

Journey CHURCH

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Session 1 Brand Recognition

In the book of Acts, we see that people in Antioch (one of the Romans Empire's largest cities) were the first to identify followers of Jesus as "Christians" (11:26)

Later in Acts, when Paul is under arrest and testifying for his defense, he preaches Christ to King Agrippa and expresses his longing for this man to come to faith. The king answers, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christina?" (Acts 26:28)

The final occurrence of this word in Scripture is in 1 Peter 4:16. "If you suffer as a Christian," Peter writes, "do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name." (1 Peter 4:16). The implication is that those persecuting the followers of Jesus had thrown this label "Christians" at them, but Peter urges his readers to see the intended slight as cause to praise God.

But the New Testament highlights a different name for the followers of Jesus- and exploring it both teach and challenge us.

Discussion Starter

What comes to mind when you think of the word "Christian" (associations, people, ect.)? How would you normally define the term? What has it primarily meant to you in the past?

How have you noticed that other people define the word differently than you do?

Video Overview For session 1 of the DVD

In the book of Acts, we see a Jesus community forming in a city called Antioch (in modern Turkey), where may- both Jews and Gentiles embraced this new faith.

Church leaders in Jerusalem sent a man named Barnabas to Antioch to observe and help this new church. Barnabas later brought a man named Saul (known later as Paul) there to help him. "For a whole year," we read Acts 11:26, "Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." So "Christians" were label that others gave them.

In the New Testament-specifically in the four Gospels and in people who were part of this Jesus movement. In the term "disciple". Notice again Acts 11:26: "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." What is a disciple? It simply means a learner, a pupil, an apprentice, an adherent, or a follower.

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A disciple looks to a certain other person as the authority and the example of everything. A disciple always answers yes to whatever that person asks or requires of him.

That brings us to this uncomfortable question, Are we disciples? Or are we just Christians? If we're disciples of Jesus, then no matter what he asks us, the answer must be yes.

Jesus gave his disciples the bottom line of what it means to be his disciple. On the night before he was crucified, he told them, "A new command I give you. Love on another. As I have loved you. So you must love one another" (John 13:33-34). That's how he wanted them to characterize their relationships.

He wanted them to love one another in such ways that outsiders looking on would be drawn to say "Look how they love!" He wanted them to be a community of people defined by unconditional, generous, compassionate love.

Jesus said this was how others would know we're really his followers. Not by how long we pray, how loud we preach, or what we do on a Sunday morning, but how we love one another.

What would it look like in your world to love people around you the way Jesus loves you? By God's grace, just try. Trying it won't mean that your life will be free of problems, after all, Jesus was crucified. This isn't a means to an end: it is what it means to follow Jesus.