

Next Steps

These questions are designed to extend the impact of the weekend message. Use them to go deeper in your personal study time, with your family and/or with a group.

No one stumbles into discipleship or accidentally begins to follow Jesus better. NEXT STEPS outlines the priorities and strategies of The Hills Church to help make and grow followers of Jesus. What's your next step?

1 The Bible is stunningly silent regarding the physical appearance of Jesus. Isaiah simply says, *“He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.”* (Isaiah 53:2) Do you think there is a purpose for that omission?

2 **“FOLLOW ME” is more than “accept me.”** The Hills Church exists to make and grow followers of Jesus. However, the word “follow” has been emptied of much of its impact in our culture. **Read Mark 1:16-20.** What do you think Jesus meant by “follow me” and how does that differ from “Cultural Christianity”?

3 We live in a culture where you can be a Christian without actually having to do what Jesus says. The destination for a follower is Christ-likeness, yet transformation is not expected in many churches. In what ways is this true and why do you think this is so?

4 FOLLOWERS MAKE imitation their destination. Following is not getting Jesus *into our lives*; it is getting *into Jesus' life*. Our destination is to think, act, and love like Jesus. **Read Romans 8:28-30.** God is dedicated to our transformation into the image of Jesus. Share a time when God brought good out of a tough situation to make you more Christ-like.

5 FOLLOWING MEANS taking intentional steps. No one stumbles into the likeness of Jesus. It must be intentionally pursued. In his book, *Renovation of the Heart*, Dallas Willard says that *“spiritual formation for the Christian basically refers to the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself.”* With that in mind, what role does the Holy Spirit play in the process, and what role must we play?

6 Rick mentioned that going forward our church would be less focused on programs and more focused on process in order to make and grow followers of Jesus. The agenda will be to help people **“take the next step”** on a path that will help them think, act, and love more like Jesus. How might this be different from the way you've known church in the past?

7 You cannot stay still and stay close to Jesus... Read 1 John 2:6. Everyone has a NEXT STEP to take whether it's your first or one of many. We believe there are seven primary steps to a growing follower of Jesus: **Worship Regularly, Connect with God, Live Differently, Do Life Together, Give Generously, Serve Others, and Tell Your One.** As you reflect on those seven, what is your NEXT STEP and what can you do today to move in that direction?



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1 Faithful followers worship faithfully. Studies show that people who consider themselves faithful members of churches actually attend those churches much less often than they did a generation ago. Why do you think that is? How have recent trends impacted how your family worships regularly?

2 Read Psalm 122: 1, 4. The Bible treats regular corporate worship not as an option but as an ought. Since our worship does not make up for anything lacking in God, why do you think God commanded His children to gather regularly to worship together?

3 WE GO... because Jesus went. No one had more right to insist that private worship was all one needed than Jesus, but he didn't. **Read Luke 4:16.** Why do you think corporate worship was a priority to Jesus? What does this say to a culture that likes to "judge" worship on the basis of "what I get out of it"?

4 WE GO... because Jesus comes. We don't just meet to worship God; we worship to meet with God. God promises to come near to those who come near to Him. **Read 1 Corinthians 14:25.** What do you think would cause a visitor to sense the presence of God when a church is assembled?

5 WE GROW... because worship restores us. Life can be hard. Trying to be light in a dark world is draining, and everyone needs to get their spiritual batteries recharged. Worship restores our spiritual batteries (that's why Paul and Silas sang in prison). Share a time when your spiritual batteries were restored through worship.

6 WE GROW... because worship re-stories us. We are surrounded by a lot of seductive narratives. Discipleship is the conscious decision to choose to live by the story where Jesus is the hero. In worship we are reminded of the narrative that shapes our lives as Jesus-followers. **Read Philippians 2:6-11.** This was an early worship song. How does worship help you "remember our story"?

7 So grow through regular worship and go live a better story. We gather to lift up Jesus, and we scatter to live like Jesus. How do these two priorities relate to each other? What is your **NEXT STEP** to make **Worship Regularly** a priority in your life?



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1 Read Ephesians 1:17. Among all the things that Paul could have been praying for the Christians in Ephesus, he prayed that they would know God better. Why do you think this was important to Paul?

2 We read to know God and follow Him better. The Bible is the primary way we can get to know who God is and what He is like. **Read Hebrews 1:1-3.** How does what we learn about Jesus shape what we can know about God?

3 Psalm 119:11 says, *"I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you."* How does spending time in God's Word translate into follow Jesus more faithfully?

4 Read Hebrews 4:12. What are ways that God has convicted or challenged you through His Word? Give an example to your group.

5 We pray to admit dependency and pursue intimacy. **Read Psalm 23.** Where in this psalm do you see dependency on God, and where do you see intimacy with God?

6 Read Luke 5:15-16. Jesus made time for prayer even when his ministry was busy and growing. What are obstacles to you having a regular rhythm of prayer? What are steps to overcoming those obstacles?

7 Jesus secured our connection to God. Read 1 John 4:14-16. Any connection we have to God is because of and based on the perfect work of Jesus. Finish by praying as a group a prayer of thanks to God for Jesus and ask God to stir in your hearts a hunger for His Word and a desire to meet with Him in prayer.

ACTION STEP

What is your **NEXT STEP** to better **Connect with God**? Note: One step we can all take together is to read through the book of Matthew during the next seven weeks leading up to Easter. You can find a reading plan along with other recourses to help you **Connect with God** on our App and/or website: www.thehills.org/connectwithgod



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1 Jesus started his preaching ministry with this message: **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”** (Matthew 4:17) How would you explain what the kingdom of heaven is to someone who had never heard of it? Why would this statement from Jesus matter in our day and age?

2 I'm called to live different than the old me. Read **Matthew 10:39**. Jesus says something that sounds backwards here. What do you think Jesus means when he talks about losing your life?

3 Read **Matthew 16:24** (compare to Luke 9:23 for extra credit). Jesus invites us into daily self-denial. What does it mean to take up our cross? How does that connect with following Jesus?

4 Following Jesus inevitably means my life will be **different than the world around me**. Read **Matthew 7:13-14**. Where in your world do you see “broad road” living? What attitudes or actions are commonplace in society that differ from God's desires?

5 Read **1 Peter 2:12**. Our world is growing less and less accepting of certain Christian teachings. How do you navigate following Jesus in settings like school or work? How can your example be used by God in those places?

6 Read **Matthew 5:10**. Jesus doesn't shy away from talking about spiritual persecution (being treated badly because we follow Jesus). What should our approach be to times when we are mocked or mistreated because of our faith?

7 All of us live with a desire to be accepted. As we encounter a world that may not accept us because of who we follow and what we believe, how do we keep our focus on God's acceptance and approval above anyone else's?



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1 NEXT STEPS is our church's strategy to help followers become more like the One we are following. At first glance, it could seem like a list of rules if taken out of its intended context. What is the difference between "being legalistic" and encouraging spiritual disciplines? How have you experienced this tension in your relationship with God?

2 FOLLOWING must be RELATIONAL. Read **Matthew 1:21**. Jesus' mission was bigger than the salvation of individuals; it was the creation of a new community. How does this impact the way we understand and live out the gospel?

3 DO LIFE TOGETHER... is how Jesus lived. The first chapter of the Bible reminds us that Jesus lived in community, "*Let us make mankind in our image*" **Genesis 1:26**. What does that tell us about the nature of God, and what does it imply about the nature of man?

4 DO LIFE TOGETHER... is how Jesus taught. Jesus taught that loving people is the primary way we love God. Several teachings from the "Sermon on the Mount" (**Matthew 5-7**) like the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, and the Golden Rule assume that people do life together. With that in mind, why do we turn so much of the focus of his teachings on "me" instead of "we"?

5 What do you think Rick meant by his statement "*community remains shallow when it is built around preferences instead of promises*"? Agree or disagree? Why is it important for us to be bound by something stronger than preferences?

6 DO LIFE TOGETHER... is how Jesus disciplined. Read **Mark 3:13-14**. Jesus invested most of his discipling efforts in a small group rather than a crowd. Why did he do that, and what are the implications for churches today?

7 RELATIONAL must be INTENTIONAL. Growing disciples need circles, not just rows. What are the blessings of being in a community group? What are the fears and struggles? What is your group's next step?



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1 Jesus spoke about money more than any other subject except the kingdom of God. What are a few of the sayings or parables by Jesus on the subject of money? Why does Jesus devote so much attention to money?

2 **Read Matthew 6:24.** When Jesus said a person cannot serve God and money, do you think he meant that it was unwise, or that it was impossible? Explain.

3 **GENEROSITY IS A FAITH STEP.** It demands trusting in the faithfulness of God. **Read Matthew 6:33.** What does it look like to trust God and seek the kingdom first?

4 **Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-4.** Studies consistently show those with little tend to be more generous than those with much. Why do you think generosity tends to decrease as wealth increases?

5 **GENEROSITY IS A HOPE STEP.** It is a way of investing in eternity. **Read 1 Timothy 6:18-19.** Rick contrasted the cultural understanding of “the good life” with Paul’s understanding of the good life. How would you describe the differences between the two?

6 **GENEROSITY IS A LOVE STEP.** The way we steward our resources shows that we love God and love people. And it all starts with God’s generosity to us. **Read 2 Corinthians 8:9 and Romans 8:32.** How is the cross a motivator for generosity?

7 **Read Matthew 6:21.** Where my money leads, my heart follows. How does money influence your relationship with God? How can you be intentional in using money to draw your heart closer to God?



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1 *SAVED* people *SERVE* people. The order is important: we do not serve to get saved, but we serve because we are saved. It's easy to get that order reversed and start to think that our good works contribute to our salvation. **Read Ephesians 2:8-10** and discuss the difference between serving to be saved versus serving because we are saved. Follow up question: What are some examples of "good works" God has planned for us to do?

2 Serving others is not for a special class of believers, but it is for everyone enrolled in the "following Jesus" class. Jesus didn't just write the curriculum, he lived it. **Read Philippians 2:5-7.** Jesus intentionally chose the path of downward mobility. What does following him in this way look like for us today?

3 Jesus *emphasizes* serving others. **Read Mark 10:42-45.** Jesus doesn't just question the "top down" way of changing the world; he opposes it. In what ways do disciples make the mistake of trying to use the world's way to be great? How has this been a struggle for you?

4 Jesus *empowers* serving others. Jesus wants us to be his tangible presence in the world, and he empowers us for his mission through the presence of the Holy Spirit. **Read 1 Peter 4:11.** What gift has the Spirit given you for the sake of others? Share an example of a time when you knew it was God's strength enabling you to serve.

5 Jesus *embraces* serving others. He welcomes service to the least as service to himself. **Read Matthew 25:37-40.** Why do you think the people were unaware of the significance of their service? What does this say about the nature of true service?

6 We must put the *low* in *follow*. As followers of Jesus we must intentionally pursue a path of downward mobility. **Read 2 Corinthians 4:5.** In practical terms, how do we preach that we are servants for Jesus without calling attention to ourselves?

7 Rick closed by reminding us that "*We cannot preach the gospel without words, but we cannot witness to the gospel with only words.*" How is that true and relevant in our lives?

NEXT STEP

God has equipped us with skills and talents that can help build His kingdom. Serving at church and in our community serves God and shows others the heart of Jesus. What is your **NEXT STEP** as you think about how to **Serve Others**? Make sure you check out the opportunities found on this page: <http://www.thehills.org/serve/>



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1 Jesus began his public ministry by proclaiming, “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.*” (Matthew 4:17). What does that mean and why is it still significant for us today?

2 One of the last things Jesus shared was what we call the Great Commission. **Read Matthew 28:18-20.** This is still our mission today. What resonates with you most from these words from Jesus? Why?

3 Luke 15 gets to the heart of Jesus’ ministry and message. **Read Luke 15:1-7.** David Meyer reminded us from this story that when you *Tell Your One* it brings *personal joy, community joy, and heavenly joy.* How have you experienced this in your life recently?

4 Tell us about your One, how did you come to know them, what’s their story?

5 Tell us both positive and what you would consider negative interactions with Your One when you’ve discussed Jesus.

6 How can we join you in praying for your One?

NEXT STEP

The greatest act of love you can show toward a friend is to help that friend find Jesus. The best way to do that is to share Jesus’ story. Everyone knows someone who needs to know more. What is your **NEXT STEP** as you think about how to *Tell Your One*?

