

— *The* —  
**JOURNEY**  
*Embracing your life in Christ*





*Paul Gotthardt*

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## *How does this study work?*

### **Format: Read, Discuss, Apply, Entrust**

- We will **read** through the material in the study.
- We will pause to **discuss** the material and answer questions.
- We will prayerfully **apply** the truths we discover.
- We will continue to **entrust** to others what God has entrusted to us.

## *Why does this study work?*

### **We are combining several powerful pieces for growth in Christ.**

- **Relationship:** We focus on a relational understanding of Christianity. Everything God desires to do in and through your life, He will accomplish out of the overflow of your relationship with Him.
- **Discipleship:** Jesus commissioned His Church to make disciples. Disciples are made when believers pursue Christ by loving God, uniting with believers, serving the world, and entrusting the Gospel. You will be led through the New Testament paradigm for discipleship.
- **Alignment:** This study aligns the pieces of Christianity into an understandable, focused, and life-changing journey.
- **Community/Coaching:** You are able to process the information with a group of believers and receive coaching along the way. This setting provides a safe place to get to know other believers, ask questions, and share experiences. Christianity is to be lived out in community.
- **Prayer:** You will be encouraged to prayerfully work through this information in dependence upon God. Spiritual growth is not the result of what you do for God; spiritual growth is the result of what God does through you. As we pray and depend upon God, He lives through us.



## *What's the big idea?*

A number of years ago, I purchased a small indoor tent for my daughters. The package contained 12 short poles, 14 long poles, 21 connecting brackets (of various shapes and sizes), a colorful canvas, a small bag for storage, and NO INSTRUCTIONS FOR ASSEMBLY. I laid all the pieces in front of me, I could see the picture on the box, but I had no idea how to assemble it correctly. I connected and disconnected poles. I turned, bent, twisted, and forced brackets into place. I jammed pieces together with the hopes that the final product looked remotely like a tent. Finally, after more than an hour of trial and error, the tent was assembled. It was a frustrating experience.

That analogy describes how many people approach Christianity. When they open the "Christian box" it's filled with great things like God, the Bible, Jesus, prayer, church, preaching, worship, baptism, communion, serving, giving, small groups, quiet times, missions, and NO APPARENT INSTRUCTIONS FOR ASSEMBLY. Where do you start? How do you make sense of the terms? What do you do first? If you don't know how the pieces fit together, it will be a frustrating experience.

God's plan for assembly involves three primary parts: His Spirit, His Word, and His people. **Through His Spirit**, He transforms our character, guides us into truth, and empowers us for righteous living. **Through His Word**, He shares truth, challenges sin, reveals His character, and enables us to understand His plan for eternal life. **Through His people**, we are trained as followers of Christ, encouraged and challenged in our walk with God, and united as a force for good in this world.

The goal for this guide is to provide a framework for Christian discipleship. The guide will not answer every question about God, the Bible, Christian living, or eternity. That's not the goal. The guide will not exhaust every concept mentioned in the booklet. The purpose is to provide a starting place for discussion and a basic understanding of the big picture. When someone understands the goal, God's intentions and expectations, key concepts and truths—it gives the perspective needed for significant growth in Christ.

*How do I use this guide?*

This guide is best used in the context of one-on-one discipleship or small group discipleship. The information has been written with a blend of bullet points and brief descriptions. While there's enough information to address the subject, there's not so much information that you get bogged down in details. It allows conversation to form naturally.

This guide was also written for people who want to make disciples as they go. With busy schedules, evening appointments, and crammed weekends—finding time to disciple others can be hard. This guide was written in a way that allows you to meet casually (i.e. over lunch, for coffee, a small group, etc.) and entrust the essential truths of the faith to others.

*What will be covered?*

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*What do I need to bring?*

If you like to mark or take notes in your Bible, bring your Bible. Most passages will be written out in the study guide. If you have the opportunity to load a Bible on your smart phone, that can be helpful. Each person will receive a copy of the discipleship guide. Hold on to your copy.

## PART 1: *What is the Gospel?*

### *Big Idea:*

**The Gospel is God's good news that saves and sanctifies a person. You never grow beyond the Gospel.**

The Gospel is the good news of God for humanity. Within the Gospel, we discover our purpose, humanity's problem, God's character, and so much more. The Gospel has several key points.

- **You and I were created for relationship with God.**

Genesis 2–3 tells us that Adam was created in the image of God, and with the capacity for relationship with God. The story reveals conversation, cooperation, partnership, and relationship between Adam and God.

God's desire for relationship was not limited to Adam. He entered covenant relationship with Israel. *"I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people"* (Leviticus 26:12). Jesus stressed the importance of relationship by instructing His disciples to abide in Him (John 15:1–10), promising to reveal Himself to those who love Him (John 14:21), and by referring to His followers as friends (John 15:15). All of these passages show God's desire for relationship.

- **Our sin separated us from that relationship.**

Sin is breaking God's law, and we've all done it. *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). Romans 6:23 tells us the punishment for breaking God's law. *"The wages of sin is death."* Wages are what we earn for what we've done. According to the Bible, we have all earned death.

When the Bible speaks of death, it speaks primarily of separation. When we die physically, our spirit is separated from our body. When we died spiritually because of sin, our spirit was separated from God's Spirit. *"But your iniquities [or sin] have made a separation between you and your God..."* (Isaiah 59:2).

- **There is nothing that we can do to reconcile this relationship on our own.**

Many people believe good deeds will make them right with God. Unfortunately, there is no definitive marker for “adequate goodness.” The Bible doesn’t say, “If you are good most of the time, you are acceptable to God,” or “three good deeds will offset one bad deed.” Without a definitive standard for goodness, how good is good enough?

The Bible helps us see that our problem is not a lack of goodness; our problem is the effect of sin. We could never reconcile the relationship with God because sin brings death and deception. Ephesians 2:1 teaches that without Christ, we were dead in trespasses and sins. Second Corinthians 4:3–4 reveals that without God’s intervention we are blinded to the truth by the god of this world. We can do nothing to reconcile with God because dead people don’t act; and deceived people don’t believe.

- **Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin.**

The penalty of sin was death. Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin. His sacrifice made reconciliation possible. *“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life”* (Romans 5:10).

- **Jesus rose from the dead that we might have eternal life.**

While Jesus’ death paid the penalty for our sin, it is His resurrection that brings us the hope of eternal life. *“Blessed be the God and Father...who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”* (1 Peter 1:3).



- **Jesus offers eternal life (or a reconciled relationship) to those who will repent of their sin by placing faith in Jesus Christ.**

Jesus spoke often of eternal life (John 3:15–16; 4:14; 5:39; 6:40). Many people assume that eternal life is going to heaven when you die. But that’s not what Jesus said. In John 17:3, Jesus said, *“This is eternal life, that they may know You...”* Eternal life is to know God. Eternal life is to experience a reconciled relationship with God.

According to the Bible, eternal life is given to those who will turn from their sin by placing faith in what Jesus has done for them. The Bible describes the act of turning from sin as repentance. It does not mean a person will be sinless. It means they desire God more than sinful activity. Repentance was at the heart of Jesus’ first message. *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (Matthew 4:17).

These truths are not only essential for salvation, they are essential for living as those who are saved. All of the key concepts and great doctrines of the faith are contained within the Gospel message. Think about these words...

|               |                |          |                |
|---------------|----------------|----------|----------------|
| Salvation     | Grace          | Love     | Forgiveness    |
| Election      | Predestination | Hope     | Life           |
| Justification | Redemption     | Faith    | God’s will     |
| Sovereignty   | Sinfulness     | Pride    | God dependence |
| Kingdom       | Community      | Humility | Heaven         |
| Hell          | Peace          | Joy      | Prayer         |
| Jesus         | Messiah        | God      | Saints         |

Every word mentioned and many others are connected to and rooted in the Gospel message. In other words, the more you know and understand the Gospel, the more you will know and understand these concepts.

**Christians grow into the Gospel—not out of the Gospel.  
You never grow beyond the Gospel.**

Notes:

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PART 2: *What is the essence of Christianity?*

*Big Idea:*  
**Christianity is about relationship.**

**What makes a great Christian?** Write down some ideas.

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There will be slight variations based on who you talk to, but most people consider a great Christian to be someone who prays, goes to church, reads their Bible, gives of their resources, serves others, and lives a good moral life. While all of those things are admirable, they do not necessarily distinguish a person as a Christian (or great). Everything mentioned can be done by a non-Christian. A non-Christian can pray, go to church, read a Bible, give of their resources, serve others, and live a moral life.

**Christianity begins with the Gospel of Jesus Christ,  
and the Gospel is about relationship.**

What is the Gospel? The Gospel is God's good news that saves and sanctifies a person. It's the story of redemption that begins in the Garden of Eden and extends through eternity. We've already addressed the Gospel in depth, but notice the relational emphasis.

- Humanity was created for a relationship with God.
- Our sin separated us from that relationship.
- There is nothing that we can do to reconcile this relationship on our own.
- Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin.
- Jesus rose from the dead that we might have eternal life.
- Jesus offers eternal life (or a reconciled relationship) to those who will repent of their sin by placing faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus spoke about eternal life often. In John 17:3, Jesus defined eternal life. *"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."* **Eternal life is to know God.** To know someone is the essence of relationship. God's plan is not to make you a better version of you; His plan is to bring you into right relationship with Himself, and conform you into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29).

Christianity begins when a person comes into right relationship with God. Once that relationship is established, Christ leads us into two other key relationships: relationship with the church and relationship with the world.

How did Jesus model life within these three relationships? He lived in...

## 1. Relationship with God the Father

Jesus lived in constant relationship with God the Father. He was in the habit of withdrawing to deserted/silent places to pray to the Father. Luke 6:12 says, *"And it was at this time that He (Jesus) went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God."* Luke 5:16 says, *"But He Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray."* Some additional passages are: Mark 1:35, Mark 5:45–46, and Mark 14:32–34.

Jesus taught about loving God completely. In Matthew 22:37–38, Jesus said, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment."*

Jesus' entire life was directed by God the Father. Jesus told His disciples that He did not come, speak, or act by Himself. Instead, He was directed by the will of God the Father. John 8:42 says, *"...for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me."* John 5:30 says, *"I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."* John 8:28 reads, *"I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me."*

Jesus spent time alone with the Father. He taught others about loving the Father completely. He lived according to the Father's will and not His own. All of that impacted what He did, what He said, and where He went. Jesus modeled a life that is lived in relationship with God the Father.

## 2. Relationship with the Church (or His followers)

Jesus lived in relationship with other believers (who would become the Church). He addressed larger crowds who were interested in His teachings. Matthew 5:1–2 says, *“When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. He opened His mouth and began to teach them...”*.

Jesus called together a smaller group of men (the 12 disciples) to train and send out. Mark 3:14 says, *“And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach...”*. Everywhere Jesus went, the disciples were with Him. They ministered together; they ate together; they served together; they spent time together.

Jesus spent even more time with three of the disciples: Peter, James, and John. These three appear together with Christ at three major events: the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28), the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:37; Mark 14:33), and the “raising” of Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5:37; Luke 8:51).

In John 13:35, Jesus said that His disciples would be known by their love for one another. Based on His interactions with larger groups, the twelve, and the inner three, you can see how He lived in community with believers. He taught and modeled this second sphere of relationships.

## 3. Relationship with the World (those who were non-Christian)

Jesus lived in relationship with the world (those who have not been reconciled to God through Christ). In His missional statements, Jesus said that He did not *“come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance”* (Luke 5:27–32). There was an absolute focus on reaching sinners. Matthew 9:10 records a scene of Jesus eating with notable sinners. *“Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples.”*

Jesus met the woman at the well (John 4:7–42). Jesus stood up for the woman caught in the act of adultery (John 8:1–11). Jesus went out of his way to have a meal with Zacchaeus—a “notorious sinner”—(Luke 19:7). Jesus was not turned off by sinners; instead He had compassion.

Jesus modeled a life that is lived in relationship with the world.

Put it all together. Christianity is about relationship. The heart of the Gospel is that God pursued you for relationship. Once you are in right relationship with God through Jesus Christ, Christ lives relationally through you. Christianity is lived in the context of three key relationships: our relationship with God, our relationship with the Church, and our relationship with the world.

**Advanced Idea:** Everything God desires to do in and through your life, He will accomplish out of the overflow of your relationship with God. (This truth will become more apparent the further we go through this study.)

## Christianity is about relationship.

Notes:

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PART 3: *What are the basic goals of the Christian life?*

**Big Idea:**

**The basic goals are to know God (by spending time with God) and for God to live His life through you.**

Once we understand the basic goals, we can see the simple course for our lives. Goals establish direction.

**The ULTIMATE goal is to know God (by spending time with God).**

God's gift to humanity through Christ is eternal life (Romans 6:23). Eternal life is to know God (John 17:3).

**How do we get to know God?**

- God must reveal Himself (revelation).
- We must believe what He has revealed (faith).
- We must spend time with the revealed One (relationship).

Let's take a moment to define and discuss each part of getting to know God.

**How has God revealed Himself?**

God has revealed Himself through...

- Creation (Psalm 19:1–4; Romans 1:20)
- Conscience (Romans 2:14–15)
- Christ (John 1:1, 5:18, 8:58; 14:9, 21; Hebrews 1:1–2)
- Canon of Scripture (John 20:31; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21)

**What does it mean to believe what He has revealed?**

First, Scripture talks about saving faith. We begin by placing faith in the Gospel message. Scripture teaches that saving faith consists of three elements: knowledge, assent, and trust. Knowledge involves understanding of the basic biblical facts regarding the Gospel. Assent agrees that those facts are true. Trust acts on them by appropriating Christ as the **only** hope for salvation. In knowledge, *I understand*; in assent, *I agree*; in trust, *I act*.

Second, Scripture talks about believing what God has declared. While our walk with God begins in **saving faith**, it continues in **living faith**. Belief is more than intellectual acceptance; belief acts according to what is accepted.

Think about the way God reveals Himself in Scripture. The Bible tells us that God is holy, loving, just, righteous, merciful, sovereign, ever-present, all-knowing, etc. It's one thing to agree with those terms; it's another thing to trust God's sovereignty when your life crumbles, or to believe God is loving when trials come, or to know He is present when you feel alone.

To believe what God has revealed is to live by faith in what He said in Scripture. It is more than intellectual understanding; it impacts how we live. That takes us to the third part of knowing God: we must spend time with the revealed One.

### How can I spend time with God?

The only way we get to know someone is by spending time with that person. You can learn about a person through a book, but you can only get to know that person by spending time with them.

**Example:** The purpose of dating is to get to know someone. While dating, you go where they go; you do what they do; you try to understand their heart, their character, their dreams and plans. By spending time with a person, you get to know that person.

### How can you spend time with God (and get to know Him)?

- Read the Bible (The Bible is God's revelation of Himself. You get to know Him as He reveals Himself in Scripture.)
- Pray (Prayer is conversation with God.)
  - Talk to God in prayer
  - Listen to God in prayer
- Worship God (Worship is a time of focused reflection upon God, thanking Him for what He's done, and learning more about Him.)
- Listen to biblically based preaching and teaching
- Time in nature (The invisible attributes of God are clearly seen by what has been made. Romans 1).
- **IN ALL OF THESE THINGS, WE GET TO KNOW HIM WHEN THE FOCUS IS ON HIM.** We're not just reading the Bible to gain information; we are reading the Bible to know Him. We're not just going to church because we should; we are going to church to know Him. We are not just praying to tell God what we need; we are praying to know His heart on what we're facing. We get to know God by spending time with God where the focus is on God.



When we spend time with God (getting to know God), God lives His life through us. Christianity is not you living for God; Christianity is God living His life through you. For God to live effectively through you, you must get to know Him (by spending time with Him), and submit to His plan.

The more you get to know God, His heart, His desires, His work, His kingdom, His character—the more you will see how He wants to live through you in the moment. Our actions flow out of our love relationship with God.

**The basic goals are to know God (by spending time with God) and for God to live His life through you.**

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PART 4: *Why should we spend time with God?*

**Big Idea:**  
Spending time with God should be motivated by love.

What motivates you to spend time with God?

Jot down some thoughts:

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When Christians talk about spending time with God, it's usually connected to reading the Bible, prayer, or worship. When you ask people why they read the Bible, pray, or worship, you will often hear one or more of the following replies:

- Desire for knowledge (they want to know more)
- Desire for comfort (they want to feel better)
- Desire for answered prayer (they want God to intervene)
- Pressure by the church (they were told they should)
- Obedience to God (God commands it)
- Guilt (they believe they should)
- Discipline (it's the right thing to do)
- Habit (they've always done it)
- Etcetera

There's a lot of truth in this next statement. **Why we do what we do is just as important as what we do.** Our motivation makes all the difference.

**Illustration:** A husband brings flowers to his wife. She is overwhelmed with gratitude and says, "These are beautiful. What's the occasion?"

Would she still be excited if he said...

- "It's more of an experiment than anything. I just wanted to study the expression on your face and learn what makes you tick."
- "It's not really about you; I just wanted to feel better."
- "I'm giving you something now because I want something from you later."
- "Some of the guys at work gave their wives flowers. I didn't really want to participate, but I felt pressure to do so."
- "You told me to bring you flowers. Here you go!"
- "I felt guilty about not getting you flowers for a while. Hopefully, this will make my guilt go away."
- "I read in a book that husbands are supposed to do things like this. I'm just trying to be more disciplined."
- "It's a habit I'm trying to develop."

If the husband gave any of these responses, the wife would not be very pleased. Why? She wants him to bring her flowers because he loves her. She doesn't want him to feel pressured or forced or compelled to do it out of habit. She wants his actions to be motivated by love and a desire to bless her.

The same is true of spending time with God. There is nothing wrong with wanting to know more about the Bible, or asking God to answer your prayers. However, when our primary reason for reading the Bible and praying is motivated by **what** we can get instead of **who** we're with—something is wrong. We should spend time with God because we love Him, we want to be with Him, and we want to know Him more.

### Why we do what we do is just as important as what we do.

If we are not acting out of love for God, we are simply going through the motions of religion. We might be doing good things, but the motivation is wrong.

As you spend time with God, consciously think of your motive. Are you there because you love Him, or are you there to get something from Him?

## Discussion Topics:

1. How does your motivation for spending time with God connect to the overall goal of the Christian life?
2. Have you ever had a friend that only spent time with you to get something from you? What words would you use to characterize that relationship?

Notes:

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## PART 5: *Why is Scripture important?*

### ***Big Idea:***

**Scripture is the final authority for all beliefs, experiences, and actions.**

#### **Basic Bible information:**

The Bible is God's revelation of Himself to humanity. It was written by men under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, and therefore is wholly without error. It reveals the depths of God's love and the principles by which God judges us; and, therefore will remain to the end of the world as the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. It is sufficient as our only infallible rule of faith and practice.

(1 Corinthians 2:7–14; 2 Peter 1:20–21; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; Matthew 5:18, 24:35; John 10:35; Hebrews 4:12; Psalm 119:89)

Scripture is:

- Inspired (2 Timothy 3:16) (God breathed out)
- Infallible (Proverbs 3:20–23) (certain, reliable, and trustworthy)
- Inerrant (Psalm 19) (without errors or mistakes)
- Unique (Jude 3) (one-of-a-kind)
- Complete (Jude 3; Hebrews 1:1) (finished; full revelation of God)

#### **There is a direct correlation between faith in God and time in Scripture.**

As we know more about God, our faith in God grows. When we see what He has done, when we understand who He is, when we take the time to get to know His heart—our faith strengthens.

As previously stated, the Bible is God's revelation of himself. In the following passages, notice the connection between faith, time in Scripture, and Scripture revealing God.

- Romans 10:17, *"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."* Our faith increases because the Word of God points to the Son of God.
- In John 5:39, Jesus told the religious people, *"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me..."* In other words, Scripture points back to Christ. The Word of God points to the Son of God.

- In Acts 8:35, Philip was speaking with the Ethiopian eunuch about a passage in Isaiah. It says, *"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him..."*. How could Philip preach Jesus from the book of Isaiah? Isaiah was written over 600 years prior to Christ's birth. The answer is Isaiah's prophetic writings pointed towards Christ. The Word of God points to the Son of God.
- In John 1:1, it says, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* John 1:14 says, *"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."* Jesus is the only one in Scripture referred to as "the only begotten of the Father." The Word of God points to the Son of God.
- In Galatians 3:24, Paul said, *"Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith."* The Law (Genesis–Deuteronomy) was our tutor. Paul tells us that the Law of the Old Testament pointed us to Christ. The Word of God points to the Son of God.

The Bible is God's revelation of Himself. He tells us about His character. He shares parts of His plans. As you spend time in the Bible, you will get to know the mind, the heart, and the Person of God. As you do, your faith will increase.

**There are multiple ways to read the Bible.** All Bible reading is not the same. Some people read the Bible for...

- Pleasure: They read for personal enjoyment.
- Application: They read to gain insights for living.
- Teaching: They read to share with others.
- Learning: They read to gain knowledge.
- Devotion: They read to know God.

Each way is beneficial; however, a quiet time is primarily for the purpose of devotion (reading to know God).

### Basic Bible Study Principles:

In order to understand and interpret Scripture correctly, we need to know the context. You discover the context by knowing what the original writer said to the original audience, in the original setting, and for that original purpose. Until you know what was said back then, you cannot understand what to apply today.



**How do I understand the context of Scripture?** Ask five questions:

- Author: Who was the original writer?
- Audience: Who was the original audience?
- Setting: What was the original setting?
- Purpose: Why was this book written (i.e. Galatians, Mark, Revelation)?
- Genre: What is the style of the writing? (i.e. poetry, historical narrative, wisdom literature, epistle, apocalyptic writings, etc.)

Most of this information is found at the beginning of each book in a study Bible. For further information on the Bible, Bible study, and interpreting Scripture, look at Appendixes 1, 2 and 3 in the back.

**How do I apply the Scriptures to my life?**

- Observation: What does the passage say?
- Interpretation: What does the passage mean?
- Application: How does the passage apply to me?

**How do I get started?** Once you get a Bible that's easy to read, here are several ideas...

- Underline, highlight, and take notes in the margins. Use a journal if necessary to record what God is teaching.
- Read for depth, not distance.
- Where should you begin? Here are a few options:
  - Start with the themes God keeps brings to mind (i.e. finances, faith, anger, etc.)
  - Read Proverbs; study the chapter that corresponds with the day of the month.
  - Read the Gospels and focus on the character and life of Christ.
  - Read the Epistles and study how the Gospel is lived in daily life.
  - Read through the Bible in a year (preferably with a One Year Bible).
  - Download the *YouVersion* Bible App to your smart phone. It gives a number of specific plans for studying Scripture.

Notes:

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PART 6: *What should I know about prayer?*

*Big Idea:*

**Prayer is conversation with God; we speak and listen.**

Prayer is conversation with God. It's not complicated. It doesn't have to be "flowery" or poetic. It doesn't need to be long or intimidating. Prayer is conversation with God.

The Bible clearly teaches Christians how to pray. Let's break the conversation down into two parts: (1) Speaking to God (2) Listening to God.

Most Christians spend the bulk of their time in the first category. We speak to God. We share our problems, our concerns, our questions, our celebrations, and so much more.

There are several primary categories for speaking to God.

- 1. Prayer:** Speaking to God in general
- 2. Petition:** Asking God for a personal need
- 3. Intercession:** Asking God to intervene on someone else's behalf (praying for others)
- 4. Adoration:** Sharing our love, respect, and affinity for who God is
- 5. Thanksgiving:** Sharing our gratefulness for all God has provided
- 6. Praise:** Sharing our appreciation for what God has done

While there are other smaller categories, these are the primary ways we talk to God. In each of these categories, we are doing the talking.

However, prayer is not supposed to be a monologue; prayer is a dialogue. It's a conversation. Not only are we to share our heart with God; we are to listen as God shares His heart with us.

Listening to God in prayer takes time. It takes time to develop an ear for His voice. It takes time to discern between what you think God said and what He actually said. The longer you listen and the more time you spend in prayer, the clearer His voice becomes.

## How can we grow in our ability to hear God's voice?

### 1. The more time we spend with God in prayer, the more we discern God's voice.

Think of the relationships that are close to us. The closer the relationship, the more familiar the voice! There are people who call you on the phone but never need to say who they are (i.e. parents, spouse, kids, siblings, close friends). There is a familiarity that only comes through repeated exposure.

The same is true of God. The more we talk to God and listen to what He says—the more familiar we become with the sound of God's voice.

### 2. Focus more on what you hear than how it sounds.

There seems to be some confusion between hearing God's voice and recognizing what God says. The first is more difficult than the second.

Once again, look at human communication. What does your mom's voice sound like? Someone may say, "It's female. It's pleasant. She speaks with an accent. She has a softness to her voice." That's great, but you've only narrowed the possibilities down to a couple billion people.

Now, what would your mom say about lying, purity, God's Word, family, health, etc.? The more you know your mom, the more you know what she thinks. If you're trying to discern her voice, you begin by eliminating what is not her.

The same is true of God. When we focus on what we hear, we can compare it to who He is. When an idea clashes with His nature or His Word, we can eliminate that from the list.

If you are having a hard time discerning the emotions of listening, the following chart may help. This chart was taken from *Choosing God's Best*.

#### **God's Voice:**

Stills you  
Leads you  
Reassures you  
Enlightens you  
Encourages you  
Comforts you  
Calms you  
Convicts you

#### **Satan's Voice:**

Rushes you  
Pushes you  
Frightens you  
Confuses you  
Discourages you  
Worries you  
Obsesses you  
Condemns you

**3. Be sure that what you hear aligns with Scripture.**

The Bible is God’s revealed Word. Our first stop in learning to distinguish God’s voice should be to discover what God has already written. God will not contradict Himself. He will not tell you something in prayer that does not align with His Word.

**4. View prayer in conjunction with God’s other mediums for speaking to His people.**

- Scripture
- Godly council
- Circumstances

As a general rule of thumb, what you hear in prayer should be confirmed by Scripture, godly council, and circumstances. God tends to use all four together to affirm His position.

**Prayer is conversation with God; we speak and listen.**

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PART 7: *What is a disciple?****Big Idea:***

**A disciple is more than an educated believer;  
a disciple wants to become like Christ.**

**What is a disciple?**

Jesus commissioned the Church to make disciples (Matthew 28:19–20). If we can't define a disciple, we can't know if we've made a disciple. Disciples are often defined as learners, students, or followers of Christ. On a very basic level, that's true. However, a disciple is much more. How does Scripture define a disciple? Let's look at disciples from a first century Jewish perspective.

First century Jewish education had several levels. Children began their study around the age of five or six in **Beth Sefer** (which means "House of the Book"). The teaching focused primarily on Torah (the first five books of the Bible).

It was said that on the first day of class, the rabbi would take honey and cover each child's writing slate. After the slate was covered in honey, he would say, "Lick the honey off the slate and off your fingers." And as the kids enjoyed the honey, the rabbi would quote Psalm 119:103, "*May the words of God be sweet to your taste, sweeter than honey to your mouth.*" The rabbi wanted the kids to know that there was nothing more enjoyable than tasting, receiving, and making the Word of God a part of your life.

For the next four to five years, these young children would memorize large portions of Scripture. In fact, some students memorized the entire Torah by the time Beth Sefer ended at age 10!

After Beth Sefer, most of the students stayed at home to help with the family business. Parents wanted to make sure their kids were well prepared for the future. They felt that two points of education were necessary: understanding of Scripture and training in a vocation. The best students continued their study of Scripture (while learning a trade) in **Beth Talmud** (House of Learning).

In Beth Talmud, the educational process was much more intense. They studied the Prophets and the Writings in addition to Torah. They learned the interpretations of the Oral Torah (legal and interpretative traditions). They learned how to interpret and apply the Scriptures. They also learned the Jewish art of questions and answers.

This second level of education focused on understanding deep truths while developing critical thinking skills. Western education focuses on the exchange of information. After teaching the addition tables, we ask questions like, "What is two plus two?" We want our kids to answer "four." Our educational process is designed around the teacher giving information and the student giving it back.

In Jesus' day, the rabbis taught kids to answer with a question. The focus was not on the exchange of information; the focus was on the understanding of that information. The rabbi might say what is two and two? Instead of answering, "four," the student might say, "What is eight minus four, or what is 25% of 16?"

If the student could give the answer in the form of a question, the teacher knew they had processed the information. Jesus was at this stage when His parents lost Him in the temple at the age of 12 (Luke 2:46). It says, *"...they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers."* They were not astonished at his questions. They were astonished at His understanding and answers. His questions demonstrated his understanding of truth.

By the time a child finished Beth Talmud, some would have memorized the rest of the Old Testament Scriptures!

At the end of Beth Talmud, most kids did not continue their education. However, some of the most advanced students would continue to the next level of education called **Beth Midrash** (House of Study). When students entered Beth Midrash, they were called "**talmidim**," which is translated "**disciples**."

At this level, a student would present himself to a rabbi. The student would say, "Rabbi, I want to become one of your talmidim. Please let me in your House of Study." The rabbi would ask a number of questions to evaluate their level of education and understanding.

The questions asked were not, "Can you tell me the books of Torah, or who was thrown in the lion's den?" The rabbi might say, "In Habakkuk there are four references to Deuteronomy. Give them to me in order." Another approach would be for the rabbi to engage in "remez." He would talk about a subject and then quote a verse. The student had to know if the verse applied to the subject, or was the subject connected to the verse before or after the verse he quoted. Without the Scriptures in front of them, that student had to know the verse, the surrounding verses, the context of those verses, and then tell if the verse was quoted properly for interpretation.



The rabbi wanted to know if the individual knew Torah. Does he understand the oral traditions? Does he have a grasp of interpretation? His goal was to see if this kid could understand his teaching, his philosophy, his approach to Scripture, and if he could eventually teach this understanding to others.

Each rabbi's understanding of Scripture was called his **yoke**. If the rabbi believed the boy was able to not only understand, but also become a rabbi and teach, he would say, "Come, follow me." To be accepted by a rabbi was one of the greatest honors anyone could receive. At that moment, the young man would leave his family, his job, his village, and his friends to begin studying under the rabbi.

His goal was simple: **He wanted to be like his rabbi.** Luke 9:40 says, *"Students are not greater than their teacher. But the student who is fully trained will become like the teacher"* (NLT). The disciples mimicked everything the rabbi did. They would eat the same food as their rabbi. They would sleep in the same position as their rabbi. They would walk the same, carry themselves the same, and they even developed similar mannerisms to their rabbi. As the rabbi taught his yoke, his disciples listened, watched, and imitated everything he did.

Can you see why so many modern approaches to discipleship fail? We equate a disciple with just being a student. A student wants to know what the teacher knows so they can give the right answer. But that's not the full view of what it means to be a disciple.

A disciple wants to be like the rabbi. That is God's plan for every Christian. His plan is not that we have a head full of answers; He wants us to be like Christ. Romans 8:29 says, *"For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of his Son."* In Galatians 4:19, Paul labored with the Galatians, *"until Christ is formed in you."*

While Christians are not following the same path of discipleship (Beth Sefer, Beth Talmud, Beth Midrash), we can see a general lesson. **Discipleship is not only about information; it's about transformation. God's goal is not to make us biblically literate; His goal is to make us like Him.**

What is a biblical definition of a disciple? A disciple is a follower who spends time with their rabbi (listening, watching, and imitating him) so that they can become like him, and eventually pass on these teachings to more disciples.

**A disciple is more than an educated believer;  
a disciple wants to become like Christ.**

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PART 8: *What does it mean to follow Christ?*

**Big Idea:**  
To follow Christ is to be like Christ.

**What does God want from me?**

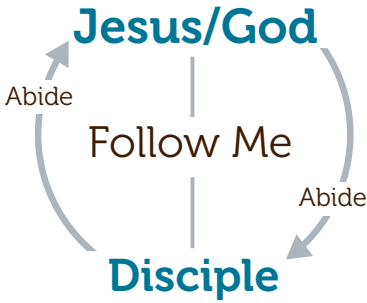
Jesus used two words to answer that question: Follow Me! It's more than claiming to be a Christian, attending church, and learning Bible stories. It's more than being an admirer of His life or fascinated by His teachings.

To follow Him is to be like Him. It includes spending time with Him (listening to Him, watching Him, and imitating Him) so that we can be like Him, and eventually pass on these teachings to more disciples.



Following Christ is much easier than following another rabbi. While first century disciples wanted to be like their rabbi, it was because the rabbi wanted to fulfill the law to please God. These rabbis were devout keepers of the law, but they were still fallen and sinful. They developed complicated yokes, and additional laws to ensure they would obey Torah. The result was a heavier, more complicated yoke. The relationship looked something like this:

The process was complicated. To follow God, please God, and obey God—a disciple started at the bottom of this chain. After years of study, they might become a disciple. In order to be like their rabbi, they needed to follow the rabbi, take on his yoke, keep the Law, and hope it was enough to please God.



Following Christ is not complicated. Jesus is God. Jesus fulfilled the Law. His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matthew 11:28–30). We do not obey the Law to be right with God; we have been made right with God by our rabbi. For a disciple of Christ, the flow is circular.

Jesus tells us to follow Him. As we follow Him (or abide in Him), we become like Him (John 15:1–10). It's that simple.

To follow Christ is to be like Christ. Is your life becoming like His? Is His heart being manifested in your life? Do you love others? Are you focused on His Kingdom? Are you serving as He served? Are you following His example for spending time with the Father?

**If not, the solution is not to tackle the problem with determination and discipline.** The solution is to follow Him by abiding in Him. As you do, He will live His life through you, and you become more like Him.

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PART 9: *How are disciples made?*

*Big Idea:*

**Disciples are made when people pursue Christ by loving God, uniting with believers, serving the world, and entrusting the Gospel.**

**How are disciples made? What does it look like to follow Christ?**

If you were to ask the average Christian how disciples are made, the conversation almost always turns to a small group gathering. "We have a great Sunday school department," or "We have small groups that meet throughout the week." While disciples are made in community, that's not the extent of disciple making.

Here's a great question for every Christian: "How did Jesus disciple the twelve?" Did He meet with them for a Bible study once a week? What did He do?

Several years ago, our staff made the disciple making approach of Christ the central focus of our staff retreat. We wrote down everything that we saw Jesus teaching, modeling, or doing with the twelve. We also wrote down how Paul discipled Timothy, Titus, John Mark, and others. After compiling our list, we grouped the statements under four main headings. When finished, we wrote the following statement:

**Disciples are made when people pursue Christ by loving God, uniting with believers, serving the world, and entrusting the Gospel.**

**Love, Unite, Serve, Entrust.** Here are some things we included under each section.

**Under *loving God*, we included ...**

- Enjoying intimate fellowship with God
- Getting to know God through His Word
- Talking with God through prayer
- Spending time with God
- Worshipping Him

**Under *uniting with believers*, we included...**

- Christian community: In the New Testament, believers enjoyed life together. Jesus and Paul traveled with their disciples, had meals together, served together, studied Scripture together, etc. They spent time with each other.

- United lives: New Testament disciples were united in mission, prayer, service, vision, love, Bible study, etc. They were not just gathering in a group; they were united around common goals and purposes.
- Genuine love: Love for other believers defined people as Christ's disciples.

### **Under *serving the world*, we included...**

- Showing people love through our actions—not just our words.
- Following Christ's example of serving others
- Investing in people, families, communities, and nations

### **Under *entrusting the Gospel*, we included...**

- Sharing the Gospel of the Kingdom
- Entrusting the teachings of Christ to others
- Inviting others to join in God's Kingdom activity
- Disciples making disciples.

Disciples love, unite, serve, and entrust. Other insights also emerged.

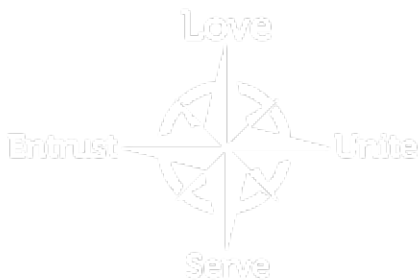
(1) We noticed that the three key relationships for Christians are clearly seen: our relationship with God is in the first point, our relationship with the Church is in the second point, and our relationship with the world is in the final two points.

(2) The statements are action oriented. Each statement has a verb that activates the thought: LOVE (is a verb), UNITE (is a verb), SERVE (is a verb), ENTRUST (is a verb). This description of discipleship is action oriented.

(3) Making disciples requires spending time together. This piece is crucial. While Jesus taught and modeled a life of love, unite, serve, entrust—*He lived it with his disciples*. They experienced it together. The same pattern is seen as Paul invested in Timothy, Luke, and Titus. Paul spent time with those he disciplined.

You can instruct crowds from a distance. You can educate believers from a distance. You can cast vision from a distance. But you cannot make disciples from a distance. Making disciples requires time together.

Everyone's journey with God is going to look a little different, but the disciple's orientation (or general path through life) is the same. Disciples pursue Christ by loving God, uniting with believers, serving the world, and entrusting the Gospel.



The description can serve like a spiritual compass. If you want to make sure that the course of your life is moving towards growth as a disciple, place these truths over your life and ask God to reveal the course corrections that need to be made. Loving God must remain our "spiritual north." Everything else flows out of this one relationship.

If you find yourself at a spiritual plateau, ask, "What's missing?" If you find yourself going through a spiritual dry spell, place this spiritual compass over your life. You will notice that one or more of these areas is missing or underutilized.

This spiritual compass can provide immediate insights into your journey with God. It can help you see the action steps that are needed to go to the next level. It also can help you recognize where you are and what steps need to happen for future growth.

**Disciples are made when people pursue Christ by loving God, uniting with believers, serving the world, and entrusting the Gospel.**

Notes:

This image shows a full page of blank handwriting practice paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced, horizontal light blue lines across the entire width of the page. The background is plain white, providing a clear guide for letter height and placement. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.



PART 10: *Who are you?****Big Idea:*****Your new identity is found in Christ.****What does it mean that your identity is found in Christ?**

Our identity defines us. Our identity is often linked to what we do, what we like, where we're from, or how we see ourselves. Think for a moment about how people introduce themselves in a group. Someone in a support group may say, "I'm John. I'm 34 years old, and I'm an alcoholic." His identity is connected to how he sees himself. Someone introducing themselves to new colleagues may say, "My name is Allie. I graduated from M.I.T. with a degree in architecture." Her identity is connected to what she's done. Our identity defines us.

Prior to Christ, our spiritual identity was defined by one word—sin. If we were introducing ourselves in a spiritual support group, we would say, "My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a sinner." Sin defined us. Sin defined our former state; sin defined our current struggle; sin determined our future reality.

Most people would never say, "I've never sinned." However, many people are quick to point out their limited involvement. "Sure, I've sinned, but it wasn't that bad. There are a lot of other people who are worse than me." While there are varying consequences for specific sins (in the eyes of the court), sin is sin before the eyes of God.

Think about sin from this perspective. If someone takes a pack of gum and doesn't pay for it, society calls that person a thief. At the moment of the offense, they are identified by stealing. It doesn't matter if they stole 1 pack of gum, a car, or \$1,000,000. When anyone takes anything that is not his or hers, they are labeled "thief." The same holds true of sin. It doesn't matter if a person has sinned a little, a lot, in big ways, or in small ways. The moment sin enters the equation, the title "sinner" comes with it.

Romans 3:23 tells us, "*all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.*" In our fallen condition, every person has been labeled "sinner" before the eyes of God. However, on the cross, Jesus paid the price for our sin. On the cross, Jesus forgave our sin debt (past, present, and future). According to 2 Corinthians 5:17, "*if anyone is **in Christ**, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*" Jesus did not polish up our former identity; He has given us a brand new identity **in Christ**.

Prior to Christ, we were spiritually identified as a sinner. In Christ, we are spiritually identified as a saint. Jesus gives us a new identity in Him. You are no longer defined by what you have done (good, bad, or indifferent). You are defined by who Christ is. You are who He says you are. Your identity (your very life) is found in Christ (Colossians 3:3–4).

A major part of the Christian life is learning to see ourselves as God sees us. That's not always easy. People try to define us. Our past seems to define us. We want to define ourselves. The labels are endless. "I am a pastor, a teacher, a business owner, a pilot, a bank manager." That is incorrect from a spiritual perspective. A career is what you do; it's not who you are. Our past is who we were; it is not who we are. If you are in Christ, you are a new creature. Your identity is found in Christ.

We must allow our identity to be defined by God. This list describes who you are from God's perspective.

## Who Are You?

**You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world** (Matt. 5:13, 14)  
**You are a child of God** (part of His family) (Jn. 1:12; Rom. 8:16)  
**You are part of the true vine** (Jn. 15:1, 5)  
**You are Christ's friend** (Jn. 15:15)  
**You are chosen and appointed by Christ to bear His fruit** (Jn. 15:16)  
**You are a witness of Christ** (Acts 1:8)  
**You are a slave of righteousness** (Rom. 6:18)  
**You are a child of God** (Rom. 8:14, 15; Gal. 3:26; 4:6)  
**You are a joint-heir with Christ** (Rom. 8:17)  
**You are a temple of God** (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19)  
**You are joined to the Lord** (1 Cor. 6:17)  
**You are a member of Christ's body** (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 5:30)  
**You are a new creation** (2 Cor. 5:17)  
**You are reconciled to God and a minister of reconciliation** (2 Cor. 5:18, 19)  
**You are a son of God and one in Christ** (Gal. 3:26, 28)  
**You are a saint** (Eph. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2)  
**You are God's workmanship** (Eph. 2:10)  
**You are a fellow citizen with the rest of God's people** (Eph. 2:19)

**You are a prisoner of Christ** (Eph. 3:1; 4:1)  
**You are righteous and holy** (Eph. 4:24)  
**You are a citizen of heaven and seated in heaven right now** (Phil. 3:20; Eph. 2:6)  
**You are hidden with Christ in God** (Col. 3:3)  
**You are an expression of the life of Christ** (Col. 3:4)  
**You are chosen of God, holy, and dearly loved** (Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4)  
**You are a son of light and not of darkness** (1 Thess. 5:5)  
**You are a holy brother, partaker of a heavenly calling** (Heb. 3:1)  
**You are a partaker of Christ** (Heb. 3:14)  
**You are one of God's living stones** (1 Pet. 2:5)  
**You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation** (1 Pet. 2:9–10)  
**You are an alien and stranger to this world** (1 Pet. 2:11)  
**You are an enemy of the devil** (1 Pet. 5:8)  
**You are now a child of God** (1 Jn. 3:1–2)  
**You are born of God and the evil one (the devil) can't touch you** (1 Jn. 5:18)  
**You are a sheep of His pasture. You have everything you need** (Ps. 23 and 100)

Your identity is found in Christ. Study these statements and corresponding passages. Begin the process of renewing your mind with these truths (Colossians 3:10). This list is not something that you read, believe, and move past. **This list is something that you read, reread, study, meditate upon, refer back to, pray through, and ask God to remind you of—throughout your Christian journey.**

**Your identity is found in Christ.**

## PART 11: *How do we walk as disciples?*

### *Big Idea:*

**How you received Christ is how you walk in Christ.**

### **How do you walk in Christ (or live in Christ)?**

We need to go back and ask a more basic question: How did you receive Christ? The answer is found in one phrase: By grace you have been saved through faith (Ephesians 2:8). You did not receive Christ based on merit or good works. You did not receive Christ because you figured Him out or you reasoned your way into the family of God. You did not receive Christ because you were born into the right family, attended the right church, or anything similar.

You received Christ by God's grace because you believed what He said about your sin, your separation from God, and your need for a Savior. You received Christ because you believed that Jesus died on the cross for your sin, He rose again on the third day, and He offers eternal life (reconciled relationship) to those who will repent of their sin by placing faith in Christ. You entered relationship by grace through faith. **Grace is what God extended; faith is how you responded.**

The appeal of Scripture is, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved"* (Acts 16:31). God extends grace; we are to respond in faith. That's why Ephesians tells us, *"...by grace you have been saved through faith."* John said, *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name."* We received Christ by grace through faith. **How you received Christ is how you walk in Christ.**

Our walk in Christ has two parts: grace and faith. A basic definition of grace is God's unmerited (unearned) favor. While that definition is theologically correct, it's not practically complete. **Grace is God doing in and through us what we could not do for ourselves.**

- We could not save ourselves, but God did in us what we could not do (that's grace).
- We cannot live the Christian life, but God does through us what we could not do for ourselves (that's grace).
- We cannot do the work of ministry, but God does through us what we could not do on our own (that's grace).

We walk in Christ by learning to rely on God's grace, and not our strength. The second part of walking in Christ is faith.

Hebrews tells us, *"The just will walk by faith...and without faith it is impossible to please God."* Second Corinthians 5:7, *"We live by faith, and not by sight."* When the disciples asked Jesus how they could join with the Father in His kingdom activity, Jesus said, *"This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."*

We are to **WALK** in faith; we are to **LIVE** by faith; we are to **WORK** through faith. How you received Christ is how you walk in Christ.

Let's get real practical. You're struggling to control your temper, you're wrestling with an addiction, you're asking God to heal your marriage, you're burdened for your child's salvation, you need a financial miracle, you're battling depression, anxiety, fear, loneliness, past scars, current trials, future worries—what do you do?

Paul says, *"As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him."* How did you receive Him? By grace you have been saved through faith! How are you to walk in Him? By grace, through faith! Rely on God's grace and walk in faith.

This next point is huge. **The Bible is not proposing faith or works; this is an issue of working by faith.** James 2:18 says, *"You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."* Genuine faith will be manifested in responsive action.

Walking by faith does not mean we refuse to act; it means we act in response to God. We trust God to lead; and when He leads, we follow. We trust God to provide; and when He provides, we receive. We trust God to sustain us; so when He prompts us to pray, or spend time in Scripture, or seek godly counsel—we respond in obedience. Our actions flow out of our faith.

**How you received Christ is how you walk in Christ.**

## PART 12: *Why is church important?*

### *Big Idea:*

**Part of your growth in Christ only happens in community.**

### **What's the point of church?**

#### **Why is it important to assemble together with other believers?**

Answer: Part of your growth in Christ only happens in community.

Christianity is a team sport. It is a collective pursuit. If you want to be all God created you to be, it only happens in biblical community.

Biblical community is more than showing up to church on Sunday. It's more than attending a Bible study, or grabbing a meal with another Christian. It's about uniting our lives together around a common goal, pursuing a common purpose, and living together as citizens of Christ's kingdom.

When the twelve disciples were called to follow Christ, they were not called individually for a one-year internship. They were called collectively for a lifelong journey.

- **They were together in pursuit:**

- When Jesus taught, the disciples were together with Him (Matthew 5:1–7:29).
- When Jesus ministered, the disciples were together with Him.
- When Jesus performed miracles, the disciples were together with Him (Matthew 8:23–27).

- **They were together in service:**

- When Jesus feed the 5,000 and the 4,000, the disciples served the people together.
- When Jesus sent out the twelve and later send out the 70, He sent them two by two (Mark 6:7–13; Luke 10:1–16). They served together.

- **They were together with questions:**

- They didn't understand the hard sayings of Christ (Mark 8).
- They had questions about Christ's identity (Matthew 8:27).
- They didn't always understand His miracles.

- **They were together in learning.**
  - Lord, teach us to pray (Luke 11:1–13).
  - The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7)
  - The parables (Matthew 13)
- **They were together in love.**
  - In John 13:35–36, Jesus said, *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*
- **They were together in encouragement.**
  - In Luke 22:31, Jesus said to Simon Peter, *“Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”*
- **They were together in mission.**
  - Jesus told the disciples in Matthew 28:19–20, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you...”*

The disciples were together in their pursuit of Christ, together in their service for Christ, together in their questions about Christ, together in their learning from Christ, together in their love for each other, together in their encouragement, together in mission. They traveled together, ate together, and ministered together. Their lives were intentionally woven together.

The atmosphere created by Christ was not a competition. He created an environment where community aided in growth. They weren't alone. They didn't have to figure it all out by themselves. They were securely placed in a community that offered encouragement, strength, accountability, belonging, friendship, and various gifts.

**Part of your growth in Christ  
only happens in community.**

PART 13: *What is the Kingdom of God?***Big Idea:**

**"The kingdom of God is God's sovereign activity in the world resulting in people being in right relationship with Himself." —Vance Pitman**

**What is the kingdom of God?**

The kingdom of God is God's sovereign activity in the world resulting in people being in right relationship with Himself. We will never understand God's ultimate plan in the world unless we get our minds around the kingdom of heaven.

We can see that the kingdom of God was central to the teachings of Christ. Jesus came to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Matthew 4:17 records the first message Jesus ever preached: "*Repent, for the **kingdom of heaven** is at hand.*" Matthew 4:23 says, "*Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the **kingdom**...*".

If you move into Matthew 5, you will find the Sermon on the Mount. This message could be the most famous message ever preached. The very first words he shared in verse 3 were, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the **kingdom of heaven**.*" Verse 10 says, "*Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the **kingdom of heaven**.*"

Verse 19 is about the kingdom. Verse 20 is about the kingdom. The model prayer in Matthew 6 speaks of the kingdom. Christ's answer to our basic needs is to focus on the kingdom and all these things will be added to you (Matthew 6). In fact, the kingdom of heaven is mentioned so much in the Sermon on the Mount that the entire sermon has been labeled, "The Constitution of the Kingdom."

Jesus preached the kingdom of heaven in the synagogues (Matthew 4:23), on hillsides (Matthew 5–7), through parables (Matthew 13), and through prayers (Matt. 6:9–13). He used children to illustrate kingdom citizens (Matthew 19:14), He sent the disciples out with the kingdom message (Matthew 10:9; Luke 10:8–9), and He challenged pride by showing what greatness looks like according to kingdom standards (Matthew 18:1–5). He even addressed grief and sadness at the Last Supper by directing the disciples' attention to the future kingdom reunion (Matthew 26:29).

Jesus stayed on message. As He said in Luke 4:43, *“I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose.”*

To further define how the Bible describes the kingdom of heaven, here are several references:

1. The kingdom of God is comprised of believers of all nations (Revelation 5:9–10; Matthew 8:11).
2. The kingdom of God is entered with child-like faith (Matthew 18:3).
3. The kingdom of God values humility (Matthew 18:4).
4. The kingdom of God operates according to God’s power (1 Corinthians 4:20 NLT).
5. The kingdom of God is expanding (Matthew 24:14).
6. The kingdom of God is eternal (Revelation 11:15)

## What’s our part?

### How do we involve ourselves in God’s kingdom activity?

The kingdom of God is fully recognized in heaven and it is constantly growing on earth. The reason it’s constantly growing on earth is because God has chosen to establish His kingdom through His people. As new people enter the family of God by faith in Christ—the kingdom grows. As the church takes the Gospel to the ends of the earth—the kingdom grows. As individual believers live as salt and light in their community, at their jobs, and with their friends—God’s influence permeates that area and the kingdom expands.

### There are several key ways to be involved in God’s kingdom activity.

1. Focus on knowing God and ask Him to live through you.
2. Engage in the Great Commission by sharing the Gospel, discipling others, and taking the message of Christ to the nations (Matthew 28:19–20).
3. Pray for God’s kingdom expansion.
4. Be a part of a short-term mission trip.
5. Be a part of a church plant.
6. Give your time, talents, and treasures to Kingdom opportunities.
7. Live as salt and light where God placed you (Matthew 5:13–16).

**The kingdom of God is God’s sovereign activity in the world resulting in people being in right relationship with Himself.**



PART 14: *What should I do with what I've learned?*

**Big Idea:**

**You are to entrust to others what God has entrusted to you.**

The following passage is Matthew 28:16–20. The text is called the Great Commission. This scene takes place just before Jesus ascends back to heaven. He gives one final command to His disciples.

*"But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

There are four quick observations of this text.

- 1. Jesus' disciples still had doubts.** Even after everything they went through, saw, and experienced firsthand—some were doubtful. Do not be too hard on yourself when wrestling with tough truths. Don't wait until all your questions are answered before sharing with others. Share as you learn.
- 2. Disciples are called to go.** We are not called to just gather and discuss; we also need to scatter and disciple.
- 3. Disciples observe all that Christ commanded.** Jesus said, "*Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.*" To observe means to keep strictly. Disciples are not those who know the truths of Christ; disciples are those who observe the truths of Christ. They act upon what they know.
- 4. Disciples entrust Christ's yoke to others.** Jesus clearly tells us to *make disciples of all the nations...teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.* We are to entrust to others what Christ has entrusted to us.

**To entrust is to give someone responsibility for something.** If we teach people to observe all that Christ commanded, they have the responsibility to live according to what they know.

Jude 3 says, "*Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all **entrusted** to the saints.*" "The faith" is being used broadly for the teachings or Gospel of Christ.

When speaking to the Romans, Paul said, *"But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were **entrusted**"* (Romans 6:17). The only teaching that allows slaves of sin to wholeheartedly obey anything is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul said in Galatians 2:7, *"I had been **entrusted** with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews."* Paul was given the responsibility of taking the Gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter was to the Jews. Both were entrusted with the Gospel message.

To those in Thessalonica, Paul said, *"We speak as men approved by God to be **entrusted** with the gospel"* (1 Thessalonians 2:4).

He told Timothy that, *"The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, **entrust** these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also"* (2 Timothy 2:2).

**You are to entrust to others what God has entrusted to you.**

### Practical Hints:

- Start with people you know (i.e. family, friends, co-workers, neighbors).
- Share as you learn. Do not wait until you've "arrived" to start sharing. Begin entrusting what you've learned today.
- It's not your job to make people believe; you are to share what you've learned, seen, or personally experienced, and allow God's Spirit to call people to Himself (Acts 1:8).
- Take people through the information in this packet.
- Do not try to change the world overnight. Pray for opportunities and share as God brings them in your path.

**Write down any names that immediately come to mind:**

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix 1: Bible Basics:

#### The Old Testament:

- Consists of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.
- Written in Hebrew with a few parts in Aramaic.
- 39 books
- Written over a 1600 year period
- Multiple authors and approximate dates
  - **Moses:** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy (1400 B.C.)
  - **Joshua:** Joshua (1350 B.C.)
  - **Samuel, Nathan and Gad:** Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel (1000–900 B.C.)
  - **Jeremiah:** 1 Kings, 2 Kings (600 B.C.)
  - **Ezra:** 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah (450 B.C.)
  - **Mordecai:** Esther (400 B.C.)
  - **Moses** (although this is uncertain): Job (1400 B.C.)
  - **Several different authors, mostly David:** (1000–400 B.C.)
  - **Solomon:** Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon (900 B.C.)
  - **Isaiah:** Isaiah (700 B.C.)
  - **Jeremiah:** Jeremiah, Lamentations (600 B.C.)
  - **Ezekiel:** Ezekiel (550 B.C.)
  - **Daniel:** Daniel (550 B.C.)
  - **Hosea:** Hosea (750 B.C.)
  - **Joel:** Joel (850 B.C.)
  - **Amos:** Amos (750 B.C.)
  - **Obadiah:** Obadiah (600 B.C.)
  - **Jonah:** Jonah (700 B.C.)
  - **Micah:** Micah (700 B.C.)
  - **Nahum:** Nahum (650 B.C.)
  - **Habakkuk:** Habakkuk (600 B.C.)
  - **Zephaniah:** Zephaniah (650 B.C.)
  - **Haggai:** Haggai (520 B.C.)
  - **Zechariah:** Zechariah (500 B.C.)
  - **Malachi:** Malachi (430 B.C.)

### The New Testament:

- Consists primarily of the gospels (Matthew–John) and epistles (Acts–Revelation).
- Written in Greek.
- Written from approximately A.D. 40 to 95 by eyewitnesses or one who interviewed an eyewitness (Luke).
- 27 books
- Multiple authors and approximate dates
  - **Matthew:** Matthew (A.D. 55)
  - **John Mark:** Mark (A.D. 50)
  - **Luke:** Luke, Acts (A.D. 60–65)
  - **John:** John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Revelation (A.D. 90)
  - **Paul:** Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon (A.D. 50–70)
  - **Author unknown** (best guesses are Paul, Luke, or Barnabas): Hebrews (65 A.D.)
  - **James:** James (A.D. 45)
  - **Peter:** 1 Peter, 2 Peter (A.D. 60)
  - **Jude:** Jude (A.D. 60)

## Appendix 2: Inductive Bible Study Overview

### OBSERVATION—Discover what it says

**1. Begin with Prayer.**

Prayer is often the missing element in Bible study. You are about to learn the most effective method of Bible study there is. Yet apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, that's all it will be—a method.

**2. Ask the 5 “W’s” and an “H”.**

Ask the “5 W’s and an H” As you study any passage of Scripture, train yourself to constantly ask: **Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?** These questions are the building blocks of precise **observation**, which is essential for accurate **interpretation**.

**3. Mark key words and phrases.**

A key word is one that is essential to the text. Often key words and phrases are repeated in order to convey the author’s point or purpose for writing. For example, the words “end,” “coming,” and “tribulation” are all key words in Matthew 24.

**4. Look for lists.**

Making lists can be one of the most enlightening things you do as you study. Lists reveal truths and highlight important concepts. Matthew 24:4–8, for example, contains a simple list of events that must take place prior to the tribulation period.

**5. Watch for contrasts and comparisons.**

Contrasts and comparisons use highly descriptive language to make it easier to remember what you’ve learned. For example, Jesus compares the time of His second coming to the “days of Noah” (Matthew 24:37). A great example of contrast can be found in Matthew 24:36.

**6. Note expressions of time and places that are mentioned.**

Places that are mentioned usually give you a good idea where a certain event is taking place, but also more often than not, who that particular text is written to. Expressions of time let you know when certain events are to take place and in what sequence. It is therefore very important to mark both places and expressions of time in order to attain a proper interpretation of the text.

**7. Identify chapter themes.**

The theme of a chapter will center on the main person, event, teaching, or subject of that section of Scripture. Themes are often revealed by reviewing the key words and lists you developed. Try to express the theme as briefly as possible, using words found in the text.

## INTERPRETATION—Discover what it means

While **observation** leads to an accurate understanding of what the Word of God says, **interpretation** goes a step further and helps you understand what it means. As you seek to interpret the Bible accurately, the following guidelines will be helpful:

### 1. Remember that context rules.

If you lay the solid foundation of observation, you will be prepared to consider each verse in the light of the surrounding verses, the book in which it is found, and the entire Word of God. As you study, ask yourself: Is my interpretation of a passage of Scripture consistent with the theme, purpose, and structure of the book in which it is found? Is it consistent with other Scripture about the same subject? Am I considering the historic and cultural context? Never take a Scripture out of its context to make it say what you want it to say. Discover what the author is saying; don't add to his meaning.

### 2. Always seek the full counsel of the Word of God.

When you know God's Word thoroughly, you will not accept a teaching simply because someone has used one or two isolated verses to support it. You will be able to discern whether a teaching is biblical or not. Saturate yourself in the Word of God; it is your safeguard against wrong doctrine.

### 3. Remember that Scripture will never contradict Scripture.

Remember, all Scripture is inspired by God. Therefore, Scripture will never contradict itself. Sometimes, however, you may find it difficult to reconcile two seemingly contradictory truths taught in Scripture, such as the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. Don't take a teaching to an extreme that God doesn't. Simply humble your heart in faith and believe what God says, even if you can't fully understand or reconcile it at the moment.

### 4. Don't base your convictions on an obscure passage of Scripture.

An obscure passage is one in which the meaning is not easily understood. Because these passages are difficult to understand even when proper principles of interpretation are used, they should not be used as a basis for establishing doctrine.

### 5. Interpret Scripture literally.

God spoke to us that we might know truth. Therefore, take the Word of God at face value—in its natural, normal sense. Look first for the clear teaching of Scripture, not a hidden meaning. Understand and recognize figures of speech and interpret them accordingly.

Consider what is being said in the light of its literary style. For example, you will find more similes and metaphors in poetical and prophetic literature than in historical or biographical books. Interpret portions of Scripture according to their literary style.

Some literary styles in the Bible are: Historical—Acts; Prophetic—Revelation; Biographical—Luke; Didactic (teaching)—Romans; Poetic—Psalms; Epistle (letter)—2 Timothy; Proverbial—Proverbs

**6. Look for the single meaning of the passage.**

Always try to understand what the author had in mind when you interpret a portion of the Bible. Don't twist verses to support a meaning that is not clearly taught. Unless the author of a particular book indicates that there is another meaning to what he says, let the passage speak for itself.

**APPLICATION—Discover what it means**

The first step in application is to find out what the Word of God says on any particular subject through accurate observation and correct interpretation of the text. Once you understand what the Word of God teaches, you are then obligated before God to accept that truth and to live by it.

**Reproof** exposes areas in your thinking and behavior that do not align with God's Word. Reproof is finding out where you have thought wrongly, or have not been doing what God says is right. The application of reproof is to accept it and agree with God, acknowledging where you are wrong in thought or in behavior.

**Correction** is the next step in application, and often the most difficult. Many times correction comes by simply confessing and forsaking what is wrong. Other times, God gives very definite steps to take.

*"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."*

*—2 Timothy 3:16–17*

## Appendix 3: Interpretational Principles for Scripture

### 1. When studying the Bible, you always move from general to specific.

- You begin with a general understanding of Scripture.
  - The Bible is God's Word.
  - The Bible is true.
  - The Bible is God's revelation of Himself to humanity.
  - The Bible gives God's guidance for our lives.
- You move to an overall understanding of the book.
  - Who is the author?
  - Who is the audience?
  - Where was it written (setting)?
  - Why was it written (purpose)?
  - What is the style of writing (genre)?
- You work into specific teachings from individual verses.
  - Have you read the verses before and after this section?
  - What is the writer talking about?

### 2. There is one interpretation; there are many applications.

- Correct interpretation means that you interpret the text in the way that the original writer intended for the original audience.
- When you interpret the text correctly, you then apply the text in multiple ways based on overall principles. A text on serving others can be applied in thousands of ways of service. A text on praying fervently can be applied in countless opportunities to pray.

### 3. Allow Scripture to be your text, not just your proof text.

- Exegesis is reading out of the Scriptures what the Scripture say. Isogesis is reading into the Scriptures what you think it says.
- Instead of coming to the Bible with a preconceived idea, allow the Bible to shape your ideas.

### 4. You must be born again.

- The Holy Spirit must turn the lights on and bring you into fellowship with God (John 3:1–8).
- The Holy Spirit guides you into all truth (John 16:13).
- God's Word is truth (John 17:17).
- Non-Christians do not accept the things of the Spirit and cannot understand the things of the Spirit. They must be spiritually assessed (1 Corinthians 2:14).

### 5. Scripture interprets Scripture.

- Interpret difficult passages in light of clear passages.
- No Scripture stands alone.



## 6. Interpret Scripture literally.

- To interpret Scripture literally means interpreting in the literal sense in which it was written. That comes back to context.
- The context includes: Author, Audience, Purpose, Setting, and Genre.
- The genre is the style of the writing.
- Scripture includes a number of primary genres: Historical Narrative, Poetry, Wisdom Literature, Epistles, Prophecy, Apocalyptic Writings
- You do not interpret every genre the same way. You must interpret it in the literal sense in which it was written.

## 7. The Bible does not contradict itself.

- If two texts seem to contradict each other, that means one of two things:
  - You do not fully understand the purpose or meaning of the text.
  - AND/OR
  - You have encountered antinomy.
- Antinomy is when two statements appear contradictory, they cannot be logically resolved, yet both are held to be true because God's Word declares them true.
  - Examples: The Trinitarian Nature of God, Sovereignty and Free Will in Salvation, the Omnipresence of God and His arrival in certain areas, the Omniscience of God and Jesus learning as a boy, etc.

## 8. Sound theology is not developed on a single verse.

- When one verse is pulled out of context, and an entire belief system is built upon it—that's usually the beginning of a cult.
- A cult is a group that rejects the fundamental teachings of a religion; yet, they claim to be a part of that religion.
- In Christianity, some of the fundamental teachings are: (1) salvation by grace through faith, (2) the Trinitarian nature of God, (3) Jesus' physical death on the cross and bodily resurrection, (4) the virgin birth, (5) the deity of Christ, (6) the depravity of humanity, (7) the second coming of Christ, etc.

## Appendix 4: Basic Overview of Theology

Theology is the study of God. There is no way to adequately explore the depths of theology in several pages. Theology should be studied over a lifetime. The goal of this section is to give an overview of theology, provide essential definitions, and establish key beliefs.

**There are seven major categories of Christian theology:**

- 1. SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY:** is the orderly discussion of Christian doctrine that uses truths from all parts of the Bible.
- 2. BIBLICAL THEOLOGY:** looks at the historical circumstances and development of doctrines.
- 3. HISTORICAL THEOLOGY:** involves the study of the historical development of doctrines *in church history*. It looks at how the doctrines of the Christian faith have been understood throughout the centuries since New Testament times.
- 4. DOGMATIC THEOLOGY:** is the study of how certain Christian groups have understood theology. Examples of dogmatic theology include: (1) Arminian theology—a theology that stresses the freedom of man in salvation; (2) Covenant theology—a theology that stresses the importance of two or three overarching covenants; and (3) Dispensational theology—a theology that stresses the distinction between Israel and the church.
- 5. CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY:** involves the study of the doctrines of Christian groups as they have developed since the twentieth century. Examples include Liberal theology, Neo-orthodox theology, Feminist theology, Charismatic theology, and Vatican II Catholic theology.
- 6. PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY:** involves the basic philosophical assumptions involved with theology such as the existence of God, the nature of reality, and the possibility of knowing anything about God. Philosophical theology usually involves the issues of: (a) metaphysics (the study of reality); (b) epistemology (the study of knowing); (c) ethics (the study of right and wrong); and (d) philosophy of religion (the study of religion from a philosophical perspective).
- 7. PRACTICAL THEOLOGY:** refers to theology as it is applied to Christian life and ministry. This includes the areas of preaching, teaching, discipling, counseling, worship, ethics, etc.

## Appendix 5: Biblical Terms Connected to Theology

- **Apostle:** Sent out ones; specifically chosen by Christ and saw the risen Christ.
- **Anthropomorphisms:** Throughout the Old Testament, anthropomorphisms describe God in some function or characteristic. This is figurative language that describes a certain characteristic of God or describes His divine activity from a human perspective and language. The word Anthropomorphism is derived from two words Anthropos = man, morphe = form. This designates the view of God having human features and form. He is described as having feet, hands, mouth, and a heart. Scripture mentions His ears, feet, back, fingers, arms, and hands. None of these should be taken in the solid literal sense that would have us think God, who is Spirit, has form as a human creature. These are meant to communicate something of His being or of service, some facet of the invisible God in human terminology. For example, there are the Scriptures such as the eyes of the Lord go to and fro upon the earth. God is called a shield, a buckler, a high tower, a fortress. These are terms used to communicate something of his nature or purpose to us strictly on a human level.
- **Bible:** Is comprised of numerous literary forms: historical narrative, wisdom literature, poetry, epistles, apocalyptic writings, etc.
- **Covenants:** A covenant is an agreement between two parties, one is God, the other man. There are two different types of agreements in scripture: conditional and unconditional. Covenants in sequential order are (most recognize there are only two basic covenants, the mosaic and the New covenant)
  - Edenic covenant: (Gen. 2:15–17)
  - Adamic covenant: (Gen. 3:14–21)
  - Noahic covenant: (Gen. 9:1–19)
  - Abrahamic covenant: (Gen. 12:1–3)
  - Mosaic covenant: (Ex. 19:3–8)
  - Land covenant: (Deut. 29:10–15 30:11–20)
  - Davidic covenant: (2 Sam. 7:4–17)
  - New covenant: (Jer. 31:31)
- **Decree:** Gods eternal purpose according to the council of his will, whereby for His own glory He foreordained what is to come to pass.
- **Disciple:** A learner or follower of Christ.
- **Doctrine:** The teachings of Scripture (1 Tim. 4:13–16 2 Tim. 3:16)

- **Effacacious:** God's sovereign work to effectively call people to salvation through the conviction of the Holy Spirit.
- **Election:** To elect means to choose among possibilities. In this context it means that God chose some for blessing (eternal salvation) and passed over others. For example: He chose Israel and passed over Egypt and Babylon. He chose Jacob for blessing, but passed over Esau. Words associated with election are chose, chosen, foreordained, and appointed (Matt. 20:15–16; 22:14; 24:22, 24, 32; Mk. 13:20, 22, 27; Lk. 18:7; Jn. 1:13; 10:3–4; 15:16; 17:8, 9; Acts 13:48; 15:14; 18:27; Rom. 8:28–30, 33; 9:10–24; 10:20; 11:4–7, 28, 33–36; I Cor. 1:26–29; Eph. 1:4–5, 11, 12; Phil.1:29; 2:12, 13; Col. 3:12; I Thess. 1:4–5; 5:9; II Thess. 2:13, 14; I Tim. 1:9; 2:9; II Tim. 1:9; Tit. 1:1; James 1:18; 2:5; I Pet. 1:1, 2, 5–11; 2:8, 9; II Pet. 1:10; Rev. 13:8; 17:8, 14).
- **Foreordination:** This term refers to God ordaining or determining from eternity whatever comes to pass. Theologians refer to God's ordaining as the Divine Decree.
- **Glorification:** To become like Jesus at either the rapture of the Church, or at preceding resurrections. The final state of the believer is Christ-likeness dwelling forever in heaven with Him.
- **Gospel:** Means good news referring to the message of reconciliation to God for those who are sinners.
- **Grace:** The undeserved favor bestowed upon sinners, a gift from God giving us Christ's riches which we do not deserve nor can we earn. (Eph. 2:8–10)
- **Hypostatic union:** The dual nature of Christ being both 100% God and 100% man dwelling together as one person. (Jn. 1:14,18 Phil. 2:6–8, Isa. 9:6 Heb. 4, Col. 2:9)
- **Incarnation:** God becoming flesh as the eternal Son. (Mt. 1:21–23; Isa. 7:14)
- **Impute:** To place on one's account Christ's righteousness in exchange for our sin.
- **Hermeneutics:** The science of interpreting the written word, to find what the text actually meant.
- **Inerrant:** The teaching of the Scriptures which are free of error, in doctrine, historicity, geography and science, etc.
- **Inspiration:** The activity of the Holy Spirit which superintended the writers of scripture to convey what God has said, while using their personalities and styles.
- **Justification:** A legal declaration giving one right standing before God, pronouncing a sinner righteous because of Christ's merit (not making them righteous) (Rom. 5:1,18 Isa. 53:11 Rom. 4:5).

- **Law of Moses:** Considered a unit of 613 laws. Its purpose was to reveal God's holiness, to show us how far from God's perfection we really are, to reveal sin, and be a tutor to lead us to Christ.
- **Man:** A direct creation of God. Made in his image to express God's nature and bring glory to his creator. Specifically to have a relationship with God as a child to its parent.
- **Mercy:** Is withheld punishment for righteous judgment.
- **Predestination:** It refers to a specific act whereby God foreordains the destiny of moral agents (angels or men). In more practical terms it means that God decides the final destiny of beings before they were created or born (Ps. 139:14–16; Rom. 8:29, and Eph. 1:4–5,11).
- **Providence:** God working all things to the purpose of His will (Isa. 40:28; Ps. 139:13; Rom. 8:28).
- **The Rapture:** The resurrection of the saints and those who are alive when Christ comes for his church are simultaneously taken up and changed to immortality (1 Cor. 15:51–52 ;1 Thess. 4:16–17).
- **Redemption:** To buy back out of the slavery of sin. One is liberated from sin being their master because of the complete payment of Christ's blood (Gal. 3:3; Eph. 1:1; Rom. 3:24–25).
- **Reconciliation:** To make man who was once an enemy of God have peace through Christ's atoning death. A change of relationship between God to man from hostility to harmony (Rom. 5:11; Col. 1:20–21; 2 Cor. 5:18).
- **Regeneration:** The new birth by the Spirit-implanting of the divine nature by the word of God, will of God, and Spirit of God through faith (1 Pt. 1:23; Titus 3:4, Jn. 3:5; Rom. 10:17; Eph. 3:17).
- **Reprobation:** It refers to those who were passed over and left for their just condemnation. Note that it was a passive action.
- **Sanctification:** The progressive work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life conforming them to the image of the Son (2 Thess. 2:13 Phil. 2:13).
- **Salvation:** To believe the Gospel by faith and be born anew by a spiritual birth (Jn. 3:5–8; Eph. 1:13,3:17 ; Rom. 8:2; Eph. 2:8–10).
- **Sin:** Transgression of the law. To violate Gods perfect standard or a command given.
- **Theophany:** A physical manifestation of God as a person or messenger (angel). A a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ in human form called, "the Angel of the Lord." (Gen. 16:13, 17:1–3, 18:1, 32:30; Ex. 3:2).
- **Vicarious:** To take the place of another as a substitute. Jesus took the place of sinners vicariously on the cross (Mt.20:28).

## Appendix 6: Foundational Beliefs for Christians

1. We believe the Bible is verbally inspired by God; therefore, it is the infallible, inerrant, and perfect Word of God.
2. We believe that God has revealed Himself to humanity in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. We believe in the incarnation of Jesus Christ through the virgin birth.
4. We believe in the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ on the cross for humanity's sin.
5. We believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
6. We believe in the visible and imminent return of Jesus Christ.
7. We believe in a literal Heaven where the saved shall live eternally in the presence of God, and in a literal Hell where the lost shall be forever separated from God in torment.
8. We believe that salvation is a gift from God, based upon His grace, and extended to those who will repent of sin and place their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

## Appendix 7: Expanded Beliefs for Christianity

### I. THE SCRIPTURES

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of God’s revelation of Himself to humanity. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, and therefore is wholly without error. It reveals the depths of God’s love and the principles by which God judges us; and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. It is sufficient as our only infallible rule of faith and practice.

(1 Corinthians 2:7–14; 2 Peter 1:20–21; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; Matthew 5:18, 24:35; John 10:35; Hebrews 4:12; Psalm 119:89)

Scripture is:

- Inspired (2 Timothy 3:16) (God breathed out)
- Infallible (Proverbs 3:20–23) (certain, incapable of failing)
- Inerrant (Psalm 19) (incapable of errors or mistakes)
- Unique (Jude 3) (one of a kind)
- Complete (Jude 3; Hebrews 1:1) (finished; full revelation of God)

### II. GOD

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, and Ruler of the Universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

(Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5–7; 1 Corinthians 8:4; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Timothy 2:4)

- There is one God existing in three persons. (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:18–20)

### God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become His children through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all humanity.

(Psalm 145:8–9; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Genesis 1:1–31; Ephesians 4:6; John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Hebrews 12:5–9)

- He is Creator of all. (Genesis 1:1)
- He is Father to the redeemed. (John 1:12)

## God the Son

Jesus is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ, He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, hence the God-Man. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself the demands and necessities of human nature and identifying Himself completely with mankind, yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of humanity from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, partaking of the nature of God and of man, and in whose person is effected the reconciliation between God and humanity. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

(John 10:30, 14:9; John 1:3; Colossians 1:14–17; Hebrews 1:2; Philippians 2:5–8; 1 Timothy 2:5)

### The Son:

- Is eternal. (John 1:1, 8:58; Colossians 1; Hebrews 1)
- Is eternally God. (John 1)
- Is the only mediator. (1 Timothy 2:5)
- Became a man through the virgin birth. (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23; Philippians 2:5–10)
- Was sinless. (Hebrews 4: 15)
- Died on the cross. (Philippians 2:5–10)
- Rose again. (1 Corinthians 15:4)
- Will come again (Revelation 19:11–16)

## God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables people to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls people to the Savior and effects regeneration. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows spiritual gifts by which to serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the



assurance of God to bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

(1 Corinthians 2:10–13; Ephesians 4:30; Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3–4, 28: 25–26; 1 Corinthians 12:1–6; Hebrews 10:14–15; John 16:7–14)

The Holy Spirit:

- Is a person. (Acts 5:3, 9; 1 Thes. 5:19)
- Exalts Jesus Christ. (John 16:14)
- Indwells believers at salvation. (Ephesians 1:13)

### III. HUMANITY

Humanity was created by the special act of God, in His own image, and is the crowning work of His creation. In the beginning, humanity was innocent of sin and was endowed by its Creator with freedom of choice. By free choice, humanity sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan, people transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence; whereby all people inherited a sin nature and an environment inclined toward sin, and as soon as they are capable of moral action become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring a person into His holy fellowship and enable him/her to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created humanity in His own image, and in that Christ died for us; therefore, every person possesses dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

(Genesis 2:7, 15–25; James 3:9; John 3:36; Romans 3:23, 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1–3; 1 John 1:8)

- Humanity was created by God. (Genesis 2:7)
- Humanity was created in the perfect image of God, yet by free choice, sinned against God. (Genesis 3:1–7)
- All people are sinners by nature and by choice. (Romans 3:9–18)
- All people bear the image of God, despite the corruption of sin. (James 3:9)

### IV. SALVATION

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole person, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense, salvation includes regeneration, repentance, faith, sanctification, and glorification.

- Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. (John 3:3–8; Titus 3:5)
- Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and surrender of one's entire person to Him as Lord and Savior. Justification is the declarative act of God by which, on the basis of the sufficiency of Christ's atoning death, He pronounces every believer to be righteous, that is, to have fulfilled all of the requirements of the law. Justification brings the believer into a personal relationship of peace and favor with God. (Acts 20:20–21; Romans 5:1)
- Justification is a completed transaction at the moment of salvation.
- Sanctification is the experience, beginning at the new birth, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward Christ-likeness through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit indwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the believer's life. (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30, 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 1 Peter 1:2)
- Sanctification continues throughout the earthly life of the believer.
- Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed. (Romans 8:16–17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2–3)
- The final state of the believer is Christ-likeness dwelling forever in heaven with Him.

## V. RESURRECTION

There will be a final resurrection for all people, the just and unjust. Those who surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ during this life will be raised to everlasting life in Heaven, but those who did not surrender their lives to Jesus Christ in this life will be raised to everlasting condemnation in Hell. (Acts 24:15; Hebrews 9:27; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17; Revelation 20:15, 21:8)

- There are only two eternal destinies for people: heaven or hell.

VI. THE CHURCH

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a local body of baptized believers who are associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, observing the two ordinances of Christ, committed to His teachings, exercising gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend this message of the gospel to the ends of the earth.

The church is an autonomous body with each member equally responsible. It operates under the Lordship of Christ following scriptural teachings. Two offices serve the church. It is led and overseen by men in the office of pastor/elder and served by men in the office of deacon. The New Testament speaks also of the church body as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all ages.

(1 Corinthians 12:12–13; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23–32; Revelation 19:7–8; Ephesians 1:22, 4:15; Colossians 1:18)

- The Church is the Body of Christ.
- Jesus is the Head of the Body.

VII. BAPTISM AND THE LORD’S SUPPER

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer’s faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior; the believer’s death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in the newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a public testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is a prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord’s Supper.

The Lord’s Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, remember the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

(Acts 2:38–42, 8:36–39; Romans 6:1–11; Acts 2:41–42; 1 Corinthians 11:23–32, 10:16)

- Both baptism and the Lord’s Supper are symbolic.

## Specifics on Believer's Baptism

### 1. A Proper Subject (Acts 2:41)

- Only a genuine, born again believer in Jesus Christ is a proper subject for baptism.

### 2. A Proper Method (Mark 1:9–10)

- The word "baptism" is literally translated "to immerse, to dip, or to plunge." Only immersion properly symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection.

### 3. A Proper Purpose (Romans 6:3–4)

- The purpose of baptism is to symbolize the death, burial, and resurrection.

### 4. A Proper Authority (Matthew 28:18–20)

- Baptism is an ordinance given only to the New Testament church. The ordinance of baptism is only scriptural if it is done within the authority of a local New Testament church.

## Appendix 8: Simple Gospel Presentation

### What is the essence of the Gospel message?

- **You and I were created for relationship with God.**  
(Genesis 2–3; Leviticus 26:12)
- **Our sin separated us from that relationship.**  
(Isaiah 59:2; Romans 3:23)
- **There is nothing that we can do to reconcile this relationship on our own.**  
(Ephesians 2:1–9)
- **Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin.**  
(Romans 5:8–10; Ephesians 2:13–16; 1 John 4:9 & 10)
- **Jesus rose from the dead that we might have life.**  
(1 Peter 1:3)
- **Jesus offers eternal life (or a reconciled relationship) to those who will repent of their sin by placing faith in Jesus Christ.**  
(John 3:16; John 17:3; Acts 2:38)

## Appendix 9: Expanded Gospel Presentation

### *What is the Purpose of Life?*

This question has been asked for centuries.  
The Bible gives us a clear answer.

### **LIFE IS ABOUT RELATIONSHIP.**

From the book of Genesis through the book of Revelation, the Bible shares a relational message. This message is called the Gospel (or the Good News).

When a person understands the message and embraces God's offer of eternal life, they not only discover the purpose of life, they discover Life itself.\*

\*"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life.'" — John 14:6

### **You and I were created for relationship with God.**

Genesis 2–3 tells us that Adam was created in the image of God and given the capacity for relationship with God. The story reveals conversation, cooperation, partnership, and relationship between Adam and God.

God's desire for relationship was not limited to Adam. He entered covenant relationship with Israel. "I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people" (Leviticus 26:12). Jesus stressed the importance of relationship by instructing His disciples to abide in Him (John 15:1–10), by promising to reveal Himself to those who love Him (John 14:21), and by referring to His followers as friends (John 15:15). Each passage shows God's desire for relationship.

### **Our sin separated us from that relationship.**

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Sin is breaking God's law, and there's a penalty for sin. Romans 6:23 tells us the punishment for breaking God's law. "The wages of sin is death." Wages are what we earn for what we've done. According to the Bible, we have all earned death.

When the Bible speaks of death, it speaks primarily of separation. When we die physically, our spirit is separated from our body. In similar fash-

ion, when we died spiritually because of sin, our spirit was separated from God's Spirit. "But your iniquities [or sin] have made a separation between you and your God." (Isaiah 59:2).

## **There is nothing that we can do to reconcile this relationship on our own.**

Many people believe good deeds will make them right with God. Unfortunately, there is no definitive marker for "adequate goodness." The Bible doesn't say, "If you are good most of the time, you are acceptable to God," or "Three good deeds will offset one bad deed." Without a definitive standard for goodness, how good is good enough?

The Bible helps us see that our problem is not a lack of goodness; our problem is the effect of sin. We could never reconcile our relationship with God because sin brings death and deception. Ephesians 2:1 teaches that without Christ, we were dead in trespasses and sins. Second Corinthians 4:3–4 reveals that without God's intervention we are blinded to the truth by the god of this world. We can do nothing to reconcile with God because dead people don't act and deceived people don't believe.

## **Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty of our sin.**

The penalty of sin is death. Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin. His sacrifice made reconciliation possible. "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:10).

## **Jesus rose from the dead that we might have life.**

While Jesus' death paid the penalty for our sin, it is His resurrection that brings us the hope of eternal life. "Blessed be the God and Father... who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3).

Jesus' death paid our sin debt; Jesus' resurrection makes relationship a reality.

## **Jesus offers eternal life (or a reconciled relationship) to those who will repent of their sin by placing faith in Him.**

Jesus spoke often of eternal life (John 3:15,16; 4:14; 5:39; 6:40). Many people assume that eternal life is going to heaven when you die. But that's not what Jesus said. In John 17:3, Jesus said, "This is eternal life, that they may know You." Eternal life is to know God. It is to experience a reconciled relationship with God.

According to the Bible, eternal life is given to those who will turn from their sin by placing faith in what Jesus has done for them. The Bible describes the act of turning from sin as repentance. It does not mean a person will be sinless. It means they desire God more than sinful activity.

## ***How Can I Receive Eternal Life?***

John 3:36 tells us that, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life." A person receives eternal life by placing faith in what Jesus has done for them. What did Jesus do for them? He died on the cross for their sins, He rose from the dead that they might have life, and He offers eternal life to anyone who will repent of their sin by placing faith in Christ.

Following Christ is a journey that never ends, but it can begin with a simple prayer. Use this prayer to guide you. "God, I know that I've sinned. I recognize that my sin has separated me from you. I believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sin, and that He rose again on the third day. As best I know how, I turn from my sin by placing faith in what Jesus has done for me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen."

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If you have placed faith in Christ today, we encourage you to share this decision with others.

For more resources on this new relationship with God,  
go to **[www.thisistheGospel.com](http://www.thisistheGospel.com)**.

## ***WELCOME TO THE FAMILY!***

Galatians 4:7





# Christ Life Resources

After your eyes have been opened to the wonders of relational living and the Christ-life, there's no going back to dead religion. The question becomes, "Where can I go to learn more?"

We've included a list of books that have a strong relational emphasis. Some of these books are out of print, but they can be found in second-hand bookstores. Key thoughts from several of these writers are represented within the *This is the Gospel* Resources.

Some of these books present teachings that are not held by the writers of this devotional guide. For example, Stanford teaches that believers have both the sin nature and the new nature (simultaneously). We disagree based on Scripture. McVey, Foster, and George give powerful rebuttals in their respective books. We've left these books on the list because they provide spot-on insights into other relational issues. Stanford is one of the greatest writers on the process by which God brings a believer into positional truth. While there will be some differences, a mature believer will have no trouble discerning error in light of Scripture.

As you read these books, look for key concepts on relationship. Take note of phrases like, "Christ in you," "abiding in Him," "relational living," "being instead of doing," "knowing God," "intimacy with Christ," "God living through you," "positional truth," or "in Christ truth." These phrases will guide you into the riches of relationship.

## Here's a list of recommended resources:

- ***Grace Walk*** by Steve McVey
- ***The Complete Green Letters*** by Miles Stanford
- ***Because We Love Him*** by Clyde Cranford
- ***Transformed Into His Image*** by David Foster
- ***Grace Amazing*** by Steve McVey
- ***Complete in Christ*** by Bob George
- ***The Explicit Gospel*** by Matt Chandler
- ***The Rest of the Gospel*** by Stone and Gregory
- ***Laws for Liberated Living*** by Manley Beasley
- ***Classic Christianity*** by Bob George
- ***Calvary Road*** by Roy Hession
- ***The Indwelling Life of Christ*** by W. Ian Thomas
- ***Truefaced*** by Thrall, McNicol Lynch
- ***Renovation of the Heart*** by Dallas Willard
- ***Alive By His Life*** by Manley Beasley
- ***The Law of Liberty in the Spiritual Life*** by Evan Hopkins
- ***Born Crucified*** by L.E. Maxwell
- ***Grace Rules*** by Steve McVey
- ***Falling for God*** by Gary Moon
- ***Not I But Christ*** by Stephen Olford
- ***Gospel*** by J.D. Greear
- ***Jesus + Nothing = Everything*** by Tullian Tchividjian
- ***Jesus Changes Everything*** by Bob George
- ***To Live is Christ To Die is Gain*** by Matt Chandler

If you have questions, please contact us at  
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