



JULY

STUDY GUIDE

**THE CHARACTERISTICS OF
BEING A FOLLOWER OF JESUS.**

JULY Study Guide

Mentoring Young Leaders & the characteristics of being a follower of Jesus.

In July, we spend the majority of the month in Paul's pastoral epistles: 1 Timothy & Titus. We focus on Paul's approach to encouraging Timothy in his faith and ministry and what that might mean for us as we journey together as the Church. We then look at Paul's instructions to Titus regarding instructions on how to live as the Church in the light of Christ's redeeming work. Lastly, we look at Paul's approach to Christian ethics, demonstrated in his own commitment to see relational reconciliation between those in Christ.

How to use this guide:

Each study guide is designed to be done after listening to that week's sermon, either in person or on podcast. You can use the guide as part of a small group or on your own.

1. Begin by getting comfortable and choosing to be present. In prayer, acknowledge the presence of Father, Son and Spirit and ask that your mind would be settled and heart opened to the presence of God and to one another.
2. Perhaps revisit the paragraph above as a reminder about the purpose of the series. You might also want to share personal reflections or the results of your experiment from the previous week.
3. Each week's guide begins with a quote. Use this as you like. It might be a conversation starter or perhaps a thought to come back to later in your study.
4. Read all of the scriptures listed for the week. You might like to use a few different translations, each giving a slightly different emphasis or tone. Read out loud, paying attention to genre, context and characters. Make use of any footnotes and cross references to help you get a handle on what's happening in the scene. Make notes or have a conversation about any questions that arise or discoveries you make.
5. Then take a look at the concepts. These were perhaps covered in the sermon and might help you to look at the deeper themes in the passages. Make a note of any other key ideas or themes that arise. Be attentive to what the Spirit might be saying.
6. If you are in a group, work through the dialogue questions one by one. Feel free to let those conversations take twists and turns. Keep noting the challenges and insights that emerge. Creating environments of safety, curiosity, honour and sincerity is key for meaningful dialogue. If you are on your own, perhaps enter into dialogue with Jesus. Ask him the questions and see what He says!
7. Close by giving thanks and honouring your brothers and sisters in prayer.

The **reflection** is for you to mull over during the week in a deeper way. Perhaps wind this into your quiet time or journaling practice.

Similarly, the **experiment** is an opportunity to act on something you've learned or been challenged by. Sharing experiences of these experiments with others can be a real opportunity for growth and encouragement.

WEEK 1

Mentoring Young Leaders

"A Christian discipleship that is mature and growing, that is the result of following Jesus, is very much against the stream of our instant society. It is not a tourist experience, but a pilgrimage. It is not a weekend hobby, but a life work....a long obedience in the same direction"

Eugene Peterson.

Scripture:

- 1 Timothy 1:12-20 - Paul's sober reflection of himself – the beautiful renewing work of Christ in Paul – Paul's encouragement to Timothy to live in accordance with the faith.
- Psalm 145 - One generation to another!
- 2 Timothy 1:1-7 - Fan God's gift into flame.
- Hebrews 10:24-25 - Encouraging & spurring one another on!
- Matthew 28:16-20 - We are disciples who disciple.

Concepts:

- Following Jesus is a long journey in the same direction
- Following Jesus is not a solo mission – we need communities of encouragement.
- Paul saw it as his role to encourage Timothy to continue following Jesus and reminding him of what God had said.

Dialogue:

- Discuss Eugene Peterson's thoughts on following Jesus (quote at top).
- What is the role of spiritual community in our faith journey?
- Is encouraging each other in our faith actually necessary?
- Who are you discipling?

Reflection:

- Have you ever experienced the long-term encouragement and/or discipling from another follower of Jesus? What was the fruit of that relationship?
- How can you be a gift to other Christians as they seek to follow Jesus?

Experiment:

Invite the Holy Spirit to:

- Fan into flame the gift of God within you that you may live out the ways of Jesus.
- Help you see the opportunities before you to encourage someone in their fellowship of Jesus.

WEEK 2

Instructions for church life

"The church is not simply a collection of individuals who have been saved from the world and are waiting to go to heaven. It is the body of people who are being renewed in order to model to the world what the new creation looks like". - NT Wright.

Scripture:

- Titus 2: 11-3:11; Follow the way of Jesus and 'do good'.
- 1 Peter 2: 4-12; we're being built into a spiritual house, with Jesus as the cornerstone, that we may offer sacrifices that are pleasing to God.
- Ephesians 4: 1-3; Paul's urge for us to live a life worthy of the calling we have received.
- 2 Corinthians 5:17; Christ has made us new – the old is no more.
- John 13: 34-35; A new command to love one another.
- Ephesians 5:1; Imitators of God who gave himself up for us in love.

Concepts:

- Grace has appeared to **all** people!
- Jesus has redeemed us & purified us from wickedness.
- The Church is to live differently from the world – we are His own people – and there is to be a tangible response to His grace & word.
- It is God's grace that enables us to live a self-controlled & holy life – as Christ did – in contrast to the passions of this world.
- As followers of Jesus, we come into alignment with the ways of Jesus – we devote ourselves to doing what is good – this profits everyone!
- The Church is a community that is to be committed to fellowship & formation– not marked by slander, malice, envy, hate, arguments, arrogance & given to foolish controversy.

Dialogue:

- How does God's grace both save us and train us to live differently?
- In what ways are we tempted to separate salvation from transformation?
- Paul warns against quarrels and divisiveness – how can we pursue unity without compromising truth?

Reflection:

- Reflect on Paul's words regarding the work of Christ (Titus 3:4-7)- His mercy & kindness that leads to rebirth & renewal.
- Reflect on your commitment to transformation – your only right response to Christ's mercy & kindness?

Experiment:

Ask the God of our Lord Jesus Christ to:

- Give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation that you may know Him better.
- Open the eyes of your heart in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you.

WEEK 3

Christian Ethics in Action

“Even as Christ did for us with God the Father, thus Paul also does for Onesimus and Philemon. We are all his Onesimi”. - Martin Luther.

Scripture:

- Philemon
- Galatians 3:28; we are one in Christ Jesus.
- 2 Corinthians 5:16-20; Christ has given us the ministry of reconciliation.
- 1 John 1:9; loving one another is central to following Jesus.
- 1 John 4:7-21; we love because God loved us first – our love for others comes out of our love for God.
- John 13:34-35; this is how people will know that you follow Jesus.

Concepts:

- Paul’s urging for Philemon to lay down any offence that Onesimus has caused.
- Reconciliation & forgiveness is central to being a follower of Jesus.
- Paul’s urging for Philemon to receive Onesimus as a brother in the LORD, not a slave.
- The fellowship between the people of Christ (koinonia) as demonstrated by Philemon & Onesimus being brought together in Paul.
- The Gospel that we believe is to be lived out through action, not just in philosophical thought; Paul’s emphasis on relational reconciliation between those – in Christ – is an example to believers now!

Dialogue:

- How does Paul reflect Christ in this story?
- As followers of Jesus, what is our fellowship characterised by?
- What do unforgiven and irreconciled relationships between Christians say about us?

Reflection:

- Reflect on your relationships with your brothers & sisters in Christ – are any marked by unforgiveness?
- Reflect on the reconciling work of Jesus and what that has done for you personally.

Experiment:

Ask the Holy Spirit to:

- Show you if there is any unforgiveness in your heart towards someone.
- Continue to shape you into a person of love.