

ministry to
 youth

PURSUING JESUS



Pursuing Jesus - Lesson 2

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Lesson 2



Series:

A four-week series about pursuing a relationship with Jesus.



Week 2: Surrender



Bible: *Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me."* Matthew 16:24 (NLT)



Bottom Line:

Pursuing Jesus means you learn how to surrender to him.

SUPPLIES

- None

OPENING GAME

Uncle Knuckle Thumper

GAME PREP:

- None

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME:

Say,

- For tonight's game, everyone needs to stand up and find a partner.

Once everyone has a partner, say:

- Did any of you wrestle with your family or friends when you were kids?
- And if you were losing and wanted to tap out, was there a certain phrase you said to let your opponent know you were giving in?
- Did anyone say "Uncle!" when you were giving up?
- I don't know where that saying came from, but in many places, if you were to concede in any sort of light-hearted physical combat, you would cry "Uncle!" to let your opponent know that they win.

- Tonight's game is called Uncle Knuckle Thumper, and you can probably guess what we're doing.
- Each of you will take turns thumping each other on the middle knuckle.
- When you decide you can't go on, you simply cry, "Uncle!" and return to your seat.
- If you're the winner, find another partner and play another round.
- Does anyone want to cry "Uncle!" before we get started?

Allow volunteers to back out if they're not comfortable, then continue.

Say:

- Are we ready to play Uncle Knuckle Thumper?
- Let's get ready to rumble. (Say that with your best Michael Buffer accent.)

Play the game according to the rules above, having students take turns thumping knuckles.

Emcee as if you were a boxing announcer, walking around the room and giving commentary.

Continue playing until you're down to the final two students, then bring them up front for the final round.

If your students are stubborn, you might need to choose two students to be in the final round.

If the students in your final round are incredibly stubborn, you might need to play a rousing round of rock paper scissors to choose a winner.

TEACH

What's up, everybody!

Welcome back to the series "Pursuing Jesus," where we're talking about...Pursuing Jesus!

Most of you are back in school, back into some normal, predictable rhythms, and there are lots of great things—and probably some not-so-great ones—competing for your time and attention.

I hope you see through this series that the foundation of all those other things is a rich relationship with Jesus.

Each week in this series, we're reading a verse from one of the four gospels.

If you remember, the Bible is divided into two parts: the Old Testament (everything that happened before Jesus was born) and the New Testament (everything else, starting with Jesus).

The gospels are the first four books of the New Testament, and they tell the story of Jesus' life on earth.

Last week we kicked off the series in Mark, the second gospel, and we discussed pursuing Jesus means learning how to trust him.

Tonight, we'll be reading in Matthew, the first gospel.

But before we get started, let's have a little **mandatory fun time**.

Circle up with two or three people and answer this question: Why is it easier to do a household chore if it's your idea versus if it's your parents' idea?

I'll give you a few minutes to discuss; ready, set, go!

[Give students time to discuss, then bring them back together to debrief, interacting with their answers as appropriate.]

I can remember, as a teenager, during the summer, on occasion, waking up and thinking, "I am going to clean my room today!"

I would put some music on, make a tall glass of ice-cold milk, and get to work.

I wasn't exactly efficient, but I was getting the job done and had a great attitude because it was my idea!

And then my mom or dad would come by and say something like, "It's about time...in fact, you can't go anywhere today until you get your room clean."

Guess what I no longer wanted to do?

Ten seconds before, I was cleaning my room.

Now, because my parents told me I had to clean my room, I couldn't think of anything I wanted to do less than clean my room.

It's easy to complain that my parents should have left me alone or talked to me more nicely or whatever, but if I'm honest, there's something broken in me, seeing as how I became resistant as soon as cleaning my room became someone else's idea.

I was already doing it, so why did it matter that my parents wanted me to?

Why are most of us like that?

We're fine doing things until we're told we have to do them.

I think it all comes down to control.

We all want to be in control of our own lives.

I do. Don't you?

I want to do what I want, with whomever I want, when I want, where I want, and how I want.

If you could see my notes right now, do you know what you would notice about that last sentence?

A lot of "I's" and "wants."

Seems about right, doesn't it?

We want what we want.

But I see two problems with that.

First, most of us don't really know what we want.

And second, when we get what we think we want, we quickly grow unsatisfied.

We think we do, and we might have a general idea of things, but we don't really know.

I can prove it.

What was your big Christmas present last year?

[Invite students to shout out responses.]

Raise your hand if you're still using it today.

[Invariably, some students will be stubborn, so let's continue.]

What was your big Christmas present from two years ago?

Are you still using that one?

How about *three* years ago?

You see my point: we don't have to go back too far to find something that, at some point, you really wanted, but you later realized it didn't satisfy for long.

Most of us don't really know what we want.

And when we get what we think we want, we quickly grow unsatisfied.

That's a problem if we want what we want and are unwilling to consider other ways of thinking about things.

Last week we started the series by talking about trusting Jesus for our salvation AND for teaching us how to live differently.

In some ways, this week is "part two" of that message because in order to trust Jesus, we have to stop trusting ourselves so much—at least until we become more true to ourselves by living God's plan for our lives.

Last week we read from the gospel of Mark; tonight, we'll be looking at Matthew, the first gospel.

Would someone read Matthew 16:24 out loud for the group? [I LOVE having students read the Bible out loud, but if it doesn't work for your group, you or another adult can read it.]

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me." Matthew 16:24

Thanks for reading!

If you were here last week, what is similar between tonight's passage and the passage we read last week?

In both situations, Jesus is talking about following him.

I'm highlighting that because following someone is very relational, and this whole series is about pursuing a relationship with Jesus.

Last week Jesus told Simon and Andrew that he'd teach them to fish for people—that's a little weird, but it sounds fun.

In tonight's passage, Jesus says things that feel a little heavier and a little more serious.

Look at the three things Jesus says in this passage that anyone who wants to be his follower must do and what they mean.

First, Jesus says we must **give up our own way**.

This one is probably pretty self-explanatory, but let's chew on it for a minute.

If I were to ask you to put that phrase—give up your own way—in your own words, what would you say?

[Give students time to work through responses. It's OK to let them fumble around, help each other, and make corrections.]

Great job wrestling with this idea.

Most of us don't like to think about giving up anything, much less our way.

It makes us feel small, dependent, and misguided like we NEED Jesus to show us the way.

[Wait for an awkward pause.]

But isn't all that true?

If you weren't here last week, we talked about how often we get what we want but are unsatisfied with it.

It's the same thing with our actions—we do what we want and often regret it.

Jesus says to give up our own way because he's offering to show us a better way.

Pursuing Jesus means you learn how to surrender to him.

Second, Jesus says we must **take up our cross**.

What images come to mind when I say the word "cross?"

We're meeting with our church, so "cross" means the wooden beams where Jesus was crucified.

What do you think it meant to the disciples when Jesus said this?

Keep in mind, he hadn't died yet, and most of them really had no clue that that's where all this was headed.

When Jesus said this phrase, the disciples probably understood it to mean that they needed to do their part, similar to the phrase "pull your own weight."

I think it probably still means that, but I think it has a deeper meaning on this side of Jesus' death and resurrection.

I think Jesus is building on the phrase "give up your own way."

I think Jesus is saying to be willing to give up your own way and your own life.

I know that's heavy, but that's Jesus preparing his disciples for what was coming.

It's unlikely that any of us will ever be in a situation where we'd have to die for our faith, but would we?

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The third thing Jesus says is that we must follow him.

This feels redundant since Jesus started this whole thing by saying here are things we must do if we want to be his follower.

Of course, we must follow him.

I think Jesus is saying that good intentions aren't enough; we actually have to get off our behinds and follow him.

We can't just say we follow Jesus.

We can't just show up at church meetings.

We can't just wear cool, Jesus-y T-shirts.

We actually have to follow him, do what he says, obey.

We must actively pursue Jesus by living a life of obedience, even when it's difficult.

Pursuing Jesus means you learn how to surrender to him.

Before we wrap up, I want to make one thing super clear.

Jesus isn't talking about how to make him love us.

He's not talking about how to earn God's favor or blessing or brownie points.

Jesus means precisely what he says: if we want to be his follower, those are the things we must do.

If you don't want to be his follower, you don't have to do any of those things.

There are consequences to making that choice, but it is your choice.

That's why we started the series last week talking about trust—have you decided to follow Jesus by trusting him?

This week is building on that; if you say you want to be his follower, here's what you must do.

All of this is about a relationship with God where we learn how to become more of our best self—the person God created us to be—by getting closer and closer to Jesus.

Pursuing Jesus means you learn how to trust him.

And **pursuing Jesus means you learn how to surrender to him.**

In a social-media-driven culture that celebrates self-centeredness and individualism, Jesus calls us to a different path of selflessness, sacrifice, and service.

And surrender.

What's holding you back?

Let me pray for you, then go talk about it in your small group.

[Pray as God's spirit leads, then dismiss the group.]

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is your least favorite household chore?

a. Why is it easier to do any household chore if it's your idea versus if it's your parents' idea?

2. What is similar about tonight's passage and the passage we read last week?

Tonight: *Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me." Matthew 16:24 (NLT)*

Last week: *Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" Mark 1:17 (NLT)*

a. How do both verses reveal that Jesus wants a relationship with us?

3. When you hear the word "surrender," what comes to mind?

a. Would you consider surrendering to be a sign of strength or weakness?

4. Why would Jesus say we must surrender to him?

a. Why would Jesus consider surrender to be a sign of strength?

5. How is "giving up your way" a reflection of trust in Jesus?

a. On a scale of 1 (total fear) to 10 (total trust), how is your trust-in-Jesus meter when it comes to giving up your way?

b. Which things are harder to give up than others?

6. If part of "taking up your cross" means "pulling your own weight," what is your weight to pull when it comes to following Jesus?

7. Are you more active (you take the initiative) or passive (you wait for someone else to take the initiative) in your pursuit of a relationship with Jesus?

a. How can you become more active in your pursuit of Jesus?

8. What's holding you back from fully surrendering all parts of your life to Jesus?

9. What do you sense the Holy Spirit is saying to you tonight?