

# Discipleship

A Journey in

SEPT 2007

## BEP SMALL GROUP LEADER'S GUIDE

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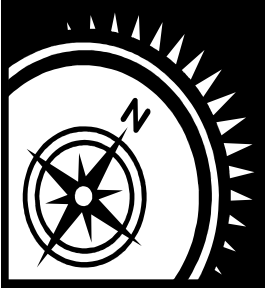
### THE RADAR

Helping keep your small group on the same frequency!

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# How Do I Follow Jesus?

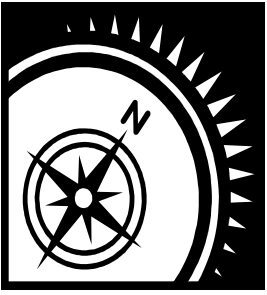
## Week One

1. Read Colossians 1:15-20. Make a list of the remarkable claims made about Jesus' person and power in these verses.
2. What are the implications of all this for our own personal discipleship and obedience? ( See Supplemental Leader's Materials on next page)
3. Read this quote and discuss your thoughts.

*Whatever controls us is really our god....The one who seeks power is controlled by power. The one who seeks acceptance is controlled by the people he or she wants to please. We do not control ourselves. We are controlled by the lord of our life....Jesus' ownership of our lives is not a control that manipulates us or takes away our dignity. He governs our lives...by being who he is without compromise and by insisting we become all that we are meant to be. And this can only occur through following him, obeying him, and maintaining a living, passionate kinship to him....God created us for himself. If we live with any center other than Jesus, we will be living incompletely....Is Jesus' desire to be the Lord of our lives some little fetish of his? Why is it so important to him? Besides the fact that he deserves it because of who he is, he knows he is the only one in the universe who can control us without destroying us. No one will ever love you like Jesus. The last breath Jesus breathed on this planet was for you. Jesus will meet you wherever you are, and he will help you. He is not intimidated by past failures, broken promises, or wounds. He will make sense out of your brokenness. But he can only begin to be Lord of your life today-not next month but now.*

--Rebecca Pippert

4. Discuss how Jesus "controls us without destroying us." What does this mean to you? How have you experienced this in your life?



# How Do I Follow Jesus?

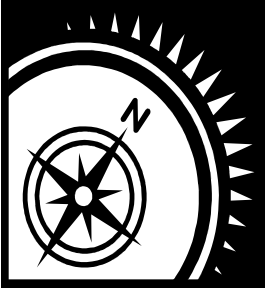
## Week One- Supplemental Leader's Materials

### 2. What are the implications of all this for our own personal discipleship and obedience?

First, "I owe it." We must absolutely obey him just because it is right. Because he is our maker, our 'inventor,' he has ownership rights over us. If you design and construct something--you and you alone have 'rights' over it. Isaiah puts it rather forceful when he says, "Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker!...Does the clay say to the potter, 'why are you doing that?'" (Is 45:9) "Jesus the Creator" means we owe him our complete, unreserved allegiance.

Second, "I can trust him." We must absolutely obey him because we can trust him. The Isaiah question--'how dare the clay talk back to the potter?'--would be an overwhelmingly threatening thought to us, but Paul adds that this Maker was willing to sacrificially love and save us ("by making peace through his blood" v.20.) This inventor does not abuse and exploit his creation--he is willing to die to preserve and sustain it. So while "Jesus the Creator" means we must absolutely obey him, "Jesus the Redeemer" means we can absolutely trust him. We need to put these two ideas--of the Lord's absolute authority over us and his absolute loving commitment to us--together. C.S. Lewis does it well in this famous quote:

"You asked for a loving God: you have one....Not a senile benevolence that drowsily wishes you to be happy in your own way, not the cold philanthropy of a conscientious magistrate, nor the care of a host who feels responsible for the comfort of his guests, but the consuming fire Himself, the Love that made the worlds, persistent as the artist's love for his work...provident and venerable as a father's love for a child...inexorable, exacting as love between the sexes....To ask that God's love should be content with us as we are is to ask that God should cease to be God: because He is what He is, His love must, in the nature of things, be impeded and repelled, by certain stains in our present character, and because He already loves us He must labor to make us lovable. We cannot even wish, in our better moments, that He could reconcile Himself to our present impurities." (C.S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain, chapter 3)

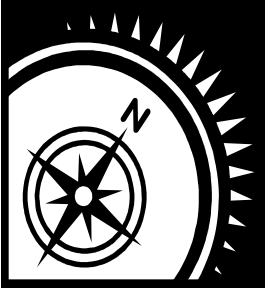


# How Do I Follow Jesus?

## Week One- Supplemental Leader's Materials

Third, "I need it." We must absolutely obey him because we need it. If we were made for him, and in him all things hold together" (v.16-17) then our lives will experience disintegration (they won't hold together!) if we don't live for his service. To the extent that we submit to his Lordship, our lives 'come together' and we experience coherence and wholeness. Through the cross, God is reconciling--re-uniting--all things in him.

In summary, Paul says the implications of all these claims is "that in everything he might have the supremacy." (v.18) That means at least that we must look at every area of our own personal lives and ask--"does Jesus have supremacy here? here?" In the application section of this study we provide some practical ways to evaluate this.



# How Do I Follow Jesus?

## Week Two

1. Read Luke 9:21-36, 52-62. What do we learn about discipleship from vv.22-25?

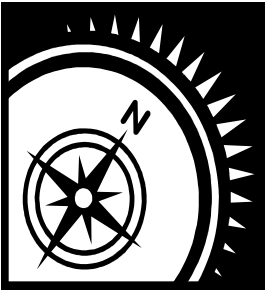
2. What do we learn about discipleship from vv.57-62.

3. What do we learn about discipleship from vv.51-56?

( See Leader's Materials on next page for supplemental answers to the above questions)

4. The following is a list of questions that is meant to help us evaluate areas of lives. Read these questions. Share your reactions. Share what these questions expose in your life and how you may need to give and submit them to the Lord.

- "Am I willing to obey whatever God says about this life-area no matter how I feel about it?"
- "Am I willing to thank God for whatever happens in this area whether I understand it or not?"
- "Is there something in this area I am relying on more than God for my hope and meaning in life?"
- "Are there problems or limitations in my life I think are too big for God to remove?"



# How Do I Follow Jesus?

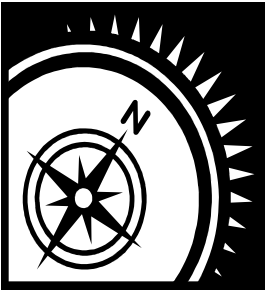
## Week Two-Supplemental Leader's Materials

### 1. What do we learn about discipleship from vv.22-25?

We learn first that a disciple of Jesus is someone who has found whole new identity. Jesus uses the metaphor of 'taking up your cross' to convey what it means to follow him, to be his disciple. You only 'took up your cross' on the way to your execution! Discipleship, then, is a kind of death. Why would Jesus use such a radical metaphor? It is because discipleship is such a radical change of allegiances that it essentially means to 'die' to your old self and identity and to get a new one. Jesus contrasts building your life on him with building your life on gaining and putting your hopes on 'the world.' He says that if you try to build your life on anything in the world more than on him, you lose your true, your 'very self.' How is discipleship a change in identity?

At the heart of discipleship is a transfer of ultimate authority from your own wisdom and will to God's wisdom and will. The difference between a disciple and a generally moral person is the word if. Persons who are generally moral and religious but who ultimately retain control over their own lives say "I'll obey if---." Examples: "if it doesn't offend my modern sensibility" "if it doesn't really cost me my reputation" "if it doesn't really cost me the possibility of marriage" "if it doesn't really cost me serious money". If there is any "if" to your obedience, the rest of the sentence shows what your identity is really built upon. If you say, "I'll obey God if he will get me married" then your ultimate hope and significance rests in being married, not in knowing God.

Here is a more specific example of what we mean. The Bible and common sense says you should not wittingly marry a person who has no faith in Jesus. (If Jesus is the love and center of your life, than any partner or spouse who doesn't share that faith will fundamentally misunderstand who you really are--what really, ultimately, 'makes you tick.') What if you have the opportunity to marry someone who (in most other ways) is a terrific 'catch' but is not a believer in Jesus--but you marry him or her anyway? What does it mean? It means that a) despite all your compliance with Jesus' teaching, you never ceded him the ultimate authority to him, and b) there is something that you look to more fundamentally than to Jesus for your happiness. You do not yet have the freedom to say, "though I really want to be married, I ultimately don't need to be married to be complete, to feel significant. Jesus is my savior and joy, not marriage." Though you may believe in the gospel at one level, and you have sought Jesus' salvation from the record of your sins, the gospel has not 'sunk all the way down.' You are still looking to other things more fundamentally for your sense of signifi-



# How Do I Follow Jesus?

## Week Two-Supplemental Leader's Materials

cance and security in daily life. Because there are other competing 'saviors' in your life, there are other competing 'lords' as well. And the way to find these 'savior-lords' is by listening for the ifs in your obedience! When you say, "I'll obey if"--you are at that moment pointing to alternate 'savior-lords.'

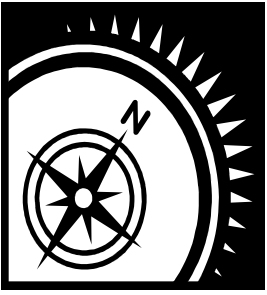
In short, if there are any conditions or "ifs" to your obedience at all--you are still on the 'throne' of your life. You are willing to consider God's recommendations, but you are ultimately the one with the final decision-making authority. You have kept control of your life. And you haven't fundamentally shifted your identity to Christ. You are still essentially deriving your significance and joy from other things, and these things limit and condition your obedience.

Disciples, then, are those who have 'died.' They have died to their old volitional foundation: their ego-centric desire to be their own masters. They have given up the right of self-determination. But they have also died to their old psychological foundations. That which they once found in career, family, recognition, reputation, success, status, relationships they now find in Christ. This new identity means they no longer condition their obedience. They are disciples.

### 2. What do we learn about discipleship from vv.57-62.

In this section we learn that a disciple of Jesus is someone who now has a whole new priority. In every one of these little stories Jesus shows that disciples makes Jesus and their relationship to Jesus the absolute priority of their lives. Jesus' response to these men is rather off-putting. He does not undertake a 'sales job' in order to recruit people to be his disciples! The first man is warned about the rigor and difficulty of being disciples. Jesus essentially says: "Go home and think about it! I don't want you to agree to follow me until you've counted the cost!"

In the second and third cases, the men say, 'first let me [do this]' (v.59) and "but first let me [do this]" (v.61.) Jesus response is clear. "Nothing else can be first. I must be first in your life." It is remarkable that in an extremely patriarchal, family-oriented traditional society Jesus has the audacity to say that a relationship with him must come even before one's family. (Note: Everywhere in the Bible we are encouraged to respect and honor our parents. So there could not have been anything per se wrong with burying one's father or saying good-bye to one's family. Jesus must have discerned that underneath their reasonable requests were heart-attitudes that he needed to correct.)



# How Do I Follow Jesus?

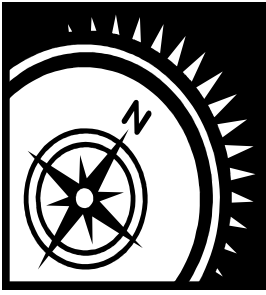
## Week Two-Supplemental Leader's Materials

There are two interesting phrases that Jesus uses to get across what it means to give him priority in the life. First, he says, 'no one who puts hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God' (v.62.) In those days you plowed one furrow at a time with a plow pulled by animals. There were also many rocks and rocky outcroppings that had to be plowed around. If you looked up or away from the ground for even a second you could strike a stone and break the plow. Plowing, then, was an image of being totally focuses and undistracted. All competing thoughts and sights had to be avoided. (Note: The word translated 'fit' is a word that meant 'potent' and was ordinarily used to describe salt that had not lost its salty-preservative powers. Jesus is not saying that total, undistracted commitment to him qualifies you for being in the kingdom, but that it is necessary for you to be a vehicle for the power of God's kingdom.

Second, Jesus says, 'let the dead bury their dead' (v.60.) It is obvious that the second 'dead' is spiritual deadness, not physical. (The physical dead cannot conduct a funeral!) To be spiritually dead is to be as blind, deaf, and insensitive to spiritual realities as a dead body is to physical realities. Jesus means that if you put off discipleship until later (as this man is doing) that doesn't mean merely that you are being a procrastinator. It means you don't really see what you are doing. It takes some degree of spiritual deadness to refuse to make Jesus absolute Lord of your life. It means you don't really see how wise he is, how great he is, how sacrificially loving he is. Your heart is spiritually cold and blind to some degree or you wouldn't be so lukewarm in your relationship to him.

### 3. What do we learn about discipleship from vv.51-56?

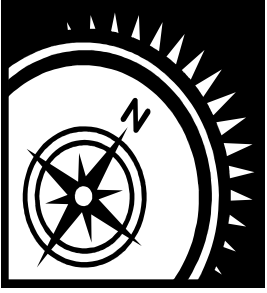
Earlier in Luke chapter 9 the disciples saw Jesus on the mount of transfiguration talking to Elijah. They learned that Jesus was even greater than Elijah. Now when they come to a village of Samaria they see people rejecting Jesus. They are outraged and they want to call fire down on the people. Why? They remember that when soldiers were trying to capture the prophet Elijah that fire came down from heaven to destroy them (2 Kings 1.) If those rejecting Elijah were subject to God's wrath--wouldn't those who rejected Jesus be even more deserving of God's fiery justice? But Jesus rebukes them. Why? Because his ministry is different than Elijah. Elijah came to tell people how they must live to please God's justice. But Jesus came to live the life we should have lived and die the death we should have died--all to satisfy the requirements of justice. In essence, the fire of God's wrath came down on him on the cross. (He refers to the fiery baptism that he was going to have to undergo in Luke 12:49-50.)



# How Do I Follow Jesus?

## Week Two-Supplemental Leader's Materials

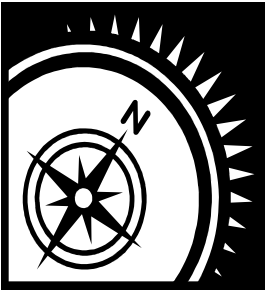
This means, finally, that a disciple of Jesus lives a life filled with mercy. Jesus' disciples demand a great deal from themselves, but they are extremely merciful and gentle to others. Why? We follow the one who took God's wrath for us so we can be accepted by grace. That humbles us and makes us very gracious with others. If you believed that you were saved because of your level of commitment, you would be very hard on those who disobey. You would feel: "I work extremely hard to be good--so you should too! And if you don't work as hard as I do, you deserve to be punished!" But the gospel-disciple cannot feel like that. We know that we were saved in spite of not living right. We are disciples out of deep gratitude for his grace. This makes us sad when we see others disobey. We may even speak very directly to them--but it is all for their sake. We cannot feel superior to them. The gospel cannot create terrorists who want to bring fire down on people. It takes enormous self-righteousness to want to do so, and the gospel dissolves that.



# How Do I Follow Jesus?

## Week Three

1. Read Luke 14:15-24. Put this parable in today's vernacular. What types of things would take us away from the banquet? Why won't those who were invited taste Christ's banquet?
2. Read 14:25-35. Share a time in your life when you had to count the cost to be follower of Christ. What was the most challenging aspect of counting the cost? What was the outcome?
3. Do you think there is a relationship in this passage between counting the cost and being "salt?" If so, what is it?
4. In what ways can you help each other count the cost as a small group?



# How Do I Follow Jesus?

## Week Four

1. Read Luke 13:22-35.

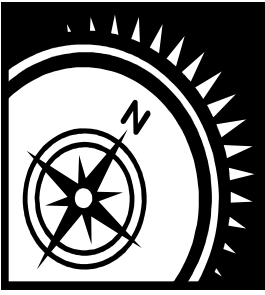
2. Dietrich Bonhoeffer says when “Christ calls a man (or woman) , He bids him come and die.” Read this quote and discuss what you think Bonhoeffer is teaching, along with the implications of this teaching in our lives.

*Cheap grace is the enemy of the church. It means forgiveness of sins proclaimed as a general truth...an intellectual assent to that idea is held to be itself sufficient to secure remission of sins. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance...grace without discipleship, grace without a cross....Costly grace is the gospel [of the church]...It is costly because it costs a man his life, and grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his son...it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God....When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die. That is why the rich young man was so loath to follow Jesus, for the cost of his following was the death of his will. In fact, every command of Jesus is a call to die, with all our affections and lusts.*

-- Dietrich Bonhoeffer<sup>4</sup>

3. What is “cheap grace” as used in this context?
4. Describe the dangers of a mere intellectual assent to the Gospel to the Church.
5. Summarize why Bonhoeffer says grace is costly.
6. How does this “costly grace” affect the way we live?

( See Leader’s Materials on next page to learn more about Dietrich Bonhoeffer and this quote.)



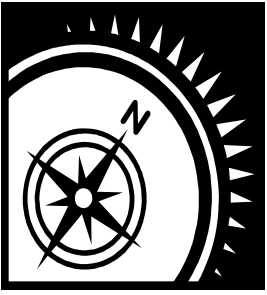
# How Do I Follow Jesus?

## Week Four-Supplemental Leader's Materials

When Hitler came to power in 1933 a group of younger ministers, including Dietrich Bonhoeffer, opposed him, but the Nazi-bishop of the German church ordered ministers to 'preach the pure gospel' and forbade them from speaking out about Hitler's policies because that was preaching 'politics.' Most of the German ministers and church members complied. The resisting ministers spoke out and persecution followed. Bonhoeffer was eventually arrested and executed by the Nazis.

This quote is taken from *The Cost of Discipleship*, written in 1937. Bonhoeffer wrote it for his students in an 'underground seminary' training ministers who would not take oaths of allegiance to Hitler or support his racial beliefs. Bonhoeffer wrote that the Biblical gospel had become twisted into what he called "cheap grace." The idea that we are saved by grace, not works, had led to the widespread inference that costly obedience was only optional. The reasoning went like this: "We are saved by grace, not by our obedience. So while there may be some very advanced Christians who want to be very serious--giving their money away, taking unpopular stands, involvement with the poor, witnessing for their faith in public--that is not for everyone. We don't have to do all that to be saved. We just have to believe and ask for forgiveness." The German church had been founded by Martin Luther himself. But over the years the concept of salvation by grace had degenerated into this 'religion of cheap grace' that had created a deep spiritual coldness and malaise in the German church. People believed they were Christians because they were born and raised in the church and they simply embraced the concept of salvation-by-grace. They gave lip-service to the idea of free justification/salvation but it was not changing their lives. To read Bonhoeffer's first chapter "Cheap Grace" against the background of the rise of Hitler is a very chilling experience. Bonhoeffer is explaining how the church had become so sleepy and lifeless that a) at first, it could not recognize Hitler for what he was, and b) later it was too cowardly to speak up against his injustices against the Jews and others.

What is the solution? Notice that Bonhoeffer does not in any way jettison the Biblical gospel that we are saved by sheer grace. He does not say: "Stop thinking God accepts you freely by grace! He only accepts those who are completely committed and obedient!" The antidote for cheap grace--costly grace--is still grace. His argument is simple (and very reminiscent of the work of Jonathan Edwards.)



# Dietrich Bonhoeffer

## Week Four-Supplemental Leader's Materials

He argues that those who have had their hearts gripped by how much our salvation cost God will be willing to do God's will even if it means the loss of life. He denies that saving faith is merely "intellectual assent" to the idea of free forgiveness. Rather, saving faith (the faith that truly saves you) is joyful repentance for our self-centered lives in the light of the costly salvation of the cross. All who truly see that Christ gave up his life for them--will be willing to give up their wills for him. It is a natural response.

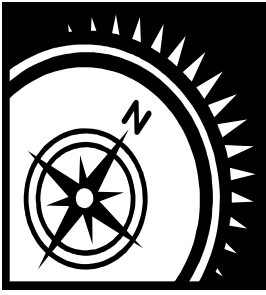
So how do we explain the people who say, "oh, I believe in the gospel that we are saved by grace not works," and who then lead unchanged lives, refusing the joyful, costly obedience of discipleship? Bonhoeffer's theory is that they look only at the free-ness of grace to us, not at the costliness of grace to God. If you don't truly understand the first principle (the free-ness) you fall into Phariseeism and legalism. But if you don't truly understand the second principle (the costliness) you fall into apathy, joylessness, and your life does not change.

Note: One of the reasons that many in the German church did not see the costliness of God's grace may have been the kind of 'universalism' that teaches that God simply loves and accepts everyone. In that view, the death of Christ is unnecessary, and so the Christ's sacrifice never becomes a moving, life-changing fact to you.

### **In what way is 'every command of Jesus a call to die'?**

The context explains that Bonhoeffer means two things by this vivid metaphor.

First, every command is a demand that we 'die' to self-determination. We don't obey Jesus because it makes sense or looks wise (though often it does) but simply because he says so and he is Lord. So to be a disciple is to 'die' living according to our own will and begin living according to God's will.



# Dietrich Bonhoeffer (con't)

## Week Four-Supplemental Leader's Materials

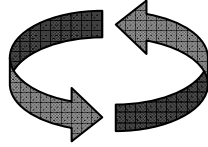
Second, every command is a demand that we 'die' to what Bonhoeffer called our 'affections and lusts.' He perceives that under every desire to disobey God is some inordinate affection--some good desire that has become too great and therefore a 'lust.' For example, if we are tempted to lie because we are afraid to look bad we must die to our excessive need ('lust') for human approval. If we are tempted to lie to do a deal that makes us money we must die to our excessive need ('lust') for wealth and/or status.

In these ways, submitting to the Lordship of Christ is always a metaphorical death. We die to our old will and its cost-benefit way of making decisions. We die to our inordinate affections--the 'ultimate concerns' of our life. In short--we die to our whole old 'self' and its identity. The decision to be a disciple, to make Jesus Lord, leaves behind your old personality, built on other ultimate allegiances and hopes besides God. The practice of discipleship--the daily acts of costly obedience--gradually constructs a new self. That is why Bonhoeffer uses such radical terminology as 'death' to talk of discipleship. Christ's Lordship remakes us into a whole new person. "Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and put on the new self which is being renewed in the knowledge of its Creator." (Col 3:9-10)

The irony of Bonhoeffer's statement is that, of course, his discipleship literally cost him his life. In order to be a witness for the truth against Hitler he lost his life. His example shows us that all discipleship is a 'call to die' because it is unconditional. When we give our lives to Jesus, we all die 'in principle' because we agree to obey no matter what the cost. Only a small minority of disciples have to give their lives literally, but that is not because their discipleship is qualitatively different.

# BEP Adult Ministry

**A simple process of discipleship**



## WORSHIP TOGETHER

### **Sunday Worship**

Set up/ Ushers/ Greeters /Enfolding Team/  
Reception Team/Worship Teams/AV Team

## LEARN TOGETHER

### **Adult Christian Education**

Journey in the Word/ W2W & Men's Ministry  
Bible Studies/Discipleship Series

## SERVE TOGETHER

### **Ministries & Missions**

Deaconate/ Deacon's Assistants/My Brother's  
Pantry /Boys & Girls Club/ Habitat for Humanity/  
Car Clinic/Fifth Quarter/ Family Club/ Tuesday  
Open Gym /Karate Club/Missions

## LIVE TOGETHER

### **Small Groups & Church Fellowships**

#### **Small Groups**

Couples/ W2W/ Men's / Divorce Care/ College & Career

#### **Church Fellowships**



# LORD, HOW SHALL WE PRAY?

## A PRAYER GUIDE FOR BEP

- ❖ *Pray for the Kick off of our Fall Ministries.*
- ❖ *Pray for 5th Qtr. Pray that God would bless the preaching of the Gospel and that we would see many students come to faith in Christ the Autumn.*
- ❖ *Pray for our small groups; that many people would be enfolded and connected in small groups.*

### JOURNEY IN DISCIPLESHIP

# ROAD MAP



<u>Month</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Key Concept</u>
September	How Do I Follow Jesus?	Discipleship
October	How Do I Meet With Jesus Myself?	Meditation
November	How Do I Meet with Jesus with Others?	Worship
December	How Do I Relate to Others Who Wrong Me?	Forgiveness
January	How Do I Relate to other Christians?	Members

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