

Author of the *New York Times* Best Seller RADICAL

6-SESSION
BIBLE STUDY

RADICAL

SMALL-GROUP STUDY

DAVID
PLATT

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THE AUTHOR

Dr. David Platt, the pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, is deeply devoted to Christ and His Word. David's first love in ministry is disciple making—the simple, biblical model of teaching God's Word, mentoring others, and sharing faith. He's traveled extensively to teach the Bible alongside church leaders throughout the United States and around the world.

David has authored several books, including *Radical*, *Radical Together*, and *Follow Me*. He's the founder of Radical (Radical.net), a resource ministry dedicated to serving the church in making disciples of all nations.

David and his wife, Heather, have four children: Caleb, Joshua, Mara Ruth, and Isaiah.

INTRODUCTION

High atop the Andes Mountains, the rays of the sun strike ice, and a single drop of water forms. It begins to trace a hesitant course downward, gradually joining other drops of water to become a steady stream. The stream gains speed and strength. Thousands of feet below and hundreds of miles later, what were once single drops have converged to become the mightiest river on earth: the Amazon. Flowing into the Atlantic Ocean at a rate of more than seven million cubic feet per second, the Amazon is more powerful than the next 10 largest rivers in the world combined.

In my first book, *Radical*, I explored how the biblical gospel affects individual Christian lives in the same way these single drops of water melt and flow down the mountain. The truth of Christ penetrates our hearts, melts our assumptions, and propels us on a journey of abandonment to God. In a world of urgent spiritual and physical need, gospel-believing, God-exalting believers don't have time to waste their lives on a faith that's been distorted by the American Dream. The American Dream prizes what people can accomplish when they believe in themselves, trust in their abilities, and work hard. But the gospel has different priorities. It beckons us to die to ourselves, believe in God, and trust in His power. The goal of the American Dream is to make much of ourselves. The goal of the gospel is to make much of God. In *Radical* I challenged believers to abandon everything for the sake of the gospel, take up their crosses, and follow Christ.

But you and I aren't intended to plunge down the mountain of radical obedience alone. The force of a single drop of water descending the Andes is minuscule. Similarly, as long as individual Christians journey alone, their effect will be minimal. But as men and women who are surrendered to the person of Christ join together in churches that are committed to the purpose of Christ, nothing can stop the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth.

So in *Radical Together* I considered what can happen when we apply the revolutionary claims of Christ to our communities of faith. I contemplated the force of a people who come together to enjoy God's grace in the church while they extend God's glory in the world. I challenged believers to answer this question: How can we in the church best unleash the people of God in the Spirit of God with the Word of God for the glory of God in the world?

This small-group Bible study combines the truths of *Radical* and *Radical Together* to frame Jesus' call to genuine discipleship. Through these six weeks of study, you will learn what Jesus meant when He called people to follow Him. When you answer the call to radical abandonment, you recognize your desperate need for Christ and your utter dependency on His Word. You adopt Jesus' priorities of caring for the poor and sharing the gospel with the lost. And you learn to lock arms with other believers in single-minded, death-defying obedience to one objective: the declaration of Jesus' gospel for the demonstration of His glory to all nations.

WEEK 1

RADICAL ABANDONMENT

START

Welcome to your first small-group discussion of *Radical*. Begin the session with the activities below.

In recent years several buzzwords and jargon catchphrases have worked their way into mainstream Christianity. Sometimes these words and phrases are helpful for clarifying our beliefs or distinguishing a new way of thinking. Other times they aren't so helpful.

Place a check mark beside any of the following buzzwords and catchphrases you've heard in recent weeks. As time allows, discuss which of these words and phrases are helpful and which are harmful in today's culture.

- Seeker-sensitive
- The sinner's prayer
- Inviting Jesus into your heart
- Devotion (as in "I had a great devotion this morning.")
- Being in the center of God's will
- Quiet time
- Fellowship
- Something being part of God's plan
- Testimony

What are some other buzzwords or jargon phrases that you feel strongly about, either positively or negatively?

How does a person become a disciple of Jesus Christ? Try to answer this question without using any buzzwords or jargon phrases.

To prepare to view the DVD segment, read aloud Matthew 10:37-38:

"The person who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; the person who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And whoever doesn't take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me."

WATCH

Complete the viewer guide below as you watch DVD session 1.

We need to ask the question, Have we ever really come to Jesus on _____ ?

Requirements for a Christian's Sacrifice

Jesus requires superior _____.

There is a dangerous temptation for us to try to _____ Jesus' words to justify the way we live.

All your affections belong to _____.

In comparison to Christ, we _____ the people we love.

This changes our _____.

It starts with a reservoir of love for the _____ of Christ and God.

Christianity does not consist of _____ obedience to Christ.

Biblical Christianity sees the supremacy of Christ and is so drawn toward Him that our _____ for Him drives everything we do.

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ means you forsake all relationships in favor of an intimate _____ with Him.

Requirements for a Christian's Sacrifice

Jesus requires exclusive _____.

Through the cross of Christ, we _____ to the life we live.

This changes our _____.

We are _____ constructing a building.

Count the _____ of following Jesus.

We are _____ fighting a battle.

Video sessions available for purchase at lifeway.com/radical

RESPOND

Following David's DVD teaching segment is the story of someone who is applying the principles of *Radical* through a sacrificial commitment to Jesus.

Discuss the DVD teaching segment with your group, using the questions below.

What struck you as new or interesting from the DVD segment? What questions do you have?

Take a moment to discuss David's central question from the video segment: "Have we ever really come to Jesus on His terms?"

Where have you seen an example of superior love? How did that love impact the people who experienced it and observed it?

What is the cost of following Jesus? How do we go about counting that cost?

Take a couple of minutes to think about a luxury in your life that may be preventing you from fully entering the battle as a warrior for God. What step could you take in the next week to remove that obstacle? Consider sharing that step with the group for increased accountability.

Do you think it's possible to live in the radical way David is suggesting? Why or why not?

Suggested Scripture memory for this week:

***"He said to him, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands' "* (Matt. 22:37-40).**

Read week 1 and complete the activities before the next group experience. Consider going deeper into this content by reading chapters 1 and 3 in David Platt's book *Radical* and chapter 1 in *Radical Together*.

RADICAL
ABANDONMENT

No one could ever accuse Jesus of being a great public-relations guy. Who else but Jesus would make it His practice to disperse crowds with difficult and controversial teachings when it would have been so easy to rally an army?

Who else but Jesus would choose to continually insult the power structure of His time rather than try to make influential friends in high places?

Who else but Jesus would align Himself with the lowest and the least of His society, those with no political clout or social standing?

But that's what Jesus did. That's what He's still doing. Perhaps with all of our educational advancements, the multiplicity of Bible studies and books available to us, and the abundance of churches in many parts of the world, we've forgotten that following Jesus isn't like choosing which flavor of syrup you want in your coffee.

The call to follow Jesus is a call to forsake everyone and everything other than Him. It's a call to a radical abandonment.

DAY 1

FOLLOW ME

Picture the scene with me. It's a clear day out on the lake. Two brothers are fishing, and the catch is good. They already know this is going to be a good day, and they're excited about totaling up the final catch at day's end.

They hear someone talking to them from the shore a short way off. They shield their eyes from the sun and cock their heads to listen. They're able to distinctly make out the two words that would change the rest of their lives:

"Follow Me."

Read Matthew 4:18-22. Why do you think Jesus called Peter and Andrew to follow Him rather than to believe in Him?

How are following Jesus and believing in Jesus linked together?

What did abandonment require for the early disciples identified in this passage?

“Follow Me.” These two words contained radical implications for the lives of the disciples. In a time when the sons of fishers were also fishers, these men would have grown up around the sea. Fishing was the source of their livelihood and all they’d ever known. It represented everything familiar and natural to them.

That’s what Jesus was calling them away from.

Look back at the passage again. What, specifically, did these men have to leave in order to follow Jesus? List those things in the left column. Then list in the right column what was represented by each thing they left.

LEFT BEHIND

WHAT IT REPRESENTED

By calling these men to leave their boats, Jesus was calling them to abandon their careers. When He called them to leave their nets, He was calling them to abandon their possessions. When He called them to leave their father in the boat by himself, He was calling them to abandon their family and friends. Ultimately, Jesus was calling them to abandon themselves.

The men were leaving certainty for uncertainty, safety for danger, and self-preservation for self-denunciation. Let’s put ourselves in the positions of these eager followers of Jesus in the first century. What if you were the one stepping out of the boat? What if you were the potential disciple being told to drop your nets? What if it were your father asking where you were going?

Put yourself in the boat that day. How do you honestly think you would have responded?

What would have been the most difficult part of following Jesus in that moment? Why?

Do you think most Christians have had to leave much to follow Jesus? Why or why not?

This is where we need to pause to consider whether we're starting to redefine Christianity. We have to give up everything we have to follow Jesus. But slowly, subtly, we have reduced following Jesus to the *idea* of following Jesus.

We do this in all sorts of ways. We rationalize Jesus' demanding teachings: "Of course, Jesus wasn't *actually* telling you to abandon your family. And of course, He wasn't *really* saying to leave everything behind to follow Him." While it's true that Jesus didn't—and doesn't—require everyone to leave their father and their occupation to follow Him, He does require absolute obedience and commitment. Rather than joyfully embracing His call, we have the self-serving tendency to water it down to be theoretical sacrifice and hypothetical abandonment. We want to follow a Jesus that doesn't require anything of us.

Have you ever rationalized like this when reading Jesus' words? Do you remember a specific occasion?

Why do you think we do this?

In essence, we've redefined Christianity. We've given in to the dangerous temptation to take the Jesus of the Bible and twist Him into a version of Jesus we're more comfortable with. It's a Jesus who's OK with our materialism, fine with nominal devotion that doesn't require any sacrifice, and pleased with a brand of faith that requires attendance on Sunday but no real commitment in day-to-day life.

But I wonder if I could help you push through the haze of self-justification and ask a simple question as we study the words of Christ together:

WHAT IF HE WAS ACTUALLY SERIOUS?