

FOLLOWING JESUS

6 QUESTIONS ABOUT THE
CHRISTIAN FAITH





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Produced to accompany a teaching series on the same theme, prepared for TWCF in summer 2022.

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FOLLOWING JESUS

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Introduction

Following Jesus is the most amazing way to live, and this is the life Jesus has called us to. Yet even the most faithful of Christians sometimes wonder if there is a better way of putting their faith into action.

Through asking and responding to six simple questions, this booklet explores what it means to follow Jesus today.* As you take time to read through each of the six questions you'll see that the responses are also simple to understand. This is intentional. Our goal is to keep things clear, memorable and practical, so that together we can focus on following Jesus in practice, not just in theory.

We suggest that you revisit the principles contained here on a regular basis as part of your devotional practice, and that these become part of our conversation as we talk together over the coming months about how God is at work in our lives.

We pray that the principles introduced here, and the questions for reflection lead each of us to follow Jesus more effectively, and with great joy as we do so.

**We have intentionally used the language of 'Following Jesus' rather than that of 'being a Christian', even though they mean the same thing. In this way we are reflecting the way Jesus called people to respond to him, and the practice of the earliest Christians, who spoke of themselves as followers of 'The Way', i.e. the way of Jesus (Acts 9:2; 19:9; 19:23; 24:14).*

Acknowledgements

I first came across the idea of expressing discipleship principles using geometric shapes back in 2005/6 when reading two newly published books by Mike Breen, formerly of St. Thomas Church, Sheffield. These principles were brought home to me again in 2017 when I started meeting with a group of church leaders in Tunbridge Wells who by then were integrating some of this teaching into their churches and ministries.

More recently, in 2021/2022, our church leadership team felt a distinct call from God to bring a renewed focus on discipleship and mission within the church. In seeking to distil biblical teaching on discipleship into simple principles I've incorporated one of Mike Breen's original shapes (the Up-In-Out triangle) as it is so helpful. I'm also indebted to my friends leading local churches for their reminder that we need to keep asking 'What has Jesus said?' and 'What am I doing about it?' This formed the basis for the second shape. The other concepts shown here are my attempt to summarise the principles I've come to hold after years of reading and reflecting about how to follow Jesus, helped especially by authors such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Dallas Willard, Eugene Petersen, Alison Morgan, and Rowan Williams to name a few.

That's a long winded way of saying that I make no claim of originality when presenting these ideas. I do however pray that they may be a blessing and that as we follow Jesus together we might grow to become more like him.

Stuart

Six Questions

1

What is the Christian faith all about?

2

How do I follow Jesus?

3

How do I live out my faith?

4

How can I grow as a Christian?

5

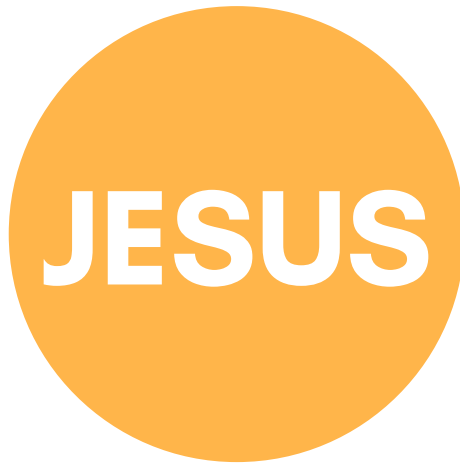
How can I be transformed?

6

How can I share my faith?



What is the Christian
faith all about?



The Christian faith is all about Jesus.
He is the centre of it all.

What is the Christian faith all about?

Key Passage: Matthew 16:13-20

In the course of his teaching and ministry Jesus asked many questions. None were more important than the one he asked his disciples when he said; "*Who do you say I am?*" Their answer to this question became a turning point in Jesus' ministry, and shaped their lives from then on.

Important principle:

- Jesus still asks us the same question, and our answer determines everything that ultimately matters in our lives, now and for eternity. Who do we say he is?

Questions for personal reflection:

- **Is Jesus King?**
 - Is Jesus my king, and what does this mean in practice for me?
 - How might my life change if I relinquish all areas to Jesus' reign?
- **Is Jesus enough?**
 - How is Jesus 'enough' in all the circumstances of my life, including my future?
 - How can I live like Jesus is 'enough', and how can I encourage others to do the same?
- **Is Jesus central?**
 - Is my love for Jesus growing?
 - In the face of the tendency of my heart to drift away from Jesus in stages, how can I ensure that Jesus remains at the centre?



How do I follow Jesus?

HEARING JESUS
SPEAK



DOING WHAT
HE SAYS

It's that simple
(But we often need help to stay on track)

How do I follow Jesus?

Key Passage: John 15:1-17, especially verse 14

Jesus invited people to be with him, to walk where he walked, and to become increasingly like him. The people who put his teaching into practice remained with him, and became known as his followers.

Important principle:

- Being a follower of Jesus involves being with him AND doing what he says to do

Questions for personal reflection:

- What is God saying to me, either through the bible or in other ways?
- How am I putting this into practice in my life and what is changing as a result?
- Am I aware of areas of my life which Jesus has spoken to me about but where I've not yet acted? What did Jesus say? What is holding me back?

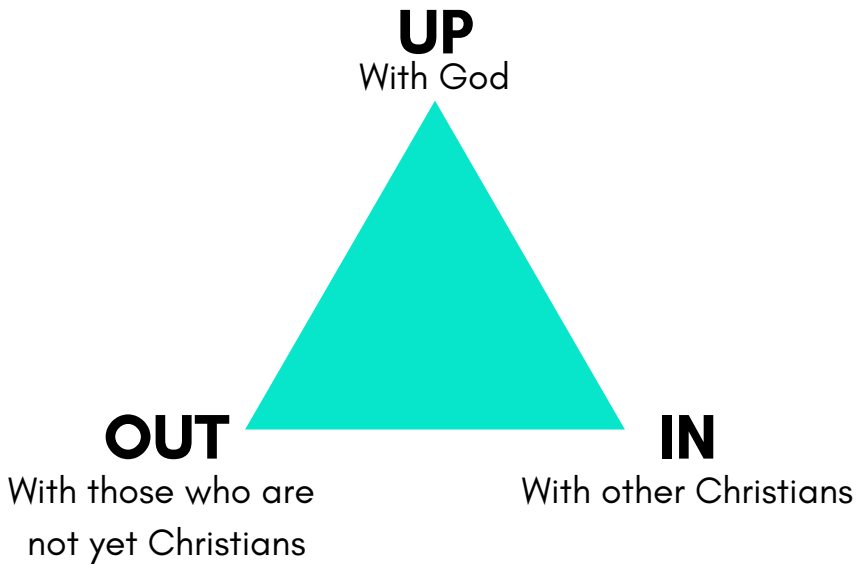
Daily Practice

As a way of helping us hear and respond to Jesus more readily, we can follow a practice used by Christians around the world for many generations. Take time at the end of each day to reflect on four simple questions:

- What am I thankful for today?
- Where did I see God at work today?
- Did I do what Jesus asked of me today?
- What about tomorrow am I trusting Jesus for?



How do I live out my faith?



We each interact with God and other people,
and need these relationships to be in balance
as we follow Jesus.

How do I live out my faith?

Key Passage: Mark 1:35-39

Jesus cultivated relationships in three directions: with God his Father, with his disciples, and with the crowds who followed him. Each of these three dimensions were important to Jesus and form a pattern of life for us to follow. The earliest Christians also followed this way of life (Acts 2:42-47).

Important principles

- We need all three relationships to be healthy
- This is a great tool for visualising how we are living as Jesus' followers

The diagram explained

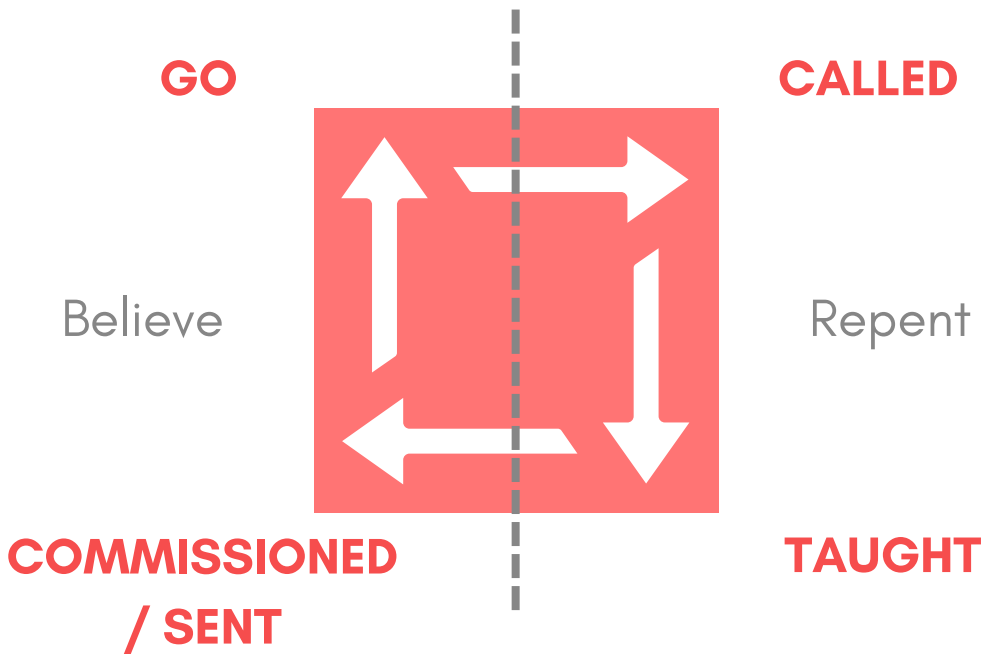
- **Up** = With God - In worship, receiving from him and being renewed by him (e.g. Church services & prayer meetings, personal prayer, worship, & study)
- **In** = With other Christians - In meaningful relationships (e.g. Life Groups, men's/women's groups, honest and prayerful friendships)
- **Out** = With non-Christians - being the good news wherever we are (e.g. work, leisure, extended family, neighbours, local and global mission)

Questions for personal reflection:

- How would I describe the shape of my life at the moment?
- How healthy is my 'Up', 'In', 'Out'?
- What steps will I incorporate in each area over the next couple of weeks?



How can I grow as a Christian?



Growth is a normal and expected aspect of life as Jesus' followers.

How can I grow as a Christian?

Key Passage: Luke 9:1-17

Jesus sent his disciples out on mission and when they returned he gave them the opportunity to feed a large crowd. In studying the way Jesus responded to these examples of 'success' and 'failure' we see the pattern he used for their growth.

Important principles:

- Jesus leads us to continually grow in him
- Sometimes we feel like we've got stuck. As we listen we will hear Jesus calling us back to himself
- Growth involves a cycle of repenting and believing

The diagram explained

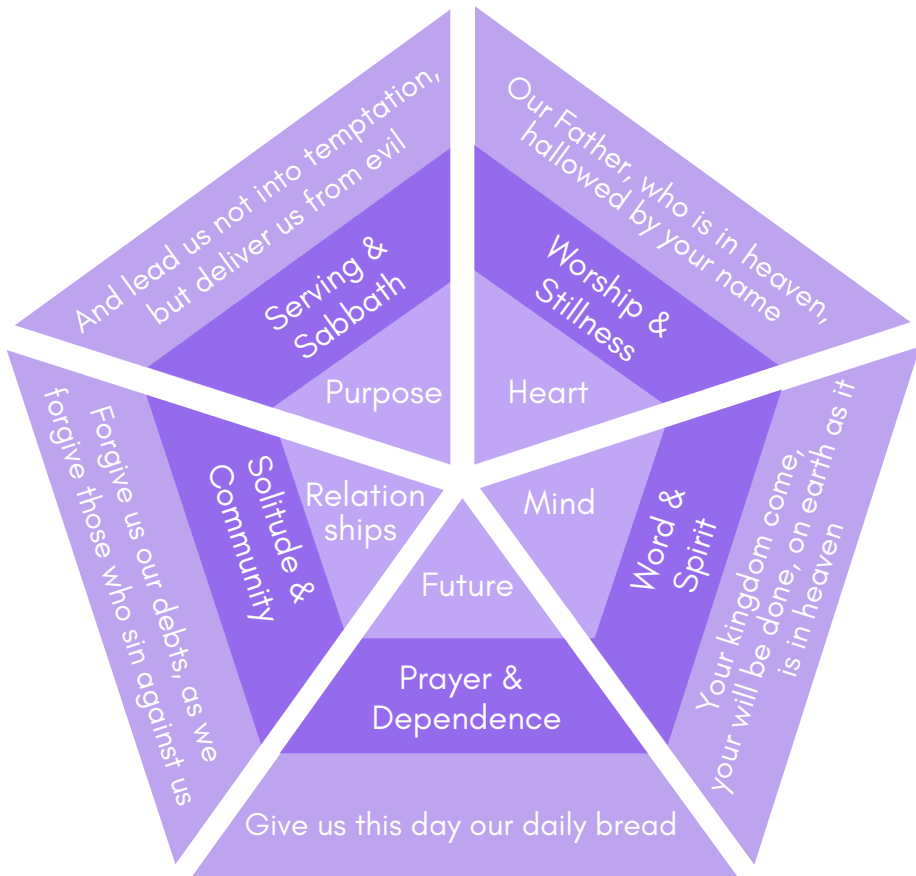
- Jesus first **calls** us to be with him and follow him
- Jesus **teaches** us all that we need to know
- Jesus **commissions and sends** us
- We then **'go'** to do whatever Jesus has said
- We grow through a life-long cycle of calling, teaching, sending and going

Questions for personal reflection:

- What difference does it make to me to know that growth in faith is cyclical, not linear?
- Looking at the picture of the square, what phase most reflects my life at the moment?
- Where is Jesus leading me to 'repent' by calling me away from some things to himself, preparing me for re-commissioning?



How can I be transformed?



Our transformation is a work of God that he invites us to participate in.

How can I be transformed?

Key Passage: 1 John 3:1-3

It is because God loves us that we are transformed. We are now children of God and through God's love we are being transformed to become more like Jesus.

The diagram explained

- The inner band shows **what** Jesus transforms in us
- The middle band shows **the gifts that God has given** us to help us be transformed
- The outer band shows **the prayer Jesus taught us**, which corresponds to each of the sections

Definitions

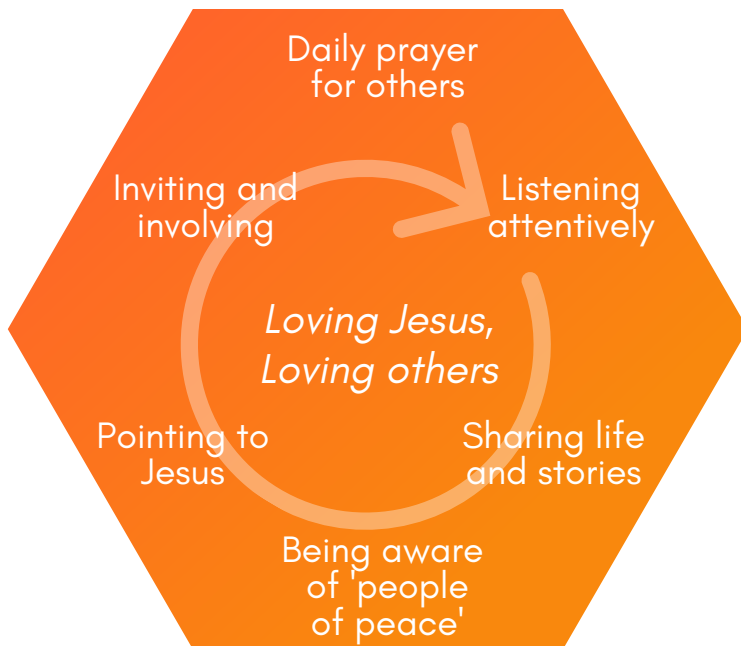
- Heart (emotion, desires, attitudes, worship)
- Mind (beliefs, thinking, values, priorities, understanding of the world)
- Future (our actual future, as well as our hope, trust and thoughts about the future)
- Relationships (in any area of life)
- Purpose (knowledge of God's will and understanding of our purpose)

Questions for personal reflection:

- Where have I most recently noticed God at work to bring transformation in my life? (Heart, Mind, Future, Relationships, Purpose)
- Which of God's gifts for transformation is he drawing my attention to?
- As I pray Jesus' prayer today, what stands out to me?

6

How can I share my faith?



Sharing our faith is one of the most exciting and life-giving things we get to do as followers of Jesus

How can I share my faith?

Key Passages: Matthew 4:19; 28:16-20. Luke 10:1-17

Jesus called and sent all his followers to share the good news of God's kingdom. Sharing our faith is something for every Christian, not just a specialist activity for a few.

The diagram explained

- Loving Jesus and loving others is the motivation for sharing our faith.
- We start with **daily prayer** for others
- We **listen attentively** to others and the Holy Spirit
- We **share our life** with others and share **stories** of God's ongoing work in our lives
- We become aware of '**people of peace**' – those who are open to God's good news (Luke 10:5-6)
- We **point to Jesus** through our words and actions
- We intentionally **invite** a response and **involve** people in what we are doing as we follow Jesus
- The cycle of stages continues as we support people in their journey of faith

Questions for personal reflection:

- Who am I praying for, that they might know Jesus more?
- Who am I actively listening to?
- When and where am I sharing my life and story?
- Who are the 'people of peace' in my life, who are receptive to God's work?
- How have I found it helpful to point to Jesus?
- What is the next step I can invite someone to take?

FOLLOWING JESUS

Becoming a Christian is life-changing, but what does it mean to live as a follower of Jesus?

By asking and answering six questions, this booklet summarises core biblical teaching about how we can follow Jesus today.

6 QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

- What is the Christian faith all about?
- How do I follow Jesus?
- How do I live out my faith?
- How can I grow as a Christian?
- How can I be transformed?
- How can I share my faith?

