

Pray Together

Use the first few minutes of your time together to lead your group in a focused prayer time.

- **Praise:** Spend time praising God for who He is.
- **Repent:** Take a few moments to silently confess any sin that is lingering in your heart.
- **Ask:** Verbalize your needs and the needs of others to God.
- **Yield:** Surrender your will to God.

Read Together

Luke 9:18-50 concludes a major section within Luke's Gospel account. Since 4:14, Luke has chronicled Jesus' ministry in the region of Galilee, specifically drawing out His teachings and highlighting numerous miracles He performed. All of these accounts come together to answer fundamental questions of Jesus' identity:

- Who is Jesus?
- Can Jesus be trusted?
- How does Jesus have the authority to do the works He does?
- What are the expectations for people who follow Jesus?

All of these teachings climax in Luke 9:18 with a clear declaration of Christ's divinity.

Jesus said to His disciples, "Who do you say that I am?"

And Peter answered, "The Christ of God."

This confession became the turning point in Luke's Gospel account. With His identity stated and confirmed, Jesus called His disciples and anyone who would come after Him to say "No" to themselves and to the world. Instead, He called men and women to reorient their lives; fully giving themselves to God. In 9:18-27, Luke records Jesus' clear expectations for growing disciples:

- Courageously confess Christ as Lord
- Repeatedly deny your sinful desires
- Daily submit to the authority of Jesus
- Boldly follow Him.

Jesus' expectations for growing disciples are still clear: confess Christ, deny yourself, submit to Jesus, and follow Him.. A growing disciple is called to say a repeated "No" to self and to the world in order to say an abiding "Yes" to Christ and His mission.

Discuss Together

Use these questions to engage in an informative and impactful discussion.

- Jesus called men and women to a life of self-denial—denial of personal desires and plans for the sake of something greater. How does Jesus' teaching on self-denial differ from other teachings like that of Buddhism, New Age teachings, natural morality, or a patriotic self-sacrifice? Share references to Scripture which support your answers.
- Invite two or three people in your Life Group to share their story of confessing Christ, denying themselves, taking up their cross daily, and following after Christ (Luke 9:23-24). Identify any universal points of connection that might resonate with people in your group.



- A Christian's primary allegiance is to Christ. Identify some lesser loyalties and commitments that Christians are being seduced by (cf. Luke 4:5-8). Examine yourself, where does your primary allegiance lie? What idols' counterfeit profits are you being enticed and ensnared by? How can Christ overcome these idols?
- There are many teachings on righteousness and sin that are considered "controversial" for today's audiences (identity, sexuality, marriage, sanctity of life). As a result, Christians sometimes fear alienation or being labeled "extreme". Have you been ashamed of Jesus and His words? Are there discussions you painfully avoid speaking into? How is the Holy Spirit helping you joyfully submit to the authority of Jesus and boldly follow Him? Identify passages of Scripture God has used to shape your obedience to Him.
- Jesus modeled for us what it meant to obey God the Father. His obedience was ultimately manifested in His death on the cross (Luke 9:22; Philippians 2:3-8), but there were many other instances where Jesus' righteousness was in conflict with the sinful world He inhabited. Identify how Jesus was demonstrating obedience to God in the following passages. How did His obedience bring about opposition?

- Matthew 4:1-11
- Mark 2:15-17
- Matthew 26:47-56

- Luke 10:38-42
- Luke 11:37-44

- *(Consider discussing this question within a smaller group of 2-4 people.)* Sin is an ever-present reality in the lives of growing disciples. The Puritan author John Owen wrote,

When sin lets us alone, we may let sin alone; but sin is always active when it seems to be the most quiet, and its waters are often deep when they are calm. We should therefore fight against it and be vigorous at all times and in all conditions, even when there is the least suspicion....Sin is always acting, always conceiving, and always seducing and tempting.

As you feel comfortable, discuss your ongoing battle to deny sinful desires in order to submit yourself to the authority of Jesus. Identify areas in your life where sin is always acting, always conceiving, and always seducing and tempting. How are you vigorously fighting against sin? What is God teaching you through this battle? How are other Christ-followers coming alongside you to overcome sin?

Do Life Together

These questions are designed to be asked in a smaller group of 2-4 people. The smaller setting will provide better opportunity for authentic responses. In your smaller group time, take notes to help others remain accountable to their answers. Grow together!

- How is God calling you to "grow up" in Christ this week?
- How can Jesus redeem this area? How has He proven that in Scripture?
- Who will keep you accountable to this commitment this week?

Pray Together

Read and pray through Philippians 2:3-8.

