

In this week's scripture, the disciples get the chance to follow. They don't know where they are going. They don't know, at the beginning, just who they are following. There is a great adventure that awaits them, but they must do a few things along the way:

Day 1

Look

It really is amazing how much we don't see. We just aren't very observant, most of the time. Why is this? Because we often get fixated on what we want or need in the moment, we fail to take the time to look at the bigger picture. Pilots and others often call this phenomenon target fixation, the inability to see what is around you because you are focusing on one thing in particular that seems more important at the time. Target fixation can lead to CFIT, or controlled flight into terrain, meaning that nothing was wrong with the plane, the pilot failed to see that he was on a path to collide with the ground and so took no evasive action. In our lives, we can become fixated on jobs, relationships, retirement plans, even the next meal, which leads us to forget about the big picture life issues that need our attention. In this week's text, Jesus asked those who would follow Him what they wanted. It is a great question. Have you thought about what you want, not right now, but in the biggest picture sense? In order to find the answer to this question, ask yourself, "and then what"? Do you want money? And then what? Do you want a relationship, or to retire? And then what? The thing you ultimately want leaves no room for anything after it, because it is complete and sufficient in itself. What would bring you satisfaction in an ultimate sense? If you are after money, then you would buy things. If you are looking for retirement, then you would relax. Only one thing in our lives can be ultimate, and that is to be united with the God who is in himself life to the full. If we are to be disciples and follow Jesus, we must look at what we really want, and make sure we are pursuing the one thing that really matters.

Verses: Isaiah 55:8-9, 1 Corinthians 12:31, Colossians 3:2

Prayer Topics: Perspective, All-Encompassing/Comprehensiveness, Wide Range of Vision/Understanding, Taking a Step Back

Day 2

Repent

After we finally look and see what it is that we really want vs. what we are actually pursuing, we must take the difficult action of repenting of those things that are of lesser value that we pursue as if they are ultimate. This is much more difficult than it seems. I think very few of us actually engage in real repentance, because we pursue things of insufficient value for emotional and psychological reasons that are deep seated and securely rooted. In other words, we have substituted lesser things for things of ultimate value because they are shortcuts to meet our emotional, spiritual, and psychological needs and we do not easily break our attachments to these things. When faced with the difficult work of true repentance, which is a turning away from the reliance and trust in these non-ultimate things which have become our substitutes for God, we rarely find the courage and strength necessary for this task. This can be seen in the lives of the Pharisees that Jesus encounters, who have substituted the praise of men for the approval of God, or the rich young ruler who goes away sad because he has great wealth. In our modern times, it is easy to wear Christianity as a thin veneer over an ordinary pagan or atheistic life. True repentance means finding ultimate meaning and placing ultimate trust in Christ, that following Him becomes the focus of our lives, and that we pursue energetically growing in the fruit of the spirit and embrace the sacrifice that was the mark of His life. If people were to look at our calendars, our bank

accounts, and our thoughts, would they find that we are oriented toward following Christ, or would they find a typical American life with a little church thrown in? We are only disciples if we are following Jesus.

Verses: 2 Peter 3:9, Matthew 3:8, Proverbs 28:13

Prayer Topics: Penitence, Wisdom, Submission

Day 3

Orient

In modern times, if we are forced away from our GPS enabled devices to a real paper map, we often find ourselves aligning the map and the direction we are facing to the north. We call this orientating the map, but in reality, that would mean aligning the map to the east. Before magnetic compasses were common, many maps were orientated, meaning aligning to the east, because of religious reasons. Whatever the time period, however, the reason for orienting maps is clear. We must have a match between the map, which shows us the lay of the land, and our own direction, so that we can understand in which direction we need to move. When Jesus asks his potential followers what they want, they answer that they want to know where He is going. This is what discipleship looks like. Where Jesus is going, they will go. They look at what Jesus is doing, what His life looks like, what decisions he is making, and what He loves. He is their map, and they orient their lives in alignment with Him so that they know where their life should be going. Have you studied the map? Do you know what Jesus loved, and what He hated? Do you know what He would say, and what He would do? Then, have you oriented your life so that it would match? Do our lives look like His? Would He be making the decisions you make about your time, your money? Does the love you show to those around you look like the love He would show to those people? If we are off on our orientation, what corrections need to be made so that our lives are oriented and on track with His?

Verses: Ephesians 2:19-22, Proverbs 16:1-4, Proverbs 21:30

Prayer Topics: Centermost/Innermost Love/Desire, Conforming the Heart, Following Joyfully & Correctly

Day 4

Recognize

The potential followers of Jesus that are written about in this week's scripture orient themselves to Jesus and go where He goes, they then come to the realization that He is the Messiah. We don't really know how most of them come to that conclusion. We know that they begin by calling Him Rabbi, which means "master," but they called John that as well and he wasn't the Messiah. Something happens in the time they spend with Him that allows them to recognize that Jesus is the son of God. Maybe the reason we aren't told is because it is an individual event, meaning that what convinces me and what convinces you are not the same thing at all. Maybe, much of the time, the thing that convinces us is not one particular piece of information, but a relationship that can only be explained in its totality and is resistant to easy summation. It could be that most of the time, if we had to explain it in a few words, we simply couldn't, much like having someone ask you how you know your spouse loves you. In fact, imagine trying to defend the idea of your spouse's love to someone who is skeptical that it is possible for one person to love another. Is there any proof that defies doubt? No matter how it happens, what is important is that at some point, the disciple can say with confidence that this person, Jesus of Nazareth, is the Messiah. When that happens, if we understand the weight of our confession, there is no other choice than to follow Him.

Verses: John 17:3, Jeremiah 9:23-24, John 10:1-42

Prayer Topics: Knowing & Being Known, Peace, Confidence

Day 5

Follow

The disciples, once they came to the awareness that Jesus was the Messiah, followed Him to the end of their days. This led them to some unexpected places. First, when they identified Jesus as the Messiah, they really didn't know what that meant, even though they thought they did. It really couldn't have been any other way. They were looking for a political and cultural leader, and they got, instead, the son of God that takes away the sins of the world. It was much bigger than they could have expected, or hoped for. How could they have known what only God knew? They had to trust when their knowledge was incomplete, and follow to a destination that was much different than what they expected. It is the same with us. We follow Christ and we think we know what that means. But how could we? It is only in following that we come to truly know Christ, so that must be a surprise. How could we know Him before we follow Him? How can we know where He is going before we know Him? We must trust Him, and as we follow, we find out in a much deeper way who He is and where we are going. This will be as much of a surprise to us as it was to the disciples. If it is not a surprise, if we don't end up in unexpected places, then we are only following our own wisdom and intuition, not Jesus the son of God. Enjoy the adventure.

Verses: 1 Corinthians 2:9-10, 2 Timothy 3:12-14, 1 Corinthians 2:12-14

Prayer Topics: Pursuit, Trust, Revelation