

# Journey CHURCH

Pastor James Greer

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## Life is \_\_\_\_\_. Leader Guide

Session 2: Life is to love others

### Video Teaching

The following is a few key thoughts to note as you watch session 2. Use the space provided to jot down personal observations or applications.

The secret to loving others is learning to love Jesus.

In Mark 8:34, Jesus said, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (NIV). This was a radical, extreme image. Crosses represented pain, torture, and death.

It is imperative that we understand that the true pathway to life according to Jesus. He teaches that if we want to find life and satisfaction and fulfillment, we have to lose our lives. We have to completely commit to self-denial, yielding, and surrendering.

We naturally think about ourselves all the time. We are subconsciously consumed with self. Yet Jesus teaches that a life focused on self will never be fulfilling.

This is not about us denying ourselves. It’s not even about us following Jesus. It’s not about us at all – it’s about Jesus.

We forget about self as we become enamored with Jesus. Our tendency is to focus on what we have to do and what our part is – when in reality our part is just to respond to Jesus’ love for us.

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The gospel is about God's love, not about our love or sacrifice. We simply get caught up in the fact he gave his life for us.

When we focus on Jesus, our lives naturally reflect his love and generosity. We become selfless, noble, giving people – without us hardly trying or noticing.

Abundant life has nothing to do with nice clothes, fine cars, or other external things, but with peace and wholeness on the inside.

We make a daily decision to shift our focus to Jesus.

In the book of Acts, we read how the early church, because of its focus on Jesus, was known everywhere as a community of great generosity and love.

Stephen was an average, ordinary person who was so in love with Jesus that he was able to forgive and love even the people who were murdering him. That sounds a lot like Jesus. When we focus on Jesus, we learn to love humanity as Jesus does.

## **Discussion Questions:**

1. Have you ever felt frustrated with your lack of ability to love God or to love other people? If so, what did you try to do differently to change that?
2. Why do you think Jesus used the imagery of the cross when he talked about following him?

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3. What does self-denial mean to you? How often does Jesus' message of following him differ from what people often think of when they talk about self-denial and self-discipline?
4. Why is it important to make following Jesus more about Jesus than about us?
5. When we follow Jesus and focus on him, what naturally happens to our lifestyle and our character?
6. What is the most inspiring thing to you about the early church in the book of Acts?
7. What does Stephen's attitude towards his murderers tell you about his walk with Jesus? How did his relationship with Jesus influence his life?