

New will. New begin  
belief. New family.  
New honor. New life  
New desire. New perspective.  
treasure. New heart. New help.  
New plan. New joy. New trust.  
mission. New strength  
course. New light  
promise. New honor

Following **JESUS**  
from the Beginning



RANDALL ADAMS

### **Thank you!**

The generous gift of Oklahoma Baptists through the Cooperative Program and the Oklahoma Baptist's State Missions Offering have made this project possible.

**Following JESUS  
from the Beginning**



# **Following Jesus from the Beginning**

RANDALL ADAMS

Welcome to the MY316 New Believer's Study, *Following Jesus from the Beginning!* You are entering the greatest time of your life. To know and follow Jesus means everything. Nothing else matters by comparison.

This study will help you begin your journey with Jesus in the best possible way. You will learn to tell others what Jesus has done for you. You will help them see that Jesus loves them too!

The lessons are designed for you to complete during the week. Each week you should meet with other believers or one-on-one with a mentor or coach to discuss the lesson.

So let's get started, Following Jesus, from the beginning.

## LESSON ONE

# Following Jesus from the Beginning

## “For God so loved the world”

Someone once asked a famous Bible teacher, “What’s the greatest thought you’ve ever had?”

His answer came from a song he learned as a little child: “Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”

Truly, this is one of life’s greatest truths! God does love me—and He loves you. Throughout history, followers of Jesus Christ have come to know and believe this dynamic truth. It’s found in many places throughout the Bible, but the best-known verse is John 3:16 (NKJV):

**“For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”**

This means God loves all the people of the world. And we know “God so loved the world” because He gave His Son Jesus to: live on this earth in perfect obedience to Him; die on a cross for our sins; be buried in a tomb; arise from the dead on the third day; and ascend into heaven. One day very soon, Jesus will return to this earth. It will mark the end of history as we know it and the beginning of a new life in heaven.

To help you personalize what this means, let’s rewrite John 3:16. Except, this time, insert your name where the words, “the world,” appear.

**“For God so loved \_\_\_\_\_ that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”**

God wants you to know for certain that you have eternal life. The Bible assures that you can know Him and have eternal life through the promises of John 3:16:

- God loves every person in the world.
- He gave His only Son, Jesus, to live as an example for you and die for your sins on a cross (see also Romans 5:8).
- You must believe in Jesus in order to have eternal life. “Believe” means you must commit your life to Him and follow Him as your Lord.
- Believing in Jesus means you won’t “perish” or spend your life and all eternity in hell, separated from the presence of God.
- When you turn your life over to Jesus by believing in Him, He gives you “everlasting life.” Everlasting life begins the moment you believe in Jesus and follow Him, and it continues in heaven.

### MY316: My story with Jesus

Write a brief description of what Jesus means to you and how you came to follow Him. It’s a story you need to share with others.

The following is a simple outline for writing your story (write 2-4 sentences under each point):

**1. My life before I believed in Jesus.** (How did you feel? Afraid? Hopeless? Lacking peace? Without purpose?)

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**2. How I became a follower of Jesus.** (Did someone tell you about Jesus? Was there a particular Bible verse that helped you make the decision to follow Him?)

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**3. My life now that I believe in Jesus and follow Him.** (I have purpose and peace. I know God. I'm free from fear, my past, etc.)

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### Transition between your story and John 3:16

After you've shared your story, quote John 3:16 and explain what it means.

The following are options to help you transition from your story to John 3:16:

- Option #1: "Jesus said something that has come to mean a lot to me. He said, 'For God so loved...'"
- Option #2: "The most wonderful truth I've ever heard is something Jesus said: 'For God so loved ...'"

You may have another transition statement that fits your story and situation better. Thinking through this transition will help you feel more confident when you share about Jesus to others.

Write here how you'll transition from your story to John 3:16.

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## God’s story using John 3:16

Now that you’ve briefly written your story and transition, follow with God’s story from John 3:16. In your own words, write a few sentences describing what this verse says and means.

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## Transition between John 3:16 and the response from the listener

After you’ve quoted John 3:16 and explained what it means, ask the listener to respond to Jesus Christ and the message you’ve shared.

The following is a way you can ask for a response:

**“What do you think about Jesus’ message in John 3:16? Would you like to believe in Jesus and give your life to Him? You can ask Him to be your Savior and Lord right now. I can help you pray.”**

You can use the example above to invite a person to respond to Jesus Christ, or you can write your own message in the space below.

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## MY316: It’s your story and God’s story

When you combine your story and God’s, using John 3:16, you have a message you can share with others. Be sure to think through how you’ll invite a person to trust Jesus as Lord and Savior. The following example will help you see how this can be done.

### Example presentation of a MY316 Story

There was a time when I had no peace in my life. In fact, if I thought about life very much I would feel afraid. I feared what death would mean. The only thing I knew was that death would forever separate me from my family, from all those I love. And honestly, I didn’t see a whole lot of hope in this life.

Then I was introduced to a person who changed my life. I’d heard of Jesus before, but I didn’t know Him. And I didn’t realize how much He loved me and how much He did for me until someone took the time to tell me about Him.

I came to believe in Jesus and gave my life to Him. He took away



my fear that death would separate me from God and everybody I love. He actually gave real purpose to my life.

Jesus said something that has come to mean a lot to me. He said, “For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Jesus was talking about Himself. Jesus is God’s Son, and He was sent to me and you because God loves all people in the world. The Bible says if you’ll believe in Jesus, you’ll have eternal life.

To believe in Jesus means to believe He loves you. It means you believe He died on a cross for your sin and disobedience to Him. It also means you believe He was raised from the dead to live forever as your Savior and Lord. It means you turn away from your sin of living life without Jesus, and trust Him to save you.

What do you think when you hear John 3:16? Would you like to believe in Jesus and turn your life over to Him? If you’d like to know Jesus right now, you can pray and ask Him to come into your life, cleanse you of your sin, and save your soul.

Pray this prayer with me:

“Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for loving me. Please forgive me for living my life without believing in Jesus and obeying You. Jesus, I believe in You now. I believe You died on the Cross for my sin. I believe You rose from the dead. Come into my life, forgive me of my sin, and save my soul. Thank you for saving me. Amen.”

## Committing your MY316 story to memory

In order to make your MY316 Story something you can easily share, commit it to memory—not only firmly planted in your mind, but so that it also becomes deeply rooted in your heart.

Read your MY316 Story until you have committed it to memory. Read it for others and let them help you refine it. This step is vital for you to tell others what Jesus means to you in a natural way, while also helping them understand that God loves them too.

## People I know and want to share MY316 with

Are you ready to tell others your story and God’s story, using John 3:16?

Since John 3:16 says, “God so loved the world” [emphasis added], write down the names of people in your world who do not yet have a relationship with Jesus. Consider the people in your family, at your job and/or school, throughout your neighborhood and other areas. With whom has God already positioned you to share His love? After writing down the names that God has put on your heart, take time to pray for them, one by one.

- To my knowledge, these friends and family do not know Jesus:

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- Which three will you pray for regularly that they will come to know Jesus Christ?

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- With whom will you share your story and God's Story (John 3:16) this week?

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- How will you show you love them and that Jesus loves them?

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God so loved  
the world

## LESSON TWO

# Following Jesus Every Day

## “That He gave”

### For Review

- Review MY316 testimony.
- Share praying, sharing, and serving reports.

Jacob DeShazer was an American captured by the Japanese during the bombing of Tokyo in World War II. He spent 40 months in a prisoner-of-war camp, suffering terribly.

While in the camp, he read the Bible. His life was forever changed when he read Jesus' words spoken from the cross: “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

Jesus' forgiveness of those who nailed Him to the cross spoke powerfully to DeShazer. He was moved to forgive his captors for the cruelty he suffered at their hands. Not only did he forgive them, but he developed a desire to share Jesus Christ with the Japanese people and later returned as a missionary.

DeShazer wrote a tract titled *I Was a Prisoner of Japan* that was widely distributed. One person who read it was the Japanese pilot

who led the attack on Pearl Harbor, Mitsuo Fuchida. He committed his life to Christ, and in one of the most wonderful stories to come out of World War II, Fuchida and DeShazer became close friends.

Because Jesus gave His life and His Word, DeShazer could give forgiveness to his captors. At a crucial time, God's Word enlarged DeShazer's heart, enabling him to obey God and follow Jesus' example.

Those who believe in Jesus Christ desire to obey Him. To love Him is to have a heart that eagerly says “yes” when He speaks.

So, how does Jesus speak to us? Though they aren't exclusive, He speaks through two primary methods: the Bible (God's Word) and prayer. In the Bible, we see He also speaks through His creation, angels, dreams, and even through a donkey!

But God never speaks contrary to what He says in the Bible, so that's where we'll begin and focus our attention.

### Jesus' final words

Read Matthew 28:18-20. Final words are revealing. This was especially the case regarding Jesus' final words, spoken after His death and resurrection. Among Jesus' final words was His command for His followers to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19).

How are we to do this? Jesus said to baptize them “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” and teach “them to obey everything [He commanded].”

## Obeying Jesus through water baptism

When a Christ-follower is baptized, he obeys Jesus. Water baptism helps one identify with Jesus and others who follow Him. It’s often described as the “first act of obedience” for a new believer because it fulfills Jesus’ command that we should “go public” for Him through baptism.

Have you followed Jesus through water baptism? If not, then talk to your pastor about taking this important step of obedience.

## Obeying Jesus in “everything”

Jesus also said we’re to teach those who follow Him to obey “everything” He’s commanded. When you read the Bible, especially the New Testament, you discover it will take a lifetime to truly learn all that Jesus teaches us.

Because of this, some have decided they’re not ready to serve Jesus until they’ve spent months, or even years, learning what He teaches in the Bible. Don’t misunderstand Jesus when He said, “Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

The key word is that we’re to “obey” Him in everything. When He speaks to you, do what He says. To believe in Jesus is to cultivate a mind and heart to love Him and obey every command He gives. Those who obey will worship and serve Him—even if they’ve only known Him for a day.

We’re to always say “yes” to Jesus every time He speaks to us. When we tell Him “no,” we sin. When we tell Him “yes,” we obey.

What has Jesus said to you through His Word? What was the last thing Jesus told you to do? Did you obey Him? Why or why not?

## Do you trust Jesus?

Obeying Jesus centers on the issue of trust. Do you trust Jesus’ commands are for your benefit? If you believe He can be trusted in all things, obeying Him will come much easier to you (see John 14:1-6; Romans 8:28-39).

What do these Scriptures say about the reasons you should trust God?

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## Reading and obeying God’s Word changes your life

The Bible contains powerful promises about the ability of God’s Word to change our lives.

Some key passages include:

**“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).**

**“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).**

Many other passages could be referenced. The primary truth is that God speaks to us through the Bible, and God’s Word changes our lives. Reading and believing what it says, and obeying Jesus’ words, will change our thinking and our heart’s desires.

### **Three questions to help you as you read the Bible:**

- 1. What?** What is God saying through the biblical text?
- 2. So what?** What is the application for me?
- 3. Now what?** What am I to do in light of what God is saying through His Word?

### **There’s no “quick fix” for human weakness**

African missionary David Livingstone told about visiting a powerful chief named Sekomi. The chief said to Livingstone, “I wish you would change my heart. Give me medicine to change it, for it is proud, proud and angry, angry always.”

Livingstone lifted up a Bible. He was about to tell him the only way the heart can be changed is to receive Jesus into his life and obey Him when the chief interrupted.

“No,” he said, “I wish to have it changed by medicine, to drink and have it changed at once, for it is always very proud and very uneasy, and continually angry with someone.” The chief then walked away.

The chief wanted a quick fix for his sinful heart. He wanted to drink a magic potion and be instantly cured. But our human weakness and sinfulness can’t be cured that way. Our lives change as we read God’s Word and obey Him. In this manner, the Holy Spirit makes us more like Jesus.

### **Ten minutes a day**

If you spend ten minutes a day reading the Bible, you’ll read through the entire Bible in about a year.

Most who have read the Bible consistently for several years vary their approach to reading it. Such variations include simply reading through the entire Bible to doing a more detailed study of one particular biblical book.

One year, I read through the New Testament every 30 days. Another year, I read the Old Testament three times. This year, I’m reading the Archeological Study Bible. I read the biblical text then the notes and articles attached related to the text. You can find specific reading plans in Christian bookstores or online.

Develop a habit of reading God’s Word, and as you read and pray, seek what He’s saying to you through it.

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### MY316: "Giving" God's Word Honor

What time of day is best for you to read the Bible?

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How do you plan to read and apply God's Word to your life?

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What has Jesus said to you through His Word?

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What was the last thing Jesus told you to do? Did you obey Him?  
Why or why not?

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How has God's Word enlarged your heart for others?

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## LESSON 3

# Following Jesus Every Day

## “His only begotten Son”

### For Review

- Share MY316 testimonies.
- Share praying, sharing, and serving reports.

On January 12, 2010, a devastating earthquake rocked the nation of Haiti, resulting in terrible destruction and loss of life. In the midst of heartbreak and suffering, there were remarkable stories of survival.

One story was about a woman who accessed her cell phone while pinned under the rubble. With it, she updated her Facebook status, telling her friends of her trouble and where they might find her. A friend in Canada read her status update, and, using that information, directed rescuers to her location. They dug through the rubble, pulled her to safety, and saved her life!

It's not difficult to see the benefit of staying continually connected to friends in light of that story. Friends are a blessing. Even more important than being connected to your friends, however, is staying

connected to God, to whom we have been given direct access through Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son.

Have you considered you can be a friend to Jesus and remain in continual conversation with Him? Through prayer, you can talk with Jesus during each moment of every day.

### Pray continually

The Bible teaches us to “pray continually” (1 Thessalonians 5:17), which means we talk with God every moment, understanding He's always with us. When we remain in constant conversation with Him through prayer, we're able to know what He's doing and what He wants us to do.

Always remember, as God speaks to you through prayer, He'll be consistent with what He tells you in His Word. So, when do you pray? What do you pray about most often?

### Prayer connects us to God

Talking with Him keeps our minds and hearts focused on Him. As we learn who He is through reading the Bible, these truths help form our thoughts and actions as we move through each day.

Read Psalm 23. How did King David express his personal connection with God? Write down as many things as you find in the passage. How does it reveal ways that you're personally connected to God?

## Prayer connects us to God’s work

Jesus said, “My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I, too, am working” (John 5:17). There’s never a moment when God isn’t working to fulfill His purpose.

Jesus speaks of God’s purpose when He says He came “to seek and to save what was lost,” speaking of lost humanity (Luke 19:10). God’s ultimate purpose, from Genesis to Revelation, is to save believing humanity from the devastating effects of sin.

Because of Adam and Eve’s disobedience to God, they were banished from the Garden of Eden and the ground was cursed (see Genesis 3). Pain, suffering, and death came to all people. However, in the end, God promises to remove the curse and bring us into a place where His presence makes all things new and good (see Revelation 22).

This is God’s work. It’s the greatest joy of those who know Him. Through prayer, you can see where He’s working and how you can join Him. So, how are your prayers connecting you to God’s work in the world? Do you see God at work in the lives of people you know?

### Learning to pray as Jesus prayed

The best way to learn how to pray is to read and study the prayers of the Bible. And there’s no better place to begin than with the prayers of Jesus.



Read each of these passages, noting the content of the prayers:

1. **Matthew 6:9-13:** Jesus taught His disciples how to pray.
2. **Luke 18:9-14:** Jesus’ parable on how to pray.
3. **John 17:1-26:** Jesus’ prayer the night before His death.

Now, write down three things you learned about prayer:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. \_\_\_\_\_  
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### When you don’t know how or what to pray

Know that you’re not alone in your prayers. The Bible says God’s Spirit helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us.

Read Romans 8:26-27. What does this teach you about prayer? Should you pray, even if you don't know how?

The Bible says God is working all things together for the good of His people, and that Jesus is also interceding for us. Read Romans 8:28-39. Who's praying for you? What's God's attitude toward you?

What you see and experience in the world can be baffling. But, through prayer, you can connect to God in a personal way, and He will connect with you, even to the point of interceding for you. It's a great mystery, but you can trust God to make it work for your good.

### Some ideas to help you pray continually

1. Pray as you read the Bible each day.
2. Pray for people involved in news you see each day.
3. Pray for each person you talk to throughout the day.
4. Learn to pray from the prayers in the Bible.
5. Every day, give thanks to God as you experience life's joys and struggles.
6. Get in the habit of developing a prayer list of people who do not know Jesus (such as: neighbors, family members, and coworkers) and commit to praying for them regularly.

In prayer, God allows you to speak to Him, hear from Him, and walk with Him each day. You'll discover no greater adventure in all of life than that of walking and talking with Jesus.

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### MY316: Praying to His only begotten Son

How have you seen God answer your prayer(s)?

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Who do you know in your life who may have prayed for you to have a personal relationship with Jesus? Take time to think about each person's life and express thanksgiving to God for their faithfulness to pray for you.

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Write down names of people in your life who do not know Jesus. Pray for them to connect with Jesus.

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Next, ask God to show you how to share His love with them. Write down what He says to do and commit to doing it.

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## LESSON 4

# Following Jesus Every Day

## “That whoever”

### For Review

- Share MY316 testimonies.
- Share praying, sharing, and serving reports.

Loving God and others is the greatest thing you’ll ever do. Yes, love is something we do.

In South Africa, there was once a system of legalized racism called apartheid. The key leader in bringing an end to it was Nelson Mandela. He spent 27 years as a political prisoner before being elected president of the country. Yet, when he was inaugurated as president, Mandela asked his jailer to join him on the platform to send a message to the country that it was time to heal.

Mandela appointed Archbishop Desmond Tutu to head an official government panel with a daunting name: “The Truth and Reconciliation Commission.” The purpose was to defuse the natural pattern of revenge that had taken place in so many countries when one oppressed race or tribe took control from another.

For the next two and a half years, South Africans listened to reports of atrocities that happened during the apartheid years. The rule was that if a white policeman or army officer voluntarily faced his accusers, confessed his crime, and acknowledged his guilt, he couldn’t be tried and punished for that crime. People considered it unjust to let a criminal go free, but Mandela insisted the country needed healing even more than it needed justice.

At one hearing, a policeman named van de Broek recounted an incident when he and other officers shot an 18-year-old boy and burned the body, turning it on the fire like a piece of barbecue meat in order to destroy the evidence.

Eight years later, van de Broek returned to the same house and seized the boy’s father. The wife was forced to watch as policemen bound her husband on a woodpile, poured gasoline over his body, and set him ablaze.

Van de Broek told this story in the courtroom. The courtroom was silent. The judge asked the woman, “What do you want from Mr. van de Broek?”

The now elderly woman who had first lost her son and then her husband finally spoke up. She wanted the policeman to go to the place where they burned her husband’s body and gather up the dust so she could give him a decent burial.

Mr. van de Broek, with his head down, nodded in agreement. Then, she added: “Mr. van de Broek took all my family away from me, and I still have a lot of love to give. Twice a month, I would like for him to

come to the ghetto and spend a day with me so I can be a mother to him. And I would like Mr. van de Broek to know that he is forgiven by God, and that I forgive him too. I would like to embrace him so he can know my forgiveness is real.”

Spontaneously, some in the courtroom began singing “Amazing Grace” as the elderly woman made her way to the witness stand, but Mr. van de Broek didn’t hear the hymn. He had fainted, overwhelmed by it all (Philip Yancey, *Rumors of Another World*, pp. 222-223).

## Jesus Speaks

Jesus said, “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34). He also said, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you” (Luke 6:27).

These and other commandments about “love” are some of Jesus’ best-known and most appreciated sayings. As His follower, the greatest opportunity you’ll enjoy in life is to love Him and love others. It fulfills God’s greatest expectation of you.

In other words, like Jesus, we are to demonstrate love to “whoever” God places in our lives.

Perhaps Jesus’ most famous statement about love came when a man asked Him a question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Read Jesus’ answer in Matthew 22:36-40.

When it seemed as though Jesus was trapped with no way out, He made a stunning statement. He didn’t elevate a single commandment,

nor did He abbreviate the commandments. Rather, He declared that love is the “point” of them all.

## God’s love for you

One truth in Scripture is that God loves you deeply. We’re told He loved you even when you didn’t love Him and were, in fact, His enemy. Biblical writers have described His love with amazing imagery.

Read the following and note the love God has for you:

1. Romans 5:8: What’s God’s greatest act of love for you?
2. Ephesians 3:17b-19: Does God’s love for you have limits?
3. Romans 8:38-39: Can anything keep God from loving you?

Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God.” But that’s only possible when you believe God loves you.

## Loving God with all of you

The only proper response to God’s love for you is to love Him in return. The Bible speaks of your love in terms of your obedience or disobedience to Him. Read the following and note how they describe those who love God:

1. John 14:15, 21-24: How do you show God your love?

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2. 1 John 5:1-3: Can you love God without loving Jesus?

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3. Psalm 97:10: Those who love God hate what?

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**Your love relationship with God helps you love others**

Jesus says loving others is impossible apart from the presence of God in the lives of His people.

Read the following and note what they teach about love:

1. Matthew 5:43-48: Who are your enemies and how will you love them?

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2. Luke 10:27-37: Who is your neighbor? How do you love him or her?

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3. John 13:34-35: Jesus commands His disciples to love each other. What does He say will result from such love?

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Follow JESUS from the Beginning

4. James 2:1-9: Should followers of Jesus love both the poor and rich?

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5. 1 John 4:20-21: Can you love God and not love your brother?

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Take time to pray for these individuals, asking God to help you love them as He does.

**Action Plan**

1. This week, how will you show God you love Him?

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2. This week, how will you love your neighbor?

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**MY316: Loving “whoever” God puts in my life**

What happened in your life to help you become the “whoever” of “whoever believes in Him”?

It’s one thing to pray for our friends and family to receive Christ; but it is entirely different to pray for our enemies. Write down enemies you know who need to know God’s love. What happened in your heart when you wrote down those names?

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3. This week, how will you love your enemy?

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Following Jesus leads into a life of love—love for Him and others. The elderly woman in South Africa was able to love Mr. van de Broek because of the love and forgiveness she received from God.

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## LESSON 5

# Following Jesus Every Day

## “Believes in Him”

### For Review

- Share MY316 testimonies.
- Share praying, sharing, and serving reports.

In the 1980s, when HIV was first surfacing, fear ran rampant because everyone who became infected died. One issue people were most concerned with was how easily the disease could be contracted.

Could a mosquito spread the disease? What if an HIV-infected person spit in your eye? Could you contract the disease that way? We soon learned it doesn't spread that easily, but people were still fearful of it.

There was one young girl who became infected through a blood transfusion. Her parents feared they might be asked to quit attending church by those fearful of “catching” HIV from their daughter.

Instead, the pastor and other church leaders told the little girl and her family this: “The church is a family. And as a family we will live together. And as a family we may die together, but whatever we do, we will do it together.”

The little girl eventually died, but she died within the family of her church, loved by them and ministered to by them (Erwin McManus, *An Unstoppable Force*, 154).

This story helps to capture the spiritual reality of the church. Our beliefs are demonstrated by how we spend our time, talents and treasures for God in the context of the local church.

When you become a Jesus follower, you have companions on life's journey, and these companions are called the church. The church is a family. The church is the Body of Christ—followers of Jesus, joined together for the purpose of worshipping God, serving Him, and living out His purpose in the world.

### The Body of Christ

A phrase found in many places in the New Testament to describe the church is “the body of Christ.” Romans 12:4-8 talks about this. Read these verses and think about the following questions:

1. Who forms Christ's body?

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2. To whom do the members of Christ's body belong?

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3. What responsibility do Jesus' followers have, as members of His body?

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The church is a people, not a building. The members of the church body are connected to each other. Through faith in Christ, each member has the life of Jesus in them and is called to serve His church where He's gifted him or her (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 and Ephesians 4:11-16).

How has God gifted you to serve the Body of Christ?

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## The Purpose and Function of the Church

Everything you've learned leading up to this point will help you understand the purpose and function of the church. Through this foundation, the church finds spiritual life and expresses her life.

The following outline provides a helpful summary of how the church fulfills her purpose:

- 1. Worshipping God** (see Ephesians 5:17-21). What are some things the church does to worship God? This text doesn't describe everything churches do in worship services. Other elements of worship include the Lord's Supper, water baptism, reading and preaching the Bible, and more. The key idea is that worship is "unto the Lord," with God as our audience. Worship is one way the church joins together in expressing thanksgiving and praise to God for who He is and what He's done.
- 2. Fellowshiping with other followers of Jesus** (see 1 John 1:1-7). John was one of the twelve disciples and, as such, was one of Jesus' first followers. On what basis does John say we have fellowship with each other?
- 3. Teaching and studying God's Word** (see 2 Timothy 3:14-17 and Hebrews 4:12). What benefit does studying God's Word have for



the church? What are some ways Scripture can be used to equip the church for effective living?

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**4. Proclaiming the message of Jesus to the lost world** (see John 4:39-42 and Romans 1:16-17). How is your church proclaiming the message of Jesus to those who don't yet know Him? The church, and individual church members, are instructed and empowered to take the message of Jesus to those who've not yet believed.

2. 2 Corinthians 9:7: How much should you give in support of God's work? What attitude pleases God when giving?

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### Matters of receiving and giving

**Everything you have is from God.** He created the world in such a way that it provides everything we need to sustain life. Through faith in Jesus, we even become heirs to all He possesses.

“Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17). Moreover, God is eager to share His riches with us. “He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will he not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things” (Romans 8:32)?

Because everything you have is from God, you should be willing and eager to give back to Him. He's given you time, talents, possessions, and money, and you can use these things to invest in His work.

Consider the following passages of Scripture:

3. Luke 12:15-21: What warning does Jesus give in Luke 12:15? Why did Jesus issue this warning?

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1. Matthew 6:19-21: What is it that you treasure most? What does your treasure indicate about you? Where should you invest your treasure?



4. Luke 21:1-4: What does the widow’s small gift teach us about Jesus’ view of our giving? What has God given that you can share with others? How can you increase your giving to God’s work?

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**Final Word**

The body of Christ is the physical presence of Jesus on the earth. Our individual relationships with Jesus bring us into relationship with each other. Churches are like families. They live together, worship together, and serve together. We celebrate babies’ births and the deaths of th°e saints. Church is doing life together.



**MY316: Demonstrating my “belief in Him”**

How are you involved in the Body of Christ?

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What new experiences have you shared as a result of this involvement?

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Describe how your priorities have changed since becoming a follower of Christ. How do you now spend your time, talents and treasures?

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What dreams do you want to see come true in your life and through your church?

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## LESSON 6

# Following Jesus Every Day

## “Should not perish”

### For Review

- Share MY316 testimonies.
- Share praying, sharing, and serving reports.

On Saturday, April 10, 2010, the Daily Oklahoman newspaper’s lead story was about four children who were removed from their home because their adoptive parents were convicted of abusing a fifth child. The children wept and embraced their parents as they were taken from the home.

Another front-page story in the same edition concerned the murder of a 7-year-old girl and the possibility that she was forced to drink antifreeze, which killed her.

There was an article chronicling a terrible accident in a West Virginia coal mine that took the lives of 29 miners. Another article concerned a teen suicide. Another discussed a sex abuse scandal in a church.

Then there was an editorial about Wilma Mankiller, the first female chief of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, who succumbed to death,

ending a life plagued by cancer, kidney failure, and other physical ailments.

This isn’t even a complete list of all the tragedies and troubles found in the paper on that day. The news of April 10, 2010 wasn’t chosen because it was a particularly difficult day. It was simply the day when this lesson was written.

Each day, the news is sadly similar, revealing that no person escapes pain in life. For the follower of Jesus, there’s the additional pain of persecution and even martyrdom.

Most of the early followers of Jesus, who walked with Him, died violent deaths as martyrs. And, every year since Jesus’ death and resurrection, many have suffered and died for the sake of His name.

The good news for Christians is that pain and even death in this world is temporary. Unlike unbelievers, people who believe in Jesus will not perish (live eternally separated from God in hell). They will spend eternity, pain-free, in heaven with God.

But for now, the certainty of persecution makes it vital that followers of Jesus arm themselves with the biblical truth about pain.

### All people experience pain

The first experience of pain is mentioned in Genesis 3 after Adam and Eve sinned against God. Genesis 3:10 says Adam experienced guilt pains and hid from God in fear. “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid” (Genesis 3:10).

Before banishing the two from the Garden and because of their sin, God told Eve she would experience pain in childbirth. He told

Adam the ground would be “cursed” and he would only produce food through “painful toil” (Genesis 3:16-17). The pain resulted from man’s rebellion against God.

The Bible, and all of recorded history, shows that mankind cannot escape the reality of pain.

### Jesus speaks about tragedy and pain

Though pain resulted from Adam’s sin, not every experience of pain happens because of your sin. Pain comes to us as part of the broken rhythm of a world out of sync, as part of a creation in “bondage to decay” (Romans 8:21).

Jesus addresses tragedy and pain more than once, but His most complete discussion is found in Luke 13:1-5:

1. What are the two sources of pain and tragedy mentioned in the text?

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2. What conclusions did Jesus draw from each tragedy?

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3. Have you experienced pain inflicted upon you by another person?

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4. Have you suffered an accident that was nobody’s fault?

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Jesus drew the same two conclusions from each tragedy:

**1. Death didn’t come to these because they were worse sinners than other people.** Tragedy isn’t reserved for the worst people. Suffering and death just happen. We sometimes think life will be fair to us because we follow Christ, but it’s not. Tyrants kill,

towers fall, cancer comes. These disasters take no particular aim at wickedness and they take no detour around righteousness. However, the seeming randomness of tragedy and suffering doesn't mean there's no value in pain suffered well.

**2. Tragedy and suffering, even when experienced by others, should make us turn to God.** The reason we ought to repent, or turn to God, is because our time of pain will come one day. When it comes, we must be ready to meet God so we won't die and be forever separated from Him. For example, when your neighbor's house burns down, you begin to check your fire alarms so the same tragedy won't happen to you. When someone you know dies a tragic death, you start to check your own heart to see if you're ready should you suffer the same fate.

**Paul had pain, but God had a plan**

In 2 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul revealed his pain in life, or what he called a "thorn in his flesh."

Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 and answer the questions below:

1. What did Paul learn about God's purpose in not removing the "thorn" from Paul's life?

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2. What did Paul learn about God's provision in the midst of his pain?

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Sometimes we're so busy telling God what He ought to do about our situation that we miss what He wants to do and say to us. We're certain the right thing is to remove the problem altogether. That's why it's good to be reminded of Paul's pain and what God did in his life through it.

Remember—Satan is stupid. Through Jesus' work in your life, Satan's plans always backfire. The thorn he hoped would cause Paul to rebel against God had the opposite effect. God takes even the most sinister plots of the enemy and turns them into good for your life and His glory.

**God's provision in your pain**

God's provision is His presence and grace. God told Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

A favorite Scripture of those in great difficulty is the final statement Jesus made in Matthew’s Gospel: “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20b).

Plant this truth deep in your heart and cherish the reality of the ever-present Christ.

**Persecution**

Sometimes following Jesus brings additional pain into your life. Peter, Paul, and the other apostles were jailed, beaten, and eventually killed for their faith in Jesus. Since those early days, persecution has always accompanied those faithfully following Him.

When you’re persecuted, it should come as no surprise because Jesus warned His followers they would suffer. He said, “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first” (John 15:18), and “if they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also” (John 15:20).

Later, the Apostle Paul wrote, “Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12).

**A Concluding Thought**

I could give you many more passages in Scripture about persecution, but the best thing Jesus said, after warning His first followers about the certainty of suffering, was this: “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).



**MY316: Perish? No. Pain and Persecution? Yes.**

Following Jesus will bring rejection and sometimes worse. Has anyone mistreated you because of your commitment to Jesus Christ?

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When you experience persecution, it might help to remember what the Apostle Peter said about it (see 1 Peter 4:12-16). When persecution comes, how should the follower of Jesus respond?

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Peter says persecution for Jesus' sake brings blessing. Why?

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What should you do when you suffer for Jesus?

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**should not  
perish**

## LESSON 7

# Following Jesus Every Day

“But have everlasting life”

## For Review

- Share MY316 testimonies.
- Share praying, sharing, and serving reports.

In the course of history, dozens of men have attempted to conquer the world. One of the more interesting was a North African military genius, Hannibal Barca.

Famous for his use of elephants in battles against the Romans, he also used poisonous snakes. In one naval battle, Hannibal stuffed clay pots full of poisonous snakes and then catapulted the pots onto the enemy ships!

But Hannibal wasn't a perfect strategist and was eventually defeated by the Roman general Scipio at the battle of Zama. The battle began when Hannibal ordered his elephant cavalry to charge the Roman army. But when the elephants charged, Scipio revealed his secret weapon. Scipio ordered his band to play!

The Romans blew trumpets and cornets, frightening the elephants and throwing Hannibal's forces into confusion. Twenty thousand of

Hannibal's men were killed. Almost 20,000 were taken prisoner. And that marked the end of Hannibal as a great power (Bevin Alexander, *How Great Generals Win*, 64-66).

History is replete with stories of the rise and fall of great powers. All of man's strategies and plans ultimately fail and are countered by better ideas. Every human plan is flawed.

But Jesus compels us to “set our minds on things above” (Colossians 3:2) and to put our efforts into things that will last for eternity. Our possessions and professions will fade away, but people will live forever —either with or without God.

Unlike our human strategies, God has a strategy that's remained unchanged for 2,000 years, and it will remain until the end of time. That's Jesus' plan to bring the good news of His kingdom to all the peoples of the world.

The wonderful thing about Jesus' plan is that He has a job for you!

## Jesus' plan for declaring His gospel to all peoples

Read Acts 1:1-11 and see if you can identify Jesus' strategy to carry His gospel to all the people of the world.

Jesus gave only one command in the passage. What was it? What did He say would happen when the Holy Spirit came upon His people, and what would His people become?

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## You are Jesus' witness

You're a witness to the fact that Jesus is who He says He is. The Holy Spirit empowers followers of Jesus to witness as a result of their personal relationships to Jesus.

For example, if I bear witness about my wife, I could give you several facts—place and date of birth, height and weight, educational background. But, after 28 years of marriage, I can do far better than give you facts.

I know my wife. I know her heart. I know what she loves. I know her temperament and moods. I know what she thinks about the big issues of life. No one can bear witness to my wife better than me, because I know her well.

God's plan for the world to know Jesus is for those who already know Him to tell His story.

How has Jesus loved you? Tell people about it. How has Jesus given life to you? Tell others about it. How has Jesus delivered you from your fears? Why has your hope not died in the face of life's losses? Tell people what Jesus has done. How have you been able to deal with your guilt? Tell people what Jesus has done.

You can tell people the facts of Jesus' death and resurrection, but a witness to Jesus goes beyond the facts to what the facts truly mean.

## The extent of your witness

Jesus uses expansive language to describe the witness of His people. He says they'll bear witness to Him in the city of Jerusalem, throughout the province of Judea, on to Samaria, and to the very ends of the earth.

Clearly this involves geography, with people traveling to various parts of the world to tell others of Jesus. But the extent of your witness goes beyond geography to include bearing witness to people of different languages, cultures, and ethnicities.

Moreover, the language of Acts 1:8 says your witness isn't to be sequential, as in "first in Jerusalem, then in Judea," and so forth. It's to be carried to each of these peoples "at the same time."

## The Burning Question

Acts 1:8 proposes this: By what criteria should any person, anywhere, be denied the right to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Does this question burn in your heart? Is there any reason even one person anywhere should be denied the right to hear the precious and powerful gospel of Jesus Christ?

If your answer is "No, it's not right. It's not acceptable that a boy in my hometown, or a girl in some Oklahoma City housing project, or a

slum dweller in Bangladesh be denied the right to learn of Jesus’ love for them,” then you must take personally the fulfillment of Acts 1:8.

### Ideas for developing an Acts 1:8 lifestyle

- Highlight verses in your Bible that speak about God’s purpose to reach all peoples.
- Pray for people who need Jesus in your community and in other areas of the world. Use the news as a means to help you know the people who need prayer.
- Discover who the internationals are in your community.
- Connect with a missionary and become a part of his encouragement and support team.
- Obtain a passport.
- Seek opportunities through your church to do missions, locally and beyond.
- Support mission causes financially.

God’s revealed method is that you go and tell all human beings everywhere that Jesus loves them. God has empowered you with the Holy Spirit so that you can be a witness for Jesus Christ in your hometown, your state, and to the unreached people groups of the earth.

This is God’s strategy. This is God’s plan. And it will be in force until Christ appears in the clouds to call us home and time shall be no more.

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### MY316: God’s “everlasting” plan

How has Jesus loved you? Tell people about it.

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How has Jesus given life to you? Tell others about it.

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but have  
EVERLASTING life

How has Jesus delivered you from your fears? Tell someone else about it.

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Why has your hope not died in the face of life's losses? Tell people what Jesus has done.

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How have you been able to deal with your guilt? Tell people what Jesus has done.

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Do you believe: "For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"?

**THEN GO TELL PEOPLE  
ABOUT THIS GREAT GOD  
AND HIS GREAT LOVE.**



CONCLUSION

# Following Jesus Every Day

**“For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”**

In this journey, you have been challenged to discover how important it is to share the love of Jesus with others in your lives. This is God’s ongoing assignment, and like other disciplines, the more you do it, the more natural and joyful it will be. Consider the process below as a great way to motivate you for reaching others using John 3:16.

## **MY316: Putting it all together**

**MY:** Take it personally. We are all commanded to be witnesses for Him. Determine how to weave your story into His story. Commit yourself to doing whatever God calls you to do to see your lost friends and family members come to know Him.

**3:** Ask God to burden you for 3 lost friends for whom you will pray daily and focus your service.

**1:** Share your life story and your John 3:16 testimony with at least one of these three and become involved in the one-on-one

discipleship of a new believer. Ask God expectantly to open up opportunities to share and to grow you as a disciple maker.

**6:** Determine 6 ways you can serve these three people to show them practically the love of God. Ask God to give you the power for your walk to match your talk.

MY316 is a clever way to remember this, but it is only a slogan if we don’t take it personally and get involved.

Continue the journey of following Jesus through MY316.com, a network of people who are taking the true meaning of John 3:16 personally by accepting God’s love and gift of Jesus Christ and by serving their community in ways that lovingly transform our world. You can even add your own thoughts and stories.

May I express my excitement over what God has planned for your life? Truly, you have begun a remarkable journey and one day in heaven, we will have the opportunity to see how God used you to share His love in this hurting world.

May I pray for you?

“Dear Jesus, Thank You for allowing this reader to take on the greatest responsibility in mankind: leading others to know, love and follow You, the Creator of the heavens and earth. Jesus, please allow this person to sense Your divine purposes and to have the courage to follow You no matter where You lead. Thank You that “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). What glorious plans they

must be (Jeremiah 29:11)! Jesus, I pray that you burn deep into this reader's heart a commitment to love You, to spend time with You, and to serve You by serving others. May Your Word burn in his or her heart like a fire (Jeremiah 20:9) so that he or she can't help but share it with others. May You truly use this person in a life-changing, life-giving, and life-sustaining way, I pray. Amen."

**Follow JESUS  
from the Beginning**

New will. New begin  
belief. New family.  
New honor. New life  
New desire. New perspective.  
New heart. New help.  
New joy. New trust.  
New plan. New strengt  
New heart. New light  
New honor.  
New she  
New so  
New power.  
New Father  
New work.  
New love.  
New sign  
New assurance.  
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