

Committing to Follow Jesus- A Prelude to the Book of Romans

Icebreaker: What excuses have you used to get out of doing something? Or what keeps you from doing something you should do?

Watch the Bible Project Video, Romans1-4

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/romans-1-4/>

1. Tell the group what do you hope to get out of this series on the book of Romans.

Why a series through Romans: Paul's primary theme in the book is God's plan for salvation for people of every nation, language, tribe and tongue. If you have been a part of Sun Grove Church for any length of time, you know that is exactly what we preach, share & proclaim. Paul was writing to prepare the people of the Roman house churches for his upcoming visit, by sharing with them solid doctrine about Christ.

Jesus calls people to follow Him, continuously for a lifetime. As Christians, we are to be growing in faith and in our commitment to Christ. Pastor Dave told us that Jesus tells His disciples that there is a cost to following Him, and so it is for us. To prepare us for the journey through Romans, this lesson is on the faith, commitment and sacrifice required to follow Jesus.

2. Which areas of Christian commitment do people struggle with the most?

3. What was your hardest struggle when you became a Christian?

LUKE REMINDED US THAT IT IS ALL ABOUT JESUS!

Luke 9:57-62 *57As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." 58 Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." 59 He said to another man, "Follow me." But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." 60 Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." 61 Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family." 62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."*

4. Jesus lays out what it means to be a disciple, letting go of personal comfort. What personal comfort have you let go of in your following of Jesus? What personal comfort do you need to let go of? (Luke 9:57-58)

5. In verses 59-62, Jesus deals with others who offer excuses to put off commitment to discipleship and following Jesus. What is the point of Jesus' response to these excuses? What are the excuses we use today?

John 6:53-56, 60-68 *53 Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. 56 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them.*

60 On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" 61 Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? 62 Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! 63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. 64 Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. 65 He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them." 66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. 67 "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. 68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

6. In John 6:53-56, 60-68, Jesus tells His followers that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood, to have life. At this point, many followers leave, because they do not understand, and are offended. Why do you think Jesus would say things to His followers that they would not understand, and stop following Him?

7. How does this differ from our tradition of telling people, "If you want to become a follower of Christ, pray this prayer?" What should we be emphasizing in our presentation?

8. Can you share with your group a time in your life when God used a hard truth or a confusing situation to test you or grow your faith?

COST OF FOLLOWING JESUS

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THE ENTHUSIASTIC VOLUNTEER: Luke 9: 57-58, *57 As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." 58 Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."*

The STALLING RECRUIT: Luke 9:59-60, Deuteronomy 8:11-14

Deuteronomy 8:11-14 *11 Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. 12 Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, 13 and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, 14 then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.*

9. How/Why does having food, homes and wealth cause us to forget God?

10. Do you spiritually thrive more in persecution, or in plenty?

Philippians 4:12,13 *12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*

Pastor Dave: Loyalty to Jesus and His kingdom is more important than loyalty to what is normal in our culture. Pastor Dave suggested the following excuses:

- Let me live with my girlfriend.
- Let me establish my career.
- Let me get out of debt.
- Let's not take this religion too far.
- Let's not share in suffering.
- Let's wait until I am older.

11. Can a person be a Christian or a disciple while struggling with sin(s) or desires for things of this world? (1 John 2:15,16) Where is the principle/dividing line that separates real followers of Christ from people who do not have salvation? (Hebrews 4:2;11:6)

1 John 2:15 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.*

Hebrews 4:2 *For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.*

Hebrews 11:6 *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

THE PEOPLE-PLEASING VOLUNTEER: Luke 9:61-62, Luke 14:25-26

Luke 14:25-26 *25 Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: 26 “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.*

12. How does family conflict with our commitment to being Jesus’ disciple today?
Can you tell of a time that you have experienced this conflict with your family?

13. What would you say to a person who wanted to call himself a Christian but not obey God’s will as expressed in the Bible?

In the Church in America, many people equate church attendance with being a Christian. Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us that salvation is by grace through faith. But how is that faith expressed? Is it simple church attendance? We teach a moment in time where we sincerely ask Jesus to come into our hearts. But Jesus calls people to follow Him, continuously for a lifetime. As Christians, we are to be growing in faith and in our commitment to Christ. Pastor Dave told us that Jesus tells His disciples that there is a cost to following Him, and so it is for us.

14. How can we make our Christian faith more authentic?