



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In this guide, you will find discussion questions for each chapter of *Flawed Follower*.

We filmed 12-minute videos on the actual locations of each chapter in the book. These are designed as discussion starters for study groups.

Each week's discussion, including the video, is designed to last about an hour.

VIDEO 1 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

TOUCH BASE - 10 Minutes

Here are some words and phrases that describe Simon Peter. Are there any that could describe you?

Flawed
Underqualified
Insecure
Inadequate
Inconsistent

Physical
Impetuous
Impulsive
Brash

Stressed
Pressured
Theologically uneducated
A little arrogant

TAKE IT IN - 10 Minutes

Read Luke 5:1-11.

Watch the video for “Flawed Follower Week 1” at flawedfollower.com

Video Notes:

TALK IT OUT - 25 to 35 Minutes

1. Do you sometimes feel unqualified or inconsistent as a follower of Jesus? In what ways?

___ I am drawn to Jesus but don't always get Jesus.

___ I am attracted to Jesus, but sometimes wonder if Jesus is attracted to me.

___ I vowed never to do that thing again and then did it.

___ I sometimes wish I should just quit the Jesus thing because I can't live up to it.

___ I can be moved by Scripture or transported in worship – and then almost instantly afterward indulge a terrible thought or deed.

___ Other:

2. Why do you think it's significant that Jesus calls someone like Simon Peter to be one of his first disciples? How can that encourage you?

3. How does Jesus' simple call to "follow" help clarify what it means to be a Christian?

4. At what point did you begin to understand your Christian faith as a personal choice to follow Jesus – in other words, is there a specific moment or period in your life you can describe when you realized Jesus was saying, "Follow me"? What did that look like for you?

5. What do you think Jesus meant by being a "fisher of people"? Why do you think Jesus did not just say, "Come and learn a bunch of stuff"?

TAKE IT HOME - 10 Minutes

How is the Spirit leading you today to be a "fisher of people"? Is there a specific person you are hoping to introduce to Jesus? Or is there someone you feel called to help in some way?

Share what you hope to get from this study of Simon Peter's story.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Have each group member share a prayer request.

VIDEO 2 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

TOUCH BASE - 10 Minutes

Choose one of these questions to share:

- What is a high and a low you experienced this this past week?
- Have you ever been afraid in a storm? Have you ever driven, sailed, or flown through one? What made it frightening?

TAKE IT IN - 10 Minutes

Read Matthew 14:22-33.

Watch the video for “Flawed Follower Week 2” at flawedfollower.com

Video Notes:

TALK IT OUT - 25 to 35 Minutes

1. What storms of life frighten you right now?
2. What are three things that tend to take your eyes off Jesus and onto the worries or cares or dramas of this world?
3. How can you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus – and what difference do you think this would make in your life, especially related to the three things you mentioned in the previous question?
4. In what way can Jesus' words “Courage I am, do not be afraid” bring you peace?
5. Is there a situation in your life where you need courage to get out of the boat—to try something new? What is it?

TAKE IT HOME - 10 Minutes

What practical steps can you take this week to spend more time listening to Jesus' voice and less time listening to your fears?

Begin to discuss a group service project. You could collect funds and food for a food bank, volunteer to paint at a school or church, do an act of service for an older adult, or something else you think of! Serving together is another part of following Jesus.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Have each group member share a prayer request.

VIDEO 3 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

TOUCH BASE - 10 Minutes

Choose one of these questions to share:

- Share a highlight and a lowlight of the week.
- If you could know the answer to any question, what would it be?

TAKE IT IN - 15 Minutes

Read John 6:22-68 (This is a long passage, so you may want to divide it into five sections this way: John 6:22-27; John 6:28-38; John 6:39-46; John 6:47-58; John 6:59-69)

Watch the video for “Flawed Follower Week 3” at flawedfollower.com

Video Notes:

TALK IT OUT - 25 to 35 Minutes

1. Do you identify with the people challenged by Jesus’ words in that synagogue?
How?
2. Which of these statements from the gospels do you identify with:
“This is a hard teaching.”
“Lord, to whom shall we go?”
“You have the words of eternal life.”
“I believe; help my unbelief.”
3. The invitation of Jesus is specifically to “follow me.” How is this different than saying “understand me,” “sign this doctrinal statement for me,” or “have no further questions about me”? How is “follow me” different from what many people perceive it means to be a Christian?
4. Have you ever come to a crisis of faith, when you wondered whether to continue or abandon it? Have you resolved it? If so, how?

5. Read John 6:66-68. How might Peter's conversation with Jesus help your walk of faith, even through your doubts and trials?

6. Apparently, some in that crowd were following Jesus when they got something fun out of it: Free wine, free dinner, free healing ... but when he challenged some of their ideas, they were gone.

Similarly, sociologist Christian Smith coined the phrase "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism" (MTD) to describe the actual religious beliefs of many Americans. They may use the term "Christian," but in actuality, they see salvation as coming by good behavior; they see the purpose of Jesus as increasing their sense of well-being; and they see God vaguely as "the man upstairs." Did you ever have a more vague view of Jesus like that? When did your view of Jesus come into sharper focus? What happened?

TAKE IT HOME - 10 Minutes

Jesus is always compassionate, humble, and gentle. Yet he is not usually interested in making himself absolutely easy to understand or pleasing people. He leaves a lot of puzzling statements hanging in midair, as he does in John 6. Why do you think this is? What can this teach you about following Jesus?

Have you decided on a group service project? Choose your project, decide on a date, and choose project coordinators.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Have each group member share a prayer request.

VIDEO 4 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

TOUCH BASE - 10 Minutes

Choose one of these questions to share:

- What is a high and a low you experienced this this past week?
- Name something that makes you happy

TAKE IT IN - 10 Minutes

Watch the video for “Flawed Follower Week 4” at flawedfollower.com

Video Notes:

TALK IT OUT - 25 to 35 Minutes

1. Read Matthew 16:13-20. Jesus asks, “Who do you say I am?” Why is this question so important—why this instead of, “What do you think of my teaching?”
2. What had Jesus done to this point that may have moved Peter to conclude that Jesus was the Messiah?
3. Jesus wants these disciples to make a personal conclusion: “Who do you say I am?” Have you arrived at a moment when you made your faith personal? When and how did that happen for you?
4. Read Matthew 16:21-23. How do Peter’s two responses show that he is both accurate and inaccurate about Jesus?
5. What does the fact that Peter is both a rock and stumbling block within five verses teach you about Christian growth? How could you apply this in your setting (to your children, your friends, your fellow Christians)?
6. Why do you think the gospel writers chose to describe Peter’s leadership role—and yet they also keep highlighting his misunderstandings, mistakes, breakdowns, and failures? How do you respond to seeing both sides of Peter?

7. Read Matthew 16:24-27. The way of Jesus is suffering and service. That is our calling, too.

Read these verses:

For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps. (1 Peter 2:21 NLT)

You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5-8 NLT)

(Jesus said after washing his disciples' feet) "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." John 13:13-15

Is it possible for Christians today, like Peter in today's story, to sincerely get the *identity* of Jesus as Messiah and Son of God – yet totally miss the way of Jesus as suffering servants? How do you see this happening?

TAKE IT HOME - 10 Minutes

What is one practical way this week that you can represent not just the *who* of Jesus, but also the way of Jesus, through service and sacrifice?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Have each group member share a prayer request.

VIDEO 5 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

TOUCH BASE - 10 Minutes

Choose one of these questions to share:

- What is a high and a low you experienced this this past week?
- Who do you relate to more: someone who is heroic, strong, and seemingly flawless, or someone flawed and transparent about their weaknesses? Why?

TAKE IT IN - 10 Minutes

Watch the video for “Flawed Follower Week 5” at flawedfollower.com

Video Notes:

1. Why do you think all four gospels include this story of Peter’s failure – even though he was a well-loved figure among the early Christians? Is there any comfort you gain from Peter’s story of failure? How can failure or relapse be part of growth?

2. Read Mark 14:27-31. Peter insists that even if all the other disciples fell away, he would never fall. Humorously, the other disciples insist the same thing is true of them! Why do you think most people tend to rate themselves “better” in comparison to others? Why is this a danger?

3. Read Mark 14:66-72. Which of the three common reasons for failure do you most identify with?

- I overestimate my strength
- I fear disapproval
- I speak from insecurity and exhaustion

4. In chapter 5, Rene mentions three means of recovery from a fall. How have you seen God use these in your own life?

- Grief
- Groups
- Grace

5. Read Luke 22:31-32. Which of these three statements is most difficult for you to believe in practice?

Jesus is never shocked when you fall.

Jesus welcomes you back when you fall.

Jesus prays for you when you fall.

6. How might you be tempted to “deny Christ” in the world today?

7. Was there ever a moment in your life when you heard the rooster crow, so to speak, and suddenly realized with clarity that you had crossed a line or had a character flaw and needed to change? What happened?

TAKE IT HOME - 10 Minutes

In your own life, have you learned a practical lesson or helpful tip about resisting temptation that you can share with the group?

What guardrails can you put back up in your life this week to keep from falling?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Have each group member share a prayer request.

VIDEO 6 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

TOUCH BASE - 10 Minutes

1. Choose one of these questions to share:

- What is a high and a low you experienced this this past week?
- Is there a certain smell that triggers emotions or memories for you?
- What are some of your best memories of camping? What are the *smells* of camping for you?

TAKE IT IN - 10 Minutes

Watch the video for “Flawed Follower Week 6” at flawedfollower.com

Video Notes:

TALK IT OUT - 25 to 35 Minutes

1. What are some of the emotions Peter might have experienced as he saw and smelled the charcoal fire Jesus prepared?
2. Do you sometimes struggle with a pervading sense of guilt?
3. Based on this story in John 21, how does Jesus respond when you fail?
4. Read these passages and describe what they say about God’s forgiveness:

Romans 3:23-24

Romans 8:1

Ephesians 1:7-8

Psalms 103:11-12

5. In John 21, what is the connection between “Do you love me?” and “Then tend my lambs?” How does our care for others show our love for Jesus?

TAKE IT HOME - 10 Minutes

Who is a “lamb” of Jesus you can care for this week or as part of your group’s project?

If you have done your group service project, you have “served his lambs.” How is an act of service to others also an act of love toward Jesus?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Have each group member share a prayer request.

VIDEO 7 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

TOUCH BASE - 10 Minutes

Have each group member share a highlight and a lowlight from the week.

If you could live in a different country for a year, which country would you choose?

TAKE IT IN - 15 Minutes

Read Acts 10:21-48. (This is a longish passage, so you may want to divide it among three people like this: Acts 10:21-33; Acts 10:34-43; Acts 10:44-48)

Watch the video for “Flawed Follower Week 7” at flawedfollower.com

Video Notes:

TALK IT OUT - 25 to 35 Minutes

1. Read Acts 15:11. How are we saved, according to Peter? Grace means God lavishes his blessings on us, including salvation from sin, without cost. We do not earn it. We receive it. Understanding biblical grace can change everything about how you perceive your religion, your motivations, God, others ... in fact, life itself!

The following chart may help you see how this happens.

PERFORMANCE-ORIENTED RELIGION

THE GOSPEL OF GRACE

(Chart adapted from *Gospel in Life: Grace Changes Everything* by Tim Keller)

“I obey, therefore I’m accepted”

“I’m accepted, therefore I obey”

Motivation: Fear and insecurity

Motivation: Security and grateful joy

Identity: Based on my performance; therefore criticism is devastating

Identity: Based on God’s love for me therefore criticism may be a struggle but is taken much less personally

My prayer life is largely obligation; I feel I must pray more, and pray better.

My prayer life is relaxed and has stretches of praise and adoration

Self-image: Swings between two extremes: I can feel proud and impatient with “lesser performers” when I am doing well, then when I fall, I feel like a miserable failure.

Self-image: I see myself as both sinful and yet also fully loved by God, lavished with his grace though I am undeserving.

My self-worth is based mainly on how hard I work or how moral I am – and I find myself looking down on the “lazy” or “immoral.”

My self-image is centered on the One who died for me. I am saved by sheer grace so how could I look down on anyone?

Which side of this chart are you on?

2. The Bible verse most frequently quoted by the Bible itself – it is repeated, paraphrased, and referenced at least 20 times – is about God’s grace: “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.” (Exodus 34:6) How is this different from the way many people see God?

How would it impact your life if you genuinely believed that verse every day to the core of your being?

3. Why is it easy to relapse into a works-oriented view of religion rather than grace? Has this ever happened to you? If so, what brought you back to grace?

4. If “keeping rules” is not the correct biblical gauge for measuring spiritual health, then what is? (See Galatians 5:22-23)

5. When Peter accepted Jesus' invitation to "follow me," he had no idea of the places he would go or the amazing things he would do. Everything about his life changed, from his worldview to his home. Has following Jesus led to any surprising changes or growth in your life?

TAKE IT HOME - 10 Minutes

What does Peter's life's transformation tell you about the forgiveness of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit?

As we wrap up our look at Peter's life, what life lesson will you take away from this study?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Have each group member share a prayer request.