

Phase 1

Teacher Manual

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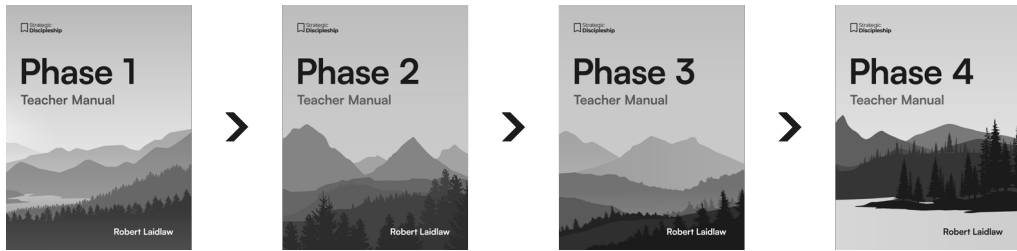
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The Four-Year Curriculum



The series are set up to accommodate 26-28 studies every year for four years. For a full list of each week's topic, go to the Curriculum Overview page at StrategicDiscipleship.com.

We suggest offering Phase 1 at two starting times in a year. However, the second time we offer it, we only cover the first thirteen weeks. It is good to have at least two groups each year so that the groups can mix for Phase 2, and in future phases.

RECOMMENDED STARTING POINT: PHASE 1

We recommend that everyone starts at Phase 1, whether they are a retired pastor or a skeptic walking in from the street. There are numerous reasons for this:

- > It puts everyone on the same page.
- > People never know as much as they think they know.
- > Many people who thought they were Christians discover they were not.
- > Everyone learns how to present the gospel to their friends.
- > Skeptics need to be around other believers where they can see spirituality modeled and applied.
- > Believers need to be around skeptics to hear afresh their questions and perspectives.
- > Everyone learns something in each phase, no matter how long they have been following Jesus.
- > This policy means we don't have to keep guessing which phase the person should really be in, especially when people think they should be in a higher phase than they ought to be.
- > Everyone who initially felt insulted by starting at Phase 1 said afterward it was the best thing they could have done.
- > Everyone needs to be able to communicate the content to others.

We have attempted to place the series in a logical, progressive manner, but this is not a legalistic thing. There may be times when you may want to shuffle series around. Keep in mind, this is merely a tool to assist you in discipling your students. Use it in whatever way works best for you.

Teacher Notes

All teacher notes are noted like this in the studies. The students do not have these notes in their workbooks.

To grow as a disciple, six areas need to be developed:

1. Godly Character
2. Biblical Knowledge
3. Spiritual Disciplines
4. Authentic Community
5. Gifted Ministry
6. Global Mission

Content DOES NOT create disciples

Disciples make disciples as they walk alongside people showing them how to live out the Christ-life. However, disciples do need certain knowledge (truth) to be spiritually effective. These studies are designed to cover what we believe are some of the key issues a disciple needs to grapple with to move forward in maturity. Covering a topic in one study does not necessarily embed that issue in a person's life. These topics need to be continually reinforced from the pulpit or other teaching venues, and as we walk with one another.

Curriculum is merely a “tool” to help you disciple others

You can use that tool however you want. You can lengthen sessions, shorten, re-write sessions, etc. We have simply provided content that we have found helpful in that process. Your group may need different content at different times. Every group I teach, the sessions look a little different because of the people who are there and the conversations that arise. I do not hold rigidly to any curriculum.

Every curriculum obviously has a theological slant

At any point, if your ministry has a different teaching emphasis, then simply create your own study for that session. All we ask is that it not have the Strategic Discipleship label attached to those sessions.

The curriculum is not designed for lecture but to evoke meaningful conversation

People learn so much better when they discover the truth, as opposed to being told what to believe. Work hard at making the process feel like a natural conversation versus a classroom lecture. The teacher notes are provided for your preparation and are not

designed to be “read” to the students as the “correct” answer. When in the teaching time, try to guide conversations so that the students themselves discover the truths presented through the scriptures provided.

Look for emotional reactions

Sometimes, during various discussions, a person might seem to respond in different ways. Some people will get really excited about a new concept, a certain issue might convict some, or some might be reminded of some difficult past. Obviously, our goal is not emotionality; however, truth, when it hits home, will often have an emotional impact. Some of the signals may be very subtle. A person might suddenly become very quiet and withdrawn, or agitated, or excited. At these times, take note and allow the person to share what is happening. There have been times when I observed a student experiencing profound impact in a study, and would have been ready to share what confusion or hurts they were experiencing around that topic, but the teacher kept moving on through the lesson so he could cover all the points. He missed an in-depth discipleship opportunity. If you are not getting an emotional reaction through the entire year, it may be that you are presenting more in a lecture format and not allowing the topic to go deeper into the person’s life through meaningful discussion.

Student Notes

Historically, a disciple was a person who studied under a master teacher to learn both his knowledge and approach to life, with the goal of passing that knowledge and lifestyle on to others. As disciples of Jesus, we long to understand everything Jesus taught, live by it, and teach others to do the same. Discipleship ALWAYS has the intent of passing what you have learned on to others.

Jesus was very clear his intention was that we would spread his teaching throughout the world so that people of all nations could enter a relationship with him and experience his forgiveness and life. So discipleship is not an accidental by-product of going to church; discipleship is to be strategic and intentional, with a kingdom-impacting goal in mind.

God has called others to disciple you, but that does not negate your personal responsibility for your growth. No teacher can make a student grow spiritually. The student needs to assume responsibility to do the hard work of learning, developing disciplines, and stepping out in faith in ministry and missional experiences.

To grow as a disciple, six areas need to be developed:

1. Godly Character
2. Biblical Knowledge
3. Spiritual Disciplines
4. Authentic Community
5. Gifted Ministry
6. Global Mission

This curriculum merely raises the “issues” we believe are beneficial to address in the discipleship journey. It is your job to work on practical expressions of your growth through developing disciplines, experimenting with various ministries, and finding ways to share your faith with those in your spheres of influence.

The challenge of discipleship is learning to die to self and allowing Christ to live in and through us. This means putting an end to our expectations and priorities and learning to allow his agenda to direct our days. Living by faith takes on a whole new understanding as we follow the Spirit’s leading, not knowing the outcomes or how he will provide. We follow anyway because we have declared Jesus is Lord.

The outflow of the Spirit-led and Spirit-empowered life is an incredible sense of joy, peace, and purpose as we partner with Jesus in the adventure of reconciling the world to him. There is no life like it!

Introduction

We suggest having name tags for everyone if they are new to one another.

1. Have everyone share a bit about themselves.
2. Have everyone share how they came to your church/group.
3. Have everyone share a bit about their spiritual background.

Sample questions:

- › Did they grow up going to church?
- › Did they stop going at some point?
- › Have they ever been to a church before?
- › Was their experience a negative or positive one?

Teacher: Share your spiritual journey

Teacher: Share the history and mission of your church.

- › Any questions regarding the church, its mission, or structure, etc?

Series:

FOUNDATIONS

Session 1

Who is God: Part A

- 1. If God exists, then what do you think he is like? What is the first characteristic that enters your mind? Why do you think that attribute came to your mind?**
- 2. Of all of God's attributes, which one do you think is the most significant in that it will influence all the others?**

Many people will often refer to God's love as being the most significant. It is almost as though God is a big Grandpa in the sky who warmly loves everyone. However, the Bible also refers to God's wrath. Take the story of Noah, for instance. Civilization became so wicked and violent that eventually, all righteousness would have been abandoned, and life on earth become very short-lived (see Genesis 6). To save civilization God had to choose a wrathful response, judge evil, and start over with Noah. He was the one man who had faith in God and desired to live righteously.

- 3. How can wrath and love work together? They must be determined by some other overriding factor.**

Isaiah 6:1-5 (NLT)

¹It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple.

²Attending him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. ³They were calling out to each other,

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Heaven’s Armies! The whole earth is filled with his glory!”

⁴Their voices shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire building was filled with smoke. ⁵Then I said, “It’s all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.”

4. What characteristics do the seraphim see as being all significant and why?

God's holiness

Holiness is the one attribute of God that influences all his other attributes. If we want to emphasize something in the English language, we often use the word “really”, as in, “It was really big”. We might even go so far as to say, “It was “really, really, big.”

Likewise, in the Hebrew language, if you want to emphasize something, you simply repeat the adjective. Here, the seraphim were not merely saying, “God is holy.” They were not even saying, “God is holy, holy.” They were saying, “God is holy, holy, holy.” Do you get the sense they are trying to stress a point?

5. What does the word “holy” mean?

Holiness consists of two concepts:

1) Separate

God, by his nature, is separate from anything created. The opposite of that which is holy is that which is “common.”

In the Old Testament, people and objects dedicated to him were also considered to be “holy” as they were made distinct from everything else and set apart for God. For example, the temple priests were declared holy by God and set apart from the other Israelites for his service. They alone could enter the Holy Place of the tabernacle and into the presence of God (Also: Ark of the Covenant, the temple utensils, etc. were declared holy).

2) Moral Purity.

To say God is holy means that he is completely righteous, separate from anything imperfect or impure. There is no hint of sin or evil associated with him. Because he is holy, he can in no way embrace what is evil or sinful.

Matthew 5:48 (NLT)

But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

6. Why do you think Isaiah responds the way he does in verse 5?

When a person encounters the true holiness of God, he becomes distinctly aware of his own sinfulness. It induces an overwhelming sense of guilt, shame, and judgment. Our natural response is to want to retreat from it—like insects under a rock quickly hide when being exposed to the light.

Isaiah's response was to say he was “doomed” by that experience.

Why did Isaiah think he was doomed? Isaiah felt naked and exposed as he stood before his holy God. He felt there was no possible way he, a sinner, could survive such an encounter. We can never completely understand the full extent of our sinfulness until we see the nature of true holiness.

7. Isaiah became painfully aware of his sinfulness as he stood before the Holy God. How would you define sin?

Sin is anything that does not reflect the absolute moral purity of the holiness of God.

The actual Greek word has reference to the realm of archery when the arrow misses the target. Sin is compared to missing the target of God's glory and holiness (Romans 3:23). Anything that falls short of hitting the target of holiness is sin. We might think sins have varying degrees of severity, but all sin is a moral rejection of him from God's perspective.

Hebrews 12:14 (NLT)

Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord.

8. How does understanding the holiness of God affect how you see your current relationship with God?

SUMMARY

1. What are the positive aspects of God's holiness?

- > God is good.
- > God can never be evil or do evil to you.
- > God can be fully trusted to do what is morally right in every situation.
- > You can trust God.

2. Have there been times when you have questioned the goodness/holiness of God? When do we tend to do this the most?

3. What is the negative side of God's holiness with regard to us?

- > God cannot be united with evil.
- > If we have any sin in our lives, we cannot be in a relationship with God or dwell with him through eternity.

Don't worry. Over the next few weeks, we will resolve the tension and reveal God's solution to the problem of our sin.

4. Is there anything in your life right now that you can identify as not being holy that you realize should change?

5. Is there any concept from this study that might affect your perspective about God or self?

SESSION 1
Who is God: Part A

Session 2

Who is God: Part B

Last week we discussed that God is Holy, meaning he is morally pure and completely set apart from creation. When we stand before his holiness, we become shamefully aware that we are sinful and finite (limited by our humanity). Yet, it is also comforting to know that God can never do anything wrong or evil.

Are there any questions with regard to God's holiness that have been raised in your mind as a result of last week's study?

We have discussed God's holiness, but there are also a few other characteristics that we want to look at to help us better understand our relationship with him:

God is JUST

Psalm 9:8 (ESV)

...and he judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness.

1. What does it mean to say God is just?

God will always give the appropriate (correct) response to every situation and judge according to his holy standard. God can never turn a blind eye to evil and, ultimately, will only allow righteousness to prevail.

Imagine a judge who presides over a case that proves a man maliciously raped and murdered a young girl.

- › How do you want that judge to react to such a crime?
- › How would you feel if the judge merely put the man on probation?

We want a judge who hates injustice, gets angry with wrongdoing and who will ultimately deal with evil in such a way that it is removed from our presence so that it can do no harm again.

2. If God is just, then what are the implications for us with regard to our sin?

God must declare us guilty and give a proper response to our sin.

3. What do you think is a proper response to sin from God's perspective?

Isaiah 59:2 (NLT)

It's your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore.

Romans 6:23 (NLT)

For the wages of sin is death,

SUMMARY

- › Our sin cuts us off from a relationship with God
- › Our sin demands the consequence of death

Review of the Implications:

God is HOLY

- › Good News: God is morally pure and can do no evil.
- › Bad News: If we have sin in our lives, we are eternally separated from God.

God is JUST

- › Good News: God will always judge rightly and respond appropriately to evil.
- › Bad News: If we have sin in our lives, the appropriate penalty is death.

What is your reaction to these statements?

Fortunately, there are other characteristics of God that come into play that bring us hope. God is not merely HOLY and JUST, he is also LOVE.

God is LOVE

1. How is God's love different from our love?

God's love is unconditional. Our love is almost always "conditional."
I love you "because" of how you treat me or how you make me feel.

2. What do you think is the best example of non-conditional love we might experience on earth?

A frequent response is often the love of a parent with their brand new baby, but even then, we discover that love as very conditional. I love "my" child—not yours. The parental love for the child is "conditional" based on the fact that it is "my" child. If I had unconditional love for a baby, I would have to have that same love for every baby—and then also, not just babies, but everyone of every age. Otherwise, the conditions I have set are that it must be a baby, and it must be mine. All our love is conditional and therefore it is extremely difficult for us to grasp and trust the concept of unconditional love

3. What is God's love based on if it is not based on our performance?

Romans 5:8 (NLT)

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

1 John 4:8 (NLT)

But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

God is love. He doesn't merely act lovingly...he is love.

Any love we experience originated in and flowed from his character. It is rooted in who He is. Therefore, when God loves us, it has nothing to do with us but everything to do with him. His love for us is not based on our performance but on His character. God's love is not an emotional reaction to us but flows freely from his nature. It is a gift of grace to us. We receive love from God even when it is not deserved or earned.

4. What sort of things might I do that would cause God to love me less?

Nothing!

5. What can I do to ensure God will continue to love me or to love me more?

Nothing!

6. How do you feel about the fact that you can't increase or diminish God's love for you?

God is SOVEREIGN

Nebuchadnezzar was a very powerful, Babylonian king. He is credited with creating one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar ruthlessly attacked and conquered all the surrounding nations and established the most powerful empire on Earth. In his pride, he claimed this was all done by his power and for the glory of his majesty, completely ignoring God's role in the events. As a result, God caused Nebuchadnezzar to become insane and live like a savage beast in the wilderness for seven years, until he repented and acknowledged God.

Daniel 4:34-35 (NLT)

³⁴“After this time had passed, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven. My sanity returned, and I praised and worshiped the Most High and honored the one who lives forever. His rule is everlasting, and his kingdom is eternal. ³⁵All the people of the earth are nothing compared to him. He does as he pleases among the angels of heaven and among the people of the earth. No one can stop him or say to him, ‘What do you mean by doing these things?’

7. What do we mean when we say God is sovereign?

He is in absolute control over the affairs of heaven and earth. He has determined the course of events of life, and nothing happens without his permission or outside his ultimate purposes.

8. In what ways might it bother us to confess that “God is sovereign”?

It is easy to look at the world and question whether or not God is in control. It makes one wonder why God would allow all the evil that happens.

9. If God is truly sovereign and in control, how might that affect how you approach this next week?

- > Free from stress or anxiety
- > Prayerfully dependent on him to provide everything I need for life
- > Confident, Obedient, Humble, etc.

We may never understand why God does things the way he does, but because God is sovereign, he can ensure righteousness prevails.

Romans 8:28 (NLT)

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

10. Does this passage comfort you in any way? If so, how?

One of the significant challenges to belief in God is the question, “**If God exists, why does he not do something about all the evil in the world?**” Every life tension we experience can cause us to challenge or question God’s character.

Appearance:

God seems incapable of stopping evil
God seems to permit evil
God seems unwilling to judge evil
God seems indifferent to people’s suffering

Character Challenged:

His sovereignty
His holiness
His justice
His love

11. Which of God’s attributes do you struggle with the most?

This series aims to show you that **God does have a plan**; he is working it out, and you are a part of it. God approaches things the way he does because he is holy, just, loving, and sovereign. As you grow in a deeper understanding of God, you will begin to see more clearly how he is at work in the world and your life.

SESSION 2
Who is God: Part B

Session 3

Who Are We

Are there any questions concerning God's holiness, justice, love, or sovereignty that have been raised in your mind as a result of the last session?

If God is complete in every way, perfect in every way, why do you think he would choose to create people like us? What was his motivation?

God created us for two significant purposes.

Purpose 1: RELATIONSHIP

Matthew 22:37-40 (ESV)

³⁷And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

1. Do you tend to think God will judge you based on how you serve him, or how you love him?

We tend to think that "God is most concerned with how I live."

We think God will primarily judge us based on what we do.

This is not true. We will be judged with regard to how we have loved him.

2. Why do you think loving God is the greatest commandment?

As parents, do we want children just so they can serve us and do more things around the house? Why do people tend to want to have children?

We desire to express love in intimate community, because God is that way! Remember, we are created in his likeness! Because God is relational, we are relational. Because God is community-oriented, we are community-oriented. Family is the most intimate form of community.

Do we want our children to obey us? Yes, but which would you prefer, children who simply obey because they are forced to, and will get a consequence if they don't? Or, would you prefer to have children who do what you ask because they love you?

The truth is, if we love God, that will influence how we serve him.

3. What then, from God's perspective, is the greatest evil we could ever commit?

The greatest evil act would be to NOT love God with our all heart, soul, and mind.

4. How is "not loving God" more vile than murder, rape, genocide, etc.?

To not love God is to turn away from your very reason for existence. To not love God is to actually work in opposition to his purpose in creating you.

We have a sinful tendency to invert (or reverse) these two commands. When people talk about whether they are a "good person," they tend to refer to how they have historically interacted with other people. They rarely reflect on their relationship with God.

When we place loving others above loving God, we actually embrace humanism. Humanists believe that your relationship with your fellow man should play a more critical (higher) role than your relationship with God.

If we love God first and foremost, he will give us a greater capacity to love others. If we love others more than God, then we will not be able to love them with the capacity or fullness of God's love. This will cause our love to become very limited, conditional, and self-serving.

Which father can love his children more?

- A father who is limited by his own needs for respect and acceptance?
- A father who has experienced God's unconditional love and is allowing that love to flow through him to his children?

5. In the following verse, what is the basis for not being accepted into Heaven?

Matthew 7:22-23 (NLT)

²²On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' ²³But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.'

To “know” in the Bible does not merely mean to “know about” something. It means to know through experience and intimacy (i.e., Adam “knew” Eve and, as a result, had a baby named Cain: Genesis 4:1). Jesus was not saying he didn’t know “about” the people. He was saying that he was never invited into an intimate relationship in their life, where they knew each other both personally and in a spiritual way. That is the deciding factor in who goes to Heaven.

It's not what you do—it's who you know!

6. What point are the following verses trying to stress?

Psalm 37:4 (NLT)

Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart's desires.

Zephaniah 3:17 (NLT)

For the LORD your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs.”

Romans 5:8 (NLT)

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

God deeply loves you and wants to bless your life. Even when you are at your worst and rebelling against him, he loved you enough to die for you. You matter to him.

7. How do you feel when you hear how much God loves you and only wants the best for you?

8. How could trusting these verses make a practical difference in your life?

Purpose 2: REPRESENT

Genesis 1:26-28 (NLT)

²⁶Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like ourselves. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

²⁷So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

9. The very first statement about mankind in the Bible is that we were made in the image of God. What do you think that means?

In olden days, kings would sometimes set up a monument in a conquered land saying, “this is my image/likeness”. **The monument didn’t necessarily look like the king, so what do you think the point was in leaving it there?**

It was a physical reminder to the nation that even though the king wasn’t visibly present, he still ruled over that land. Every time the people passed the monument, they would be reminded of that fact and be motivated to live accordingly under his rule.

People will often refer to personality traits or other characteristics to explain the image concept. While these are somewhat valid, the context of the Genesis passage is all about **rule**.

God is looking for someone who can rule the earth on his behalf and to care for his creation in a manner reflective of his holy and creative character. As people who are made in the image of God, we are God’s visible representatives on earth. Instead of merely creating a stone monument, God created a living, walking, talking image to represent him. Every time we look at another person we are to be reminded that God exists and rules over creation.

Exodus 20:4 (NLT)

You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea.

10. Why does God say in the Ten Commandments that we are not to make an image of him?

God has already established his image—Us! To create another image is to discredit the image God has already created and to severely limit the picture God wanted to present. He didn’t want a rock or piece of wood to represent him. He wanted you, a living being who was indwelt and led by his Holy Spirit, representing his holiness,

justice, love, and creativity. How can we compare a person to a hand-crafted rock? When we create another image to represent God, we devalue ourselves and the role God called us to perform (live-out). It is no wonder then that we have a world filled with people walking through life plagued by low self-esteem. A sense of low-worth is rooted in the fact that we have lost sight of who we were created to be.

**“As no coin is so small
that it cannot bear the image of the emperor,
so no man is so humble that he
cannot bear God’s image...”**

Soren Kierkegaard, writing on Radical Discipleship

11. What do you think are some implications of having been given this incredible responsibility?

We should consciously choose to represent God in everything we do:

- > To model his holiness, justice, love, and creativity in everything we do and say
- > To care for creation on his behalf and in his way
- > To respect others as God’s representative—even if they are not acting like it
- > To respect life because it is God’s creation, God’s design, and God’s picture for us

12. How would the world change if everyone treated each other as the image of God?

13. How might your relationships at home and work change if you took this approach?

SUMMARY

As God's image we are his representatives on earth, caring for creation on His behalf.

God created us for two purposes:

- › To enjoy RELATIONSHIP with him and his family
- › To REPRESENT him in this world

14. How might understanding these purposes make a practical difference in how we live our lives this next week?

Session 4

Who is Jesus: Part A

All of Christianity hinges on the one question, “Who is Jesus?”

It is the most vital question we can ever answer in life because the implications, either way, are simply staggering. Jesus raised this very question for those who thought they would follow him.

Matthew 16:13-15 (NLT)

¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴“Well,” they replied, “some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.”
¹⁵Then he asked them, “Who do you say I am?”

1. If Jesus asked you that question, how do you think you would respond?

When trying to understand who Jesus is, the best place to start is to look at what He said about himself.

JESUS' CLAIMS ABOUT HIMSELF

Read the following statements about Jesus from the Bible and discuss their importance and the implications regarding who He was.

John 8:58-59 (NLT)

⁵⁸Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I AM!" ⁵⁹At that point they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus was hidden from them and left the Temple.

2. Did the Jews pick up stones to kill Jesus simply because He used bad grammar?

3. What really motivated this violent reaction to His words?

Jesus was referring back to Exodus 3 when God spoke to Moses from a burning bush and told him to go back to Egypt to free the Israelite people. Moses asked God what name he should give the people regarding who was sending him.

Exodus 3:14 (NLT)

God replied to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you."

4. What is the significance of the words "I Am"?

By using the title "I am," Jesus is declared himself to be the very same God that appeared to Moses from the burning bush. This was the statement that prompted the Jews to pick up rocks to stone him. Jesus' claim was considered to be blasphemous in their eyes—he, a mere man, claiming to be "I AM."

Jesus never merely claimed to be God—that would have been far too vague. The people in the Roman Empire worshipped many different gods. Jesus claimed to be the very same God that appeared to Moses, is the God of Abraham, and also the God who had formed the Israelite nation. He made it very clear.

John 10:27-33 (NLT)

²⁷My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, ²⁹for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand. ³⁰The Father and I are one."

³¹Once again the people picked up stones to kill him.

³²Jesus said, "At my Father's direction I have done many good works. For which one are you going to stone me?" ³³ They replied, "We're stoning you not for any good work, but for blasphemy! You, a mere man, claim to be God."

5. Which of the statements Jesus made led the Jews to believe he was claiming to be God?

- > My sheep
- > I give them eternal life...
- > The intimate reference to God as “My Father”
- > I and the Father are one.

Each of these would have created problems for his listeners. Jesus doesn’t refute their assessment. In fact, he goes on to elaborate further, at least until they try to seize him, and then he escapes.

Revelation 21:6-7 (NLT)

⁶And he also said, “It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. ⁷All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.

6. What insights does this passage give regarding the identity of the speaker?

Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and Omega is the last. This means that God is over all things. There is nothing that came before him and nothing will outlast him. He is the source of all things.

“I will be his God.”

The same person continues to speak:

Revelation 22:13-16 (NLT)

*¹³I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”
¹⁴Blessed are those who wash their robes. They will be permitted to enter through the gates of the city and eat the fruit from the tree of life. ¹⁵Outside the city are the dogs—the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idol worshippers, and all who love to live a lie. ¹⁶“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this message for the churches. I am both the source of David and the heir to his throne. I am the bright morning star.”*

7. What new insights does this passage give with regard to the identity of the speaker?

“I will be his God” connects to “I, Jesus”

8. Regardless of what you have ever thought about Jesus, what does Jesus appear to have believed about his own identity?

9. If Jesus is speaking the truth about himself in each of these passages, what are some implications for us?

OTHERS' CLAIMS ABOUT JESUS

John 1:1-2 (NLT)

¹In the beginning the Word [Jesus] already existed. The Word [Jesus] was with God, and the Word [Jesus] was God. ²He existed in the beginning with God.

(See John 1:14 to see that this is referring to Jesus)

John 1:14 (ESV)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 20:26-28 (NLT)

²⁶Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. "Peace be with you," he said. ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!" ²⁸"My Lord and my God!" Thomas exclaimed.

Isaiah 9:6 (NLT)

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. And the government will rest on his shoulders. These will be his royal titles: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Jesus is called God

Genesis 1:1 (NLT)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

John 1:3 (NLT)

God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him.

Colossians 1:16 (NLT)

...for through him [Jesus] God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see— such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him.

Hebrews 1:2 (NLT)

And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son [Jesus] he created the universe.

Jesus is the Creator

10. Is this a new insight and understanding concerning the person of Jesus for any of you?

Jesus is the physical expression of the invisible God. Whenever God appears in scripture, we understand that to be the second person of the trinity, Jesus. Whenever God does anything of a physical nature, it is done through the person of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the work of making a physical creation would also come under the responsibility of Jesus.

11. How do these verses change the way we view the person of Jesus?

Matthew 4:10 (NLT)

“Get out of here, Satan,” Jesus told him. “For the Scriptures say, ‘You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him.’”

12. Who is allowed to receive worship and why?

Only God is allowed to receive worship. Jesus acknowledged this when tempted by Satan.

- > He is the only one worthy to be the centre of our attention
- > He is the only one to whom all credit is due
- > He is the only one who could rescue us from our sinfulness
- > He is the only one who is God

Hebrews 1:6 (NLT)

And then, when he presented his honored Son to the world, God said, “Let all the angels of God worship him.”

Revelation 5:11-13 (NLT)

¹¹ Then I looked again, and I heard the voices of thousands and millions of angels around the throne and of the living beings and the elders. ¹² And they sang in a mighty chorus: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered— to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.” ¹³ And then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea. They sang: “Blessing and honor and glory and power belong to the one sitting on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever.”

Jesus receives Worship

13. Is there any doubt, at least from the Bible’s perspective, that Jesus is God in human form?

14. What do you think about this perspective? Is it new to you? Is it difficult to believe?

15. If Jesus truly is God who took on human form and came to earth, what are some of the implications for us?

Personal Study: Other relevant passages to look up on your own.

- › **Authority to forgive** Mark 2:1-12
- › **Jesus' Glory** John 12:41, Matthew 17:2
- › **The Good Shepherd** John 10:14 (see Psalm 23)
- › **Meets Spiritual Needs** John 14:1, John 17:3, Acts 4:12, John 14:6-11, Matthew 11:25-27

Session 5

Who is Jesus: Part B

1. Are there any questions resulting from the last study's discussion about the deity of Jesus?

THE HUMANITY OF JESUS

2. If Jesus was God in human form, wouldn't that give him an unfair advantage over the rest of us? Can we really identify with Jesus? Can Jesus really identify with us?

Hebrews 4:15-16 (NLT)

¹⁵This High Priest of ours [Jesus] understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. ¹⁶So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

3. What are all the “human” challenges Jesus would have faced that we all face?

4. How might the above passage give us comfort?

Jesus understands every temptation we face and why we fail. He overcame every temptation that ever came his way by submitting to the will of the Father, giving us an example to follow so that we too can escape temptation. Jesus will give us the strength to stand firm when temptation arises if we turn to him.

5. How might this passage help us in times of testing and temptation?

6. How might this understanding of Jesus encourage us to support others when they are struggling, instead of condemning them?

Philippians 2:5-7 (NLT)

⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. ⁶ Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. ⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.

7. What “divine privileges” did Jesus give up by becoming a man?

Jesus gave up his position and the adoration of heaven to take the form of a servant. He restricted himself to that which the “image of God” was to experience in the Garden of Eden. Understand, he was still FULLY God, but he lived the life that Adam was supposed to have lived all along. This means he would have restricted his divine attributes such as:

Omnipresence: Jesus, as a man was only able to be in one place at one time.

Omniscience: Jesus, as a man did not know all things. He did not know who touched him in the crowd. He did not know the time the Father set for him to return. Being fully man, Jesus would have had to learn how to walk, talk, read & write, etc. In other words, as a three-month-old baby, he was not necessarily talking in multiple languages and writing out calculus equations.

Omnipotence: Jesus got physically and emotionally tired. He had to take time to rest and recharge.

This in no way diminishes who Jesus was by nature, as God, but merely reveals how he chose to represent himself in this world as the “Image” that God intended in the

garden. This is why Paul refers to Jesus as the second man or second Adam. He was to live the perfect human life as the image of God that Adam failed to do.

8. List all the things you can think of Jesus doing on earth that we would normally have credited simply to the fact that he is God.

Walking on water, calming the storm, raising the dead, etc.

Discern the common theme in the following passages.

Matthew 4:1 (NLT)

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil.

Matthew 12:28 (NLT)

But if I am casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has arrived among you.

Luke 4:18 (NLT)

“The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free,

9. What was the power and the drive behind all that Jesus did?

In these situations, because Jesus had restricted his divine privileges, he needed to now rely on the Holy Spirit to:

- > Empower him
- > Set the agenda
- > Speak
- > Heal
- > Cast out demons
- > Live a joy-filled life
- > Minister to others

Again, we need to emphasize that Jesus was fully God through his whole earthly existence, but that he limited his activity to that which the “image of God,” as described in the Garden of Eden, experienced. In other words, Jesus lived out the Holy Spirit empowered and dependent life we all, as the image of God, were supposed to be living ever since the garden of Eden.

10. If Jesus, through his humanity, chose to limit his divine attributes and rely on “his” Spirit for all he did, then what are the implications for us if we have his same Spirit within us?

The implication is that everything Jesus did, we as the image of God, united with God’s Spirit, should have been doing all along, as directed by the Holy Spirit. Jesus fulfilled the creation mandate to rule on this earth that we failed to do. In this way, he modeled the “image life” available to us when we receive his Spirit.

John 14:12 (NLT)

“The truth is, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father.

Jesus directly told the disciples that everything he did on earth, we can also do through faith when empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit.

11. What are the “greater works” we are told we will do?

How can one do greater works than Jesus? Who can top raising Lazarus from the grave?

Keep in mind that Jesus had not yet been crucified and raised to new life, and had not yet sent his resurrected Spirit to dwell in our lives. The greater work we can do is to proclaim the resurrected Christ and invite people to receive his Holy Spirit and be given new life. We can now fill the whole earth with this message, seeing people of all nations respond and be reconciled to the Father. Giving people eternal life trumps even restoring the dead to physical life.

12. In what ways does this excite you to know God can similarly work in you as you develop an intimate relationship with him?

Back to Philippians 2

Philippians 2:5-7 (NLT)

⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. ⁶ Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. ⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.

13. Why do we find it so difficult to give up our positions of respect and authority?

14. What perspective did Jesus have that freed him to humble himself in such a way?

Jesus knew who he was. His sense of identity did not come from what he did or what others thought about him. It came from his true identity, which is unchangeable. He is God. Even though he became a man, he did not lose his identity as God. As a result, he was free to do whatever the Father called him to do, without being controlled by the opinions of others.

15. If we were truly secure in our identity as the “Image of God,” how would that change how we approach life?

16. How might it affect how we serve instead of looking to be served?

17. Jesus is very complex. He is both fully God and fully man. What sort of other questions might this raise for you?

18. Understanding the full person of Jesus, how might that affect your relationship with him moving forward?

SESSION 5
Who is Jesus: Part B

Session 6

Why Did Jesus Come

This study aims to put the past five studies together in such a way that they create a big picture of what God has done to bring us back to a relationship with himself.

Let's start by doing some review:

In the first two sessions, we discussed some key characteristics of God.

19. God is Holy. What are the two definitions of the word holy?

- 1) Separated from that which is common
- 2) Morally pure

20. God is Just. What do we mean when we say he is just?

God will give the appropriate consequence for every action.

21. God is Love. In what way is God's love different from ours?

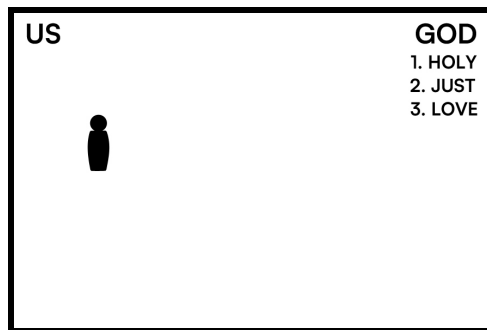
God's love is not based on our performance but is rooted in his character. He cannot stop loving us because he cannot change who he is. You can do nothing to increase or decrease God's love for you.

SESSION 6
Why Did Jesus Come



In the third session, we discussed that God created us to be vessels in which to pour his love. He created us for two primary reasons. Can you recall what they are?

- 1) To be in relationship with God
- 2) To represent God's rule to all creation



Adam and Eve were created holy and enjoyed intimate and face-to-face relationships with God until sin entered the picture.

Genesis 2:15–17 (NLT)

¹⁵The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it.
¹⁶But the LORD God warned him, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—¹⁷except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.”

Genesis 3:6 (NLT)

The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too.

22. What do you think motivated Adam and Eve to eat the fruit?

Adam and Eve believed that knowing good and evil would free them to make decisions about what was right and wrong on their own, apart from God. They could make their own decisions about right and wrong without needing God's input or leadership. They believed they could create a better life for themselves by disobeying God and taking control than by trusting and submitting to him.

Every sin we commit is based on the lie that we can determine what is best apart from God. We do this every day.

23. What are the implications for us if we have sin in our lives and God is holy and just?

God's Character vs. Sin's Consequence

HOLY:

We cannot stand in the presence of God and are eternally separated from him.

Isaiah 59:2 (NLT)

But there is a problem—your sins have cut you off from God. Because of your sin, he has turned away and will not listen anymore.

Hebrews 12:14 (NLT)

Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord.

CONSEQUENCE OF SIN: SEPARATION

JUST:

God's justice demands that he acts against sin, giving it the only appropriate consequence—death. God will bring to full justice anything that distorts moral perfection and brings death. Anyone who separates himself from the life-giving God is only left with death.

Romans 2:5 (NLT)

But because you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself. For a day of anger is coming, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

Romans 6:23 (NLT)

For the wages of sin is death

CONSEQUENCE OF SIN: JUDGMENT/DEATH

24. What does the Bible mean when it says the consequence is death?

25. There are two phases to death. Can you define them?

1) Physical death

Adam and Eve were created to live forever. As soon as they ate the fruit and sinned against God, they started to die physically. The aging process began, and disease and illness slowly developed. Eventually, they would physically die, and their bodies would return to the dust from which they were created. Physical death might come immediately or be prolonged through many years—but the end is inevitable.

Hebrews 9:27 (NLT)

And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment.

2) Spiritual death

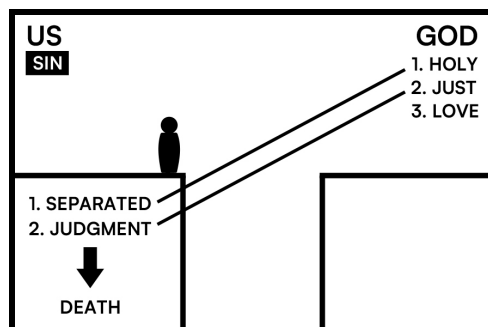
Though the death process for Adam and Eve began as soon as they sinned, they did not physically die right away. Spiritually, however, they died immediately. Since the Holy Spirit cannot be united with sin, he left their lives at the moment they embraced sin. Without the Holy Spirit, we do not have spiritual life. This does NOT mean we cease to exist. We were created to live forever. It means that we will exist apart from the life-giving presence of Jesus and dwell in the judgment of the lake of fire.

Luke 9:60 (NLT)

But Jesus told him, "Let the spiritually dead bury their own dead!"

Revelation 20:15 (NLT)

And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.



26. What are the ways people typically react to this situation?

1) Denial

Refuse to believe the message

Psalm 53:1 (NLT)

Only fools say in their hearts, "There is no God." They are corrupt, and their actions are evil; not one of them does good!

2) Avoid Responsibility

Minimize our sin or shift blame onto someone else. Since we live within a sinful culture, all we know is sin. We have a ranking in our minds with regard to sin, and we don't see most of the sins we commit as being that serious. We do not understand the depth and seriousness of our sins. When we do, we tend to shift responsibility to others. We do not need to teach children how to avoid responsibility for their actions, it comes naturally.

Genesis 3:12 (NLT)

The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it."

Why did Adam blame Eve for his sin?

Adam wanted to avoid the death consequence for his sin—so he blamed Eve. He figuratively threw Eve under the bus to save his own life. He would rather Eve die than for him to face the consequences of his own actions.

In what ways do we tend to minimize our sin or shift the blame for our failures?

3) Earn God's favor

We strive to ensure our good deeds outweigh our bad deeds. Our world operates on this principle. We define ourselves as a good person by comparing ourselves to all the evil we see around us. If we seem to be above the curve, we feel we will be accepted by God.

What is wrong with this perspective? Why doesn't it work?

Isaiah 64:6 (NLT)

We are all infected and impure with sin. When we proudly display our righteous deeds, we find they are but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall. And our sins, like the wind, sweep us away.

a) Our righteous acts aren't so righteous

Everything we do is tainted by our sinful rebellion against God.

Scenario: A man helps an old lady by carrying her groceries home from the grocery store.

Has he done good?

How does his goodness rate in the big picture of life and his relationship with God? What if, at the time of his “good deed,” he is spiritually rejecting God in his life? What if he is spiritually stating that God is not in control of his life and he is going to do whatever he feels like doing? It just so happens that helping the old lady makes him feel good. From God’s perspective, is he good?

It would be similar to someone breaking into your home and stealing all your prized possessions but deciding to wash your dishes in the sink for you before he left. Would you feel he had done good?

b) Our problem is NOT the absence of good deeds

Scenario: A police officer pulls you over for speeding. You explain that you have been driving for the past 5 hours and only speeding for the past 30 minutes. In fact, you stopped at a crosswalk and let an old lady cross the street; you even slowed down and stopped for a yellow light. In lieu of your driving record for the day, you explain that your good driving far outweighs your bad; therefore, you should not receive a ticket.

How do you think the police officer will respond? Why?

Good driving is the expected norm—that’s just the way we’re supposed to drive. The problem isn’t how much good driving we do, the problem is when we BREAK the LAW. No amount of good driving will make up for the fact that the law is now broken, and there needs to be a consequence.

We can try to bridge our way back to God by doing good things (going to church, serving in church, reading your bible, praying, giving to the poor, helping others, etc.), but these are just good things we are to do anyway. When we do good, if it’s outside a relationship with God, then God still calls them evil acts.

The problem is not our good deeds. The problem is the presence of sin in our lives.

Romans 14:23 (ESV)

But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

Romans 3:10-12 (NLT)

¹⁰As the Scriptures say, “No one is good—not even one. ¹¹No one has real understanding; no one is seeking God. ¹²All have turned away from God; all have gone wrong. No one does good, not even one.”

Matthew 7:22-23 (NIV)

²²Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ ²³Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

Romans 3:20 (NIV)

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

We are entirely HOPELESS.

There is absolutely nothing we can do to change our situation. There is no way we can make ourselves righteous or holy. We are separated from God and are under his righteous condemnation.

This is the BAD NEWS...BUT

GOD IS ALSO LOVE

- › God knows our rebellious hearts (sin nature)
- › God knows he must judge our sin (death consequence)

But God still loves us and desires to redeem us.

There are two issues that need to be resolved:

1) OUR SINFUL ACTIONS

All the morally wrong things we’ve done and thought throughout our lives leave us under God’s wrath and judgment. They demand we pay the death penalty.

2) OUR SINFUL NATURE

We don’t just sin—we are sinful. Our very nature is to sin. In any given circumstance, the most natural thing for us to do is sin.

- › What are we like first thing in the morning after a terrible night’s sleep?
- › What is our most natural response if someone insults us?
- › What comes out when I’m caught off guard or hit my thumb with a hammer?
- › In times when we have less self-control, our “nature” is most clearly shown.

GOD'S SOLUTION:

God came to earth as a man (Jesus)

27. How did God's coming to earth as Jesus solve the above-mentioned problems?

1) JESUS' DEATH PAYS FOR OUR SINFUL ACTIONS

By dying on the cross, Jesus paid the price for our sinful actions. Justice is served, our crimes are paid for, and God's holy wrath is appeased. We can now be forgiven and set free from the consequences of our own sin.

PROBLEM 1 SOLVED

Romans 8:1-4 (NLT)

¹So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. ²And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. ³The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. ⁴He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

2) ACCEPTING THE RESURRECTED SPIRIT OF CHRIST GIVES US NEW LIFE, NEW NATURE

Because Jesus conquered death and rose to new life, when we receive his Spirit into our lives his death is applied to us and we are forgiven, but the Spirit of Christ also restores life to our spirit giving us new life and a new nature.

PROBLEM 2 SOLVED

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

28. In light of what Jesus has done, how does the Father now view those who have accepted him?

Romans 8:1 (NLT)

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.

Colossians 1:22 (NLT)

Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.

1 John 2:1–2 (NLT)

1My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. 2He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.

29. In what ways are these verses encouraging to you?

30. So now that Christ has died on the cross to pay the consequence for our sins, does that mean everyone goes to heaven?

No!

Revelation 20:15 (NLT)

And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.

31. So what does one have to do to cross over to God and get their name written in the Book of Life?

WE MUST:

Confess 2 things (which are really two ways of saying the same thing)

1) CONFESS OUR SIN

1 John 1:9 (NLT)

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong.

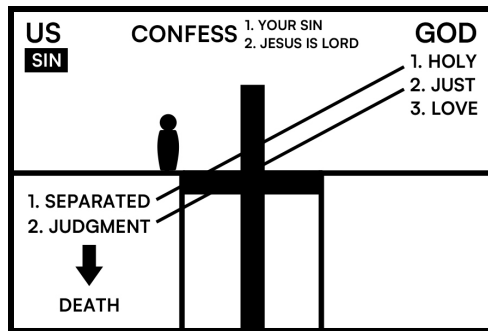
Confession here implies repentance. It means that one is truly sorry for a life of sinful rebellion and independence from and have a change of heart and mind regarding a relationship with him. They desire to be forgiven and restored to intimate relationship with God. As a result, they turn from sin and live in a way that represents God's holy character.

2) CONFESS JESUS AS LORD (Life Leader)

Romans 10:9 (NLT)

For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

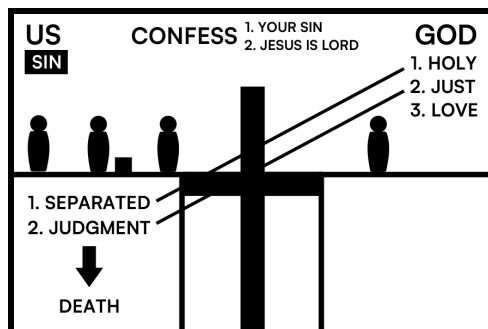
If I am truly sorry for rejecting God's rule and holiness, the implication is that I want him restored to a proper position in my life. This means I am willing to surrender control of my life and let him be in charge. It is now his life to do whatever he pleases with. I'm content to follow his lead through whatever circumstances he chooses to lead me.



Entering this type of relationship is a lot like getting married. When a proposal is given the other person needs to make a response. It could be:

- > No, I don't want to marry you
- > I need time to think about this
- > Yes, I'd love to marry you

When it comes to God, he has extended the invitation to covenant relationship with himself. We need to decide where we stand with regard to that relationship offer.



32. Where do you place yourself on the above diagram?

1) To the far left saying:

“I’M NOT INTERESTED IN PURSUING GOD”

2) In the middle of the left side, saying:

**“I’M INTERESTED,
BUT I NEED TO KNOW MORE”**

This implies that there are some hurdles that need to be dealt with. They could be intellectual (why should I believe Jesus is God, etc.), or they may be rooted in past hurts with Christians or the church. Most likely, it will be a control issue (Am I really willing to trust God and let go of the reins of my life?)

3) On the edge saying:

**“I WANT TO CROSS OVER,
I SIMPLY HAVEN’T DONE IT YET”**

4) Right side:

**“I’VE ALREADY ASKED GOD TO FORGIVE ME
AND BE LORD OF MY LIFE”**

Have the people check off on their sheet where they believe they are at on their journey.

Some may say that they believe they’re on the Bridge crossing over, but this is not the case. Their name is either written in the Book of Life or not. They are either forgiven or not. They have either declared Jesus Lord of their life and received his Holy Spirit or not. When they die they’re either in heaven, or not. There is NO MIDDLE GROUND. It is up to you to determine whether your group is a safe enough place for everyone to publically share within the group where they place themselves.

SESSION 6
Why Did Jesus Come

For those at stage 3 you can cross over right now if you wish. This can take place by a simple heart felt prayer. Here is a sample prayer you could say to God.

“Father, I realize I have led a life of sinful independence from you. I have not embraced a loving relationship with you, nor have I represented your holy character in this world. In fact, I’ve done much that has been in direct opposition to you and your plans. I want to say now that I’m sorry, and based on what Jesus accomplished on the cross and his resurrection, I ask that you forgive me for all my sin. I invite you by your Holy Spirit to come and dwell in my life. Give me a new nature and take the lead of my life. I confess you now to be Lord of my life. In the name of Jesus I pray this. Amen”

When someone prays that prayer, all heaven stops what it is doing and celebrates that person.

Luke 15:10 (NLT)

In the same way, there is joy in the presence of God’s angels when even one sinner repents.

The rejoicing is in front of the angels — guess who is doing the rejoicing?
Jesus himself!

Session 7

The Lordship of Jesus

Review: Everyone explain the Bridge to Life illustration with someone in the group.

1. What do you think it means to declare Jesus as Lord?

Matthew 19:16 (NLT)

Someone came to Jesus with this question: “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?”

2. If someone asked you this question, how would you answer?

Matthew 19:17-18 (NLT)

¹⁷ “Why ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. But to answer your question—if you want to receive eternal life, keep the commandments.”

¹⁸ “Which ones?” the man asked.

3. Why do you think Jesus answered this man's question by saying, "There is only One who is good"?

The man believed that if he were good enough, he would get to heaven. Jesus immediately corrects this assumption by saying that no one is good except God alone. In other words, if he is hoping to get to heaven based on being good, he has already fallen short.

Psalm 14:3 (NLT)

But no, all have turned away; all have become corrupt. No one does good, not a single one!

To make his point, Jesus says that someone would need to be able to keep the commands of God to live a holy life. The man asks which ones, which seems to indicate there are some commands that he perceives are negotiable or less critical than others. So Jesus lists some of the Ten Commandments from Exodus 20.

Matthew 19:18-22 (NLT)

¹⁹ And Jesus replied: "You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. ¹⁹ Honor your father and mother. Love your neighbor as yourself." ²⁰ "I've obeyed all these commandments," the young man replied. "What else must I do?" ²¹ Jesus told him, "If you want to be perfect, go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." ²² But when the young man heard this, he went away very sad, for he had many possessions.

4. Which commands did Jesus leave out?

Below is a system of using your fingers to help remember the Ten Commandments in order. Have fun with the group seeing if they can remember them next week.

Teacher Note: On the next page, have fun reviewing the Ten Commandments using their ten fingers. Afterward, see if they can recite all ten commandments from memory.

Ten Commandments on Fingers:

1: One God

Worship God only

Hold one finger up.

2: Scissors

Cut out all idols

Two fingers held like scissors cutting paper.

3: W

Watch your Words /Walk

Three fingers forming a W.

Don't take the Lord's name in vain. It means more than not swearing.

Don't claim to be God's child and live contrary to that name.

4: Family going to church

Keep the Sabbath day holy

Four fingers representing Dad, Mom & 2 kids going to church.

5: Hand salute

Honor your Parents

Five fingers together to make a salute.

6: Finger stabbing hand

Do not kill

One open hand being stabbed by one finger of the other hand.

7: Two leaving a party

Do not commit adultery

Five fingers in one hand (at a party), two in the other.

The two leave to be by themselves.

8: Hide thumbs

Do not steal

Four fingers on each hand, with thumbs hidden. In some countries if you steal they cut off your thumbs. In other countries they put you behind bars (the 8 fingers looking like bars).

9: Pinocchio's nose grew

Do not lie

Eight fingers with thumbs hidden. As Pinocchio lied his nose grew. Gradually extend one thumb out to mimic the growing nose.

10: Hands on top of fence

Do not covet — love your neighbor

Place all ten fingers and thumbs as if they are holding on top of a fence and you look over into your neighbor's yard.

The first four commands relate to: Loving God

The last six commands relate to: Loving Others

5. Which commands did Jesus leave out of his list?

Jesus left out the commands directly related to loving God above everything else.

6. Why do you think Jesus left out these specific commands?

The man would have known the Ten Commandments. They would have been taught and embedded in him as he grew up going to the synagogue. He should have become very suspicious when Jesus left these very important ones out. But, because he was so eager to be declared “righteous” and worthy of heaven, he focused solely on what he did versus what he did not do. By leaving them out, Jesus was revealing the very area that the man was neglecting in his life.

7. Why does Jesus respond by telling him to give away everything he has to the poor and follow him?

Jesus knew that this man’s god was his wealth. As long as his money remained the most important thing to him, God could never be God in his life, and God will not take second place. Whatever we value the most is what we declare to be our God. This is why the greatest commandment is to LOVE GOD with ALL your HEART, ALL your SOUL, and ALL your MIND.

8. Why did the young man walk away sad?

The young man’s wealth gave him an illusion of success, significance, independence, comfort, and status. People in that culture were considered blessed by God if they had material wealth. For him to give up his wealth would be to forfeit everything he relied on to give his life meaning. His wealth had such a grip on him that when it came to choosing between following Jesus or his money, his money won. The reason he went away sad was that he knew that even with all the money he had, his life was empty and unfulfilled. He knew that there was some disconnect between him and God, but taking a step of faith and trusting God with his life was a step he was unwilling to take. His money was his God, and he was not willing to let it go.

9. Does this mean we need to give away all our money to the poor in order to go to heaven?

Jesus knew that money was this man’s idol and that it was a barrier between him and God, so he challenged him on this point. Each of us has different things we prioritize in our lives. The question is, “Is there anything in our lives that takes a

higher priority than God himself?” If there is, then Jesus would come to us and ask us to surrender that issue to him.

10. What things we might be tempted to value more than God?

Relationship, Family, Career, Hobby, etc

11. What might Jesus want to say to us about what we value?

12. If the man had been told merely to pray a prayer, asking for forgiveness for his sins, he would have likely done that and then walked away, feeling he was now secure and going to heaven. Would his assumption have been correct?

His repentance would have been superficial and incomplete. In his heart, he was not willing to let God be God; he was not ready to let Jesus be Lord. There was still a rebellion in his spirit that did not trust God, and he valued what his money offered him more than Jesus. He would have walked away deceived, believing he was a child of God, but in for a major disappointment on the day of judgment.

13. How can we be sure we trust Jesus as Lord?

When Jesus calls us to do something, we obey. Even if we don't understand or don't see how he can protect us, we obey him, knowing that he loves us and has our best interests at heart.

Luke 6:46 (NLT)

So why do you keep calling me 'Lord, Lord!' when you don't do what I say?

Read the following scenarios and consider how Jesus challenges their perception of his Lordship.

Matthew 8:19-20 (NLT)

¹⁹Then one of the teachers of religious law said to him, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." ²⁰But Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place even to lay his head."

14. Why do you think the teacher might have been motivated to follow Jesus?

Teachers love listening to good teachers. In this case, the teacher was obviously enthralled with Jesus' teaching and expressed he would be willing to become his disciple and follow him everywhere. Surely, to train under a great teacher like Jesus would assure this teacher a position of honor and prestige among the people.

15. How might Jesus' response have made him think otherwise?

Jesus never declared that life would be easy for his followers. Following him was never a guaranteed passage to a comfortable, wealthy, or even respected life. This man's claim was a rash decision that was made without considering the cost or what he would be called to surrender. Jesus was ultimately asking him if he felt it was still worth it to follow him, even if it meant having to live by faith for a place to lay his head.

16. What are some of the costs we might face if we truly choose to call Jesus Lord?

Matthew 8:21-22 (NLT)

²¹Another of his disciples said, "Lord, first let me return home and bury my father." ²²But Jesus told him, "Follow me now. Let the spiritually dead bury their own dead."

17. What would have been so wrong with Jesus letting the man go and bury his father?

This is another situation where Jesus is challenging the priorities of the man. Let the dead bury their dead. Jesus described those who are separated from God as being spiritually dead. Their spiritual death ultimately culminates in physical death and eternal judgment. Jesus is not in the "death" business; he is in the "life-giving" business. He challenged the man to consider whether he is more interested in dealing with death, or is he more interested in giving life?

True, it is the man's father, and Jesus calls us to honor our parents. Still, when Jesus calls us to follow him, we have to decide whether our life centers on our earthly family or whether it centers on Jesus and his mission to rescue people from death. As important as burying family members is, obeying Jesus and giving life to others takes a higher priority. When God calls us to follow him it is not always convenient, but if he is truly Lord, we obey.

Matthew 10:32-39 (NLT)

³² "Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³ But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven. ³⁴ "Don't imagine that I came to bring peace to the earth! I came not to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ 'I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶ Your enemies will be right in your own household!' ³⁷ "If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine. ³⁸ If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. ³⁹ If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it."

18. Which phrases in this passage do you find hard to accept?

19. What point is Jesus stressing in the above passage?

We need to understand our relationship with Jesus is to come before any other relationship. The greatest command is to LOVE GOD first; LOVING OTHERS follows from that. If those two are reversed then God is not God; your family or friends are your god.

When family members choose to set Jesus as their priority, it will often create tension within a family. Suddenly, your values are different, your priorities are different, where and how you spend your time and money, and who you enjoy being with all change. Not everyone will be thrilled that you have chosen to follow Jesus, and it may create divisions within a family

20. Have any of you had to pay a price in your relationships because you chose to follow Jesus?

21. What does Jesus mean when he says to pick up your cross and follow him?

When Jesus picked up his cross, he was saying to the Father, "Not my will, but yours be done." Jesus did not want to die a painful, torturous death on a cross, but he knew that it was the Father's will for him to do so in order to rescue all humanity. Jesus put to death his own will and preferences, choosing to embrace the Father's will despite the great suffering it would bring him. When he tells us to pick up our cross, he calls us to follow his example of dying to self and embracing God's will, whatever the cost.

22. Why do we find it hard to surrender our lives to the rule of Jesus?

Two common reasons:

1) Pride

We like to be in control. We like to think we are self-sufficient and that we are capable of doing everything on our own. Pride says I can do a better job with my life than God can.

2) Fear

A distrust that Jesus will meet all my needs as well as a fear of where he will lead me and what he might call me to do. It is ultimately rooted in a questioning of God's true love for me.

23. In all of the above scriptures, the question is raised, “What role will Jesus play in your life?”

To declare Jesus is Lord is to say that he is now the Owner of your life; he can do with it whatever he wishes. It is HIS!

To declare Jesus is Lord requires a huge step of faith, trusting that he is HOLY, JUST and that he LOVES you fully.

24. If Jesus is truly Lord of your life, what aspects of your life may need to change this week?

Session 8

Understanding Baptism

In the New Testament, the idea of baptism is introduced by John the Baptist, developed by Jesus, and later by the Apostle Paul.

1. What do you think is the whole meaning behind baptism?

Read the following verses to determine what each explained about baptism.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

Mark 1:4-5 (NLT)

⁴This messenger was John the Baptist. He was in the wilderness and preached that people should be baptized to show that they had turned to God to receive forgiveness for their sins. ⁵All of Judea, including all the people of Jerusalem, went out to see and hear John. And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River.

2. What was the focus of John's baptism?

Focus: Repentance

John was preparing people for the coming of the Messiah and the Kingdom of God. He warned them of their need to see how they had drifted away from God and to seek forgiveness for their sin. As people came, repenting of their sin, they were baptized as a public confession, denouncing their old, sinful way of life and affirming their new loyalty to God. They were preparing for life under the coming Kingdom of God.

3. What do you think this baptism symbolized?

Symbolism: Being washed clean

JESUS CHRIST

Matthew 3:13-17 (NLT)

¹³Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. ¹⁴But John tried to talk him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptized by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?"

¹⁵But Jesus said, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires." So John agreed to baptize him. ¹⁶After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him.

¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy."

4. Obviously, Jesus, being perfect, didn't need to repent of any sin, so why do you think he might have chosen to get baptized?

5. What statement would Jesus' baptism have made regarding John's ministry and message?

Affirmation: It declared that Jesus affirmed John's ministry and message, which was ultimately about him.

When John first saw Jesus coming to him he stated, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1:29 (NLT). By getting baptized by John, Jesus implied, "John is right. I am the Messiah. I have come to take away people's sins, and I have come to bring the Kingdom of God. Follow me!"

6. Why did Jesus say he needed to do this to “carry out all God requires?”

Affirmed his mission: Jesus’ purpose in coming to earth was to die as a substitute sacrifice for our sins. In order to do so, he needed to live a sinless life in complete submission to the will of the Father. He could only accomplish this by fulfilling completely the demands of law as laid out in the Old Testament. When Jesus talks about fulfilling all righteousness, he is not merely talking about the act of baptism, but about living a sinless life and eventually going to the cross to die.

He was also affirming baptism as the initiation rite into the Kingdom of God. By getting baptized himself, he is set an example for all believers to act out their new faith and relationship with God. It is right for us to be baptized because Jesus calls all of his disciples to follow his example.

7. Why would God the Father say he was pleased with his Son at this point?

By getting baptized, Jesus declared that he was accepting the mission that the Father set before him—going to the cross. Jesus, obviously, did not look forward to the great suffering he was about to experience. The human part of Jesus dreaded the pain, both spiritually and physically, that he was about to endure. His personal preference would have been to avoid it. But Jesus was committed to doing the will of the Father despite the personal cost for himself.

Luke 22:42 (NLT)

“Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.”

Jesus’ ministry started and ended with the tension of whose “will” will prevail. Jesus affirmed submission to the Father at the beginning of his ministry and then also at the end.

Baptism is the point of letting go of the control of your life and handing the reins over to God. Jesus had to battle with this, just as we all do, yet he obeyed, despite the immense suffering and death it would cost him. Because of this act of submission, the Father responded with his affirmation of love. In a sense, it is equivalent to saying, “Son, I’m proud of you!”

8. In what stage of Jesus’ ministry did his baptism take place?

Launching Point: Jesus’ baptism took place at the very beginning of his ministry. It was the moment he was empowered by the Holy Spirit for the ministry that was now set before him. Baptism for us is the launching point into our new life of ministry, also empowered by the Spirit. It is from this beginning point that we live with a whole new purpose, new set of priorities, and life goals.

JESUS BUILDS ON THE SYMBOLISM

Mark 10:38-39 (NLT)

³⁸But Jesus said to them, "You don't know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of suffering I am about to drink? Are you able to be baptized with the baptism of suffering I must be baptized with?" ³⁹"Oh yes," they replied, "we are able!" Then Jesus told them, "You will indeed drink from my bitter cup and be baptized with my baptism of suffering.

Luke 12:50 (NLT)

I have a terrible baptism of suffering ahead of me, and I am under a heavy burden until it is accomplished.

9. What do you think he is referring to when he talks about the baptism he'll have to undergo?

He is referring to his upcoming death. He will be immersed into death.

APOSTLE PAUL

Romans 6:3-4 (NLT)

³Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? ⁴For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

Colossians 2:12 (NLT)

For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to a new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

10. According to these verses, what is the symbolism of being lowered into the water?

Death and burial of your old self: By uniting ourselves with Christ, his death and burial is applied to us and the death consequence for our sin is now paid for. In baptism we are acting out the fact that, through Christ, our sinful nature has been input to death, and we have been set free from its control. Though we are given a new life with a new nature, we still struggle with sin because we have a body and mind that have been corrupted by sin. On the day when Christ returns the Bible tells us we will be given new bodies and the picture will be complete.

1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

11. What is the symbolism of coming up out of the water?

Rising to new life

Coming out of the water denotes resurrection. As we unite with Christ in his death, just as the Spirit raised him to new life, so will his Spirit give us new life. This new life, empowered by the Holy Spirit, gives us a whole new identity, set of priorities, and life purpose. The Spirit guides us, transforms us, guards us and shows us how to experience intimacy with God. It's a whole new life.

Marriage Example: When a person gets married the old single life instantly dies. They have become one with another and live their lives in light of that new relationship. Certain things from their old life no longer play a role in their new life and new relationship. In fact, some of those old things would be very destructive to the new relationship (dating, spending money however you wish, going away on the spur of the moment on your own, working long hours at the office, etc.) This new life has new priorities, new habits, new goals and a new lifestyle.

Read the following passages. Focus on why people were getting baptized.

Acts 2:36-41 (NLT)

³⁶“So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!”

³⁷Peter’s words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”

³⁸Peter replied, “Each of you must repent of your sins, turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ to show that you have received forgiveness for your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹This promise is to you, and to your children, and even to the Gentiles—all who have been called by the Lord our God.”

⁴⁰Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation!”

⁴¹Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.

Acts 8:34-36, 38 (NLT)

³⁴The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or someone else?” ³⁵So beginning with this same Scripture, Philip told him the Good News about Jesus. ³⁶As they rode along, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look! There’s some water! Why can’t I be baptized?” ³⁸He ordered the carriage to stop, and they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

Acts 16:29-34 (NLT)

²⁹The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰Then he brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” ³¹They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household.” ³²And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household. ³³Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared

SESSION 8
Understanding Baptism

for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized.³⁴ He brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God.

12. According to these verses, who should get baptized and when?

Those who have come to a point where they:

- > **BELIEVE** Jesus to have died for them and rose again, offering them forgiveness and new life.

- > Confess their sin and **REPENT**.

People were baptized at the point they placed faith in Jesus Christ (declared themselves his disciple) and received new life. It was at the point in time when they died to their old self and received the Holy Spirit.

Picture Summary:

WATER:	<u><i>Being washed clean</i></u>
GOING INTO THE WATER:	<u><i>Death and burial of your old self</i></u>
RISING FROM THE WATER:	<u><i>Rising to new life in Christ</i></u>
WALKING OUT OF THE WATER:	<u><i>Launching into a new life of ministry</i></u>

Session 9

The Lord's Table

1. **Before we start to probe into the scriptures, what can you tell me about what the Lord's Supper is and why we participate in it?**

Matthew 26:17-20 (NLT)

¹⁷On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to prepare the Passover meal for you?" ¹⁸"As you go into the city," he told them, "you will see a certain man. Tell him, 'The Teacher says: My time has come, and I will eat the Passover meal with my disciples at your house.'" ¹⁹So the disciples did as Jesus told them and prepared the Passover meal there. ²⁰When it was evening, Jesus sat down at the table with the twelve disciples.

2. **What do you know about the Passover Feast?**

God sent Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, where they had been slaves under Pharaoh. Through Moses, God performed nine miraculous signs to convince Pharaoh to let the people go, but Pharaoh refused to comply each time. The following passage reveals the tenth and final warning to Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave Egypt.

Exodus 12:1-20 (NLT)

¹While the Israelites were still in the land of Egypt, the LORD gave the following instructions to Moses and Aaron: ²“From now on, this month will be the first month of the year for you. ³Announce to the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each family must choose a lamb or a young goat for a sacrifice, one animal for each household. ⁴If a family is too small to eat a whole animal, let them share with another family in the neighborhood. Divide the animal according to the size of each family and how much they can eat. ⁵The animal you select must be a one-year-old male, either a sheep or a goat, with no defects.

⁶“Take special care of this chosen animal until the evening of the fourteenth day of this first month. Then the whole assembly of the community of Israel must slaughter their lamb or young goat at twilight. ⁷They are to take some of the blood and smear it on the sides and top of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the animal. ⁸That same night they must roast the meat over a fire and eat it along with bitter salad greens and bread made without yeast. ⁹Do not eat any of the meat raw or boiled in water. The whole animal—including the head, legs, and internal organs—must be roasted over a fire. ¹⁰Do not leave any of it until the next morning. Burn whatever is not eaten before morning.

¹¹“These are your instructions for eating this meal: Be fully dressed, wear your sandals, and carry your walking stick in your hand. Eat the meal with urgency, for this is the LORD's Passover. ¹²On that night I will pass through the land of Egypt and strike down every firstborn son and firstborn male animal in the land of Egypt. I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt, for I am the LORD! ¹³But the blood on your doorposts will serve as a sign, marking the houses where you are staying. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. This plague of death will not touch you when I strike the land of Egypt.

¹⁴“This is a day to remember. Each year, from generation to generation, you must celebrate it as a special festival to the LORD. This is a law for all time. ¹⁵For seven days the bread you eat must be made without yeast. On the first day of the festival, remove every trace of yeast from your homes. Anyone who eats bread made with yeast during the seven days of the festival will be cut off from the community of Israel. ¹⁶On the first day of the festival and again on the seventh day, all the people must observe an official day for holy assembly. No work of any kind may be done on these days except in the preparation of food. ¹⁷“Celebrate this Festival of Unleavened Bread, for it will remind you that I brought your forces out of the land of Egypt on this very day. This festival will be a permanent law for you; celebrate this day from generation to generation. ¹⁸The bread you eat must be made without yeast from the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month until the evening of the twenty-first day of that month. ¹⁹During those seven days, there must be no trace of yeast in your homes. Anyone who eats anything made with yeast during this week will be cut off from the community of Israel. These regulations apply both to the foreigners living among you and to the native-born Israelites. ²⁰During those days you must not eat anything made with yeast. Wherever you live, eat only bread made without yeast.”

3. What is the point of the Passover Feast?

The Passover Feast was a meal that God commanded the Israelites to celebrate once a year as reminder of their dramatic rescue from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12). Their freedom came about as each Israelite took a lamb, slaughtered it, put the blood on the doorposts of their home, and then ate the roasted lamb as part of the meal. As they did this, a destroying angel went through Egypt, killing the firstborn male of every household that did not have the blood applied to their house. In such a way, God finally convinced Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave.

4. What were the three symbols of the Passover meal? What did these represent to the Israelites of that day?

1. The Sacrificial lamb

This was the final curse against Pharaoh, who had hardened his heart through the first nine plagues. The death of his firstborn and the firstborn of every Egyptian family was what it took for the Israelites to gain freedom from Pharaoh's control.

2. Bitter Greens

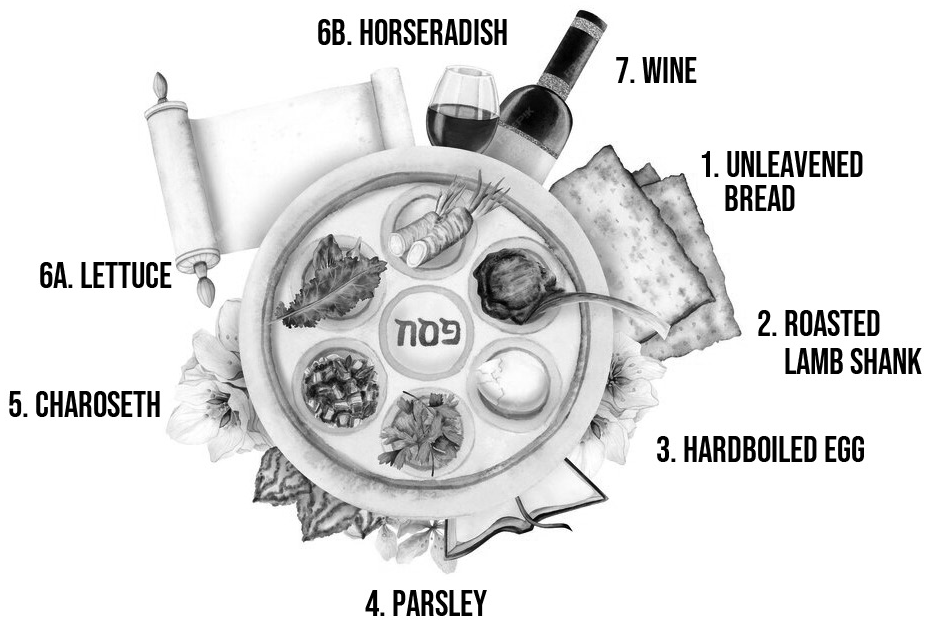
The bitter greens reminded the Israelites of the harshness of slavery and their need for a savior.

3. Unleavened Bread

The bread was to be unleavened because they would leave quickly and take the bread with them. You would not want to travel with a bunch of yeast-inflated loaves.

Over the years, the Israelites added symbols to the feast to help every generation remember the dramatic way God rescued Israel from slavery. These symbols are still used in Passover celebrations today. The image on the next page shows a typical Jewish Passover Seder plate.

SESSION 9
The Lord's Table



5. Can you guess what each item symbolized to the Jews?

ITEM	SYMBOLISM
1. Unleavened Bread	<p>The Israelites were not to make bread with yeast to emphasize how quickly there would be a turn of events, and they would quickly flee from Egypt. Yeast takes time to rise — they would not have that time. That is why they were even instructed to eat in haste with their cloaks and sandals on and their staff in their hands</p> <p>During the feast, the middle piece of bread is taken and broken in half. One half is wrapped in a cloth and hidden behind a pillow until later in the meal.</p> <p>The upper and lower pieces are eaten at various stages of the meal. The hidden piece is brought out near the end of a meal, broken, and each participant is given a piece to eat.</p>
2. Roasted Lamb Shank	<p>This is a reminder of the lamb that was sacrificed in place of the firstborn male of the family. When the angel saw the blood of the lamb applied to the doorposts, he passed over that house. Since the destruction of the temple in 70 AD., Jews do not sacrifice lambs at the altar. The shank bone looks forward to the day when the temple will be rebuilt.</p>
3. Hardboiled Egg	<p>This is sometimes used to symbolically represent a full meal. It is a reminder of the hardness of Pharaoh's heart and the tears of the Israelites who slaved under Egyptian taskmasters.</p>
4. Parsley	<p>Dipped in salt water, this is a reminder of passing through the Red Sea to become a free, growing, and independent nation</p>

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5. Charoseth	Choopeed apple mixed with cinamon, is a reminder of the bricks and mortar they used to make bricks as slaves in Egypt.
6A&6B. Bitter Herbs: Lettuce & Horseradish	These are a reminder of the bitterness of slavery they experienced in Egypt. Lettuce is sometimes used as it starts off tasting sweet but then turns bitter later. This remembers how their stay in Egypt started sweet but then turned bitter.
7. WINE	<p>The pouring of each cup of wine initiated the start of a new phase of the feast. The cup would be poured at the beginning of each section and then drunk to conclude that section.</p> <p>1. The Cup of Sanctification: Celebrates that they are a people set apart to God to be holy.</p> <p>2. The Cup of Instruction: Explains the meaning of the Passover symbols. Children were to ask four specific questions regarding the meaning of the symbols. The Father would then explain the significance of each, relating the whole exodus story.</p> <p>3. The Cup of Redemption: Celebrates their freedom from bondage.</p> <p>4. The Cup of Praise: Celebrates God, who set them free.</p>

Matthew 26:26-29 (NLT)

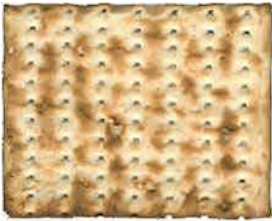
²⁶ As they were eating [the Passover Meal], Jesus took some **bread** and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "Take this and eat it, for this is my body."²⁷ And he took a cup of **wine** and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them and said, "Each of you drink from it,²⁸ for this is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice to forgive the sins of many.²⁹ Mark my words—I will not drink wine again until the day I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom."

6. Jesus, during his last supper, reinterpreted these elements as symbolically referring to himself. Why do you think Jesus would compare his life to the Passover experience of the Old Testament?

The Passover was all about an escape from bondage and death through the substitute sacrifice of a pure, spotless lamb. He is essentially saying the Passover experience was simply a picture of the "real" escape from bondage and death caused by our sin. By dying on the cross, he would become the substitute sacrifice for our sins and create a new "exodus" to true freedom.

Our modern-day Lord's Table focuses on two main elements: the unleavened bread and the wine.

THE UNLEAVENED BREAD



7. How do the three loaves of bread (The Unity) point to Jesus?

We understand this to be representative of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

8. What do you think is the New Testament's significance of the bread being made without yeast?

Yeast carries the symbolism of sin and false teaching, which grows and spreads. In this case, the bread is without yeast to depict Jesus, who is without sin.

1 Corinthians 5:6—8 (NLT)

⁶Your boasting about this is terrible. Don't you realize that this sin is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough? ⁷Get rid of the old "yeast" by removing this wicked person from among you. Then you will be like a fresh batch of dough made without yeast, which is what you really are. Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us. ⁸So let us celebrate the festival, not with the old bread of wickedness and evil, but with the new bread of sincerity and truth.

9. What do you think is the significance of Jesus taking the middle loaf, breaking it, wrapping it in a cloth, and hiding it behind a pillow?

This second piece of bread represents Jesus, the Son of God, whose body was broken on the cross, wrapped in burial cloths, and then laid in the tomb behind a great stone, only to be later resurrected.

10. What is the symbolism of the bread having holes and stripes?

The stripes could represent the lashings Jesus received on his back, and the holes could represent the nail holes in his hands and feet.

Isaiah 53:5 (NASB)

But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. [and with his stripes we are healed. KJV]

THE WINE

The cup Jesus referred to in the Last Supper was the third cup, called the Cup of Redemption.

11. What does it mean to “redeem” something?

To redeem something means to pay the price to purchase something back as a debt repayment

For example, If you pawned your watch, you could redeem it by paying the debt owed. In biblical days, if a family owed a debt they couldn't pay, a child/servant could be taken as a slave for compensation. The Father could redeem his child/servant by paying the ransom price or by offering a servant of greater working value.

12. Why would Jesus say that this cup of wine represents his blood that will be shed?

Jesus declared that through his death on the cross, he is the substitute sacrifice whose blood would be shed so that we may be forgiven and set free from bondage to sin and death. In other words, he paid the ransom price (death) on our behalf. We could also consider him the “greater one” who was given on our behalf to set us free.

13. Wine symbolizes two contrasting ideas in scripture. Can you think what they are?

1. Abundant Blessing

Amos 9:13 (NLT)

“The time will come,” says the LORD, “when the grain and grapes will grow faster than they can be harvested. Then the terraced vineyards on the hills of Israel will drip with sweet wine!”

2. God's Wrath

Psalms 75:8 (NLT)

For the LORD holds a cup in his hand that is full of foaming wine mixed with spices. He pours out the wine in judgment, and all the wicked must drink it, draining it to the dregs.

14. How are both of these ideas represented in Jesus' blood shed on the cross?

Wrath: God released his full wrath against all sin through Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus' death satisfied the demand for justice against sin.

Isaiah 53:5–6 (NLT)

⁵But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. ⁶All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all.

Blessing: Through Christ's blood shed on the cross, we can be forgiven and receive every spiritual blessing through Christ.

Ephesians 1:3 (NLT)

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.

Ephesians 1:7–8 (NLT)

⁷He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. ⁸He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

1 Corinthians 11:26 (NIV)

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11:24,25 (NIV)

²⁴"This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵"This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

15. Why do you think Jesus wants us to continue to celebrate this feast?

If escaping slavery from another country was an important cause for celebration, how much more so is escaping our bondage to sin and judgment? It is all about remembering what Christ has done for us on the cross, the price he paid, and the freedom he has purchased for us.

It is easy for us to forget. We quickly forget the good things God has done for us; we lose perspective and sight of where we came from. It reminds us of where we are headed and encourages us to live out that reality in our lives now. You are a child of the King who is coming back to claim you as his own; live a life worthy of that calling and look forward to Christ's return.

16. Why do you think it might be important for a church to celebrate this together?

In the same way that the Passover was celebrated as a family, it is important for the "Family of God" to celebrate it together. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ have pulled us together and created us as a family. As we all eat and drink the symbols together, we proclaim that Jesus has redeemed us, he is worthy of our worship, and that we need to stay true to the life and relationship he has called us to.

There is a spiritual bonding that takes place among us as the church celebrates this feast together. To miss out on this experience is to miss out on a deeply significant celebration that Christ has given to us as a gift to bless and strengthen us.

17. How often do you think we should celebrate the Lord's Table?

- › The Passover was celebrated by the Jews once a year.
- › Some churches celebrate the Lord's Table every week as a continual reminder.
- › Some churches celebrate once a month so as not to make it routine and become immune to its significance.
- › The New Testament does not tell us how often to celebrate it. It only says that "whenever" you do it, do it, remembering who Jesus is and what he has done for you.

18. What do you think are some of the personal benefits you might receive from celebrating the Lord's Table with your church family?

19. What might be lacking in your life should this ceremony be neglected?

SESSION 9
The Lord's Table

Session 10

The Holy Spirit

1. If someone asked you to explain who the Holy Spirit is, what would you say?
2. Do you typically think of the Holy Spirit more as a “force/energy” or as a person?
3. What do the following verses teach us about the Holy Spirit?

Matthew 28:19 (NLT)

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is equal with the Father and Son.

Acts 5:3-4 (NLT)

³Then Peter said, “Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself. ⁴The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren’t lying to us but to God!”

The Holy Spirit is God.

Romans 8:11 (NLT)

The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us new life.

Ephesians 4:30 (NLT)

And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he is the one who has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.

The Holy Spirit can experience sorrow

Think of the idea of a person, not so much in terms of a being with a physical body, but as an individual who has personality, can think, talk and feel, etc.

SUMMARY:

The Holy Spirit has characteristics of a person vs. a force.

The word “Spirit” is gender-neutral, and so sometimes the word “it” is used, but it is more in line with the term “person” or “child,” which has no gender qualification but is still a person.

Illustration of understanding the nature of the Holy Spirit:

One of the best ways to understand the nature of God is to look at his image —us. When God designed us, he made us both a spiritual and physical being. Apart from our body, our spirit will still have memory, intellect, and personality. It is still us—just absent a body. However, our bodies and spirits are finite and must remain together while on earth.

Jesus, in his body, was also limited physically and geographically. However, his Spirit was still eternal and omnipresent. Even now, though Jesus reigns in heaven, his Spirit is free to be in all places at all times. His Spirit is not just a force, but part of his personhood, in the same way, our spirits are fully us (only minus the body).

Read the following passages and discuss the Holy Spirit's activity.

John 16:8 (NLT)

And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment.

The Holy Spirit Convicts us of Sin, Righteousness, and Judgment

How does the Holy Spirit convict us?

When we do wrong, the Holy Spirit convicts us through our conscience to steer us back to the right path. The Holy Spirit's convicting work brings us to the point of repentance and a restored joy with the Father. This means we should always listen to our conscience.

John 14:26 (NLT)

But when the Father sends the Counselor as my representative—and by the Counselor I mean the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I myself have told you.

The Holy Spirit Teaches us

How does the Holy Spirit teach us?

4. Have you ever met someone who has read the Bible, but nothing sinks in or makes any real sense to them? How is this possible?

The Holy Spirit helps us to understand spiritual truths that don't seem to make sense apart from Christ. Once we enter into a relationship with God, his Spirit speaks to our spirit, helping us to grasp concepts that never seemed to click or make sense before. God himself becomes our teacher.

Romans 8:14 (NLT)

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

Matthew 4:1 (NIV)

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.

The Holy Spirit Leads us

5. How does the Holy Spirit lead us?

6. The Holy Spirit leads through:

a) The Bible

As we prayerfully read God's word, the Holy Spirit is able to bring passages to life that will help guide us through life. This is not a mysterious encounter but an open conversation whereby he can lead us through his word.

b) Promptings

We will sometimes receive a strong burden, conviction, or message about something we need to do or stop doing. This will always be in sync with Scripture and the character of God, to bring glory to Jesus Christ and strengthen the church.

c) Dreams, Visions, Messages

On occasion, God will use an extraordinary means to convey an important message. These may require spiritual discernment from others within the family of God. Be aware, not every vision is a message from God.

d) Other Believers

Sometimes, to strengthen the community, God gives someone else a message he wants us to hear. We believe this takes place at church services, small groups, etc., but also on an individual basis.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NLT)

And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more.

Philippians 3:21 (NLT)

He will take these weak mortal bodies of ours and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same mighty power that he will use to conquer everything, everywhere.

The Holy Spirit Changes us — spiritually and physically

He immediately changes our nature when he indwells us.
He continues to renew our minds to make us increasingly like Jesus Christ.
He changes our bodies when Christ returns.

Acts 1:8 (NLT)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

The Holy Spirit Empowers us

7. What are some of the different ways the Holy Spirit enables and empowers us for life and ministry?

8. To date, we have looked at the Father, the Son, and now the Holy Spirit. How might you explain the difference between the roles of all three in how they relate to us?

The Father:

God as sovereign architect, overseeing the plan for humanity.

- › All authority in heaven rests in the Father’s hands.
- › We pray to the Father, through the Spirit, in the Son’s name.
- › The Father sends the Son and the Spirit.

The Son:

The visible expression of God, dealing with humanity on the physical level.

- › The Son fulfills the Father’s purposes in creation and redemption of humanity.
- › The goal of the Son is to bring us to the Father.
- › The Son also sends the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit:

God dealing with humanity on the spiritual level.

- › The Holy Spirit convicts us with regard to sin, righteousness, and judgment.
- › The Holy Spirit gives us new life by applying the death & resurrection of Christ to us and renews us to be like Christ.
- › He fills and empowers us to walk the Christ-like life.

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The Holy Spirit

Session 11

The Spirit-Filled Life

Ephesians 5:18 (ESV)

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,

- 1. What does it mean to be “filled” with the Holy Spirit?**
- 2. What happens when one is “filled” with alcohol?**

Alcohol influences the body and mind to such a degree that people no longer act as they normally would. Instead, they act according to the amount of alcohol they have consumed. The more they drink, the more they lose control over their life. Unfortunately, this is usually for the negative and has a destructive effect.

- 3. What insight does this contrast give us about what it means to be “filled” with the Holy Spirit?**

Paul is writing to believers who already have the Holy Spirit in their lives, yet they still need to be “filled” with the Holy Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit implies that the Holy Spirit is in our life in such a way that his presence influences every aspect of our lives. As we come under his control, we start to think differently about life and the world. Our behavior changes to become more Christ-like. Unlike alcohol, which decreases our control, the Spirit’s presence actually increases our self-control so that we can live the way God desires us to. This occurs because the Spirit restrains our sin nature, helping us to resist temptation and, as a result, make godly choices instead of choices that are being driven by sinful impulses.

A Spirit-filled life is a Spirit-controlled life.

4. How does one become “filled” with the Holy Spirit?

Car Bumper Sticker: “God is my Co-Pilot”

Next Bumper Sticker: “If God is your Co-Pilot, you’re in the wrong seat!”

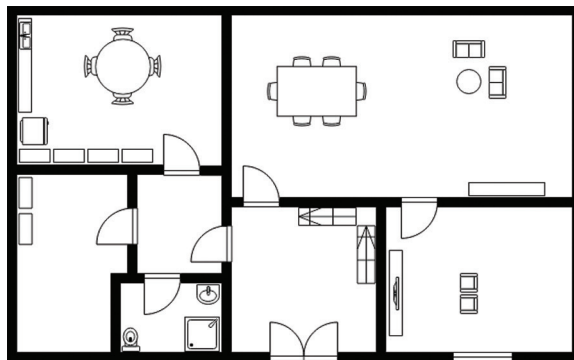
We are filled with the Spirit when we surrender all areas of our life to his control.

5. Who is on the THRONE of your life?

In the past, people would sometimes set their watches to beep on the hour. Whenever the beep went off, it is a reminder for them to evaluate their life to see who is sitting on the throne of their life—them or God. Being filled with the Spirit is an act of obedience. In Ephesians 5:18, the verb is an imperative, not a “request,” meaning it is something we are commanded to do.

This contrast with some people’s perspective of pleading with the Holy Spirit to fill them. The Spirit fills us when we align our lives with his character and purposes, and surrender to his daily control.

You may want to show the video: “The Stool” by One Time Blind
http://onetimeblind.com/resources_videos.html (Also on YouTube)



The House Illustration

We invite the Spirit into the “house” of our life, telling him to make himself at home. However, we sometimes, knowingly or unknowingly, keep some areas of our lives off-limits (locked doors) to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit-filled person is the one who goes through his life, unlocking all the doors allowing the Spirit to enter that room, clean it up, and use it for God’s glory. As we release control of our lives and submit in obedience to his will, we will be led and directed by the Spirit.

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We are filled with the Spirit when we surrender our will, agenda, pride, and life to the will of God—as Jesus modeled at his baptism and in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Spirit then has full access to our life and will accomplish his purposes in our lives.

6. What are some areas of our life we might keep closed off to the Holy Spirit?

7. What are some of the results of being “filled” with the Spirit?

Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT)

²²But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

8. Why are these traits called “fruits of the Spirit”?

These are not characteristics we need to strive to achieve; these are character traits that accompany the Spirit when he comes into our life. The more we allow the Holy Spirit to permeate every area of our life, the more we experience the evidence of these fruits.

9. If you could experience one of these traits right now, which one would you like to experience most?

10. What do you think is the key to experiencing this fruit in your life?

LIVING THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

11. How might we relate to others if we are filled with the Holy Spirit?

Look at the remainder of the Ephesians 5 passage.

Underline what the Spirit-filled person starts doing.

Ephesians 5:18-21 (ESV)

¹⁸And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

12. Why do you think singing worship songs tops the list?

We are created for praise. When filled with the Spirit, music becomes a powerful expression of our love and adoration of God, for who he is and what he has done. It is a bonding experience when we can gather with other believers to praise and worship our heavenly Father. Note that we actually sing to “one another.”

13. Why would we give thanks always for everything?

If the Spirit is in control, he will only allow us to experience what he wants us to experience for his purposes. We simply need to rest, confident that God is in control and that he loves us.

Corrie Ten Boom and her sister Betsy were placed in a Nazi concentration camp because of their commitment to help rescue the Jews. As Christians, they read that they were to give thanks in all circumstances. So, they started to thank God for everything they were experiencing in the camp: the bible they were able to smuggle into the camp, the fact that they had the freedom to hold bible studies in the room without being disturbed by the guards and the crowded rooms, so more could hear about Jesus. Betsy even gave thanks for the fleas, although Corrie struggled with that and was convinced Betsy was wrong about that one. Later Betsy discovered that the main reason they had so much freedom to hold bible studies in the large room was because of the fleas. The guards would not go anywhere near the room. (The Hiding Place by Corrie ten Boon)

The Spirit-filled life finds its joy from a relationship with God, surpassing any circumstances we might encounter. Circumstances, then, simply become a means by which God will accomplish his purposes in our lives.

14. What does it mean to submit to one another?

Submission does not mean obedience. It means putting the needs and well-being of others ahead of your own.

Philippians 2:3-5 (NLT)

³Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. ⁵You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

15. What are some examples of how you think Jesus modeled the Spirit-filled life?

Read the following verses and discuss how Jesus modeled the Spirit-filled life.

Matthew 4:1 (NIV)

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.

John 12:49 (NIV)

For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.

John 14:31 (NIV)

...but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.

Jesus followed the Spirit's leading whenever it prompted him. The Father was able to direct Jesus because Jesus was open to being led by the Spirit.

He only said what the Father told him to say. He only did what the Father directed him to do

By developing an intimacy with God, Jesus learned to recognize the voice and leading of the Spirit. The more time we spend with God, the more we step out in faith, trusting him in whatever he brings our way, and the more we focus on his purposes, the more we can identify his will.

Galatians 5:25 (NIV)

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

16. How can we live in step with the Spirit tomorrow? How can we live the Spirit-filled life?

1) By reading the Bible

If the Holy Spirit primarily teaches us by bringing the Word of God to life in our lives, it makes sense that we need to be reading it daily to allow him to teach and lead us.

2) By praying

Through prayer, we ask God to lead us and guide us through all life's challenges. The Holy Spirit leads as we invite him to show us the way.

3) By taking seriously the mission of Jesus

The Holy Spirit is continuing the ministry of Christ on earth through his people. If you are not interested in carrying on this mission, there will be a disconnect between what you are doing and what the Spirit desires to do through you.

4) By obeying the Holy Spirit's promptings

The Holy Spirit convicts and leads us through promptings to our spirit. This can be entirely subjective, and caution needs to be exercised. Sometimes our promptings can be evoked by our desires, fears, or insecurities. Sometimes our promptings can be produced by, or initiated by, Satan. In every case, whenever we sense a prompting that we believe may be from God, we need to test it.

If it is from God, it will:

Be in complete harmony with God's moral will as expressed in scripture

Be a continuation of the work and mission of Jesus Christ

Bring glory to God

Require a step of faith

Sample Morning Prayer

“Father, I hand over control of my life to you today. It is yours to do with whatever you wish. Help me recognize and follow your Spirit’s leading, both in what I say and what I do. I will trust that whatever circumstances I experience, you have allowed to come my way for your purposes. I will choose to be thankful at all times, knowing you love me and are watching over me. May I simply live in a way that is pleasing to you, and may I represent you well today.”

SESSION 11
The Spirit-Filled Life

Session 12

The Bible

1. How would you explain the nature of the Bible to someone else? What is it?

The goal of this study is to understand the Bible's perspective of itself.

Read the following passage together.

Underline each of the effects the Word of God can have on our life.

Psalm 19:7-11 (ESV)

⁷The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;
⁸the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;
⁹the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.
¹⁰More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.
¹¹Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them
there is great reward.

2. What do you think about these statements?

3. If we invented a pill that could revive your soul, make you wiser, give you joy, and give you greater understanding of life, how well do you think it would sell?

Such a pill would fly off the shelves instantly. It would create mass mobs of people desperate to get their hands on it. It would under global demand. We would make billions of dollars on its sale.

4. Why don't we gravitate to the Bible with the same enthusiasm as the Psalmist?

The Bible doesn't evoke that type of response because people don't believe it will really produce those results. We want change instantly and are not willing to allow the Word of God to do a gradual transforming work in our life.

The main reason is that the Bible must be read from a relational perspective. It is God's words to us. Apart from an intimate relationship with God, the words of the Bible will fall empty. We may still get some good advice from the Bible, but new life, wisdom, joy, and understanding come as we hear and surrender to these words from God himself.

If we read the Bible as **God's love letter** to us, then the words take on a whole new impact and meaning. They become more precious than gold and sweeter than honey. It's not difficult to get someone with that perspective to find time to dive into God's Word.

5. How can we claim the Bible is the Word of God, when we know it was written by people?

Get your students' input.

6. How do the following verses provide confidence that God's Word actually is God's word?

Deuteronomy 18:18-22 (NLT)

¹⁸I will raise up a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites. I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell the people everything I command him. ¹⁹I will personally deal with anyone who will not listen to the messages the prophet proclaims on my behalf. ²⁰But any prophet who falsely claims to speak in my name or who speaks in the name of another god must die. ²¹“But you may wonder, ‘How will we know whether or not a prophecy is from the LORD?’ ²²If the prophet speaks in the LORD’s name but his prediction does not happen or come true, you will know that the LORD did not give that message. That prophet has spoken without my authority and need not be feared.

God says that the words are his, not the prophet’s, and he backs it up with a warning. No person making up the words himself would have added the whole bit about unfulfilled prophecy bringing the death sentence. That would not have been a clever move! God authenticated his word by making promises and prophecies and then fulfilling them.

Mark 16:20 (NLT)

And the disciples went everywhere and preached, and the Lord worked through them, confirming what they said by many miraculous signs.

God used signs of healing, casting out demons, raising the dead, and other miracles to authenticate the message that was being delivered.

2 Peter 1:19-21 (NLT)

¹⁹Because of that experience, we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets. You must pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place—until the Day dawns, and Christ the Morning Star shines in your hearts. ²⁰Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet’s own understanding, ²¹or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.

7. What do you think it means when it says they were “moved by the Holy Spirit?”

The words didn’t originate with men, but with God. Men merely communicated what was given to them by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit inspired them in such a way that they wrote or spoke the Spirit’s words, even though it came through their specific dialect, personality, and grammatical skills. The writers themselves declared that what was expressed did not come from them but God.

8. According to the verses below, how did the Bible writers view what was written?

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NLT)

Therefore, we never stop thanking God that when you received his message from us, you didn't think of our words as mere human ideas. You accepted what we said as the very word of God—which, of course, it is. And this word continues to work in you who believe.

The Bible should never be understood to be man's message, but rather, God's.

2 Peter 3:15-16 (ESV)

¹⁵And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

The words "other scriptures" here is key. Peter is expressing that Paul's writings are also "Scripture" and have been given to him by God.

9. What is the benefit of reading the Bible?

2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV)

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

IT TEACHES truth -----IT REFUTES false teaching.

The translated word "reproof" is better understood in this context as "refute."

IT CORRECTS ungodly behavior----- IT TRAINS us to live righteously

It brings us back to righteousness and accomplish all God has prepared for us.

Hebrews 4:12 (NLT)

For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

The Word of God is ALIVE and POWERFUL. This is because the Word of God is the means by which God communicates with us. Through his word, he teaches and convicts us. God's word will speak to us personally because God speaks through the words. He brings his word to life in a way that will impact us and change our relationship with him.

10. What are the implications for anyone who purposefully distorts the Word of God?**Revelation 22:18-19 (NLT)**

¹⁸And I solemnly declare to everyone who hears the words of prophecy written in this book: If anyone adds anything to what is written here, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book. ¹⁹And if anyone removes any of the words from this book of prophecy, God will remove that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city that are described in this book.

Plagues - Judgment
Loss of Life Eternal

11. What is the safeguard that the Bible won't be destroyed or distorted throughout history or that we won't ever lose God's Word to us?**Matthew 5:18 (NLT)**

I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God's law will disappear until its purpose is achieved.

Every little stroke of the pen will remain throughout time until everything has been fulfilled. God will not let his word be exterminated or distorted in such a way that we should worry or lack confidence in the Bible we have today. He is actively involved in guarding his word.

Isaiah 40:8 (NLT)

*The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands **forever.***"

His promise.

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE TIPS

Start with a Proper Attitude

View this as an opportunity to spend time with God and learn from him. This isn't like reading a textbook; it's far more relational than that. This is God writing a letter to you, and he desires to reveal to you something about himself, something about your relationship with him, and something about how to live. Read the Bible with a sense of expectation.

Select a Specific Time

General principle: Try to give God the best time of your day vs. left over time. For some, it's in the morning, for others, it's in the evening. If you're approaching God when your mind and body is tired, don't expect to get as much out of your time together — that's true with any relationship. Value this time and try not to let it get crowded out by less important things in life (i.e. TV, social media, books, etc.). Don't focus on how long you're meeting with God - don't watch the clock. Remember, some days the time will be short, other days longer; the key is to focus on the relationship.

Choose a Special Place

It's best if you can get off by yourself somewhere where you won't be disturbed or distracted. Choose a location with good lighting and a place where you are comfortable talking out loud to God (but not so comfortable that you fall asleep, i.e., bed).

Read Conversationally

We're not talking in-depth theological studying at this point. We're talking about you and God getting to know each other. As you read through the passage, dialogue with God about what you're reading. If something sounds confusing, let him know and ask him to help you figure out the meaning. If you come across a statement that hits home to you — make special note of that and spend some time talking to God about it. Some questions will drive you to a deeper theological study on the issue.

Apply it

"What am I going to do about what I've just read?"

The time you spend will only be as beneficial as the application of what you are learning to your daily life. Test God in this to see if what he says actually works. Find ways to remind yourself throughout the day of the truth you're trying to apply. This will help it sink in. Remember, if you read the Bible but don't apply it to your life, it is absolutely useless to you.

***But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says.
Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.
James 1:22 (NLT)***

Even if you're not sure what you believe about God, start off by asking him to reveal himself to you through the passage you're about to read, then read it with that sense of expectation.

BIBLE STRUCTURE (66 books)

Old Testament (39 Books)		
History (17)	Poetry (5)	Prophecy (17)
The Law/Pentateuch (5)	Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs	Major Prophets (5 Large)
Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy		Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel
Historical Books (12)		Minor Prophets (12 Small)
Joshua Judges Ruth 1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 2 Kings 1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah Esther		Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi

New Testament (27 Books)			
History (5)	Paul's Letters (13)	Other's Letters (8)	Prophecy (1)
Life of Jesus/Gospels (4)	Letters to Churches (9)	Hebrews James 1 Peter 2 Peter 1 John 2 John 3 John Jude	Revelation
Matthew Mark Luke John	Romans 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians 1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians		
The Early Church (1)	Letters to Individuals (4)		
Acts	1 Timothy 2 Timothy Titus Philemon		

Bible Authorship

The Bible was written by more than 40 different authors over 1500 years.

Authors: Shepherds, Fishermen, Kings, Royalty, Tax Collectors, Doctors, Tent Makers, Priests, Prophets, brother of Jesus, etc.

Historical Reliability

The closer the writing to the event's actual date, the more reliable it is considered to be. The more documents that are in existence, the greater the weight that is given to the authenticity and accuracy of the documents.

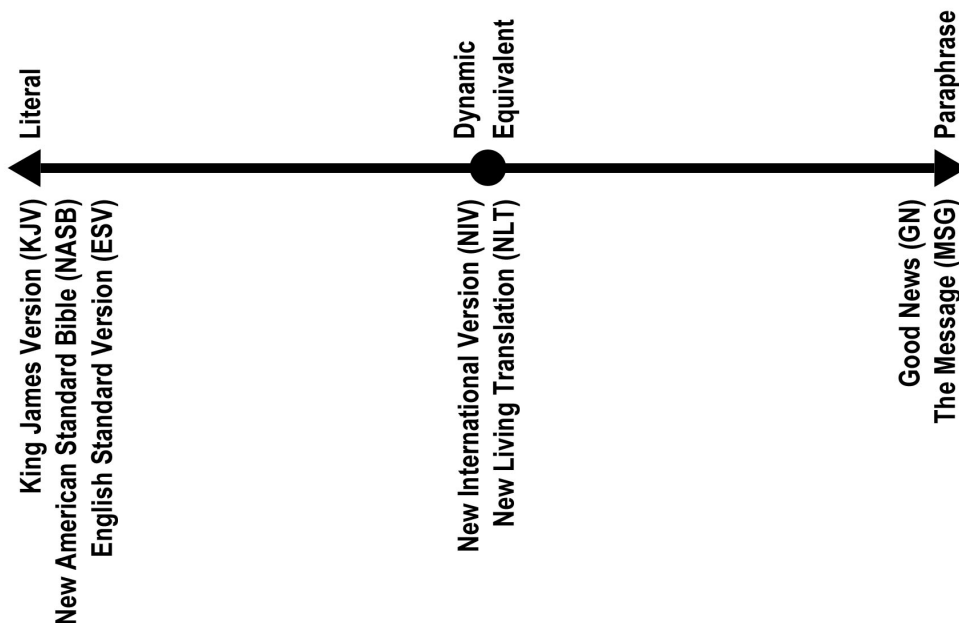
Out of the ancient historical documents that are universally accepted as reliable, the Bible dramatically outshines them all. The Bible was written within a lifespan of the actual events and has far greater numbers of documents available than any other literary works. Due to the vast number of copies written in diverse locations, it is easy to determine if and when any copying mistakes were made in a specific location.

Bible Translation

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew and a little Aramaic.

The New Testament was originally written in Greek.

When translating into English, translators have to determine whether they give the exact literal translation of the word or write the essence of what was trying to be communicated. If they write the exact translation, it may not mean the same in our present culture. If they provide the meaning, they make some decisions of interpretation and move away from the exact wording. It is a challenging balance to strike. Present-day translation of the Bible can be anywhere on that spectrum.



Session 13

Prayer

1. What is the point of prayer?

Prayer is about building a relationship. It is a conversation, a dialogue between you and God.

We tend to approach prayer as a task list of things we want God to do, but that misses the point of what it is really about. If you only talked to an individual when you wanted something from them, you would essentially be “using” that person for your own purposes. This type of prayer is not so much about a relationship with God, as much as it is viewing God as a resource to be tapped into and used when you need him. Surprisingly, this is how we often tend to approach our prayer life with God. We spend the vast majority of our time giving him our list of all that we want him to do for us, then we say Amen and go about the rest of our day. This is not an effective way to approach any relationship, let alone our relationship with God.

2. Consider your best friend or any other person you spend a great deal of your leisure time talking with. Why do you speak with that person, and what does a typical conversation consist of?

- You talk to that person because you enjoy sharing the events of your life with that person, and he listens with interest.
- You share the exciting times, and they get excited with you.
- You share the bad times, and he cries with you.
- You share your dreams and aspirations, and he encourages you.
- You share some of the wrong decisions you’ve made, and he rebukes you.
- At times you make requests of him, and he eagerly helps you out.
- He is interested in your life, and you are interested in his.
- You talk with him simply because you enjoy his presence and his company.

If God is in control and does whatever he deems best, does prayer actually change anything?

James 4:2 (NIV)

You do not have, because you do not ask God.

James' bold statement is, prayer does change things!

By asking God for something, we get something we would not normally have received had we had kept quiet. Those who do not bring their hearts' desires before God miss out on the blessings God wants to bestow upon them.

As we come to God in prayer, we affirm our relationship, as well as seeking his will and direction in our lives. His purposes become our purposes, and our prayers become expressions of what God has already placed on our hearts. To not pray is to rob ourselves of both the blessing of relationship and the changed life God wants to generate in us.

People who feel unworthy to ask God for anything are actually living independently of God, relying on themselves to make it through life. This is exactly the opposite of what God desires for us. He wants us to bring every concern and desire before him and to rely on him for life.

PRAYER KEYS

3. Look at the following scriptures to discover some keys to effective prayer. Why is each key significant?

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NLT)

Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.

Key: Humble yourself, Seek God, Repent

Mark 11:22-24 (NLT)

²²Then Jesus said to the disciples, "Have faith in God. ²³I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain, 'May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and it will happen. But you must really believe it will happen and have no doubt in your heart. ²⁴I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours.

Key: Faith in God

John 14:13-14 (NLT)

¹³You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!

Key: Ask in Jesus' name / It must glorify God

Using Jesus' name is not a secret formula that evokes a positive answer from God. When we ask for something in Jesus' name it means that we are coming as a Representative of Jesus asking for that which will help accomplish Jesus' purposes here on earth.

Everything Jesus accomplishes ultimately brings glory to the Father. This means we need to think carefully about what we are praying for. Does it advance the purposes of God, does it bring glory to God, or is it purely selfishly motivated?

Psalm 37:4 (NLT)

Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart's desires.

Key: Delight in God

PRAYER HINDRANCES

4. What are some things that might hinder your prayers from being answered?

Discuss why each issue raised below hinders prayer.

Psalm 66:18 (NLT)

If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, my Lord would not have listened.

Hindrance: Sin

It only makes sense that if I am determined to live against God's holiness and go my own way, my prayers will not reflect a desire for God's purposes to be fulfilled. They will instead, represent my own purposes and desires.

Prayer is not so much about accomplishing things as it is about building intimacy with God, thus allowing him to fulfill his purposes through our lives. To come to God with requests apart from submission to his will and Lordship, is to treat him like a genie in a Bottle who grants our wishes while maintaining control.

Prayer

Unfortunately, that is how we often live. We choose to live independently of God and his purposes, and then, when we find ourselves in trouble, we send out an SOS, expecting him to respond immediately. We are “god,” and he is to serve us. Fortunately, God does not respond to us under those conditions.

However, if we repent and turn back, reentering into a proper relationship with God, he will forgive us and he is especially eager to hear the concerns of his children.

James 4:3 (NLT)

And even when you do ask, you don't get it because your whole motive is wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure.

Hindrance: Wrong motives Not glorifying to God

5. What are some examples of wrong motives in your prayer life?**James 1:6 (NLT)**

But when you ask him, be sure that you really expect him to answer, for a doubtful mind is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.

Hindrance: Lack of Faith

6. What are some of the answers that God gives to prayers?**NO**

Though the request seems to make sense to us, God knows the big picture of what he is accomplishing and understands this request is not the best course of action.

GO

We are in sync with what God wants to accomplish, and are fulfilling his purposes for our lives.

SLOW

Right prayer request, wrong timing. Sometimes God is far more patient than we are, waiting for the perfect time to arrive. In our quick-serve, drive-thru society we often become very impatient, wanting immediate relief, immediate blessing and immediate answers. God says to simply trust him and rely on him for all you need—he will take care of you.

Sometimes the answer to prayer takes time to develop. Start praying now and it may begin a chain of events that bring about the desired outcome sometime down the road.

Sometimes God wants you to demonstrate just how important the prayer is to you by praying for it frequently and consistently over time. If you drop the prayer request after the first little while, it may be an indicator that you weren't that serious about it. God tells us to be persistent in prayer.

Prayer is not ultimately about getting things done.

It is about building an intimate relationship with God.

Luke 11:1 (NLT)

Once when Jesus had been out praying, one of his disciples came to him as he finished and said, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

7. Why do you think Jesus' disciple asked him how to pray?

Jesus responded by giving what we call "The Lord's Prayer."

Matthew 6:9-13 (ESV)

⁹Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

¹⁰Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹Give us this day our daily bread,

¹²and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

8. How is this prayer an instruction on how to pray? Do you think this was ultimately intended to be a prayer that gets recited over and over?

9. If this is a model prayer, what are the concepts that Jesus is modeling for us?

10. What does each phrase teach us?

Have students discuss what they think each phrase models for us.

Our Father in heaven:

This expression of God as our Father emphasizes his desire for an intimate relationship with us, but it also keeps in perspective the nature of that relationship—he is the Father, we are his children.

There must be a healthy balance between the fact that God is the Holy King of Kings, Author of Life and Creation, and that he invites us into intimacy with himself. He does this through the imagery connected to the word “Father.” It calls for a level of respect and an awareness that he is greater than us, but is blended with the loving compassion of a father.

How does the idea of God as “Father” resonate with you?

This imagery may stir up some painful emotions for those who have not had a good representation of fatherhood in their own lives. The problem is that their father did not accurately represent the character and love of the true Father, and as a result, we get a distorted picture of God. The key is not to abandon the idea of God as Father, but instead to understand that we do have a perfect Father in Heaven who will meet our needs of love and security.

Hallowed be your name:

This is not so much a statement of praise in the original language as it is a request: Father, sanctify your name. *“To paraphrase, ‘Father, lift up, single out, exalt, manifest, and reveal your name to the people of earth. Become famous for who you really are. Cause the people of earth to know and adore you!’”* by Hawthorne, The Story of His Glory.

God desires that his name be embraced as holy and held in awe by all peoples, but he has given us the responsibility of declaring his name to the nations. His name will only be embraced as holy when we do our task of promoting it. If we are going to pray this prayer, then we must also be willing to fulfill our role in its answer by proclaiming God’s glory to the entire world.

Your kingdom come:

When Jesus came, he said that the Kingdom of God had also arrived. God’s kingdom is not about controlling a piece of land, but rather, it is an expression of God’s right and authority to rule wherever he goes.

Jesus expressed the coming of the kingdom as having two different stages. The first stage is when he came to earth, as we have recorded in the gospels. The second, and final stage of the kingdom’s coming, will occur when Jesus returns to earth with power and glory. However, Jesus stated that this day would not come until all the peoples of the earth have had an opportunity to hear and respond to the message regarding his

kingdom. In expressing our desire to see his kingdom come, we must realize that God calls us to take his message to the world's unreached peoples. You cannot sincerely pray this prayer without having a passion for the world to know about this kingdom.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven:

How is God's will carried out in heaven? Perfectly! Jesus says that we should desire God's will be carried out by his servants on earth in a similar manner. This statement is a humble submission to the purposes of God and a denial of self. If we desire that God be completely obeyed and faithfully responded to, then that prayer must first find its fulfillment in our own lives. Are we truly willing to submit perfectly to God by allowing him to rule our lives in the ways he deems best?

Give us this day our daily bread:

This request is a confession that we understand that everything we need for life comes from God as a gift. It focuses on bread because it is symbolic of the most basic need we have in life.

We have a strong sinful tendency to want to be self-sufficient and independent of God. We don't want to have to rely on anyone, including God. This prayer is a statement of our daily commitment to trust God to provide us with everything we need for life. We don't have to worry about anything because God will sustain us in every way as long as we seek first him and his kingdom. Jesus elaborates on this point in Matthew 6:25-34. It is also interesting to note that later in his ministry, Jesus even defines himself as the Bread that we need for Life (John 6:35).

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors:

This may not be a safe verse to pray because it is requesting God to forgive us in the same manner that we have forgiven others. This is such a critical issue that Jesus gives an explanation to it after the prayer is finished.

Matthew 6:14-15 (NLT)

¹⁴If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. ¹⁵But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

When we refuse to forgive others yet are willing to accept God's forgiveness, we are really saying that we view the other person's sin against us to be much greater than our sin against God. This approach reveals that we don't truly understand the severity of our own sinfulness, and it devalues Christ's death on the cross, limiting the fullness of God's grace. Jesus indicates that this degree of spiritual blindness may reveal a person's eternal standing before God. (Parable: Matthew 18:23-34)

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil:

The word for temptation here means: period or process of testing, trial, test, temptation, or enticement. (Newman, Greek Dictionary)

This is a call to God to protect us from wandering into a situation where we might succumb to Satan's deception. It is not asking that we never have to go through trials, for we know that we will. It is not so much concerned with having to endure pain or sorrow as much as avoiding spiritual failure and sin. It is an ongoing request that God protect us from the wiles and deadly darts of the evil one.

11. What is a common theme that runs through the following verses?

Acts 1:14 (NLT)

They all met together continually for prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.

Acts 2:42 (NLT)

They joined with the other believers and devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, sharing in the Lord's Supper and in prayer.

Acts 4:24 (NLT)

Then all the believers were united as they lifted their voices in prayer: "O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them..."

The Believers prayed Together

12. Why do we ask others to pray for us? Is it because the more people we can get on our side, the more God will pay attention and perhaps answer our prayer?

No! It all comes back to the fact that God is our Father, meaning we as his children are family. God wants us to come together as his children and be united about what is important to Him and us. Sometimes God holds off answering a prayer until his children come together in unity, desiring a common outcome.

Session 14

The Family of God

1. What is a church?

Historical use of the word “Ecclesia” (We translate “church”)

MILITARY: used in reference to calling an army to assemble.

POLITICS: used to describe city citizens gathered together in order to make judicial and political decisions.

2. What does church never refer to?

Church never refers to a building.

3. What do you think about the statement, “You don’t have to go to church to be a Christian”?

The goal here is merely to provoke discussion. We will return to this question at the end of the study to see if opinions have changed.

Reflect on these scriptures to understand the significance and role of the church.

Matthew 16:18 (NASB-U) *(Jesus speaking to his disciples)*
I will build my church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

4. How might this passage affect our view of the church?

We should not take lightly the church Jesus is building. If the church is Jesus' creation, then it must have enormous significance and purpose. It is God's means for the message of salvation to be spread into the world. It is his only plan; there is no Plan B. The church is it.

5. How might that affect how we speak about the church?

We should be very slow to criticize the church, and when we speak concerning it, it should be with reverence, respect, and awe. This is true in spite of the fact that the church has flawed people who bring their baggage with them into it. From God's perspective, the church is his beautiful bride - and grooms don't like it when people speak negatively about their bride. Remember though, we are talking about the true church of Christ, and not necessarily all representations of the institutional church.

6. How does Jesus accomplish building his church?

Christ builds his church, but he does it through us as he invites us to partner with him in his work. We are his hands and feet that he directs to accomplish his purposes.

7. What does it mean when it says the gates of Hades will not overcome it?

The church will grow—and nothing will be able to stop it. Hades is a reference to the place of the dead. In other words, even death itself will not be able to stop the church. Christ proved this when he rose from the dead and proceeded to build his church. All believers who die will also conquer death and rise as the bride of Christ.

Ephesians 5:25-27 (NLT)

²⁵And you husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the church. He gave up his life for her ²⁶to make her holy and clean, washed by baptism and God's word. ²⁷He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault.

8. In light of the above verse, how important is the church to Jesus?

Jesus came to earth for the sole purpose of creating the church. It was of such intense significance that God himself was willing to limit himself to come to earth

as a man, be rejected by mankind, and die a horrendous death on the cross, all to make it a reality.

He then sent his Holy Spirit to indwell the church, give gifts to the church, lead the church, guard the church, and mature the church until the day he returns.

He then entrusted to the church the sole responsibility of bringing the message of life and death to the rest of the world.

To say the church is of importance is an extreme understatement.

Colossians 1:18 (NLT)

Christ is the head of the church, which is his body. He is the first of all who will rise from the dead, so he is first in everything.

9. What is the significance of Christ being the head of the church?

Christ is the head of the church. It is not to be a democracy where the masses vote and come to their own conclusions. The church is to be guided and directed by Jesus Christ himself.

10. What role is church leadership to play?

The church is to seek his will through the leading of the Holy Spirit and being obedient to what Christ calls it to do. Church leaders have the responsibility to pray and seek the unity of the Spirit with regard to his leading. With this being the case, there should never be power struggles, church splits, or disunity. We are not to strive for our personal agenda, but to seek first Jesus and his will.

Some may argue that the word “head” merely means “source” and has no authoritative connotation to it whatsoever. Although the term may imply source, there is an understanding that the “source” always has a responsibility for what comes from it. (For example, Parents are the “source” of their children, but in so being, they also have the responsibility to care for them and the authority to lead them.)

11. According to the following verses, what are the purposes of the church?

Romans 15:5-6 (NLT)

⁵May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. ⁶Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Praise and glorify God

Ephesians 4:11-13 (NLT)

¹¹He is the one who gave these gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. ¹²Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ, ¹³until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ.

Equip God's people to build up the church

Unify God's people in faith and knowledge

Spiritually mature God's people

Matthew 28:19-20 (NLT)

¹⁹Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Make disciples of all nations

12. What is the future of the church?

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NLT)

¹³And now, brothers and sisters, I want you to know what will happen to the Christians who have died so you will not be full of sorrow like people who have no hope. ¹⁴For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus comes, God will bring back with Jesus all the Christians who have died.

¹⁵I can tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not rise to meet him ahead of those who are in their graves. ¹⁶For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the call of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, all the Christians who have died will rise from their graves. ¹⁷Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and remain with him forever. ¹⁸So comfort and encourage each other with these words.

As a spiritual family, we will be united with Christ

Revelation 22:4-5 (NLT)

⁴And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. ⁵And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever.

As a spiritual family, we will reign with Christ forever

Ephesians 3:20-21 (NLT)

²⁰Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope. ²¹May he be given glory in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever through endless ages. Amen.

As a spiritual family, we will bring glory to God forever

13. Why do we need to be a part of the church?

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 (NLT)

⁷A spiritual gift is given to each of us as a means of helping the entire church. ⁸To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another he gives the gift of special knowledge. ⁹The Spirit gives special faith to another, and to someone else he gives the power to heal the sick. ¹⁰He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and to another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to know whether it is really the Spirit of God or another spirit that is speaking. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, and another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. ¹¹It is the one and only Holy Spirit who distributes these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.

14. Why doesn't the Holy Spirit give each of us all the needed gifts?

God delights in community, and God delights in diversity. Even within the Godhead itself, God is structured in such a way that the Father, Son, and Spirit all play different roles that complement one another. God desires that we come together as a family and diversely pour our lives into each other with love. We need each other, and that's precisely the way God designed it.

It also means that we have a special and unique role to play within God's purpose. No one can say they don't have a place of significance in God's kingdom. As we carry out the purposes for which God has uniquely crafted each one of us, we grow in faith and maturity.

Ephesians 4:11-13 (NLT)

¹¹He is the one who gave these gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. ¹²Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ, ¹³until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ.

15. What happens if we cut ourselves off from the giftings within the local church?

- > We will not be equipped to do God's work
- > We will not partner with Christ in building his church
- > We will not become unified with other believers as God desires
- > We will not grow in our knowledge of Jesus Christ
- > We will not mature spiritually
- > We will not become what God desires us to be.

16. What happens if we sit back and don't use our giftings in the local church?

Others will not be equipped to do God's work, etc. See above.

17. How would you respond now to the person who says they don't need to be part of a local church to be a Christian?

SESSION 14
The Family of God

Series:

LIFE OF JESUS

Session 15

Jesus in Genesis

Explaining Jesus from the Old Testament

The following story takes place shortly after Jesus is resurrected from the grave.

Luke 24:13-32 (NLT)

¹³ That same day two of Jesus' followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them. ¹⁶ But God kept them from recognizing him.

¹⁷ He asked them, "What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?" They stopped short, sadness written across their faces. ¹⁸ Then one of them, Cleopas, replied, "You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn't heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days."

¹⁹ "What things?" Jesus asked.

"The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth," they said. "He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people. ²⁰ But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. ²¹ We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago. ²² "Then some women from our group of his followers were at his tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report. ²³ They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! ²⁴ Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said." ²⁵ Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. ²⁶ Wasn't it clearly

predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?”²⁷ Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.²⁸ By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were going on,²⁹ but they begged him, “Stay the night with us, since it is getting late.” So he went home with them.³⁰ As they sat down to eat, he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them.³¹ Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared!³² They said to each other, “Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?”

1. What Old Testament scriptures might you use to teach about Jesus?

The Serpent’s Curse

Genesis 3:15 (NLT)

And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.”

2. How does this passage reveal Jesus?

3. How did Satan strike the heel of Jesus?

Satan struck Jesus’ heel by putting him to death on the cross.

4. How did Jesus strike Satan’s head?

The very act of dying is what defeated Satan’s hold on the world.

Summary:

Satan was already defeated when he warred against God in heaven and was cast down to the earth. He is now filled with wrath, wanting to destroy that which God loves most—us. By successfully tempting Adam and Eve to sin, mankind is now eternally separated from God. Dying in our sin is the victory Satan has over us. Death is now the enemy we must all face.

When Jesus died and then defeated death by rising to new life, he accomplished several things. First of all, he provided his death as a substitute for ours, making forgiveness possible. Second, by rising to new life through his Spirit, we also are given new life in relationship with God. Jesus made it possible for us to escape the judgment Satan conspired to bring upon us. Now, anyone who chooses to receive God’s grace and forgiveness may do so freely, thereby defeating Satan’s rule over their lives.

5. What is the one danger for a serpent when it bites a heel?

That heel is eventually going to come down, and when it does, it will crush the serpent's head. The irony is that the very act of the serpent striking its prey is what causes its own destruction in the end. Had the serpent not attacked the heel, it would not have been defeated.

Colossians 2:15 (NLT)

In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.

6. How does it impact you to realize God had this all so thoroughly planned back in the garden?

Intriguing Genealogy

7. In Genesis 5, there is a genealogy listed that covers a family line from Adam all the way to Noah's sons. Why do you think God may have included this genealogy in the Bible?

Name meanings often carry significance in the Bible. Write down each of the meanings below.

NAME	MEANING
Adam	<u>Man</u>
Seth	<u>Being Appointed</u>
Enosh	<u>Mortal</u>
Kenan	<u>Sorrow</u>
Mahalalel	<u>Blessed God</u>
Jared	<u>Shall Come Down</u>
Enoch	<u>Teaching</u>
Methuselah	<u>His Death Shall Bring</u>
Lamech	<u>Despairing</u>
Noah	<u>Comfort/Rest</u>

*For an explanation of some of the names: <http://www.bible-codes.org/Names-Bible-Prophecy-Code-notes.htm> We do not necessarily endorse other content on the site.

8. Can you see anything significant about the order of the names?

Man being appointed mortal has sorrow.
Blessed God shall come down teaching.
His death shall bring to the despairing comfort/rest.

9. What are some of the implications of this passage?

1) God has a plan

God sovereignly oversaw the naming of each child so that a powerful prophetic message could be formed over a 1056 year span from Adam to Noah. God already had the future mapped out. He had already guaranteed salvation to be available to us through Jesus Christ.

2) You can have confidence in God's plan due to fulfilled prophecy

At times when you start to question the validity of the Bible, fulfilled prophecy gives us assurance.

3) People are the plan

Everything God does, he does for his people and through his people. God seldom acts apart from people who place their faith in him.

Abraham and Isaac

Genesis 22:1-18 (NLT)

¹ Some time later, God tested Abraham's faith. "Abraham!" God called. "Yes," he replied. "Here I am."

² "Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you."

³ The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son, Isaac. Then he chopped wood for a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day of their journey, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ "Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told the servants. "The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back."

⁶ So Abraham placed the wood for the burnt offering on Isaac's shoulders, while he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them walked on together, ⁷ Isaac turned to Abraham and said, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "We have the fire and the wood," the boy said, "but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?"

⁸ "God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son," Abraham answered. And

they both walked on together.

⁹ When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. ¹⁰ And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice.

¹¹ At that moment the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Yes," Abraham replied. "Here I am!" ¹² "Don't lay a hand on the boy!" the angel said. "Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son."

¹³ Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son. ¹⁴ Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh (which means "the LORD will provide"). To this day, people still use that name as a proverb: "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

¹⁵ Then the angel of the LORD called again to Abraham from heaven. ¹⁶ "This is what the LORD says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that ¹⁷ I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. ¹⁸ And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me."

10. What are some of the parallels of Abraham and Isaac's story to the life of Christ?

Have people share as many insights as they can, then use the following notes to cover any they may have missed.

1) Isaac's birth was miraculous (Genesis 15:1-6)

Matthew 1:23 (NLT)

"Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.'"

2) Isaac was Abraham's only son

John 3:16 (NLT)

"For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

3) The sacrifice was on Mount Moriah

2 Chronicles 3:1 (NLT)

So Solomon began to build the Temple of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah,

Mount Moriah is where Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem, the same region where Jesus was to be crucified as the ultimate sacrifice.

4) Isaac carried the wood that would bring about his death

John 19:17 (NLT)

Carrying the cross by himself, he went to the place called Place of the Skull (in Hebrew, Golgotha).

5) Abraham explained God would provide the lamb for the sacrifice

John 1:29 (NLT)

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

6) Isaac was bound

Matthew 27:2 (NLT)

Then they bound him, led him away, and took him to Pilate, the Roman governor.

7) Isaac gave no apparent struggle when Abraham bound him

Keep in mind Abraham is well over a hundred years old and Isaac is probably somewhere in his teen years. He could have easily resisted or run away.

Isaiah 53:7 (NLT)

He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.

Matthew 27:12 (NLT)

But when the leading priests and the elders made their accusations against him, Jesus remained silent.

8) God provided a substitute sacrifice

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NLT)

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

In Jesus' case, he is the substitute sacrifice for us.

9) Abraham knew that somehow Isaac would live despite the sacrifice

Hebrews 11:19 (NLT)

Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead.

1 Corinthians 15:3—4 (NLT)

³I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. ⁴He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said.

11. What impact does seeing all these parallels have on you?

12. How do these prophecies provide strength to your faith?

The entire book of Genesis reveals the person of Jesus Christ in many ways. In fact, all of the Old Testament scriptures point us to Jesus.

13. How might this awareness change your perspective as you read through the Old Testament?

SESSION 15
Jesus in Genesis

Session 16

The Tabernacle

1. What was the Tabernacle?

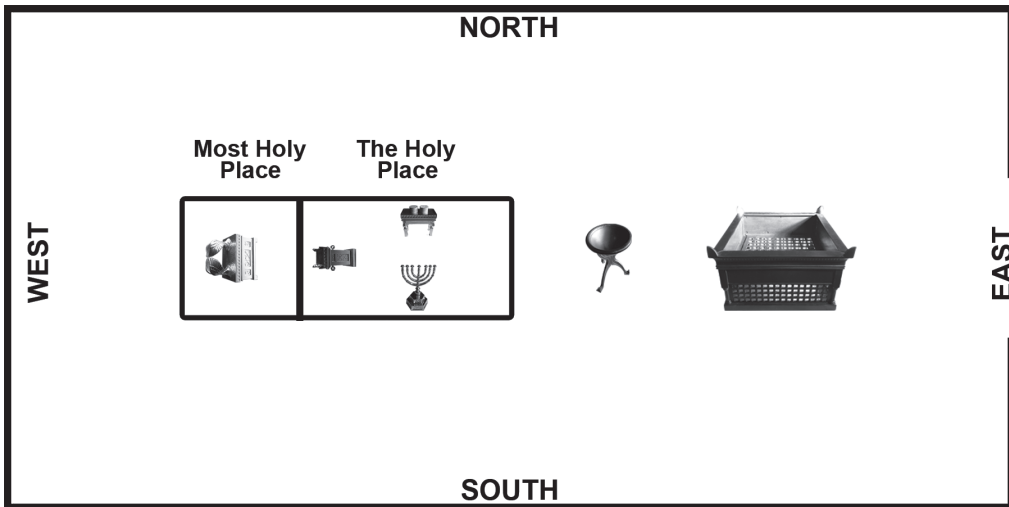
The Tabernacle was a portable temple or dwelling place of God. It represented the presence of God among the Israelites from the time they left Egypt until they settled in Canaan and built a permanent temple under the reign of Solomon.

It consisted of a curtained courtyard with a tent inside that contained two rooms, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. Everything about the Tabernacle and all its furniture depicted their relationship with God. All objects represented both a **barrier** that existed between them and God due to sin, but also the **hope** of a restored relationship, all fulfilled by Jesus Christ. This session will only attempt to scratch the surface of this understanding, but the topic really deserves much deeper study.

The ultimate goal is to enter the Holy of Holies (the Most Holy Place), the throne room of God. However, between us and the throne room are many barriers that need to be dealt with in order to make it possible to access the presence of God.

As you come to each aspect of the tabernacle, discuss the barrier it represents, the hope it provides, and how Jesus Christ fulfilled this hope.

SESSION 16
The Tabernacle



OBJECT	BARRIER	RESOLVED BY JESUS
<p>The Tabernacle Proper Exodus 25-30</p>	<p>We do not have direct access to God</p> <p>Though God was traveling with the Israelites through the wilderness, the Tabernacle was a clear picture that they could not simply walk into the presence of God. They were cut off from him, unable to physically walk with him or talk face to face. This was in contrast to the fact that God used to walk with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:8).</p>	<p>In what way does the Tabernacle point to Jesus?</p> <p>Jesus is the <u>True Tabernacle</u></p> <p>John 1:14 (ESV) <i>And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.</i></p> <p>The Greek language says he “tented” or “tabernacled” among us. Jesus is the new revelation of the glory of God in human form. He is Emmanuel: God with us. The idea is also that Jesus is leading us into a new exodus experience, but instead of appearing as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, he appears as a man who reveals the glory of God in a personal way. The Israelites set up their camp surrounding the tabernacle so that it was always at the center. In the same way, if we are to follow Jesus, he must be at the center of our lives.</p>

<p>Courtyard & Gate (150' x 75' x 7')</p>	<p>You cannot approach God any way you want.</p> <p>The twelve tribes of Israel camped around the tabernacle, three tribes on the north, three on the west, the east, and the south. The tribes could not simply enter the tabernacle at a point that was most convenient to them. They had to walk to the east side and enter through the one gate.</p> <p>In our culture, there is an errant belief that there are many ways to God. The tabernacle speaks strongly against this idea. The Israelites could not approach God however they wished; they could ONLY come the way he prescribed, from the very direction he described. Otherwise, there would have been gates all around the tabernacle, one for each tribe's specific location. There was only one entrance, only one way to the presence of God.</p>	<p>In what way does the fence and gate point to Jesus?</p> <p>Jesus is <u>the Gate</u></p> <p>John 10:9 (NLT) <i>Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures.</i></p> <p>John 14:6 (NLT) <i>Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."</i></p> <p>Interestingly, in Revelation 21:13, the New Jerusalem is described as having twelve gates of access to God's throne. Since Jesus made a way to a restored relationship with God, we have unhindered access to God's throne.</p>
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<p>The Altar (9' x 9' x 6')</p>	<p>The consequence for our sin is death.</p> <p>The very first thing people would see once coming into the tabernacle is the altar—DEATH. Imagine what it must have been like. How many sacrifices would have been performed there?</p> <p>Imagine the blood-stained ground. Imagine the smell.</p> <p>The picture of death was not only a concept but a reality you could see, smell, and participate in by bringing an animal for slaughter. All of this was because our sin deserves the death penalty. Instead of us paying the penalty of death, God permitted an animal to be brought in our place. For many, the idea of sacrifice carries with it a sense of loss, but this would not have been the understanding of the Israelites. The fact that an animal could be offered for death, instead of one's self, would have been a huge blessing, a gift of grace, a joyful surrendering. It was when one forgot the severity of their sin that the sacrifice became an onerous thing.</p>	<p>In what way does the Altar point to Jesus?</p> <p>Jesus is our <u>Substitute Sacrifice</u></p> <p>John 1:29 (NLT) <i>The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"</i></p> <p>1 Peter 3:18 (NLT) <i>Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit.</i></p> <p>Animal sacrifices could never truly pay for our sins. They merely pointed forward to the ONE who would come who would be the true sacrifice—Jesus. By dying on the cross, the demands of justice were served and God's wrath is removed from anyone who accepts what Jesus did, and applies his death to their life.</p>
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<p>The Washbasin</p>	<p>We are spiritually and morally unclean before God, and as a result, we cannot enter into his presence.</p> <p>The basin provided a very practical service as well as a spiritual one. The priests, after spending a day slaughtering animals, would be covered with blood. They had to wash both their hands and feet before entering the Holy Place, otherwise, they might die before the Lord (Exodus 30:17-21). Washing in the basin would remove any blood and symbolically cleanse them so they could enter the Holy Place.</p>	<p>In what way does the Washbasin point to Jesus?</p> <p>Jesus <u>Cleanses Us</u></p> <p>Hebrews 10:22 (NLT) <i>Let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.</i></p> <p>Ephesians 5:25-27 (NLT) ²⁵ <i>For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her</i> ²⁶ <i>to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word.</i> ²⁷ <i>He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault.</i></p> <p>Through Jesus' death on the cross, we are washed from all unrighteousness. We are declared "clean" and "holy" before God.</p>
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<p>The Lamp-stand</p>	<p>We walk in darkness and cannot find our way to God.</p> <p>The lampstand provided a very practical purpose as well as a spiritual one. It was dark in the tent. A priest walking in to perform his duties would need to see what he was doing. But even more so, he would need to see the way to the throne room of God.</p> <p>The lampstand consisted of one branch in the middle with 3 branches to each side.</p> <p>It gave light to the priests in a dark place to enable them to:</p> <p>a) have fellowship with God b) intercede on behalf of the people for their sin.</p>	<p>In what way does the Lamp-stand point to Jesus?</p> <p>Jesus is the <u>Light of the World</u></p> <p>John 8:12 (NLT) <i>Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."</i></p> <p>Hebrews 1:3 (NLT) <i>The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God.</i></p> <p>Jesus is the radiant glory of God and shows us the way to the Father.</p>
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<p>The Showbread (3' x 1.5' x 2'3")</p>	<p>Because of our sin, we are unable to have fellowship with God.</p> <p>Why do we usually have food at any social gatherings? What role does food play? Food brings people together and is a facilitator of fellowship. When people eat, it releases endorphins in the body, giving us a sense of well-being. When we do this together, it creates a sense of community, family, and oneness.</p> <p>There were twelve loaves of bread set out every Sabbath (representing the twelve tribes of Israel). The bread was to be eaten at the end of each week, and only by the priests, and in the Holy Place.</p> <p>It was called showbread because it was always in God's presence and was symbolic of God's desire for fellowship with us.</p>	<p>In what way does the Showbread point to Jesus?</p> <p>Jesus is the <u>Bread of Life</u></p> <p>John 6:35 (NLT) <i>Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."</i></p> <p>1 Corinthians 1:9 (ESV) <i>God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.</i></p> <p>As we embrace a relationship with Jesus, we can now have fellowship with the Father. The celebration of the Lord's Table is a picture of feasting in the presence of God, made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus.</p>
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<p>The Altar of Incense (1.5' x 1.5' x 3')</p>	<p>Our sin cuts off communication with God.</p> <p>Psalm 66:18 (NLT) <i>If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.</i></p> <p>The Altar of Incense was positioned right in front of the veil separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. Every morning and evening, the priests were to place incense on this altar resulting in a fragrant smoke that would fill the tent. The incense was figurative of the prayers and intercession of the Israelites going to God as a sweet aroma.</p> <p>Blood from the altar of sacrifice was to be placed on the horns of the altar of incense every year. It was only through sacrifice that worship and communication with God was made possible.</p> <p>The Israelites could not simply run into the throne room of God and throw their requests at him. Scripture tells us, Our sin interferes with our worship and our dialogue with God.</p>	<p>In what way does the Altar of incense point to Jesus?</p> <p>Jesus is our <u>Intercessor</u></p> <p>Hebrews 7:25 (NLT) <i>Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf.</i></p> <p>Through Jesus' sacrifice, we now have one who intercedes before the Father on our behalf and brings our prayers to him.</p>
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<p>The Veil</p>	<p>Our sin prevents us from entering into the presence of God</p> <p>Hebrews 12:14 (NLT) <i>Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord.</i></p> <p>According to rabbinic literature (the Mishnah), the curtain may have been a hand-breadth thick (approx. 4 inches). The veil separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies). Only once a year was the High Priest allowed to enter past the veil into the Most Holy Place (the throneroom of God) to make atonement for the sins of Israel and pray on their behalf.</p>	<p>In what way does the Veil point to Jesus?</p> <p>Jesus destroyed the <u>Barrier</u></p> <p>Mark 15:37-38 (NLT) <i>³⁷ Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last. ³⁸ And the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.</i></p> <p>Hebrews 10:19-20 (NLT) <i>¹⁹ And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. ²⁰ By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place.</i></p> <p>Through Jesus' death the barrier between us and God. We can now enter boldly into his presence spiritually speaking. When we are given new bodies we will be able to enter into his presence physically on a new earth and see him face to face.</p> <p>Revelation 22:3-4 (NLT) <i>³ No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. ⁴ And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads.</i></p>
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The Ark of the Covenant

2. What is an ark?

An ark is a box or chest designed to protect what it carries it carries within it. Noah's ark was essentially a large box that provided salvation for humanity through the flood.

3. What is a covenant?

A covenant is essentially a relationship contract for life.

4. What was the Ark of the Covenant?

The Ark of the Covenant was a box that represented the Israelite's Covenant relationship with God. It was through the covenant relationship with God that the Israelites received salvation and were called the people of God.

The lid of the Ark was called the Atonement Cover (Mercy Seat) and represented the seat of God's throne. The box is considered God's footstool (1 Chronicles 28:2). Once a year, the High Priest would enter the Most Holy Place and sprinkle blood from the altar onto the Atonement Cover (Leviticus 16:14).

What does the word "atonement" mean?

To make atonement means to make amends for one's crimes. It also conveys the idea of removing the wrath of judgment.

Covenants are sealed through the shedding of blood indicating that this is a relationship until death do they part. Should the covenant be broken, the death penalty would be invoked. That's why yearly, the High Priest needed to bring the blood of the sacrifice to the Ark of the Covenant to atone for our sin.

Jesus provides our atonement

1 John 2:1-2 (NLT)

¹ My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. ² He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.

Contents of the Ark

1) Manna:

What was manna?

As the Israelites escaped from Egypt and entered into the wilderness, it did not take too long for them to realize provision in the wilderness was very sparse.

They collectively started to grumble and complain, distrusting God's provision for their journey (Exodus 16). In response, God provided a miracle bread that would appear as wafers on the ground in the morning. These wafers could be ground and used for bread or a variety of cooking options. However, God only provided enough for each day, and the Israelites were to trust him for new provision the next day. Any food they kept overnight would spoil and rot, except on the sixth day when they were to collect enough for the Sabbath as well.

Barrier: Distrust of God's provision.

The Israelites grumbled about God's miraculous provision of manna in the wilderness. This was symbolic of their ongoing, consistent discontentment with how God graciously provided for them.

In what way does the Manna point to Jesus?

Jesus is our Provision for Life

John 6:48-51 (NLT)

⁴⁸ Yes, I am the bread of life! ⁴⁹ Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died. ⁵⁰ Anyone who eats the bread from heaven, however, will never die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and this bread, which I will offer so the world may live, is my flesh."

The Lord's Prayer is interesting in that it asks God to give us each day the bread we need to survive. It does not ask for the next day. It implies a trust that God will provide what we need for each day, and we do not need to worry about tomorrow.

2) Aaron's Budding Staff:

Israel rose up against Moses and Aaron, questioning their right to rule over them (Numbers 16-17). After some intense confrontation experiences, God settled the issue by having a representative leader from each tribe write their names on their staff and then place them in the Tabernacle (Tent of Meeting). Whichever staff sprouted in the morning would be God's indication of his approved leader. The next day Aaron's staff had not only sprouted but had fully blossomed and produced almonds, firmly establishing his role as High Priest over the people.

Barrier: Rejection of God's appointed leadership.

The Israelites rejected Moses and Aaron as leaders over the Israel nation, claiming they also had every right to lead. They forgot that Moses and Aaron were both appointed by God to these positions.

In what way does Aaron's Staff point to Jesus?

Jesus is our High Priest

Hebrews 6:19-20 (NLT)

¹⁹ *This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary.* ²⁰ *Jesus has already gone in there for us. He has become our eternal High Priest in the order of Melchizedek.*

Like the staff that was once dead and then was brought back to life, producing much fruit, Jesus also died and was brought back to new life, producing much fruit. This act of resurrection authenticates him as having the right to be our God-appointed leader through life.

3) Stone Tablets:

When Moses received the Law from God at Mount Sinai, he presented it orally to the people. Once they affirmed a covenant relationship with God, he then went back up the mountain to receive the "hard copy" summary of that law from God (The Ten Commandments). Forty days later when he returned down from the mountain, he discovered that the people had already broken the terms of the covenant, and in response, he smashed the tablets. God then had him go back up the mountain for a second copy, but this copy Moses had to create himself.

Barrier: Rejection of God's holiness (Exodus 32)

In what way do the stone tablets point to Jesus?

Jesus offers us a new covenant

Hebrews 9:15 (NLT)

That is why he is the one who mediates a new covenant between God and people, so that all who are called can receive the eternal inheritance God has promised them. For Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed under that first covenant.

5. How does understanding that every object in the Tabernacle points to Jesus impact you? Does it increase your confidence in God's plan in any way?

6. Does this help you understand the depth of our sin? If so, in what ways?

We have not had time to reflect on all aspects of tabernacle worship (priesthood, offerings, laws, etc.), but every one of these are pictures that reveal the barriers to and the hope of a restored relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

- 7. How might understanding this affect how you read through the Old Testament?**

SESSION 16
The Tabernacle

Session 17

The Promised Messiah

1. **If you were to describe Jesus to your friends, what words would you choose to use? What picture would they draw in their minds using your description?**
2. **Would your description more reflect someone they would “like” or someone they would “revere?”**
3. **What are the dangers of leaning too far in either direction?**

Dangers of only likeability:

- › Familiarity breeds contempt
- › Danger of putting ourselves equal with Jesus
- › We might like Jesus, but not revere Jesus
- › Temptation to not take him too seriously
- › Temptation to not obey his commands with fear and trembling
- › Temptation to not turn to him as the ultimate solution for any issue
- › Temptation not to surrender our lives fully to his leading
- › We might underestimate his authority and the authority he has given us.
- › Etc.

Dangers of only reverence:

- > Jesus is out of reach—untouchable - distant
- > Jesus cannot relate to our problems
- > I am an inconvenience to Jesus
- > I must keep impressing Jesus—meeting his expectations, or he will be angry
- > God doesn't really love me—he uses me
- > He doesn't really relate to my everyday life
- > Etc.

The Promised Messiah

4. What do the following Old Testament passages reveal about the promised messiah?

Jeremiah 23:5—6 (NLT)

⁵“For the time is coming,” says the LORD, “when I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David’s line. He will be a King who rules with wisdom. He will do what is just and right throughout the land. ⁶And this will be his name: ‘The LORD Is Our Righteousness.’ In that day Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety.

Insights:

- > He will be called “The Lord is Our Righteousness”
- > He will be righteous and just
- > He will be a descendent of David
- > He will be a king
- > He will bring safety to Judah/Israel

What is the significance of this prophecy?

The title given to the coming messiah indicates that he will be a righteous king from the line of David who, in some way, will transfer his righteousness to us. He will bring salvation to the people of God.

Isaiah 11:1-10 (ESV)

¹ There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. ² And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge

The Promised Messiah

and the fear of the LORD. ³ And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, ⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. ⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. ⁶ The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. ⁹ They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰ In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

Insights:

- > He will be a descendent of Jesse (the father of King David)
- > He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, giving him wisdom, understanding, and power
- > He will judge the earth in fairness
- > He will be righteous and faithful
- > Under his reign, creation will turn back to peace as in the Garden of Eden
- > Through him, people will fully know God

What is the significance of this prophecy?

Under the fulfilled reign of the Messiah, creation will be restored to God's original design and everyone will experience peace and joy.

5. Based on these passages, describe what you believe Old Testament Jews would have been anticipating with regard to the promised Messiah?

They would be expecting a man who would:

- > Be a descendent of David
- > Become a powerful king over Israel
- > Be righteous and just
- > Defeat all his enemies and establish peace on earth

Acts 1:6 (NLT)

So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?"

6. What do you think Jesus' disciples were expecting to do?

Even after three years, the disciples were still expecting Jesus to establish his kingship and free Israel from Roman oppression. They wanted to see Israel as a powerful nation in the world as in the days of David and Solomon.

7. Do you think this expectation might have had anything to do with Judas' betrayal of Jesus?

Judas became one of Jesus' disciples because he also anticipated Jesus becoming a powerful king and that he would receive a position of wealth and power as one of his twelve disciples. However, Judas noticed that Jesus consistently abandoned opportunities to be king and gave away most of his wealth. After three years of this, Judas had enough. He saw betraying Jesus as a way out and a means to make some money (thirty pieces of silver) simultaneously.

8. How are we to understand these prophecies in light of Jesus' life and ministry?

The Jews of the Bible were looking forward to the day of a coming Messiah. Unfortunately, they tended to focus on only one aspect of the Messianic prophecies, and as a result, had a distorted picture when Jesus came on the scene. In this study, we will attempt to show how the prophecies paint two images of the same Messiah.

In the following passage, what ideas contrast with the "mighty king" motif?

Isaiah 53:1-12 (ESV)

The Promised Messiah

¹ Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ² For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. ³ He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? ⁹ And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. ¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. ¹¹ Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

9. Israel is referred to as God's servant in Isaiah(Isaiah 41:8-. Therefore, some would argue that Isaiah 53 is referring to the nation of Israel and not the coming Messiah. What are your thoughts and why?

- › The New Testament reveals Isaiah 53 was speaking about Jesus (Matthew 8:17, John 12:38)
- › Verse 7: Isarel never suffered willingly and silently.
- › Verse 8: Isarel was never completely cut off from the land of the living.
- › Verse 9: When did Isarrel ever avoid doing violence and have no deceit?
- › Early rabbinic writings understood Isaiah 53 to refer to the Messiah (Sanhedrin 98b, Zohar II, 212a, Targum Jonathan).
- › Every phrase perfectly parallels the death of Jesus.

10. How can we reconcile the two extremely different passages about the Righteous King and the Suffering Servant?

The type of nation God desires is a holy nation where he rules as king in the lives of the people. It would be meaningless to set up an earthly kingdom if everyone, in their hearts, was still sinfully rebellious against the king.

Before there could be a “people of God,” the barrier of sin had to first be removed, forgiveness granted, and new life restored to its citizens. The only way to do this was to first die to pay the penalty for the sin of everyone in the world.

Once death and sin were defeated on the cross, people could turn back to God and declare Jesus as their lord/king. Now it was possible for a spiritual kingdom to be created, which paved the way for an earthly kingdom to be established.

Without first coming as a Suffering Servant, there could be no possibility for a Righteous King in the lives of humanity.

11. When is Jesus going to appear fully, as the Righteous King?

There are different theological opinions on how this all plays out in the future. The goal is not to get into a heated debate on this topic but to stress the truth that he will return as an earthly king sometime in the future, and we need to be prepared. We devote a whole study to the return of Christ at the end of this series.

Revelation 19:11–16 (NLT)

¹¹Then I saw heaven opened, and a white horse was standing there. Its rider was named Faithful and True, for he judges fairly and wages a righteous war. ¹²His eyes were like flames of fire, and on his head were many crowns. A name was written on him that no one understood except himself. ¹³He wore a robe dipped in blood, and his title was the Word of God. ¹⁴The armies of heaven, dressed in the finest of pure white linen, followed him on white horses. ¹⁵From his mouth came a sharp sword to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod. He will release the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty, like juice flowing from a winepress. ¹⁶On his robe at his thigh was written this title: King of all kings and Lord of all lords.

12. How does seeing Jesus as a victorious king affect your view of him?

13. Which description do you most relate to, the Suffering Servant or the Righteous King? Why?

14. How might embracing a deeper understanding of both dynamics affect your life?

The Israelites focused on their expectation of a Righteous King, and as a result, many misunderstood Jesus' role as the Suffering Servant.

15. What are some ways you may have limited your perspective of Jesus?

16. What are some ways you could gain a greater balance in your perspective of Jesus?

- > Read the gospels, honing in on the side of Jesus you have not necessarily seen before.
- > Read more of the prophecies that give vivid descriptions of Jesus' dual role.
- > Pray to Jesus, acknowledging his greater role in your life. Ask him to show how you might be limiting his role in your life.

SESSION 17
The Promised Messiah

Session 18

The Birth of Jesus

The Christmas Story Quiz: How much do you really know?

Have the students go through the quiz on their own (without looking up the bible references) and then go through the answers as a group.

1. How did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem?

- a) Walked
- b) Mary rode a donkey, as Joseph walked alongside
- c) They rode in a cart
- d) Who knows?

Answer: D

The Bible gives no record of their means of travel.

Luke 2:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

2. What did the innkeeper say to Mary and Joseph?

- a) "I have a stable in the back."
- b) "No babies allowed."
- c) "There is no room in the inn."
- d) None of the above

Answer: D

An innkeeper is never mentioned in the scriptures.

Luke 2:7 (ESV)

And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

3. The baby Jesus was born in a _____.

- a) Cave
- b) Manger
- c) Stable
- d) Who knows?

Answer: D

The bible doesn't say where Jesus was born. After he was born he was placed in a manger as a safe sleeping place. There is no mention of a stable at all. The word translated "Inn" most likely referred to the guest room in Palestinian homes.

Luke 2:7 (ESV)

And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

4. What is a heavenly host?

- a) An angelic army
- b) An angelic choir
- c) An angelic greeter that shows you around heaven
- d) Who knows?

Answer: A

This would have been a gathering of warrior angels.

Luke 2:13 (ESV)

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,...

5. What did the heavenly host sing?

- a) The Hallelujah Chorus
- b) Glory to God in the highest
- c) Silent Night
- d) They did not sing

Answer: D

They didn't sing - they spoke.

Luke 2:13–14 (ESV)

¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

6. Who were the “Wisemen” that brought gifts to the baby Jesus?

- a) Kings
- b) Astrologers
- c) Smart men who created the first GPS
- d) None of the above

Answer: B

They were astrologers. Kings are not mentioned visiting the baby Jesus in the bible at all.

7. How many Wisemen came to see Jesus?

- a) 3
- b) 2
- c) There is no such thing as a “wise” man.
- d) We don't know how many wisemen there were

Answer: D

The bible doesn't actually say how many Magi came bringing gifts.

Matthew 2:1 (ESV)

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem,

Jewish scholars for centuries anticipated the arrival of the Messiah. By examining Old Testament prophecies, determine exactly how much information they could have gathered regarding the Messiah's birth.

Fulfilled Prophecies

Teacher Note: You may just want to highlight a few of these.

Old Testament

Genesis 3:15 (NLT)

And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and **her offspring**. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."

Isaiah 7:14 (NLT)

All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! **The virgin will conceive a child!** She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us').

Isaiah 11:1 (ESV)

There shall come forth a shoot **from the stump of Jesse**, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

Jeremiah 23:5 (NLT)

"For the time is coming," says the LORD, "when I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David's line. **He will be a King who rules with wisdom**. He will do what is just and right throughout the land.

New Testament

Luke 1:30-31 (NLT)

³⁰ "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God!
³¹ **You will conceive and give birth to a son**, and you will name him Jesus.

Luke 1:34-35 (NLT)

³⁴ Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."
³⁵ The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God.

Luke 2:6-7 (NLT)

⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. ⁷ **She gave birth to her first child, a son**. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

Genealogy of Jesus

Matthew 1:6 (ESV)

and **Jesse the father of David** the king.

Luke 1:32 (NLT)

He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him **the throne of his ancestor David**.

Isaiah 9:6 (NLT)

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. **The government will rest on his shoulders.** And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Micah 5:2 (NLT)

But you, O **Bethlehem** Ephrathah, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel will come from you, one whose origins are from the distant past.

Hosea 11:1 (NLT)

“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and I called my son out of **Egypt**.

This passage would seem to merely relate to Israel’s exodus from Egypt. However, as Matthew writes to a Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus is the promised king, he uses this passage as part of his convincing argument (Matthew 2:15).

Jeremiah 31:15 (NLT)

This is what the LORD says: “A cry is heard in Ramah— deep anguish and bitter weeping. Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be comforted— for **her children are gone.**”

Hebrews 1:8 (NLT)

But to the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever. **You rule with a scepter of justice.**

Luke 2:4-7 (NLT)

⁴ And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to **Bethlehem** in Judea, David’s ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. ⁵ He took with him Mary, his fiancée, who was now obviously pregnant. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. ⁷ She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

Matthew 2:13 (NLT)

After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up! **Flee to Egypt** with the child and his mother,” the angel said. “Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

Matthew 2:16 (NLT)

Herod was furious when he realized that the wise men had outwitted him. **He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem** who were two years old and under, based on the wise men’s report of the star’s first appearance.

Isaiah 9:1 (NLT)

Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when **Galilee** of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory.

Matthew 2:19-23 (NLT)

¹⁹ When Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt.

²⁰ "Get up!" the angel said. "Take the child and his mother back to the land of Israel, because those who were trying to kill the child are dead." ²¹ So Joseph got up and returned to the land of Israel with Jesus and his mother. ²² But when he learned that the new ruler of Judea was Herod's son Archelaus, he was afraid to go there. Then, after being warned in a dream, **he left for the region of Galilee.** ²³ So the family went and lived in a town called Nazareth. This fulfilled what the prophets had said: "He will be called a Nazarene."

Malachi 3:1 (NLT)

"Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his **Temple**. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies.

Luke 2:22 (NLT)

Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem **to present him to the Lord.**

8. Why do you think it was necessary for Jesus to be born of a virgin?

It was necessary for Jesus to be born of a virgin in order to bypass the sin nature that is genetically passed down through the human race since Adam and Eve's fall. As a result Jesus had a perfect, sinless DNA and was placed in Mary's womb.

9. Why was it necessary for Jesus to be born in Bethlehem

1) Sheep Raising

Bethlehem was the region where sheep were raised to be used for temple sacrifices.

Why was it important that the angels appeared to the shepherds? Why them specifically?

Shepherds were required to identify which lambs were born spotless and without blemish in order to be worthy of temple sacrifice. The angels sent the shepherds to Jesus, the Lamb of God for that very reason; to declare hi

pure and without blemish. It was only appropriate that the Lamb of God be born in the place where sheep were raised for sacrifice.

2) The City of David

Once David became King, Bethlehem gained recognition as the birthplace of the King of Israel. It was prophesied that the future Messiah would be a king of the line of David. It was appropriate that this future king would be born in the city of David.

Why was it important that the Wisemen visited Jesus in Bethlehem?

The Wisemen would have been royal representatives who were also astrologers. They believed that when a star appeared in the universe, it signaled the arrival of a great king. God used this belief to motivate them to travel from the Far East to acknowledge and worship this divine king. The gifts they brought were suitable to honor royalty in life and their future burial.

3) The Name Bethlehem

The name "Bethlehem" literally means "House of Bread."

Bread has much symbolism in the Bible from the Manna in the wilderness and the Bread of Fellowship that was put out every day in the Tabernacle and Temple. All these references point to Jesus who in John 6 referred to himself as the Bread of Life. It was only appropriate that the Bread of Life be born in the House of Bread.

10. What do you think about the odds of one individual fulfilling even two, three, or four of these prophecies?

11. Would it be possible for simply anyone to come along and fulfill all these messianic prophecies? Explain.

12. Why do you think God provided all these prophecies (and many more) about the person of Jesus Christ? Why not just have Jesus appear and accomplish what he needed to accomplish without all the prophecies?

13. How do these prophecies impact your level of confidence in the Bible and Jesus Christ?

Session 19

The Temptation of Jesus: Part A

1. If Jesus is God, was it really possible for him to be tempted to sin?

Jesus, as solely God, could never sin. But somehow, when Jesus left heaven and came to earth, he restricted his divine attributes and became fully a man. This means that, apart from a sinful nature, Jesus had all the limitations that every human being faces. It also means Jesus had to make the same types of decisions Adam and Eve had to make, and each of us has to make daily. He had to struggle with the same tensions that every man faces physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Hebrews 4:14-15 (NLT)

¹⁴ So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. ¹⁵ This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin.

2. Did Jesus have an unfair advantage, dealing with temptation due to the fact that he did not have a “sin nature”?

Jesus' sinless nature actually made the type of temptations Jesus faced much more intense. Most of the time, when we are tempted, the temptation is focused on our sin nature; things we know are wrong and self-serving.

The temptations that Jesus faced (turning stones to bread, jumping off the Temple, and having angels catch him) were not inherently wrong in and of themselves,

The Temptation of Jesus: Part A

and they promised a greater good for others. Jesus was tempted according to his perfect nature, which made the temptation much more appealing and strong, yet Jesus still resisted.

The Bible describes three types of temptations we all face in 1 John 2:15-17.**1 John 2:16 (NLT)**

*For the world offers only a **craving for physical pleasure**, a **craving for everything we see**, and **pride in our achievements and possessions**. These are not from the Father, but are from this world.*

Describe these three temptations in your own words.**1) Physical Cravings:****2) Cravings of the eyes:****3) Pride:****Luke 4:1-13 (NLT)**

¹ Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ² where he was tempted by the devil for forty days. Jesus ate nothing all that time and became very hungry.

³ Then the devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, change this stone into a loaf of bread." ⁴ But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone.'"

⁵ Then the devil took him up and revealed to him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ "I will give you the glory of these kingdoms and authority over them," the devil said, "because they are mine to give to anyone I please. ⁷ I will give it all to you if you will worship me." ⁸ Jesus replied, "The Scriptures say, 'You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him.'"

⁹ Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! ¹⁰ For the Scriptures say, 'He will order his angels to protect and guard you. ¹¹ And they will hold you up with their hands so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.'" ¹² Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test the LORD your God.'"

¹³ When the devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity came.

3. How do Jesus' temptations correspond to the ones listed by John?

Stones to Bread: Physical Cravings

Authority over all the kingdoms: Cravings of the eyes

Jumping off the temple: Pride

4. What was Jesus' secret to consistently resisting temptation throughout his entire life?

Have them discuss their thoughts. We will look at each temptation specifically to determine why Jesus responded with the words he did.

Temptation 1

Luke 4:3 (NLT)

Then the devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, change this stone into a loaf of bread."

5. Explain the nature of this temptation and why it would have been wrong for Jesus to give in.

Jesus was on the verge of physical starvation. At this point, the body starts to deprive lesser parts of the body of what they need so that the brain can get all it needs to fight for survival. Every fiber of Jesus' being would have desperately craved food for survival. Satan is merely encouraging Jesus to do what he naturally longed to do.

6. Would it have been "sinful" for Jesus to turn a stone into a loaf of bread to avoid starvation?

Jesus performed many such miracles. He turned water to wine, multiplied loaves and fish, cursed a fig tree that bore no fruit, got tax money from a fish's mouth, etc. There was nothing intrinsically sinful about turning a stone into bread.

7. Why was Jesus in the wilderness in the first place?

Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to fast. God's plan was to have him experience the same challenges faced by the Israelites when they traveled through the wilderness for forty years. Jesus' forty days is symbolic of the years Israel spent in the wilderness. The Israelites failed when they were tested as to their faithfulness. Jesus now needs to prove his righteousness, where the rest of mankind failed. The fast was God's agenda, God's timing, and God's purpose, and the fast was not yet declared over by God.

The Temptation of Jesus: Part A

If Jesus gave in to Satan's encouragement to eat, it would have broken God's ordained fast, before God's intended time. It meant that Jesus would have allowed his physical needs to direct his life, as opposed to the will of the Father. If Jesus couldn't survive this physical suffering, there was no way he would make it to the cross.

8. Why did Jesus respond with the words, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone'"?

Discuss various ideas

Jesus is quoting a passage from the Old Testament. The following is the broader context of the verse.

Deuteronomy 8:2-3 (NLT)

Remember how the Lord your God led you through the wilderness for forty years, humbling you and testing you to prove your character, and to find out whether or not you would really obey his commands. ³ Yes, he humbled you by letting you go hungry and then feeding you with manna, a food previously unknown to you and your ancestors. He did it to teach you that people need more than bread for their life; real life comes by feeding on every word of the Lord.

9. Why did God allow the Israelites to go hungry at various points in time?

He did this to test their faithfulness, not that he needed to know where they stood, but he wanted them to see how much they really trusted him. By letting them go hungry, it revealed their heart's relationship to God. It exposed that they would only follow God to the extent that he served them the way they wanted. The temptation was to set their cravings above obedience and faithfulness to God. In other words, they made their stomach their God, and God was merely a means to serve the demands of their stomach.

10. How are we often tempted in a similar way?

11. Can you share a time when you were mad at God because he didn't meet your expectations? Did you question God's love for you during this time?

12. Have you ever tried to take control of a situation yourself because God didn't seem to care?

13. Have you ever tried to shortcut God's purpose for your life simply because it wasn't comfortable?

14. What was Jesus' key to resisting this temptation? What statement did he make to Satan?

Jesus declared that:

- > He would not make the same decision that the Israelites made. They chose their stomachs over God.
- > He understood true life comes from obedience to God, more than from food.
- > Cravings/feelings would not determine what he did with his life, but rather the will of God.
- > He would not cut short God's purpose for his life simply because it was uncomfortable.

The Temptation of Jesus: Part A

Session 20

The Temptation of Jesus: Part B

Review:

3 Types of Temptations:
Physical Craving
Cravings of the Eyes
Pride

What was Jesus' first temptation?

Temptation 1: Follow your cravings more than the will of God for your life

Temptation 2

Luke 4:5-7 (NLT)

⁵ Then the devil took him up and revealed to him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ "I will give you the glory of these kingdoms and authority over them," the devil said, "because they are mine to give to anyone I please. ⁷ I will give it all to you if you will worship me."

Jesus never disputed Satan's claim of authority over the kingdoms. This means that Satan actually could release his grip on the nations, and they would be free to follow the leadership of Jesus without Satan's interference.

The Bible describes Satan as the ruler of this world.

1 John 5:19 (NLT)

We know that we are children of God and that the world around us is under the control of the evil one.

1. Explain the nature of this temptation, and why would it have been wrong for Jesus to give in?

This would have been a great temptation to Jesus. To have Satan release his hold on the world would assist greatly in people coming back to faith in him and submitting to his rule.

2. What are the problems with this temptation?

1) It would require worshipping Satan

This is extremely problematic as scripture says that only God is worthy to receive worship. To bow down and worship Satan would not only deny God of worship, but would also deny the very identity of Jesus himself.

To worship Satan to bring freedom to the nations would involve embracing evil to accomplish a godly goal. This is not possible. You cannot accomplish a godly goal through an evil approach. In other words, “the end-justifies-the-means” approach to life is not a concept that is even remotely consistent with the character of God. God will always provide a godly way to accomplish his will.

2) The freedom offered was not the freedom ultimately desired

Jesus was not sent merely to align the nations under his rule. He came to die.

If Jesus was tempted to establish his rule on this earth at this point, it would imply that he would not be rejected and sent to the cross to die as a sacrifice for our sins. True, he could establish “image rule” and bring peace to the earth, but mankind would still be eternally lost. It was only through his rejection, death, and resurrection that he could truly redeem mankind. Satan’s offer, if accepted, would have entirely derailed the mission Jesus was sent to fulfill.

Interestingly enough, after his resurrection, Jesus was granted complete authority over the nations. However, this was done on God’s terms, not Satan’s. In fact, through Christ’s death and resurrection, Satan’s rule was destroyed, and Christ now reigns supreme.

3. Why did Jesus respond with the words, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only’?”

Discuss various ideas

Jesus is quoting a passage from the Old Testament. Following below is the broader context of the verse.

Deuteronomy 6:10-15 (NLT)

¹⁰ "The Lord your God will soon bring you into the land he swore to give your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is a land filled with large, prosperous cities that you did not build. ¹¹ The houses will be richly stocked with goods you did not produce. You will draw water from cisterns you did not dig, and you will eat from vineyards and olive trees you did not plant. When you have eaten your fill in this land, ¹² be careful not to forget the Lord, who rescued you from slavery in the land of Egypt. ¹³ You must fear the Lord your God and serve him. When you take an oath, you must use only his name.

¹⁴ "You must not worship any of the gods of neighboring nations, ¹⁵ for the Lord your God, who lives among you, is a jealous God. His anger will flare up against you and wipe you from the face of the earth.

4. Why did Jesus refer to this passage? What temptation did God warn the Israelites not to give in to?

The Israelites were constantly tempted to embrace the worship and belief systems of the nations around them. Whenever they did so, they were declaring that they did not trust God to meet all their needs, and they needed to pursue another path for getting what they wanted. Their lives became self-focused and they merely used "deities" to serve their expectations. However, turning to false gods always led them into a disadvantaged state as they stepped out from underneath God's protective care, and usually became oppressed by the gods/nations they turned to.

5. How are we often tempted in a similar way?

6. Have you ever done anything "wrong" in order to accomplish a greater good? Share.

7. Have you ever felt that something or someone could provide you with more contentment in life than God? Explain.

8. What was Jesus' key to resisting this temptation? What statement did he make to Satan?

Jesus declared to Satan that he would not make the same mistake the Israelites did. He would not worship Satan as a shortcut to getting what he wanted. He was determined to keep the Father as the sole object of his worship and devotion, trusting him for all things.

The end does NOT justify the means.

God will always provide a godly means to accomplish his purposes and meet our needs!

Temptation 3

Luke 4:9-12 (NLT)

⁹ Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off!" ¹⁰ For the Scriptures say, "He will order his angels to protect and guard you." ¹¹ And they will hold you up with their hands so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone." ¹² Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, "You must not test the LORD your God."

9. Explain the nature of this temptation and why it would have been wrong for Jesus to give in.

To jump off the Temple and be rescued by angels in front of all the masses would provide undeniable evidence that Jesus was the Son of God. He would prove it to himself; he would prove it to everyone else. Nobody could dispute it.

This would have made Jesus' ministry so much easier. Instead of walking around from town to town, gradually building a reputation, he could start with a glorious bang. People right from the start could not question his identity but would be forced to acknowledge he truly was from God. This would seemingly pave a greater receptivity to his message, and people would seemingly then respond to his identity more appropriately.

10. What are the problems with this temptation?

1) This was not part of the Father's plan

The Father's plan was that Jesus would gradually allow people to struggle with his identity over a three-year period. Whenever demons wanted to reveal Jesus' identity too soon, Jesus always commanded them to remain silent. Even Jesus' message was often cloaked so that only the serious seekers would get it. That is why Jesus spoke in parables as opposed to straightforwardly speaking the truth. He always made the people ponder what he said.

2) Jesus did not need to "prove" himself to anyone

When anyone challenged Jesus to give them a "sign" to authenticate who he claimed to be, he always refused.

By needing to "prove" himself to others, he would have actually been placing himself under their authority, as if they were his judge. His need for their approval and acceptance would have manipulated his message and ministry. If Jesus determined in his mind that he needed the approval and acceptance of others, to feel good about who he was and what he did, he would never have embraced rejection and the cross.

3) This approach called into question God's strategy

Satan was proposing that there was a better way for God's purpose to be fulfilled. It was really the same temptation that Satan used to cause Adam and Eve to morally fall. He convinced Eve that there was a better way to approach life (by eating the fruit) rather than having to rely on God for constant leading, direction and wisdom. Satan challenged Jesus to question God's very plan and to resort to a different plan that would be more comfortable and glorious.

4) The goal of Jesus' ministry was not to gain the approval of others but to die.

Such a glorious display of leaping from the temple only to be rescued by angels would not have paved the way for his crucifixion. It would have publicly raised Jesus' ratings in the polls and would have defeated any attempts by others to discredit him. This would again have defeated God's purpose for Jesus in coming to earth and left mankind in a hopeless situation.

11. Why did Jesus respond with the words, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'?"

Discuss various ideas.

Jesus was quoting a passage from the Old Testament.

The Following is the broader context of the verse.

Deuteronomy 6:16-19 (NLT)

Do not test the Lord your God as you did when you complained at Massah. ¹⁷ You must diligently obey the commands of the Lord your God—all the stipulations and laws he has given you. ¹⁸ Do what is right and good in the Lord's sight, so all will go well with you. Then you will enter and occupy the good land that the Lord solemnly promised to give your ancestors. ¹⁹ You will drive out all the enemies living in your land, just as the Lord said you would.

12. Why did Jesus quote this passage? What temptation did the Israelites give in to?

The Israelites frequently challenged God's strategy for their lives. This was clearly shown when they were wandering through the wilderness and forced to rely on God for provision. God had just miraculously rescued them from slavery in Egypt, miraculously brought them across the Red Sea on dry ground and miraculously destroyed their enemy before their very eyes. He had proven that he was more than sufficient to meet their every need...until they got thirsty (Exodus 17:1-7).

At this point, the Israelites had to make a decision. Either they simply trust God's wisdom and patiently wait for his provision, or they grumble against God and start to revolt. They started to grumble and revolt, even questioning the very proven presence of God in their midst.

God graciously responded by providing a stream of running water from a rock, but still chastened them for their lack of faith. He named that place Massah, which means “testing”. God tested their faithfulness and they failed. They tested God’s leadership and provision, but he provided.

13. How are we often tempted in a similar way?

14. Can you recall a time when you distrusted God’s plan and provision and felt you needed to take control, as opposed to simply being content with who you were and what God called you to do? How did that turn out?

15. What statement was Jesus making to Satan? What was his key to resisting this temptation?

Jesus made the declaration to Satan that he was going to trust that God knew best and that God would provide everything he needed to accomplish his purpose for his life. Jesus was not going to second guess God’s strategy for him.

This freed Jesus to not need affirmation from anywhere else, from Satan or the masses. He could simply approach each day by the leading of the Holy Spirit, as a moment by moment adventure. Jesus understood from scripture that God’s path is always best, even when it feels like life hangs in the balance. God always provides, and Jesus refused to question or challenge this biblical and practical truth.

16. What can we learn about Satan’s strategy to make us fall spiritually?

17. What can we learn from Jesus about resisting temptation?

Jesus always based his response on the Word of God. It was not quoting scripture that scared Satan off; it was the declaration that he was standing on the scriptural truth as the determiner of how he lived his life.

Discuss your thoughts about each of the following verses.

18. How does each one give you hope or strength?

The Temptation of Jesus: Part B

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NLT)

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.

Hebrews 2:18 (NLT)

Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.

James 1:13-14 (NLT)

¹³ *And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else.* ¹⁴ *Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away.*

19. What are some steps you can take to avoid giving in to temptation?

Session 21

The Kingdom of God

1. How would you summarize the message and ministry of Jesus into just a few words?

Jesus' Mission

Mark 1:14-15 (NLT)

¹⁴ Later on, after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News. ¹⁵ "The time promised by God has come at last!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!"

Acts 1:3 (NLT)

During the forty days after his crucifixion, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. And he talked to them about the Kingdom of God.

2. According to the above passages, what was the focus of Jesus' message?

The Kingdom of God

3. What is the kingdom of God?

Discuss

4. What do the following passages teach us about the kingdom of God?

Luke 17:20-21 (NLT)

²⁰ One day the Pharisees asked Jesus, "When will the Kingdom of God come?" Jesus replied, "The Kingdom of God can't be detected by visible signs. ²¹ You won't be able to say, 'Here it is!' or 'It's over there!' For the Kingdom of God is already among you."

The Israelites were expecting the kingdom of God to come in the form of a politically restored Israeli nation, but they forgot that Israel was created to be, first and foremost, a spiritual nation that represented God's rule in this world.

The kingdom of God speaks of the spiritual rule of God among the lives of his people.

Luke 18:17 (NLT)

I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.

To live in the kingdom, you have to "receive" the kingdom. It is not a rule that is forced on you, but one you must choose to embrace. This occurs through accepting it by faith, the type of faith exhibited by small children.

Luke 11:20 (NLT)

But if I am casting out demons by the power of God, then the Kingdom of God has arrived among you.

The kingdom of God is powerful. If the king is all-powerful, then no enemy will be able to defeat his kingdom. His kingdom will keep pushing forward in strength and might.

5. What are the three focuses of Jesus' ministry?

Luke 8:1-2 (NLT)

¹ Soon afterward Jesus began a tour of the nearby towns and villages, preaching

and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom of God. He took his twelve disciples with him, ² along with some women he had healed and from whom he had cast out evil spirits. Among them were Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons;

1) Preaching

Luke 4:42-43 (NLT)

⁴² Early the next morning Jesus went out to an isolated place. The crowds searched everywhere for him, and when they finally found him, they begged him not to leave them. ⁴³ But he replied, "I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God in other towns, too, because that is why I was sent."

2) Healing

Luke 9:10-11 (NLT)

¹⁰ When the apostles returned, they told Jesus everything they had done. Then he slipped quietly away with them toward the town of Bethsaida. ¹¹ But the crowds found out where he was going, and they followed him. He welcomed them and taught them about the Kingdom of God, and he healed those who were sick.

3) Demonic Deliverance

Matthew 12:28 (NLT)

But if I am casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has arrived among you.

Notice these three same activities in the following passages.

Sending out the 12

Luke 9:1-2 (NLT)

¹ One day Jesus called together his twelve disciples and gave them power and authority to cast out demons and to heal all diseases. ² Then he sent them out to tell everyone about the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

Sending out the 72

Luke 10:1,10 (NLT)

The Lord now chose seventy-two other disciples and sent them ahead in pairs to all the towns and places he planned to visit... Heal the sick, and tell them, 'The Kingdom of God is near you now.'

Luke 10:17-20 (NLT)

¹⁷ When the seventy-two disciples returned, they joyfully reported to him, "Lord, even the demons obey us when we use your name!" ¹⁸ "Yes," he told them, "I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning! ¹⁹ Look, I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy, and you can walk among snakes and scorpions and crush them. Nothing will injure you. ²⁰ But don't rejoice because evil spirits obey you; rejoice because your names are registered in heaven."

6. Why does Jesus say he saw "Satan fall like lightning from heaven"?

Satan established his kingdom on earth when he tempted Adam and Eve to sin, and they rejected God's rule in their lives. By default, he became the ruler of this world, over all people who have joined in rebellion against God. But now, through Jesus Christ and the message of the kingdom, Satan's rule is being overthrown, and he is being pushed back by the very humanity he had enslaved.

As Jesus' disciples go around casting out Satan's army in the name of Jesus, Satan's defeat in heaven is being relived. God's rule through his "image" is being restored on earth.

7. What does Jesus mean by verse 19?

"Snakes and scorpions" are a figurative way of talking about evil spirits who are at work to keep us from freedom and life in Jesus Christ. The second half of the verse emphasizes this when it talks about the "power of the enemy". Jesus was saying that those who are a part of his kingdom have nothing to fear from Satan's kingdom. Nothing will harm you because you can exercise authority over the enemy, in the name of Jesus.

8. Why does Jesus tell the disciples to "not" rejoice that the spirits submit to them?

Jesus was warning the disciples not to get too cocky but to rejoice that they have been rescued. Apart from Jesus, the disciples were a part of the same kingdom and would suffer the same fate as these spirits. They were rescued from that life solely by the love and grace of God in their lives. The primary focus for them should not be in their newfound authority but in the grace of God, who set them free from Satan's bondage.

9. Why do you think each of these three focuses were so important to Jesus' ministry?

a) Preaching

People can't be saved unless they hear the good news that Jesus has come to forgive them and set them free.

Romans 10:14-15 (NLT)

¹⁴ But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? ¹⁵ And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, "How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!"

It was through preaching that people heard, repented, and chose to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Jesus said that we would know the truth, and the truth would set us free. Preaching was his way of declaring the truth to a people who desperately needed to hear it.

b) Healing

The first impact of the fall of mankind was the onset of death and illness. Mankind was supposed to subdue the earth and keep it in proper order, but when man abandoned his role as "image", nature became unruly and unsafe.

Jesus, when he came, represented "image" as we are supposed to live it out. Wherever Jesus went, he battled the effects of the fall, subdued creation, and restored things to the way they were meant to be. Some examples of this were: calming the storm (healing nature), healing illness, raising the dead, etc.

If the kingdom of God was coming, it was coming to overthrow the effects of the curse and restore life to God's people. Therefore, wherever Jesus' representatives went, they spoke "image" authority in the earth and brought healing.

c) Deliverance

If Jesus came to restore life and reverse the effects of the fall, this is no more significantly expressed than by overthrowing the enemy who had claimed rule on this earth through the fall.

Satan's rule placed people under bondage to sin and death. We could not escape by our own merit, and as a result, are hopelessly lost and to be condemned along with the rest of Satan's kingdom.

If people are to experience the privilege of being part of Christ's kingdom, they first have to be set free from Satan's control and kingdom. Jesus did precisely that. Wherever he went, he exercised his authority over the demonic realm, and they fled in terror from him.

Jesus' ministry was authenticated by the very fact that demons submitted to his name and released their hold on the person. Proclaiming the kingdom, casting out evil spirits, and defeating the power of the enemy was a necessary aspect of that ministry.

This ministry approach was consistent in Jesus' ministry when he sent out the twelve and the seventy-two, and among the disciples through the book of Acts.

10. Do you think these focuses should also be part of our present-day ministry?

11. Do you struggle with any one of these emphases?

12. What are the dangers of neglecting or over-emphasizing any one aspect of Christ's ministry?

Neglecting Preaching:

Without preaching, no one would hear about Jesus and what he accomplished on the cross. As a result, no one would be saved; no one's life changed, no forgiveness granted, and no escape from condemnation. It is hearing the message of Jesus and his kingdom and believing that sets people free and brings eternal life.

Over-emphasizing Preaching to the neglect of the others:

It is a message without authority or power. It is a message that does not translate into the practical and forgets the call to exercise "image" rule in this world.

Neglecting Healing:

Without healing, no one would be healed, and the curse would not be repealed. It would show that the curse has greater authority than the power of Jesus.

Over-emphasizing Healing:

Jesus moved away from communities when the emphasis became solely on him healing. He was ultimately there to declare the kingdom as opposed to being a divine doctor. Jesus is ultimately more interested in spiritual healing than physical healing, but physical healing does have a place because of compassion and restoration of image rule on the earth.

Neglecting Deliverance:

Without deliverance, people would stay in spiritual bondage to Satan. If Satan is confusing people's thoughts or keeping them trapped in sin, they will not move forward in their walk with Jesus until this is dealt with.

Over-emphasizing Deliverance:

Too strong an emphasis on deliverance means we are spending more time focusing on Satan and his kingdom than on Jesus Christ. Jesus did not seek evil spirits to cast out, but he dealt with them authoritatively as they crossed his path. It would be easy for ministries and people to get sidetracked by chasing after Satan instead of pursuing God.

13. What are the implications are for you as you represent Christ?

14. Have you had experience in preaching, healing, or spiritual deliverance (whether something you did or something you benefitted from)?

Pray that our church would be effective in all areas of ministry Jesus calls us to.

Session 22

Kingdom Character

1. **The world's values are often very different from God's values. Can you think of some examples?**

Listed below are some “kingdom of God” values, as described by Jesus.

2. **Think about what Jesus is saying in each statement and describe how it conflicts with what the world says.**

Matthew 5:3-11 (ESV)

³ *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

⁴ *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

⁵ *“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*

⁶ *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*

⁷ *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*

⁸ *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

⁹ *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*

¹⁰ *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

¹¹ *“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.*

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Kingdom Character

Jesus Says: Blessed are	What this means!	Who the World says is blessed.
The poor in spirit	Those who realize they are spiritually in need. They are fully dependent on God to give them life.	Those who “have it all together” and need nothing from anyone.
Those who mourn	Those who grieve over their sinful state and are repentant.	Those who aren’t restrained or burdened by conscience. Those who are always celebrating personal victory.
The meek	Those who are humble yet confident. Strong yet gentle.	Those who have a right to be arrogant. The “survivor” who looks out for himself. “Me first” attitude!
Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness	Those yearning for a Christ-like life that conforms to the character of God.	Those who strive for success and status.
The merciful	Those who show God’s grace to others and are quick to forgive.	Those who give people the judgment they think they deserve.
The pure in heart	Those who are undivided — fully surrendered to the will of God. Motives are a deeper concern than surface behavior.	Those who are able to get what they want, by any means.
The peacemakers	Those who promote reconciliation between others and with God.	Those who fight for what they want.
Those who are persecuted because of righteousness	Those who stand firm in their faith despite consequences.	Those who conform to society. They put peace with others before the love of God.

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Kingdom Character

Jesus Says: Blessed are	The Benefit & Why?
The poor in spirit	Theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. Those who understand their spiritual state and need for a new life are the only ones who will turn to and receive God's forgiveness, grace, and adoption into his family. The proud and self-reliant ones do not submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ and therefore cannot enter his kingdom. The self-reliant pride our world embraces is the very thing keeping us from God.
Those who mourn	They will be comforted. We will only be freed from bondage to sin and death when we begin to grieve over and hate sin. Conviction is the work of the Holy Spirit, who brings us to a point of repentance SO THAT, we can be freed from our guilt and shame. Mourning is the path to comfort.
The meek	They will inherit the earth. Those who understand who they are before God are the ones who will rule on the earth. They understand that they are who they are, by the grace of God, and that all authority comes from Christ. They are the people who represent God's interests as opposed to their own.
Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness	They will be filled. Those who love God long for his righteousness to be fully expressed and lived through their lives. They grow to despise sin that robs people of life, joy, and peace.
The merciful	They will be shown mercy. Those who show mercy understand that people matter. Everyone makes mistakes and has times in their lives when they need to be shown love and grace. When we fully understand the incredible mercy God shows us, we are compelled to show his mercy to others. When we don't show love to others, it is because we have turned a blind eye to our own need for grace.
The pure in heart	They will see God. Without holiness, no one will see the lord. (Hebrews 12:14)
The peacemakers	They will be called sons of God. God is a peacemaker. Jesus gave his life to establish peace between the Father and us. Children of God take this same mission of reconciling others to God and embrace it with their lives. (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)
Those who are persecuted because of righteousness	Theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. This world will not appreciate the stand we take — but God does! To those who persevere, he gives the inheritance of the kingdom of Heaven. It is the reward for those who choose God, over this world.

3. How can we live each of these characteristics out in our lives?

	Jesus Says: Blessed are	How?
Relationship with God Spiritual Need	The poor in spirit	Reflect on your desperate need for the grace of God in your life. Die to selfish desires and goals! Submit fully to the control of the Holy Spirit.
	Those who mourn	Repent of every sin in your life. Grieve when you see sin at work around you. Start to hate every sin you see active in your life and remove it.
	The meek	Be confident yet humble. Submit to others to build them up. You are the image of God, by the grace of God, and all that you have comes from him.
	Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness	Confess areas of sin in your life and pursue living life through the power of the Holy Spirit. Learn to identify any idols in your life — those things you turn to for life, apart from God. Keep learning to surrender every area of your life to the control of the Holy Spirit.
Relationship with Others Spiritual Abundance	The merciful	Show mercy when others don't. Look for opportunities to express God's unconditional love that will run counter to our natural sinful inclination. Be slow to anger and quick to forgive.
	The pure in heart	Choose righteousness over sin. At those points, when your conscience is in tension with your desires, make a conscious decision to do what you know is right. Remove areas from your life that bring temptation and cause you to stumble.
	The peacemakers	Be a promoter of reconciliation between others and God. Look for opportunities to bring peace in the midst of conflict. This most powerfully occurs when we help people bring God into the midst of all their relationships.
	Those who are persecuted because of righteousness	Live your faith publicly. Don't shy away from righteousness because of the opinion or persecution of others.

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Kingdom Character

Session 23

Jesus' Discipleship Strategy

Jesus' Discipleship Strategy

Answer: Not at All / A Little / For the Most Part / Absolutely

PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4
I am interested in knowing Jesus Christ better <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I am trying daily to consciously walk with Jesus <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I understand how to share my faith with others and am doing so <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I know the major biblical themes of the Bible <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
I desire to have a deeper relationship with God <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I belong to a small group that helps me grow as Jesus' disciple <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I understand the nature of spiritual warfare <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I know how to study the Bible to get answers for myself <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
I regularly attend church <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I have developed regular habits of bible study, prayer, worship, evangelism, & giving <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I understand my authority in Christ over the spiritual realm <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I know how to discuss controversial topics in ways that show love to the other person <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
I have decided to trust Jesus Christ as my God and Savior <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I know the books of the Bible and where they are placed <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I know how to discern God's leading in my life <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I understand Jesus' style of leadership and am trying to imitate that in my life <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
I trust the Bible as God's Word <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I understand the major lies that trap me and the truths that can set me free <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I try daily to submit to Jesus' leadership <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I am continuing to share Christ <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
I have been baptised as a believer <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I am experiencing increasing freedom in my walk with Christ <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I strive daily to submit to others to build them up in Christ <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I understand our church's strategy for Missions <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
I understand the "need" for studying the bible, prayer & being part of a church in order to grow spiritually <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I am committed to serving in the local church <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I can maturely handle criticism and rejection <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I understand the biblical principles of servanthood <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
I understand the basic teachings regarding Jesus, God & the Holy Spirit, forgiveness & salvation, and the purpose of the Church <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I am assuming more responsibility for helping the church be what it should be <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I am willing to lovingly deal with conflict <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I try to serve people in practical ways that reflect Jesus' love for them <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
I understand God wants me to be continually growing as his disciple and I am committed to this journey <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I am a Partner/Member of my church <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I am willing to lovingly confront sin in the life of another believer <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I am helping others in their walk with Jesus <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
I am beginning to understand God's desire for my ministry involvement <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I am involved in my area of ministry passion <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I am willing to be confronted about an issue in my life by another believer <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I am helping train others for more effective ministry <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
I am beginning to understand that God wants me to represent him wherever I go <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>		I am learning to walk by faith, not by sight <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	I am bearing much spiritual fruit in my life <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
		I understand what it truly means to live a life of worship to God <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	

SURVEY EXPLANATION:

Quickly go through the entire survey. Once done, starting with Phase 1, if all the boxes in either the 3rd or 4th column (For the Most Part or Absolutely) then you have met the requirements of that phase.

If you have some boxes checked in the 1st or 2nd column of Phase 1, then you are considered still in the Phase 1 stage of their learning. Whichever is the earliest phase where you have some checks in the first two columns, then that is where you are at in the learning process.

This is a man-made tool and does not accurately reflect where a person is at spiritually. However, it does give people a guide to help them see what they have and have not yet learned. The full impact comes for some when they consider how long they have been following Christ yet have only progressed so far. The goal in this is to create a holy discontent and a desire to move forward in their discipleship process.

1. According to survey, which phase are you currently in?

- PHASE 1
- PHASE 2
- PHASE 3
- PHASE 4

I have been following Christ for _____ yrs.

JESUS' DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGY

Read the following passages and identify the different phases Jesus walked his disciples through.

The following four phases have been adopted from Bill Hull's book, *The Complete Book of Discipleship* (NavPress Publishing, 2000).

John 1:43-49 (NLT)

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Come, follow me." ⁴⁴ Philip was from Bethsaida, Andrew and Peter's hometown. ⁴⁵ Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, "We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth."⁴⁶ "Nazareth!" exclaimed Nathanael. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" "Come and see for yourself," Philip replied.

47 As they approached, Jesus said, "Now here is a genuine son of Israel—a man of complete integrity." 48 "How do you know about me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus replied, "I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you." 49 Then Nathanael exclaimed, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God—the King of Israel!"

PHASE 1: Come and See (Disciples time this phase: 3 months)

This phase embraces the skeptic and helps them move to the point of belief and baptism.

2. What was Nathaniel's initial reaction to the idea of checking out Jesus? Why do you think this was his view?

Nathaniel was skeptical about Jesus being the messiah. Jesus was just one of many people claiming to be the messiah in those days.

3. How did Philip persuade him to explore the idea of Jesus further?

Philip simply challenged him to come and make an informed decision for himself.

4. Were you initially skeptical about Jesus? What made you decide to check him out further?

5. What do you think would be essential to build into people's lives during this initial phase? What do they need from you to help them move forward?

PHASE 2 (Jesus: approx. 9 months)

Matthew 4:18-22 (NLT)

¹⁸ One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew—throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. ¹⁹ Jesus called out to them, “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!” ²⁰ And they left their nets at once and followed him. ²¹ A little farther up the shore he saw two other brothers, James and John, sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, repairing their nets. And he called them to come, too. ²² They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind.

Matthew 9:9 (NLT)

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector's booth. “Follow me and be my disciple,” Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him.

PHASE 2: Follow Me (Disciples time in this phase: 9 months)

6. Jesus had not yet set people apart as “Apostles” at this point. Why did he invite them to “follow him,” and what did he mean by that?

In biblical days, a teacher gathered students around him (called disciples), who would learn from him and apply his teachings to their life. Now that people have had the chance to hear Jesus speak for three months, he called them to trust him, place their faith in him, and learn from him.

7. What are some of the things you think would be important to teach or demonstrate in this phase?

8. What are some practical indicators that someone desires to grow in their faith beyond initial belief and baptism?

Mark 3:14 (ESV)

And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach

PHASE 3: Be With Me (Disciples time in this phase: 2 years)

9. Jesus had just selected twelve men to be with him constantly wherever he went. Why do you think he did this?

10. What was so important about this phase of Jesus' ministry?

Jesus was not interested in merely creating followers; he wanted to create kingdom influencers and leaders. He had two years left to establish a team of men who could lead the church into future growth.

11. What specific teachings do you think he wanted to instill in his disciples during this phase?

John 15:4-5 (NLT)

⁴ Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. ⁵ "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

PHASE 4: Remain In Me (Disciples time in this phase: Rest of their lives)

12. What is the result of remaining in Jesus according to this verse?

If we remain in Jesus, we will "produce much fruit."

13. What does it mean to "produce much fruit"?

Jesus wants us to be effective in both terms of Kingdom Growth and Spiritual Maturity. As he left the disciples, he expected that they would continue to build his church, and see many people enter the kingdom of God. This was the very purpose Jesus came to accomplish.

14. Why is having a strategic discipleship process essential for the follower of Jesus?

Significant headway only happens when we are intentional and strategic in what we do. If there is no plan, there will be very little progress. Jesus effectively moved his disciples from being skeptics to entrusting the future church into their hands within a three year period.

15. How long have you been following Christ? If your church's ministry was left in your hands, would you be ready to lead it effectively? Why or why not?

The issue here is not whether they have the gift of leadership, but whether they are spiritually equipped and prepared to do whatever God calls them to do, trusting him to give them what they need each step of the way.

16. How would you define discipleship?

A disciple is a baptized follower of Jesus who devotes his life to the teachings, mission, and leadership of Jesus Christ, assuming increasing responsibility for their own spiritual growth, the discipleship and spiritual growth of others, the ministry of the local church, and the global spread of the gospel

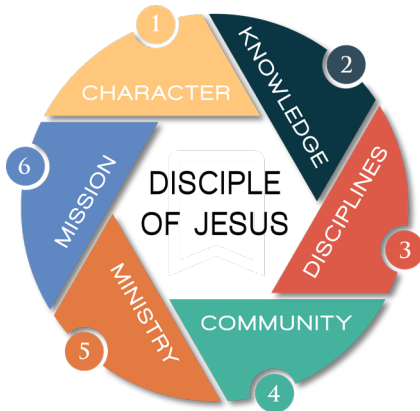
17. When you realize Jesus took only three years to move his disciples from Phase 1 to Phase 4, how does that make you feel about how far you've come in the years you've been following Christ?

The goal with this is not to make people feel like a spiritual failure, but to show them the value of the discipleship process they have now embraced.

STRATEGIC DISCIPLESHIP has mapped out four years of teaching to help one move from the position of a skeptic to a kingdom influencer. Content and teaching themselves do not grow disciples, but it is one aspect of the discipleship process. Actively assuming responsibility for your spiritual family and embracing Christ's mission is essential for continued growth.

On the next page is a summary of the four-year strategic and intentional plan to help you grow as a disciple.

We have identified six areas that need discipleship focus in order for a person to grow in spiritual maturity.



1. GODLY CHARACTER TO EXHIBIT

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Loves Jesus | Loves others |
| Spirit-filled and led | Servant's heart |
| Integrity | Respected |
| Above reproach | Faithful |
| Humble | Gentle |
| Self-Controlled | Free from addiction |
| Idol free | Hospitable |
| Passionate | Teachable |
| Repents quickly | Perseveres |

2. BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE TO ATTAIN

PHASE 1

- The Gospel
- Baptism & Lordship
- Lord's table
- The Holy Spirit
- The Spirit-filled life
- Understanding the bible
- The Spirit-filled life
- The role of the church
- Life and ministry of Jesus

PHASE 2

- Reading the bible
- Spiritual Disciplines
- Lies and truths
- Church membership

PHASE 3

- Our mission
- Sharing your faith
- Spiritual warfare
- Discerning God's leading
- Submission to others
- Forgiveness
- Church discipline
- Understanding worship

PHASE 4

- Studying the Bible
- Servant rule
- Showing grace
- Godly sexuality
- Church leadership
- End times

3. SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES TO EMBED

- Prayer: personal & corporate
- Bible study: devotional and in-depth
- Gathering
- Tithing

4. AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY TO EMBRACE

- Consistency at church gatherings
- Practises hospitality with church members
- Bridges cultural and relational gaps to make others feel included and loved
- Assumes responsibility to help the church be what Jesus wants it to be
- Guards against disunity
- Respects and submits to spiritual leadership
- Confronts error/sin humbly and lovingly

5. GIFTED MINISTRY TO PROVIDE

- Discern gifting
- Variety of ministry experiences
- Involved in a focused area of ministry passion
- Mentors others in ministry
- Engages in/leads a small group
- Engages in/leads a Triad (group of 2-4) for accountability and encouragement)

6. MISSION TO ENGAGE

- Engages missionally with those in their spheres of influence
- Has frequent spiritual conversations with unbelievers
- Practices hospitality with unbelievers
- Invites people to church/small group
- Engages in the local neighborhood community
- Engages with global missions: financially and experientially

18. In what ways is it encouraging and exciting to know there is a strategy in place to help deal with all these issues needed for spiritual maturity?

SESSION 23
Jesus' Discipleship Strategy

Session 24

The Transfiguration

Jesus asked his disciples what they thought about his identity. Read Peter's response and a conversation that followed afterward.

Peter's Confession

Matthew 16:16-17 (NLT)

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ Jesus replied, "You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being.

Peter's Rebuke

Matthew 16:21-23 (NLT)

²¹ From then on Jesus began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead. ²² But Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things. "Heaven forbid, Lord," he said. "This will never happen to you!"

²³ Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Get away from me, Satan! You are a dangerous trap to me. You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's."

- 1. What contrasts do you see between Peter's two responses to Jesus?**

SESSION 24
The Transfiguration

In the first response, Peter's response was inspired by God and defined Jesus as the promised the Messiah, the king who would rule over all Israel with wisdom, power, and might.

In the second response, Jesus defined Peter's reaction as being inspired by Satan. Peter reacted against Jesus' statement about his upcoming death as if Jesus lacked wisdom and understanding about life. Jesus' message conflicted with Peter's expectation about Jesus being the king of the Jews, and therefore Jesus needed to be "corrected."

2. In what way was Peter viewing things from a human point of view?

There was no room for suffering in Peter's theology, and therefore he felt Jesus must be missing something with regard to God's plan and purpose. Peter was focused on Jesus coming to a position of power and rule, and the setting up of an earthly kingdom. Jesus had a much more significant mission on his mind. He came to restore people to a relationship with God through his death and resurrection. Peter could not even begin to grasp the depth of God's plan and the role that suffering needed to play. A desire for comfort would have precluded any path that might include suffering and death.

3. In what ways might we, similarly, lose perspective about what our lives should focus on?

4. How does having "a human point of view" sometimes cause us to miss out on what God wants to accomplish through our lives?

Jesus' Transfiguration

Luke 9:28-36 (NLT)

²⁸ About eight days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John up on a mountain to pray. ²⁹ And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was transformed, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³⁰ Then two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared and began talking with Jesus. ³¹ They were glorious to see. And they were speaking about his exodus from this world, which was about to be fulfilled in Jerusalem. ³² Peter and the others had fallen asleep. When they woke up, they saw Jesus' glory and the two men standing with him. ³³ As Moses and Elijah were starting to leave, Peter, not even knowing what he was saying, blurted out, "Master, it's wonderful for us to be here! Let's make three shelters as memorials—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." ³⁴ But even as he was saying this, a cloud came over them, and terror gripped them as the cloud covered them. ³⁵ Then a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to him." ³⁶ When the voice finished, Jesus was there alone. They didn't tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

- 5. What do you think was the point of this whole experience?**
- 6. What was the significance of Moses and Elijah appearing with Jesus on the mountain?**
- 7. What was unique about the ministry of these two men?**

Moses: Presenter of the covenant

Moses was the one through whom God rescued his people from slavery in Egypt. Through Moses, the Israelites received the LAW or the terms of the COVENANT relationship with God. The Mosaic Covenant became the foundation of Israel in their understanding of how to remain in relationship with God.

Moses is representative of the Law

Elijah: Call to return to covenant

During Elijah's time, Israel had wandered in its faith and, under the influence of Queen Jezebel, started embracing the worship of Baal. Through Elijah, God performed great and mighty signs to call Israel to return to their covenant relationship with him.

1 Kings 18:21 (NLT)

Then Elijah stood in front of them and said, “How much longer will you waver, hobbling between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him! But if Baal is God, then follow him!” But the people were completely silent.

Elijah became representative of a whole series of prophets who warned Israel to return their covenant relationship or risk being rejected by the God who created them as a nation.

Elijah is representative of the Prophets

Matthew 5:17 (ESV)

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

God authenticated both of these men’s ministries through miraculous signs.

Miracles frequently occurred in the Old Testament only during the ministry of these men and their immediate successors. It was not until the time of Jesus that miraculous signs once again became frequently evident.

8. What was the topic of Jesus’ conversation with Moses and Elijah?

They discussed Jesus’ upcoming exodus.

9. Why did Luke refer to Jesus’ departure as an “exodus”?

Jesus was initiating a new exodus — the real exodus! Everything Moses did was a foreshadowing of the real exodus Jesus would need to lead. The true exodus is the one that leads us from bondage to sin and death and gives us true life through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

10. What are some ways the story of Moses and the Israelites’ exodus foreshadowed Jesus’ ministry and our spiritual journey?

Examples:

- > People were trapped in bondage with no possible means of self-deliverance
- > People were set free by the shedding of a substitute, sacrificial lamb
- > God’s people were cut off from the old life through a baptism (Red Sea)
- > People were called to a covenant relationship with God
- > God’s people were led through the wilderness by the presence of God
- > God revealed his glory through his representative
- > Every need was faithfully provided for miraculously by God

The Transfiguration

- > God's people were finally led to the Promised Land
- > Their faith was tested along the way

At the time of Jesus, Moses and Elijah would understand that their personal spiritual freedom rested solely on what Jesus was about to do. They would have been in a waiting place, waiting for the day Jesus would conquer sin and death. Everything they accomplished in their ministries merely looked forward to this ultimate time of redemption. It must have been a tremendous experience and privilege for them to meet with Jesus on this mountain.

11. If you had been there with Peter, James, and John on that mountain, how do you think you might have reacted?

Luke 9:33 (NLT)

As Moses and Elijah were starting to leave, Peter, not even knowing what he was saying, blurted out, "Master, it's wonderful for us to be here! Let's make three shelters as memorials—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

12. Why do you think Peter blurted out his response about building shelters for Jesus, Moses and Elijah? What was wrong with his response?

It was a nervous reaction, not a consideration of the events. He equated Moses and Elijah with Jesus in stature and importance. It was a desire to hold on to the past when Jesus came to create a future. In other words, Peter just wanted to camp out with these biblical heroes, instead of turning back to the mission at hand. It missed the whole point of the discussion of Jesus' "exodus". Jesus wasn't interested in maintaining the status quo; he came to die, to bring freedom for all.

13. Why did the Father speak at this point in time?

It was a confirmation of Jesus' identity and his mission, which Peter kept misunderstanding. It was a statement to Peter, James, and John saying, "Do not instruct Jesus; be instructed by Jesus."

14. Have there been times when you felt you needed to instruct God on what he should do?

15. Let's return to the question of why this scenario needed to have been played out? What was the point?

This was all for the benefit of Peter, James, and John. Peter had just confessed his understanding that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and was then thrown off balance by Jesus' discussion about being killed by his enemies. All the disciples found it hard to reconcile these two truths. It left them in a state of confusion, trying to understand the identity and the mission of Jesus.

By revealing the glory of God in Jesus and having affirmation from the Father in Heaven, it solidified both Jesus' true identity and his mission in the eyes of these three disciples. Without this experience, the disciples would not have been able to grasp the remaining days of Jesus' ministry and all that he was about to endure. The suffering of Jesus would have been too far from their preconceived ideas. Even though they may not have understood all that was about to take place, they now knew that Jesus was truly God and that he had a clear mission that he must accomplish, involving in some mysterious way, his death.

It also maximized the teaching time that was left. In the remaining days of Jesus' life, it was important that they be attentive to everything Jesus had to tell them. It was important that they begin to understand his teaching in light of what he was about to go through.

16. How do you think this experience might have impacted Peter, James and John?

John 1:14 (ESV)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt [tabernacle] among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

2 Peter 1:16-18 (NLT)

¹⁶ For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw his majestic splendor with our own eyes ¹⁷ when he received honor and glory from God the Father. The voice from the majestic glory of God said to him, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy."¹⁸ We ourselves heard that voice from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.

This encounter radically impacted Peter and John. It shaped everything about their life and perspective moving forward. Over thirty-forty years later, when they rewrite these words, it is as if they are re-living the experience in vivid detail.

17. Have you had any powerful, personal experiences with God? How did it affect and change your life?

18. Why do encounters with God always seem to have an impact on mission, and how we reach out to others?

Session 25

Kingdom Parables

Matthew 13:34 (NLT)

Jesus always used stories and illustrations like these when speaking to the crowds. In fact, he never spoke to them without using such parables.

1. What is a parable?

The word “parable” comes from two root words, para + ballein, which means to “place alongside”, in the sense of setting up a comparison between two things.

A biblical parable is a short, true-to-life story that has one main spiritual comparison to convey. We can also think of it as a narrative riddle that needs to be solved in order to understand a spiritual significance.

When studying parables, you need to consider:

1) The Context:

- › To whom is the story being told?
- › What circumstances evoked this teaching?
- › Was there a question raised or a problem encountered?
- › Was there a teaching that needed correcting?

2) The Story:

- › What are the key elements of the story?
- › What tension is experienced or addressed?
- › What is the climax of the story?
- › What is the main lesson learned from the story?

3) The Follow-up

- › What reactions did the people have to this story?
- › What explanation did Jesus provide, if any?
- › Were there any other stories or teachings that accompanied this parable?
- › What is the deeper spiritual application of the story?

Caution: there is one main point, and every statement in the story drives to this point. Not every detail necessarily has a deeper significance or spiritual comparison.

Matthew 13:10 (NLT)

His disciples came and asked him, "Why do you use parables when you talk to the people?"

2. Why did Jesus speak in parables that were often hard to understand? Why did he not just explain things clearly?

Jesus' Reply:

Matthew 13:11-13 (NLT)

¹¹ He replied, "You are permitted to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but others are not. ¹² To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them. ¹³ That is why I use these parables. For they look, but they don't really see. They hear, but they don't really listen or understand."

3. Did Jesus' explanation help or make things more confusing? What does he mean?

Jesus had two main reasons for using parables:

1) To reveal truth

Jesus wanted his faithful followers to understand, and live by, the nature of the kingdom of God. Those who were eager to understand the truths of the kingdom, and place their faith in Jesus would be given greater insight into the kingdom through these parables. Considering that, whenever his disciples eagerly sought an understanding of the parable, he quickly explained its meaning.

2) To hide truth

By speaking in parables, Jesus was able to hide truths of the kingdom from those who had no faith in God and were resistant in their hearts to his teaching. Many listening to Jesus' words did not understand, simply because their hearts were hardened to the message. In many ways, parables were a form of judgment against those who were rebellious in heart.

4. What are some other advantages of using parables to teach?

- > It makes the teaching easy to remember.
- > It causes you to either reflect deeply on the meaning of the message or ignore it.
- > It makes it possible to make offensive statements without getting into trouble.

5. What are some modern-day examples of parables or allegories?

- > Political cartoons
- > Nursery rhymes

Secular example:

BAA, BAA, BLACK SHEEP (original version)

Baa Baa Black Sheep
have you any wool?
Yes, merry, have I,
three bags full.
One for my master,
one for my dame,
one for the little boy
who lives down the lane.

6. What was the point of this poetic parable?

It was potentially a complaint against taxes raised by King Edward 1.

Bag 1: Master:

Taxes for the king

Bag 2: Dame:

The nobility

Bag 3: Little boy down the lane:

Tax on any wool being shipped out of the country

Frustrations of being “fleeced”!

7. What were the “secrets” of the kingdom Jesus was talking about?

The secrets were truths about the kingdom the Jews did not previously understand or grasp. They were concepts that caught the people off guard, requiring them to rethink their understanding of the nature of God’s kingdom and who was part of it.

The Israelites preconceptions of what the kingdom would look like and how it would come often blinded them to God’s actual working out his plan for the kingdom.

The Parables of Jesus

Parable	Matthew	Mark	Luke
Lamp Under a Basket	5:14-16	4:21-22	
The Wise & Foolish Builder	7:24-27		6:47-49
New Cloth on Old Garment	9:16	2:21	5:36
New Wine in Old Wineskins	9:17	2:22	5:37-38
The Four Soils	13:3-23	4:1-20	8:4-15
The Tares	13:24-30		
The Mustard Seed	13:31-32	4:30-32	13:18-19
The Leaven	13:33		13:20-21
The Hidden Treasure	13:44		
The Pearl of Great Price	13:45-46		
Fishnet	13:47-50		
House Owner	13:52		
The Lost Sheep	18:12-14		15:3-7
The Unmerciful Servant	18:23-35		
Workers in the Vineyard	20:1-16		
Two Sons	21:28-32		
The Wicked Tenants	21:33-44	12:1-12	20:9-18
Wedding Feast	22:1-14		14:16-24
Fig Tree	24:32	13:28-29	21:29-30
Faithful and Wicked Servants	24:45-51		12:42-48
The Ten Virgins	25:1-13		
The Talents of Money	25:14-30		
Secretly Growing Seed		4:26-29	
Servants keeping watch		13:34-37	
The Two Debtors			7:41-43
The Good Samaritan			10:30-37
Friend at Night			11:5-8
The Rich Fool			12:16-21
Waiting Servants			12:35-40
Barren Fig Tree			13:6-9
Lowest Seat			14:7-11
Wise Planner			14:28-33
The Lost Coin			15:8-10
The Lost Son/Prodigal			15:11-32
The Shrewd Manager			16:1-9
The Rich Man and Lazarus (parable?)			16:19-31
Humble Servant			17:7-10
The Persistent Widow			18:1-8
The Pharisee and Tax Collector			18:9-14
The Ten Minas			19:11-27

Parable of the Four Soils

Mark 4:1-9 (NLT)

¹ Once again Jesus began teaching by the lakeshore. A very large crowd soon gathered around him, so he got into a boat. Then he sat in the boat while all the people remained on the shore. ² He taught them by telling many stories in the form of parables, such as this one: ³ “Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seed. ⁴ As he scattered it across his field,

1: *some of the seed fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate it.*

2: ⁵ *Other seed fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seed sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But the plant soon wilted under the hot sun, and since it didn’t have deep roots, it died.*

3: ⁷ *Other seed fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants so they produced no grain.*

4: ⁸ *Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they sprouted, grew, and produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted!” ⁹ Then he said, “Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.”*

THE CONTEXT:

8. What is the context of this story? Who is Jesus speaking to?

As Jesus’ fame grew, he started drawing a crowd wherever he went. The people that gathered around him were doing so, with many different motives.

9. What do you think some of the various motives might have been?

Jesus tells this story as a warning to people to evaluate where they truly stand in relation to the teaching he has been giving.

THE STORY:

Draw pictures illustrating the four types of soil and their effects.

Have fun comparing everyone’s drawings.

①

②

③

④

10. What do the following elements represent?

Have students share various opinions and then read the passage below to hear Jesus' explanation.

The Sower: Jesus

The Seed: Word of God

The Path: People with hardened hearts, so the message does not sink in.

The Birds: Evil spirits

How do you think Satan takes the Word away from us?

The Rocky Soil: People initially receptive to the Word of God, but have no spiritual depth.

The Sun: Pressures in life that cause us to lose faith.

What are some examples of pressures that might cause us to stumble spiritually?

The Thorns: Distractions, desires, or deceptions in this world that prevent us from spiritually growing and maturing.

What are some examples of these that might choke our spiritual growth?

The Good Soil: People responsive to the Word of God, allow it to sink in, and let it take root in their lives.

The Crop: Spiritual growth and effectiveness.

THE FOLLOW-UP:

Mark 4:10, 13-20 (NLT)

¹⁰ Later, when Jesus was alone with the twelve disciples and with the others who were gathered around, they asked him what the parables meant.

¹³ Then Jesus said to them, "If you can't understand the meaning of this parable, how will you understand all the other parables?" ¹⁴ The farmer plants seed by taking God's word to others.

¹⁵ The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message, only to have Satan come at once and take it away.

¹⁶ The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷ But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word.

¹⁸ The seed that fell among the thorns represents others who hear God's word, ¹⁹ but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things, so no fruit is produced.

²⁰ And the seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and accept God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"

- 11. What is the overall message Jesus was trying to get across?**
- 12. What are the implications for each person in this story?**
- 13. Have you seen people as represented by these four soils? Without sharing names or specifics, can you give insights as to what you saw happening?**
- 14. Which kind of dirt are you, or more tactfully stated, where do you place yourself in this story?**
- 15. Do you see any influences that could potentially cause you to fall from the spiritual journey you have started?**
- 16. How can we ensure we represent the productive soil?**

The parables of Jesus contain many thought-provoking truths about the nature of the kingdom of God: what it is like, when it will fully come, who will be accepted into the kingdom, who won't be, how to prepare for its arrival, and the signs of its coming.

We encourage you to read through the parables carefully, reflecting on each truth Jesus is mysteriously presenting as a riddle, and consider how they relate to you right now.

Session 26

The Resurrection

Understanding the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (NLT)

³ I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. ⁴ He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. ⁵ He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. ⁷ Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him.

1. We understand the death of Jesus was necessary to pay the death price for our sinful actions, but why was the resurrection of Jesus so essential?

In the Corinthian church, some were arguing that there was no physical resurrection of believers. Paul responded by arguing that if there is no resurrection of believers, then even Jesus was not raised. He argued that the resurrection of Jesus prepared the way for us to be physically raised with new bodies as well.

1 Corinthians 15:12-19 (NLT)

¹² But tell me this—since we preach that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless. ¹⁵ And we apostles would all be lying about God—for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave. But that can't be true if there is no resurrection of the dead. ¹⁶ And if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. ¹⁸ In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! ¹⁹ And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.

2. In this passage, what are all the implications for us if Jesus was not raised from the dead? In each case discuss your thoughts as to why this is significant?

1) vs.14 The Apostles' preaching is useless

Why?

The Apostles' teachings were based on the fact that Jesus died, conquered death, and as a result, rose to new life. If this foundational teaching were not true, then all their other teachings would crumble. Every hope they proclaimed would be nothing more than empty promises.

2) vs.14 Your faith is useless

Why?

If Jesus died and stayed dead, then he was defeated by death. Yet, Christ's whole mission was to come to give us life eternal. It is true that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross would have paid the penalty for our sin, but apart from the resurrection, there would be no way to free us from the grip of death. Not only do we need to be forgiven, we also need to be given new life — both physically and spiritually. We were never intended to be spiritual beings without a physical body. This would fall short of God's perfect intent for us. Revelation says God is creating a new heaven and a new earth, on which we will dwell. We need a physical resurrection if we are to live eternally with Jesus.

3) vs.15 The Apostles are liars/false witnesses

Why?

The Apostles proclaimed that they were eyewitnesses to the physically resurrected Jesus. They claimed, as did 500 other people, to have seen him, touched him and eaten with him. If Jesus was not resurrected, then they are blatant liars and deceivers. If that is the case, then nothing they taught should be believed and the very Corinthian church that they are writing to should not exist. It is all a lie.

4) vs.17 Your faith is useless; you are still guilty of your sins

Why?

Our hope is based on the fact that the risen Jesus sends his Spirit to indwell us, applying his death and righteousness to our lives. If Jesus is still in the grave, then he is simply a martyr at best and cannot send his Spirit to cleanse us and give us eternal life. He himself is still trapped by the grave for the consequences of our sin. If this is true, then there is no way to receive forgiveness, and faith in Jesus cannot accomplish anything for us in this life or in eternity.

5) vs.18 Those who have died are lost

Why?

If Christ has not risen, then those who died in the past are still trapped in their sin, and there can be no hope for them. They are trapped in the judgment of death.

6) vs 19 We are to be pitied more than anyone

Why?

If Jesus is not raised, then we have no hope for an eternal future with God at all. This means that we have focused our faith on a hope that does not exist, that we have aligned ourselves with a belief system that is a lie, and that all we can look forward to is judgment.

Through the indwelling of the Spirit of the resurrected Christ, our standing with God changes in several ways. Discuss each theological term and what you think it means.

1) Propitiation

1 John 4:10 (ESV)

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

What does propitiation mean?

Propitiation means the anger of God has been removed through the death of Jesus Christ. God's righteous anger toward us was placed on Jesus on the cross. This implies that if we are apart from Christ, we will receive the full extent of God's wrath against our sin.

2) Justification

Romans 5:18 (ESV)

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

What does justification mean?

Justification means we are declared righteous before God. This is possible as Jesus Christ paid the death penalty for our sins, and his righteousness is placed on our lives as a gift. We, the guilty, are pardoned by the judge and are now declared Not-Guilty.

3) Sanctification

1 Corinthians 6:11 (ESV)

And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 (ESV)

³ *For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, ⁵ not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God...*

What does sanctification mean?

We are set free from bondage to sin and set apart to God.

Two expressions of sanctification:

1) We are sanctified and declared holy at the **point of salvation**. We are washed clean, declared his people, and are called saints, or “holy ones.” Every believer is, therefore a “saint.”

2) But there is also a sense in which sanctification is an **ongoing process**, as we continue to battle the old nature and increasingly live out the holy life.

4) Regeneration

Titus 3:5 (ESV)

...he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit...

What does regeneration mean?

We are changed and made new. At the point of salvation (the time of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit) we are given a new, holy nature immediately. However, the Holy Spirit does not stop there. He continues to renew our minds, which is progressive

sanctification. Eventually, he will renew our bodies at the return of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

The above terms are dependent on both the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave.

1 Corinthians 15:20 (NLT)

But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.

3. What does it mean when Paul says Jesus is the first of a great harvest?

Paul was indicating that Jesus' resurrection was the first of an abundant harvest of physically resurrected people who would spend eternity with God.

4. What do you think our new bodies will be like at the final resurrection?

Some feel they will be whatever they want to be. One youth commented on the fact that she wanted to be a mermaid in heaven. **How would you respond to this perspective?**

5. What was Jesus' resurrected body like?

- > It was physical and could be touched
- > Jesus ate with the disciples
- > Jesus could suddenly appear in a locked room
- > Jesus was recognizable — though at times not to all people

1 Corinthians 15:35-37, 42-44 (ESV)

³⁵ *But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?"* ³⁶ *You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.*

³⁷ *And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain.*

⁴² *So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.* ⁴³ *It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.* ⁴⁴ *It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*

6. What are some advantages of this new body?

The new body:

1) It will be raised imperishable

The new body will not be able to become sick, age, or die.

2) It will be raised in glory

Glory, in this sense, means the opposite of dishonor, shame, or humiliation. It looks forward to victory, honor, and being raised to sit on a throne with Christ.

3) It will be raised in power

The new body will be raised through God's awesome power and will display the power Christ exhibited while on earth, and more.

4) It will be raised spiritual

This does not mean the new body won't be physical. It means it will be holy and in complete alignment with the Spirit of God. Man was always meant to live in the physical realm while at the same time in touch with the spiritual realm. Mankind, as the image of God, is the connecting point between the physical world and the spiritual realm.

7. The following passages are directly related to the message of the hope of Jesus' return and our resurrection.

1 Thessalonians 4:18 (NIV)

Therefore encourage each other with these words.

8. How might the hope of the resurrection be an encouragement to us in the present?

1 Corinthians 15:58 (NIV)

Therefore [in light of the resurrection], my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

9. How might the hope of the resurrection help us to stand firm?

10. How might the hope of the resurrection motivate us to give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord?

11. What is the most exciting thing to you about the resurrection?

12. What may be a disconcerting reality about the hope of the resurrection?

The most disconcerting reality of the resurrection may be the reality that some people we deeply care about will not be a part of it. They will miss out on forgiveness and be left to judgment. The hope of the resurrection spurs us to declare God's grace and forgiveness to those who do not yet know him.

SESSION 26
The Resurrection

Session 27

The Great Commission

After Jesus' death and resurrection, he appeared to his disciples to declare that their work was just beginning. Jesus made reconciliation with God possible, and now it was up to the disciples to spread the news.

Matthew 28:18-20 (NLT)

¹⁸ Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

1. What is the significance of Jesus being given "all authority"?

Because he has been given all authority, he now can set people free from sin and death. He sent out his disciples with the responsibility to let everyone know that he is accepting anyone willing to become his follower and enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Also, because Jesus has this authority, we need to listen to him when he sends us out with a mission.

When Satan tempted Jesus, he claimed that the authority over the world had been given to him, and he would be willing to give it to Jesus if he worshiped him (Luke 4:6-7). Jesus refused.

2. On what basis is the authority over the world taken from Satan and given to Jesus?

Satan's authority over the world rested in his leading a rebellion against God, trapping people in their sin, and dooming them to eternal death. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus conquered the hold of sin and death and has opened a way for people to return to God to receive forgiveness and eternal life. Jesus now reigns as judge over the world, and Satan is defeated in his goal of trapping mankind. Now people will only be judged if they choose to reject God's offer of forgiveness. They no longer have to be controlled by Satan or be bound by sin.

3. What is a "disciple?"

In the Bible days, a disciple was a student who followed and modeled the life and teachings of a mentor. The master-disciple role was one in which the master held complete authority in directing and educating his students. It was expected that every disciple would embrace not only the teachings, but also the lifestyle of the master. In turn, they would pass the teachings of the master on to others so that his knowledge and approach to life would continue to spread.

In our setting, a disciple is someone who chooses to become a follower of Jesus Christ, embraces his teachings and approach to life. All disciples of Jesus are then expected to become disciple-makers, helping others also embrace the life and teachings of Jesus to others.

4. How does one become a disciple?

One becomes a disciple of Jesus when he hears and accepts the teaching of who Jesus is and what he accomplished for us through his death and resurrection. When one wants to become a follower (disciple) of Jesus, they must repent of their old approach to life (sin), ask for forgiveness, and embrace Jesus as their Lord (master).

The initiation rite that declares someone to be a disciple of Jesus is baptism. This is why Jesus commands that we go into all the world baptizing people in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The task of teaching everything Jesus taught then begins. This is not just about teaching knowledge but an approach to life and a relationship with God.

5. Why are we to go to all nations?

6. Why do think baptism plays such an important role?

Baptism is the initiation rite that starts the process of discipleship. It's one thing to say you are a follower of Jesus; it's another thing to symbolically act it out. If someone was not willing to get baptized, they were not considered a disciple of Jesus.

7. What do these following passages reveal to us about God's intent all through Scripture?

Genesis 12:2-3 (NLT) God's Blessing to Abram

² I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. ³ I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families [nations] on earth will be blessed through you.

Psalm 67:1-2 (ESV)

¹ May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, ² that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.

It has always been God's intent that all mankind would be in a relationship with him. Through Jesus, he made it possible for us to be restored to that relationship. To do so, people need to hear and respond to the good news.

Faith with God was NEVER meant to be a personal, private affair between God and us. God never invites us into a one-on-one relationship but into a family. Consistently through scripture we are called to proclaim the glory of God to all nations SO THAT all nations will respond to him.

Mark 11:15-17 (NLT)

¹⁵ When they arrived back in Jerusalem, Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out the people buying and selling animals for sacrifices. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves, ¹⁶ and he stopped everyone from using the Temple as a marketplace. ¹⁷ He said to them, "The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations,' but you have turned it into a den of thieves."

8. Why was Jesus angry in the Temple?

It was not an issue with the idea of selling animals for temple sacrifice. This was a biblically accepted practice, as people came from long distances and could not bring animals with them, or they simply lived in the city and did not have their own animal herds. However, Jesus did imply that there was some dishonesty in their practice, and they were taking advantage of people.

The most significant issue for Jesus though, was the location. The Temple had several

different courtyards that were designated for different peoples. The courtyard where the market was set up was in the Court of the Gentiles. This was the place where the nations were to gather to learn about God and to worship him.

The Jews held this of low importance. They were not concerned about the nations, so they turned their worship center into a dishonest, open market. The whole purpose of the Temple was that it was to be a light to the nations so that people of every tribe and language would one day worship God there. The Jews did not embrace this larger role God called them to and instead focused on the blessing for themselves.

THE END PICTURE

Revelation 7:9-10 (NLT)

⁹ After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they were shouting with a mighty shout, "Salvation comes from our God who sits on the throne and from the Lamb!"

9. **What excites you about this picture?**
10. **What will it take for this to become a reality?**
11. **When will Jesus return?**

Matthew 24:14 (NLT)

And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come.

Luke 24:46-47 (NLT)

⁴⁶ And he said, "Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. ⁴⁷ It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: 'There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.'

Jesus claimed that he would not return until all nations have had the opportunity to hear.

12. **We are told in the Great Commission to teach people to obey everything that Jesus commanded us. What is everything Jesus commanded us?**

We are to teach people all the principles Jesus taught through the entire word of God. The goal of this teaching is not simply to convey content but to change and free lives. We are teaching people how to experience a relationship with the Father, through Jesus, and to represent him effectively in this world. Ultimately, he taught

us to love God more than anything else and then love others (the image of God) on his behalf.

Romans 10:14-15 (NLT)

¹⁴ But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? ¹⁵ And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, "How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!"

13. What does this passage say is the key to others coming to faith?

You may "model" the Christ-filled life, and hopefully, that will establish certain spiritual credibility with others. But, at some point they need to hear the truth spoken to them clearly, about who Jesus is and how they can be restored to a relationship with God. Living a good life will never accomplish this on its own.

14. How often do the people around you hear you TALK about God and a relationship with him? Share.

15. What fears do we have about sharing the good news of Jesus with others?

16. Have you ever had the privilege of leading someone into a relationship with Jesus? Share.

Start praying that God will show you how to invest in someone's life so that he/she could enter into a relationship with God as well.

EVERY BELIEVER is called to make disciples.

This requires **intentionality** and **strategy**.

Acts 1:8 (NLT)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

17. What was Jesus’ discipleship strategy for the early church, according to this verse?

Start in the place where you presently are, then gradually expand your influence into other places.

18. How can you start fulfilling this mandate through your life?

Questions for consideration:

- › Does every believer play the same role in reaching others?
- › Does every believer make disciples on his own?
- › What role does the “church” play vs. your personal role?

Session 28

The Coming King

Acts 1:6-11 (NLT)

⁶ So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, “Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?”

⁷ He replied, “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

⁹ After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. ¹⁰ As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. ¹¹ “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!”

1. What was the point of the angel’s rebuke?

The disciples were looking intently into the sky as if expecting to see Jesus reappear. The angels were present to inform them to stop expecting his immediate return and to go about the mission Jesus just instructed them to fulfill — to tell the whole world about him.

2. In what way did the angel imply Jesus will return?

The angel implied Jesus would return in the same way they saw him go — visibly, through the clouds. This was simply affirming what Jesus had already told them.

Matthew 24:30-31 (NLT)

³⁰ And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send out his angels with the mighty blast of a trumpet, and they will gather his chosen ones from all over the world—from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven.

3. Why do you think it is taking so long for Jesus to return?

2 Peter 3:8-9 (NLT)

⁸ But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. ⁹ The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.

4. What was Peter's rationale for Jesus taking so long to return?

God is holding off returning in order that more people can turn to him. If God were to return right now, how many people would we regret not having taken the time to talk to about Jesus? God is giving us that time right now.

Matthew 24:14 (NLT)

And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come.

5. How many nations (people groups) have yet to hear the gospel preached to them?

Ministry organizations differ in how they define an unreached people group. And, determining the number of groups under any definition is extremely difficult. Generally speaking, an unreached people group is an ethnic group of people where extremely little or no representation of Jesus Christ exists within that community. One estimate: over 7000 <http://www.joshuaproject.net/>

6. Have you ever heard someone predict when Christ is going to return?

7. What is your opinion about how close we might be to Jesus' return?

Mark 13:32-33 (NLT)

³² However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows. ³³ And since you don't know when that time will come, be on guard! Stay alert!

In the following passage, quietly read and underline the signs evident right before Christ returns. Share what you discovered.

Matthew 24:3-51 (NLT)

³ Later, Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives. His disciples came to him privately and said, "Tell us, when will all this happen? What sign will signal your return and the end of the world?"

⁴ Jesus told them, "Don't let anyone mislead you, ⁵ for many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah.' They will deceive many. ⁶ And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but don't panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won't follow immediately. ⁷ Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in many parts of the world. ⁸ But all this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come.

⁹ "Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because you are my followers. ¹⁰ And many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other. ¹¹ And many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people. ¹² Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come.

¹⁵ "The day is coming when you will see what Daniel the prophet spoke about—the sacrilegious object that causes desecration standing in the Holy Place." (Reader, pay attention!) ¹⁶ "Then those in Judea must flee to the hills. ¹⁷ A person out on the deck of a roof must not go down into the house to pack. ¹⁸ A person out in the field must not return even to get a coat. ¹⁹ How terrible it will be for pregnant women and for nursing mothers in those days. ²⁰ And pray that your flight will not be in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹ For there will be greater anguish than at any time since the world began. And it will never be so great again. ²² In fact, unless that time of calamity is shortened, not a single person will survive. But it will be shortened for the sake of God's chosen ones. ²³ "Then if anyone tells you, 'Look, here is the Messiah,' or 'There he is,' don't believe it. ²⁴ For false messiahs

and false prophets will rise up and perform great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God's chosen ones.²⁵ See, I have warned you about this ahead of time.²⁶ "So if someone tells you, 'Look, the Messiah is out in the desert,' don't bother to go and look. Or, 'Look, he is hiding here,' don't believe it!"²⁷ For as the lightning flashes in the east and shines to the west, so it will be when the Son of Man comes.

²⁸ Just as the gathering of vultures shows there is a carcass nearby, so these signs indicate that the end is near.²⁹ "Immediately after the anguish of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will give no light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken."³⁰ And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.³¹ And he will send out his angels with the mighty blast of a trumpet, and they will gather his chosen ones from all over the world—from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven.

³² "Now learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branches bud and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near.³³ In the same way, when you see all these things, you can know his return is very near, right at the door.³⁴ I tell you the truth, this generation will not pass from the scene until all these things take place.³⁵ Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear.³⁶ "However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows.

³⁷ "When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day.³⁸ In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat.³⁹ People didn't realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes.⁴⁰ "Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left.⁴¹ Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left.⁴² "So you, too, must keep watch! For you don't know what day your Lord is coming.⁴³ Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into.⁴⁴ You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected.

⁴⁵ "A faithful, sensible servant is one to whom the master can give the responsibility of managing his other household servants and feeding them.⁴⁶ If the master returns and finds that the servant has done a good job, there will be a reward.⁴⁷ I tell you the truth, the master will put that servant in charge of all he owns.⁴⁸ But what if the servant is evil and thinks, 'My master won't be back for a while,'⁴⁹ and he begins beating the other servants, partying, and getting drunk?⁵⁰ The master will return unannounced and unexpected,⁵¹ and he will cut the servant to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

8. What are some of your reactions to the above passage?

9. What are some of the “birth pains” that you see already increasing?

10. What are some of the signs we are still waiting to see unveiled?

- > The sacrilegious object that causes desecration (Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11)
- > The abomination will be some form of blasphemy against God established in the temple in Jerusalem
- > Great distress unequaled in all time
- > The sun and moon darkened

Revelation 19:11-16 (NLT)

¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and a white horse was standing there. Its rider was named Faithful and True, for he judges fairly and wages a righteous war. ¹² His eyes were like flames of fire, and on his head were many crowns. A name was written on him that no one understood except himself. ¹³ He wore a robe dipped in blood, and his title was the Word of God. ¹⁴ The armies of heaven, dressed in the finest of pure white linen, followed him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth came a sharp sword to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod. He will release the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty, like juice flowing from a winepress. ¹⁶ On his robe at his thigh was written this title: King of all kings and Lord of all lords.

11. What reactions does this description of Jesus evoke in you?

12. How does the picture of Jesus in these verses contrast with how you perceived him in the gospels?

13. In what ways might this passage complete the picture you have of Jesus?

14. What role will believers play after Christ returns?

2 Timothy 2:11-12 (NLT)

¹¹ This is a trustworthy saying: If we die with him, we will also live with him. ¹² If we endure hardship, we will reign with him. If we deny him, he will deny us.

Revelation 22:4-5 (NLT)

⁴ And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. ⁵ And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever.

15. How should we live in light of the fact that Jesus will be returning and we will reign with him?

2 Peter 3:14-15 (NLT)

¹⁴ And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in his sight.

¹⁵ And remember, the Lord's patience gives people time to be saved. This is what our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom God gave him...

16. What might you need to adjust in your life to align yourself with the truth that Christ is going to return?

