

Following the Christ | John 20:31 Sermon Discussion Participant Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To discuss the problem with believing in the “autonomous self” and identify a practical step to follow King Jesus instead.

Sermon Refresher: We are tempted to live out the cultural liturgy of the autonomous self, where we think we must break free from constraints in order to experience who we truly are. However, we become our true selves not by trying to do things our way but by following King Jesus.

Icebreaker: What habits or routines have you found to be most life-giving for you? What makes them positive or helpful experiences?

Discussion:

1. Where have you heard the message of the autonomous self before? That you must be true to yourself and break free of limits in order to realize your full potential?
2. Ancient people thought pride was the most foolish sin. However, we now embrace it as essential to our true flourishing. What is foolish about this tendency to elevate ourselves above everyone else or about the belief that we have to take full control of our own lives? How does this kind of pride effect our relationships with others?
3. [John 20:31](#) says: But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

According to this passage, the Gospel accounts of Jesus are there to convince us that Jesus is the saving, ruling King promised throughout Scripture. Why is the fact that Jesus is King “good news” for us? What difference does this make in our lives?

4. Read the following passages:

Genesis 1:26-27

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. ²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

2 Timothy 2:11-12

¹¹ Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; ¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him.

1 Peter 2:9

⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Revelation 5:10

¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.

What did God create us to do, according to Genesis? What does "life in his name" (John 20:31) look like practically for us, according to 2 Timothy, 1 Peter, and Revelation?

5. How does the pride of the "autonomous self" get in the way of living out the purpose God gives us for our lives? Why are the two ways incompatible?

6. Our desire to break through constraints and uncover our true selves is not all bad. The Bible tells us we actually do have a true, authentic self that is currently hidden and will be revealed someday. However, though we are wanting the right thing, we try to get it the wrong way—by relying on ourselves rather than following King Jesus. What is one area of your life in which you are relying on yourself instead of King Jesus? What are you hoping to achieve by doing things your way?

THE **crossing** **small groups**

7. What is a practical step you can take to follow King Jesus in this area? What life-giving effect might this have on how you experience the situation?

Sharing and Prayer:

Ask others what they would like prayer for this week in light of the discussion. It could be asking for help to follow Jesus instead of self or to experience the life that comes through Jesus. After everyone has shared, close in prayer.