

BEYOND

January 9 & 10: Beyond the Old Life to the New Life

This study guide provides suggestions for further Bible study and reflection. You may not wish to pursue all the questions or to consider all practical applications. This is intended to be a benefit to the small group, not a workbook to be followed rigidly. We recommend that you take time to read the Scripture passages listed in the Sermon Summary. All Bible references are from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

Overview

This series is focusing on the word BEYOND—that is the place God wants to take us. God is on the move, always leading us —BEYOND where we are now—to some place we would not go, and could not go, on our own.

Goal of the study guide:

- To realize that it is God's way to take us BEYOND where we are right now in every aspect of life.
- To consider how we can go BEYOND our old ways in telling others the story of Jesus Christ.
- To look at what may be keeping us from fully following Jesus, and how we can lay those things down.

Key points:

- God is on the move—always leading us—BEYOND where we are now—to some place we would not go, and could not go, on our own.
- When Jesus asks us to follow Him, it means leaving where we are so we can go where He leads us.
- Going BEYOND means introducing Christ to others.



Take a second look ... Sermon Summary

*Matthew 4:18-20, ¹⁸As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."
²⁰At once they left their nets and followed him. (NIV)*

Jesus is calling to you and me, saying, "FOLLOW ME." But here's the problem: None of us really like to change. Growth is hard. Movement is hard. We don't easily go to new places.

Will you allow the radical message of Jesus to take you BEYOND your present habits, BEYOND the way your marriage is now, BEYOND the negative or fearful or arrogant ways, BEYOND the cycles of depression and discouragement, BEYOND casual Christianity?

1. To go beyond we must go where *people are*. Luke 14:23

When we follow the Holy Spirit, God will lead us to the exact people who need to hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

2. To go beyond we must *understand the culture*. Mark 2:15

In order to be effective in sharing your faith, you have to understand something about people: how they work, how they function, how they try to live without Christ. There is an emptiness in their soul and a pursuit of things that do not satisfy. So you have to understand the culture in which they live.

We need to cultivate genuine friendships with people who are not Christians. Then we can invite them to church and to our groups.

3. To go beyond we need a *variety of strategies*. 1 Corinthians 9:22

No two people are alike, so there is no single approach to reaching people. Different people need different approaches. The same strategy won't work for everyone. You have to try different strategies.

4. To go beyond we must put our *hook in the water*. Acts 8:35

To share your faith, you must not only be willing to build a bridge with an unchurched person, but you must walk across that bridge and make sure they get to hear the good news of Jesus.

5. To go beyond we must leave something behind. *Matthew 4:21-22*

What are the nets in your hands? What are the nets that are holding you back from fully following Jesus, from going BEYOND where you are now to a place where He can lead you?

- **Possessions**
- **People**
- **Plans**
- **Panic**

Every person here has a net in their hands that needs to be dropped in order to follow Jesus more fully. What's your net? Are you going to hold on to it? That's your old life. Jesus is calling you to go BEYOND the old life, so drop that net!

Hebrews 12:1-2



Take it to the source ... Bible Study

Introductory question: What was your first experience in hearing the story of Jesus Christ? Was it a good experience or a bad experience. Why?

Opening thought:

The message of Jesus is not always presented in the most effective, loving way. Some experiences may have been very good, but others may have left a bad first impression of what it means to be follower of Christ. Use the experiences of your group as a way to learn what are good or bad methods of introducing a person to Jesus Christ.

Read *Matthew 4:18-22*.

1. To follow someone implies movement. What does that say to you about the nature of your spiritual life and journey?
2. When Jesus asks you to go BEYOND in a specific area of your life, how do you respond? Are you an instant decision maker? Do you take time to process it? Do you try to lead or are you willing to follow Him? How or why?
3. What is one area in your life where you would like to go BEYOND this year? What practical steps can you take to get there?

Key points:

- The Christian life is not based on a single experience that we camp on for the rest of our lives. It is more like a journey, where God is taking us BEYOND where we could go ourselves, to a place that only He can take us.
- Life with Christ requires decisions. It requires action. He calls us to move from where we are to where He wants to take us.
- Going BEYOND ourselves means being willing to follow Jesus even when we aren't sure where He is leading us, and when we feel like He has taken us BEYOND our own capabilities and comfort zones.

Read *Luke 14:23* and *Acts 8:35*.

1. When was the last time you encountered somebody who seemed to have a spiritual hunger? How did you respond?
2. What are some of the ways people show their spiritual hunger in our culture? Do you feel you are prepared to speak to someone with spiritual hunger? Why or why not?
3. What are some practical ways you could prepare yourself to interact with someone the way Philip did?
4. If someone asked you to tell them about your life with Christ in 60 seconds, what would you say?

Key points:

- Going BEYOND means learning to be sensitive to others in the things they say, what they may be doing or situations they are facing. Spiritual hunger isn't always obvious. Some people don't even know what they're hungry for; they just know that they are dissatisfied with life. It is up to us to help them understand what they are feeling and the answer to the problem.
- The original Greek word for "preach" often had the implication of "gossiping the Good News of Jesus." Many Christians feel pressure to have an impressive presentation concerning every possible aspect of the Bible, but what is most effective is when one person "gossips" about what Christ has done in his or her life.
- Each person in your group should be able to tell their spiritual story in about 60 seconds. You may want to take some time to see how comfortable people are with this and to use this as a practice time.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:22 and Acts 17:16-34.

1. How does Paul's speech in Athens show his awareness of the culture?
2. Why is it important to know a person's perspective and cultural influences when you are sharing the story of Christ?
3. How can you learn to understand your culture without being overtaken by the values and activities of that culture? Why is this so important?

Key points:

- Paul was aware of the philosophical and cultural trends of Athens, so he could talk *with* them instead of *at* them. 17:16-18
- Paul's approach caused them to want to know more rather than making them angry and closed to his message. 17:19-20
- Instead of starting by showing them how wrong they were, Paul met them where they were and tried to lead them to a greater understanding of who God is. 17:22-31

Read Hebrews 12:1-2.

1. Are there things in your life that are keeping you from following Christ BEYOND just a casual Christianity? What can you do to set them down and follow Him BEYOND a human way of thinking and living?
2. What do you need to do to keep your eyes on Christ this year?

Application:

- Use these verses and questions as a time to help your group consider their own practical life applications for the coming year.

**Take it deeper ... Spiritual Exercise**

Take some time to prayerfully consider what might be holding you back from following Christ:

- Possessions
- People
- Plans
- Panic

Lay those things down and ask God to change you so that He can take you BEYOND anything you could have been in your own strength or abilities.

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