

CONNECT CLASS 1: FOLLOW

1. WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

Welcome everyone to Connect class 1: Follow.

A big part of following Jesus is telling our story of how we came to Him. Jesus wants to use our stories to be a testimony to others. I encourage you to share your story with someone this week

2. FOLLOWING JESUS:

New Creation. Saved. Born again. Redeemed.

Have you ever heard these terms? These are just a few ways the Bible describes conversion, which is our response to the gift of salvation, through which **we're forgiven for our sin**. Jesus called His original disciples, 'Follow me,' and He later explained that we must be 'born again.' But what do those terms mean?

Ultimately, salvation, or being born again, means putting your life into God's hands, leaving your old ways behind and Jesus becoming both the Lord and Saviour of your life. Read John 3:3. His focus as your focus, His destined and designed life for you is your life. It's a prayer that intends us to turn our life and focus around. He initiated a relationship with you and offered you a way to experience that relationship. And you responded. You've turned from your old life and turned toward God. You've been freed from sin and made right in His eyes. And you've been rescued from Satan, the enemy of God, and adopted into God's family.

Everyone's journey is different, because we are different people from different backgrounds, but regardless of how you describe your journey, all such stories share a few things in common – **a change in what you believe, a transfer of loyalty, and a reversal of direction.**

2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

Explained..

This scripture says that Christ has made us a new creation. We no longer live in our old ways doing the things we did, making the choices we made, but because we are surrendered to Him and follow Him, we ask Him to help change us to live more like He lived

Being a Christian isn't about following rules; it's about following a Person. It's not about asking Jesus to follow us but about deciding to follow Him. Jesus doesn't stand in a far-off place and demand that we get our act together before approaching Him; rather, He invades the reality of our lives and beckons us into a life larger than our own.

Following Jesus is ultimately about doing what Jesus did the way that He did it. It's that simple. We love the people He loved, serve the people He would serve, and do the things He would do. We strive to replicate His character, ways, and mission.

3. FOLLOWING JESUS INTO BAPTISM:

The word 'baptism' comes from the Greek word 'Baptizo', which means being fully immersed under water. We have our example from Christ who was baptised by John the Baptist in the Jordan River in Matthew 3. This is an act that Jesus commanded his church to not only do ourselves, but also to perform with others perform (Matthew 28:19-20).

ROMANS 6:1-4,8

"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him."

1. BAPTISM IS A PICTURE OF SALVATION

Baptism is a picture of salvation. It's a way to actively commemorate and celebrate inclusion in the Kingdom of God. When new disciples are baptised within the church, they are immersed in a body of water. They are brought down into the water, just as Jesus was brought down into the grave after His death on the cross. Yet, like Jesus, the disciples don't remain in the water. They are raised out again in a symbolic representation of Christ's resurrection. That's the key to Paul's wonderful reminder in verse 8: '*Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.*' In this way, the practice of baptism serves as an object lesson that helps each disciple gain a better understanding of what it means to be saved.

2. BAPTISM IS A PUBLIC DECLARATION OF FAITH

So far, we've addressed baptism as a personal commemoration of a disciple's personal faith in Christ, which is true. However, it's equally true that baptism also serves as a public declaration of a disciple's salvation and desire to follow Christ as a member of the church.

This public aspect of baptism is directly connected to the Great Commission, which Jesus gave to His disciples after His resurrection from the grave: Matthew 28:19-20.

The practice of baptism continues to benefit the church in many ways. For example, baptism is a shared experience among all disciples of Christ; it helps join together as the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). Paul made that clear when he wrote: 'For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body.' Public baptisms are also a fantastic opportunity for evangelism as new disciples stand to declare in front of all witnesses their intention to follow Christ.

4. CONCLUSION

We hope that this session was helpful and informative.
Next answer the questions and proceed to connect class 2.