



Until the 4th century, Christianity was a cultural minority with little to no power. However, the surprising conversion of Roman Emperor Constantine changed all of that. Since then, there has been a pattern of using power and control to convert people to Christianity. Today, the desire to control sneaks its way into the hearts of Christians through judgment, manipulation, and a host of other, nearly undetectable thoughts and actions. We're invited to a different way of life with Jesus that is less about following rules and more about a relationship with God. What if the message "follow Jesus" replaced the false mantra "follow the rules?"

ICE BREAKER

- If you could have more control over one aspect of your life, what would it be?
- If you had unlimited money and could go on a trip for 48 hours, where would you go?

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Read Mark 2:13–17. How does Jesus act towards Levi, the tax collector, in this story? What is his motivation? How do the Pharisees react to Jesus in this story? What is their motivation?
2. How might the story have been different if Jesus' words were "follow the rules" vs. "follow me?" What is the difference between these two statements?
3. How have you seen the two different commands (follow the rules vs follow me) show up in your life, your faith, or the world around you?
4. In what areas of your life do you find it most challenging to surrender control and trust God? Why is it difficult for you to let go in those areas?
5. At the cross, Jesus gave up control and gave away His life because of his love for us. As we follow Him, what does it look like for us to give up control for the sake of love?
6. In what way do you feel God wants you to surrender control to Him? How can we pray for you?

LIVE IT OUT

What practices, habits, or attitudes can help us let go of control and embrace the grace that God offers?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, you gave your Son all power and authority, yet he did not use it to his own advantage. Rather than control us, He chose to love us regardless of our response. We confess that many of our frustrations and challenges with others stem from our longing for control. We acknowledge that you alone have that power and authority. Help us release our need to control because You are in control. Jesus, we receive your gift of grace. Change our hearts so that we can better love like you love and serve like you serve. In Jesus' Name, Amen.