRAYER

List group members and their prayer requests for this week:

DAILY STUDY

Want to dig deeper? Check out **The Daily** this week at newpointe.org/daily:

Monday: Matthew 7:21

Tuesday: John 15:10-14

Wednesday: John 15:16

Thursday: Mark 10:21

Friday: Luke 14:25-28

Don't let the conversation stop here. Keep talking it over with others throughout the week.
(Don't forget to bring this paper to your next small group meeting)