

CROSSROADS *followHim* PRAYER

Your group may want to use this prayer service for the beginning and end of your *followHim* session.

Start with silence to center the group

All	Hear O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind and all your strength.
Volunteer	Psalm (the Psalm for <i>followHim</i> will be posted monthly)
Volunteer	Scripture (the scripture for <i>followHim</i> will be posted monthly)
All	Prayer for the World (prayed first time only)
All	Lord's Prayer
All	Hear O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind and all your strength. <i>And you shall love your neighbor as yourself.</i>



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A Guide for *followHim* Groups at Crossroads UMC

Introduction

followHim groups are built upon the four values that support the entire Crossroads' mission and vision to change the world one person, family and community at a time. These four values are:

Identity - We are the Crossroads family, a family that follows the ways of Jesus unlimited welcome for all people. That is why we welcome everyone without regard. We believe that every person has sacred worth. We believe that we are to practice compassion, forgiveness, service and wisdom in our daily lives. We believe we are the hands of God's love in the world.

Story - Story is the currency of relationships. Every person has a story and every story connects to a larger story. As followers of Jesus we believe that the biblical story is in many ways a mirror of our own individual and collective stories.

Practices – Practices are how we cultivate a deeper spiritual connection to God, others and self, just as Jesus did. Some key practices are: Gratitude, Silence/Solitude, Centering Prayer or Mindfulness, Body Prayer or Yoga, Listening, Journaling, Community and Service. Such practices work on us from the inside out.

Community/Gatherings – Community helps us to feel loved and accepted by others. It gives us the opportunity to engage intellectually with others. It challenges some of our deep held beliefs and, like iron sharpening iron, provides an opportunity for us to sharpen our minds and souls.

Every *followHim* gathering will include these four values.

How it works

followHim groups are designed to offer members of the congregation, and their friends, a chance to meet and discuss their 'walk' with Jesus. Each group is different, but all have one thing in common: they consider scripture from a personal point of view, how it effects each person in the group, and they learn from each other in the process.

The Basics

followHim groups are lay lead and are comprised of no more than 10-12 people to make sure everyone gets a chance to participate. Each month Crossroads posts on the website the month's scripture lessons along with a short 'teaching' on the scripture and several questions the group may use to get the conversation started. The **followHim** group then considers the scripture during its session.

The basic format for **followHim** groups is to meet monthly though some groups will choose to meet more frequently. The monthly post of scripture will have at least two such references to accommodate groups meeting more often.

How Each Session Works

followHim is designed to be simple and not require much preparation before the group meets except to have read the scripture reference and thought about how it impacts each person's life.

At the **fH** session one person begins the conversation, speaking personally about the scripture reference. When he/she is done, the next person in the circle comments. *Each person comments in turn and no cross talk is allowed.* Participants are allowed to comment about something someone else said in a positive way only, and only when it is their turn. Often in a **fH** session we will hear "something Mary said got me thinking about..." Or perhaps, "I like what John said about how this scripture impacts his life because..."

After two or three passes around the circle the leader will say "does anyone have anything else" and then anyone may comment. You will know when the **followHim** conversation is finished when the conversation begins to wane and no one has anything else to say.

It's important to make sure everyone has an equal chance to participate, so the session's leader is designated to gently suggest moving on to the next person should someone speak a little too long. This can be done gently especially if all know the leader has that role.

DIFFERENT followHim MODELS

The traditional **followHim** session look like this:

Meet, greet, fellowship

Prayer*

followHim conversation about the scripture passage

Meal together

Prayer* and departure

*On next page you will find a "prayer format" that can be used in the session though the program is flexible enough to allow the group to decide just what that prayer might look like. Some will be traditional, include intercessory prayer and the Lord's Prayer, others might use the breath prayer model.

This full format for a group of 10 can take up to two hours. Other formats take pieces of this...for example one of our **followHim** groups meets for lunch on a Friday. Those sessions are 45 minutes long so people can get back to work. *One of the advantages of followHim groups is they are flexible—be creative, make your group fit your needs but we encourage you to include food if you can. Something special happens around the table.*

A Sample Scripture Post

Here's an example of what a **followHim** scripture post will look like:

Mark 8: 34—“If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”

This is hard teaching from Jesus. When he says “deny themselves” what does he mean? Go without? And what about taking up the cross...is he calling us to abandon everything and just follow him and does the cross mean he wants us to suffer as he did? How can we do that?

Maybe Jesus isn't asking for such radical behavior, just a change of mindset... maybe he is asking us to keep him and his teaching in the forefront no matter what we are doing, to see him as the most important consideration in our lives.

Here are some questions for consideration by your followHim group:

What does “deny themselves” mean to you?

What does “following him” mean to you? How do you try to do it in your life?

What are the obstacles you find in your attempts to follow him?

Is Jesus in the forefront of your life?

Totally Flexible

While **followHim** groups are intended to follow the formats we have described above they do not have to...the key is flexibility. We encourage groups to talk about how they are functioning, how they are following or not following the recommended format. Agree on what works best *for your group* and do not worry about what any other group is doing.