

Now that I Believe:
Your First Steps with God

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Disciples are to make more disciples. This is one of most joyous experiences of your life as you share how God made you alive, and he will do the same for your friends, neighbors, and others. This isn't a frightening process; it is in fact natural for people who have been changed and are living changed lives. How will people respond to you? What is a "personal testimony"? How do I tell people they too can be a disciple of Jesus? What if they don't like me?

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Welcome

Welcome. We are glad that you have decided to check out and perhaps use this curriculum. Our deepest desire is to help new believers start their new lives well. The Bible talks about the Christian life as a “walk,” a journey. It is a marathon, not a sprint, but taken one step at a time. With each step comes new joys and perhaps new challenges. We would be privileged to help you start your journey by taking the right steps in the right direction.

The Christian walk was never intended to be taken alone. One of the most important things you can do is find a mentor, a coach, a friend — whatever you want to call him or her. This person will get to know you, regularly pray for you, and meet with you periodically and work through this material with you.

There are twelve lessons, and each lesson is broken into six days. Ideally, you would do a little work each day (with one day off per week), and meet with your mentor on the fourth day to go through the lesson. You can watch the lesson on video, listen to the audio, or your mentor can walk you through the material using the lesson outlines we provide.

General practical suggestions

- No prior knowledge of the Bible or church is necessary. We assume that you have just become a Christian and everything is new.
- Stay focused on Jesus, not on church or religious traditions to which you may have been exposed. In these twelve lessons we will cover a lot of ground, but the central truth is who God is and how you relate to him.
- Please buy a Bible. Your mentor can help you with this since there are many translations and many different editions of the Bible. We use the ESV (English Standard Version) throughout the lessons.
- Get involved in a church. Again, your mentor can help you with this. Just make sure that when the preacher is done speaking, you have heard the Bible explained. Some preachers wouldn't help you understand the Bible, which are God's words to you.
- Get involved with people. You are now part of a new family, and they will be an encouragement to you as well as you to them.
- Please commit to working through all twelve lessons on a regular schedule; twelve weeks would be best. It is important to cover all the basics.
- Be patient with yourself. All of the years of your life up to this point have taught you to think and respond a certain way. Many of those patterns are going to be changed.
- You are not alone. God does truly love you, and he will work to give you new desires and a new ability to work out those desires. The power of God that raised Jesus from the dead now lives in you. Together, you can do this.
- From the beginning you are encouraged to pray. Lesson 5 is all about this, but basically prayer is just speaking with God. It may feel strange at first, talking to someone that you can't see. But he has promised to be with you every step of the way; he is listening! As time goes by, this will become a natural part of your life.

- Never forget that the goal of all this is to have your life transformed. Training isn't just so you will know more, but the goal of all biblical training is that God work through the truths of the Bible to transform your life. Everything we talk about in the next twelve weeks should have some practical impact on your life.

Practical suggestions for working with your mentor

- Feel free to ask any question. The only "dumb" question is the unasked question. Especially if you are older, it may feel uncomfortable starting something this new later in life and you may have some hesitancy. There is too much at stake, however, not to ask.
- Be honest. Tell him or her exactly how you are feeling, what your expectations are and whether they are being met. Your mentor may be a little nervous, and he or she needs your help in order to help you.

A word to mentors

The time you spend with this new Christian may be the most significant hours of your life. You have been entrusted with a special person, and God wants to work through you to direct his new child in the right direction. Please take this trust seriously. You may be challenged in the process, and you may grow spiritually, as much as the new Christian, which is part of our thinking behind how this curriculum is laid out. Here are some practical suggestions for you.

- Don't be afraid. Throw yourself into the relationship. You wouldn't have all the answers; that's okay. But if you have been walking with the Lord yourself, you will know most of the answers. For those other questions, admit you don't know and then ask someone who does.
- Pray regularly for this person. Even if you don't pray for anything else, pray for this person, and for yourself that the truths of God's kingdom will not only be taught but also caught, from you.
- Be sure you are prepared. Work through the material. Read. Pray.
- Be regular in meeting with them. Please make it a priority. A large part of who they understand God to be and the nature of their relationship with Jesus is going to be gleaned from you. It is a great responsibility and an immense privilege.
- You may want to take some time especially at first and discuss expectations. Share what do you think will happen over the next twelve weeks. Assure them that the Christian walk is a process, a walk taken one step at a time, and each step brings with it joys and challenges.
- Don't get sidetracked. Some times these "rabbit trails" can be helpful, but not too many of them.
- This person will become very dear to you (cf. 1 Thess 2:7-8). Cherish these times; they soon will be over.
- Spend time with the person outside of any mentoring context. Have fun together. Let them see you for who you are. Be real. Get to know their life's story.
- Get a commitment from the person to follow through all twelve chapters on whatever time schedule works for them. Make sure all expectations are clear.
- Open and close each meeting with prayer. They need to see your spiritual disciplines at work.

- Don't lose contact with the person when the twelve weeks are over. Keep praying and checking up on them.

How to use this book

- This curriculum is broken into twelve weeks. You can make a "week" extend for however long you wish.
- Each "week" is broken into six "days." Again, you can make each day be any period of time, but don't let them extend too long. You don't want this initial training to take so long that you never get through it.
- Apart from the fourth "day" when you work through the lesson, each day is designed to either prepare the new Christian for the lesson (Days 1 to 3) or to help them reflect over the lesson (Day 5-6). The person needs to start developing spiritual disciplines like journaling, memorizing, and praying on a regular basis. These need to become part of their every-day life. Be sure to meditate on the truths covered as well as just read and discuss.
- The fourth "day" is when you listen to the talk and take notes.
- The fifth "day" is when you memorize a verse. This is another important spiritual discipline that will frighten some people but still a discipline to be mastered.
- Everybody seems to be a little different as to when they can do this. Please start to develop the trait of spending regular time with God, whenever is best for you: morning, noon, or night. Be consistent. Have it be a quiet, peaceful time. Don't be in a hurry.

Who are we?

Biblical Training is a group of evangelical Christians who are committed to training up people in their faith. It is a world-wide ministry that is offered free of charge. Freely we have received, and freely we give. The speaker in the lessons is Bill Mounce. More information about him is available at the website: www.BiblicalTraining.org.

Our prayer is that this material will help you take the first steps of your Christian walk in the right direction.

1. Let's Review Your Conversion

It's always a good idea to look back over your conversion experience. What do you think happened when you became a follower of Jesus Christ? Are you unclear about anything? Could you possibly have misunderstood anything? Did anything happen of which you might not be aware?

Verses on salvation

The following verses are some of the best known in the Bible on the topic of salvation. The information in parentheses (such as "John 3:16) give the location of the passage in the Bible (e.g., the book of John, chapter 3, verse 16).

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

"God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

"You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Day One

700 years before Jesus was born a prophet named "Isaiah" told us about the importance of Jesus' death. Read through the verses and write out what you have learned from him. It is a book in the Old Testament named "Isaiah," chapter 53, verses 5-6. "LORD" refers to God.

"But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Two

One of the most famous passages in the Bible is in a book called "Psalms." In Psalm 23 God is compared to a shepherd who will care for his sheep; you and I are the sheep. What does this passage tell us about our God?

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Three

In this first talk we will go back over your conversion, see if you have any questions, and perhaps fill out your understanding of what God actually did for you. In preparation, think through how you would tell someone you became a Christian.

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Four: Notes on the Talk

Introduction

"For God so loved the world"

Starting point:

This loving God:

Something terrible happened:

Consequence:

What is the punishment"

*"The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"
(Romans 6:23).*

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

“That he gave his only Son”

What actually happened on the cross?

“Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:5-6).

“God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

How is it possible that one man’s death paid the price for another person’s sin?

1.

2.

Jesus “had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17).

"That whoever believes in him:"

"Whoever"

"Him" vs. religion

"Believe into"

Psalm 23

Consequence:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

"Should not perish but have eternal life"

What are some of the benefits of eternal life here and now?

Before you made the decision, Jesus called you to count the cost

Salvation is free but will cost you everything

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

“You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19).

What happened when you made the decision to follow Jesus?

Welcome to the family of God

Reflection Questions

1. Have you always believed that God existed? If so, why? If not, why did you change your mind?
2. Can you put into words how you feel knowing that God loved the world and created the world with purpose? How is that different from your friends who do not believe in God?
3. Explain in your own words what it means for sin to separate a person from God and for the punishment of sin being eternal separation from God.
4. It is essential for you to be able to explain what happened on the cross. You need to have a clear understanding for yourself, and you will want to be able to explain it to others. Give it a try.
5. How will you explain to someone else that Jesus' death paid the penalty of your sins. How is that possible?
6. Did you have any trouble believing that God could forgive even you, with everything you have done wrong? What convinced you otherwise?
7. What did you think of Christianity before you became a Christian? Was it a religion or a relationship? How would you explain it now?
8. How would you put John 3:16 into your own words? Make sure that you clarify the significance of "believe into."
9. What does it mean to be saved by God's grace and your faith? What do you think would happen if you had to earn your salvation?
10. What are you looking forward to in heaven? What parts of heaven are you looking forward to enjoying while still on earth?
11. What might your new faith in Jesus cost you?

Day Five

Write out and memorize John 3:16.

Now write out the verse using your own words. Feel free to take longer to say it so as to bring out the meaning of the verse.

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Six

Suggested prayer topics:

2. Things are About to Change

“Conversion” means you converted from one thing to another. In your case, you changed from not being a disciple of Jesus to being one. It also means that God is now at work in your life, starting to make you be more like Jesus. Does this surprise you? What actually happened when you became a Christian? What does this new life as a follow of Jesus look like? Does my life change automatically?

Bible verses

Paul makes the Philippian church a wonderful promise, that God will not only give them the desire to do the right thing, but also the ability.

“Dearest friends, you were always so careful to follow my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away you must be even more careful to put into action God’s saving work in your lives, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him” (Philippians 2:12-13, New Living Translation).

Paul also tells the Galatian church that their lives are going to change. These changes are called “fruit,” and the fruit will be produced by the working of God’s Spirit within them.

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”: (Galatians 5:22-23).

Day One

Paul tells the church in Thessalonica about their reputation:

“For they themselves report ... how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come” (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10).

They “turned from idols” and turned to “the living and true God.” While it is still early in your Christian walk, there probably are things that you have turned away from. Can you list any?

You have also turned to God. What are some ways in which you have started to do this?

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Two

On page 21 you read Galatians 5:22-23 and Paul's discussion of the "Fruits of the Spirit." As you look over this list of what your life is going to look like, which do you long for the most?

Which ones will be a little easier?

Which ones will be a little more difficult for you?

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Three

In tomorrow's talk we will see that changed people live changed lives. God has changed you from the inside out, and that change is going to start showing itself in your attitudes, activities, even what you say and what you talk about. This is an exciting time.

But please do not get discouraged. It is not like God is sitting there with a scowl on his face demanding that you change your life right away. Remember Philippians 2:12-13 that we looked at the other day. He gives you the desires and the ability.

What are you looking forward to? What do you want this new changed life to look like? Dream a little.

Day Four: Notes on the Talk

Emphasis

“We’ve been changed, and changed people live in a changed way.”

Should not come as a surprise. What happened in your conversion?

1. Separated

2. Relationship

3. Repent

Meaning of “repent”

Changed my _____

Commitment to change _____

“For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

4. You were _____ but God made you _____.

Fill out the picture of your conversion

"My new life as a believer is going to be _____ because I am different."

Before conversion

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44).

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

When you made your decision and responded in faith

Rescued

Forgiven

Justified

Freed from condemnation

Redeemed

Sanctified

Born again (made into a new creation; adopted)

Given the Holy Spirit

Romans 6:2 and the imagery of baptism

“By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?” (Romans 6:2).

Description of the act of baptism

In baptism you publicly proclaim that _____

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4).

What does this new life look like?

Life of discipleship

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34).

Fruits of the Spirit

Who is the “Holy Spirit”?

“Monotheism”

“Trinity”

“Bear fruit”

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

This is a process that may already have started.

Is the change automatic? What is my role, if any?

1. Not automatic
2. Can't change on your own.
3. The desire, and the ability to meet that desire, are both from God

“You must be even more careful to put into action God's saving work in your lives, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him” (Philippians 2:12-13; New Living Translation).

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:1-2).

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

We are the salt of the earth

“You are the salt of the earth You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:13,14).

Reflection Questions

1. Think through your conversion. What parts of it indicate that life as a Christian would be different?
2. Before you became a Christian, you may not have thought of yourself as spiritually dead. But now as you look back, does this seem a fair estimation? Is there some other metaphor you would like to use to describe your pre-conversion life?
3. Have you noticed any changes since your conversion? Are there any actions or attitudes that are starting to change?
4. Was the word “repent” used with you? Do you know what it means? Do you understand how it includes changing your thinking about Jesus as well as changing your actions, turning your back on sin and living a new life? Ask your friend if you are not sure what this all means.
3. Do not become discouraged if change is not happening quickly. You’ve lived most of your life outside of God; it is a process to change and start becoming more like Jesus. Do you understand this? Ask your friend how their lives changed when they became a Christian.
6. Do you have any questions about baptism? Do you understand that it doesn’t save you but rather it is a public proclamation of your new faith in Jesus, that he has given you new life? Again, talk with your friend. The Bible says that we should be baptized, and the biblical model is to be baptized soon after conversion. Would you like to be baptized?
7. Are you a little frightened by the idea that you are now to follow a life of discipleship with Christ? What do you think that is going to look like in the near future?
8. The teaching of “monotheism” and the “Trinity” can be somewhat daunting. You don’t have to understand them in their entirety, but do you have a basic idea of what they mean? Do you understand what the Holy Spirit is doing in your life right now?
9. “Bearing fruit” is a helpful metaphor. What does “fruit” signify? What might be some examples of fruit that are already appearing in your life? What fruit might God want to see in the near future? Remember: don’t be overwhelmed by this. God is gentle and works with us slowly and persistently.

10. God is going to place desires in your heart and then, through the Holy Spirit, give you the ability to achieve those desires. But you must co-operate. You must take the next step. Does this make sense? Do you have any questions?

11. How do you feel about our theme statement: "We've been changed, and changed people live in a changed way."

Day Five

Memory verse: Philippians 2:12-13.

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Six

There are a lot of things that happened when you became a Christian. Upon reflection, which of the metaphors we discussed in the talk are the most important for you? Why?

Suggested prayer topics:

3. When You Stumble

Even though God's power is at work within you, helping you to become more like Jesus, you will stumble. This is not to remove the joy of your new faith; it is to prepare you for the joy of spiritual growth that lies ahead. God knows this and is not surprised, and it does not affect his commitment toward you. What is "sin"? Is temptation sin? How will you tell God that you sinned and are sorry? Does he forgive? Can you be cleansed?

Psalm 51

King David in the Old Testament sinned with a woman named Bathsheba. Psalm 51 is his repentance and call for forgiveness. There is a lot we can learn from David's confession of sin and God's ability and willingness to forgive.

- 51:1 Have mercy on me, O God,
 according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
 blot out my transgressions.
- 51:2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
 and cleanse me from my sin!
- 51:3 For I know my transgressions,
 and my sin is ever before me.
- 51:4 Against you, you only, have I sinned
 and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
 and blameless in your judgment.
- 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
 and in sin did my mother conceive me.

51:6 Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

51:7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

51:8 Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

51:9 Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.

51:11 Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

51:12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

David continues by promising God to teach others after he has been forgiven.

51:13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.

51:14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.

51:15 O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.

51:16 For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;
you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.

51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Day One

This week we are going to look at the fact that in your new walk with Jesus, you will stumble; you will do something that you shouldn't have done. We don't want to discourage you; rather, we want to help you get ready for it and know how to handle it.

In Psalm 51, verses 1-5, the author (King David) is agreeing with God that his sin is really bad. What are some of the ways in which David makes this abundantly clear?

What else do you learn about sin and confession from this passage?

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Two

In Psalm 51, verses 6-12, King David looks forward to having his sins forgiven. What are some of those specific joys?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Is there any other encouragement in these verses for you?

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Three

Before looking at things that might cause a little discouragement, let's focus on the things that are happening in your life? What has changed? What are some of the new joys? It is important to thank God for these.

Suggested prayer topics

Day Four: Notes on the Talk

When you became a Christian

You were changed

But your new life is not automatic

You must take the next _____

What is the "bad news"?

Define three terms

1. "Relativism"

Definition:

Christians believe that God our Father is the _____ and that he has the _____ and the _____ to determine truth and that he wants the _____ for his creation.

"You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11).

2. "Sin"

Definition:

"Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.... Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving" (Ephesians 4:29; 5:4).

3. "Temptation"

Definition:

a. Temptation is not _____

b. You don't have to _____

"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

"Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

c. God is _____

"Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

What will you do when you stumble, miss the mark, and sin?

Defining moment

1. Confess your sin

Definition:

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8-9).

What are some of the major points made by Psalm 51?

- a. David makes absolutely no _____
- b. David agrees with God that sin is _____
- c. Not because David deserves it but because _____

What may be your tendency to do instead of following the model of Psalm 51?

Practical advice #1:

Practical advice #2:

“Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another” (James 5:16).

2. Receive his forgiveness

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

3. Be cleansed

“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust” (Psalm 103:8-14).

Conclusion

“For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer” (Psalm 32:3-4).

“I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit” (Psalm 32:5,1-2).

Reflection Questions

1. What are some ways in which you already see your life changing? How has God's love and saving power started to change who you are?
2. Are there any areas of your life where you think God is asking you to start changing?
3. As you look back over your life, are there ways in which relativism had crept in? How did you used to determine what was right and wrong? Do you have any questions about trusting in God's right or wisdom in determining truth? Do you think that God has your best interests in heart? (This is a difficult issue. Please do not be afraid to share openly.)
4. Some people are uncomfortable with the word "sin." Are you? What are some "marks" that you know God has already laid out before you?
5. Are you a bit overwhelmed with the idea of temptation and sin? Are there any temptations that you will probably face this week that seem too much to handle. Again, please share openly so your friends can help.

For further study

Temptation will come at you from many different angles. This is not to discourage you but to help you prepare for it and understand it a little better when it does come. Satan doesn't have horns and a red suit and can even appear as an angel (2 Corinthians 11:14). World; Sin in our own heart — James 1:13-15; Mark 7:20-23; James 1:13-15. 1 John 2:15-17; 3:7-10; Eph 2; Luke 6:46

6. Is there anything in your past that has created a bad picture of God in which you think he wants you to fail? How can we think together about things such that you see God is in fact on your side and desperately wants you to succeed?

For further study and reflection

How will your handling of sin, confession, and forgiveness become a "defining moment" in your spiritual life?

7. Confession is a difficult topic. Many people find it difficult. Why do you think that is the case? What will work against you confessing early, often, fully, to one another?

8. Please read through Psalm 51 again and talk about it. How does it model biblical confession?

For more information, find the sermons on Psalm 51 at www.BiblicalPreaching.info.

9. What challenges will you face in receiving God's forgiveness? For example, some people have trouble believing God really loves them, and they think that they have to experience punishment before God will truly forgive them. How about you?

Day Five

Write out your memory verse: Psalm 51:10

Read Psalm 51 and write out five things that you did not see earlier about confession.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Six

Read Psalm 103 and list five issues in your life that it promises will be cleansed.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Suggested prayer topics:

4. Listening to God

A crucial element of any relationship is communication, both listening and speaking. God has spoken to us two basic ways, through creation and through his Word, the Bible. What do the terms “inspiration,” “authority,” and “canonicity” mean? Can we trust the Bible? How do I listen to God as I read his word? Am I supposed to do anything beyond reading it?

Main Bible Passage

Paul is writing to his good friend Timothy, encouraging him to trust the Bible (also called “the sacred writings,” “Scripture,” and the “word”) and use them in his life and ministry. It is from the book called “2 Timothy,” chapter 3 verse 14 through chapter 4 verse 5. The “man of God” Paul refers to is Timothy.

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”

Day One

Read Psalm 19. Verses 1-6 talk about what we can know about God by looking at creation. Verses 7 and following talk about the “law of the Lord,” which is the Bible. What does it tell you about how God speaks to us?

Write down what you believe God has been speaking to you about lately.

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Two

Spend some time looking over the table of contents in your Bible and the handout. Become familiar with the names of the books that make up the Bible. Notice which ones are in the Old Testament and which are in the New Testament. (If you don't know what these terms mean, don't worry; we will explain them.)

It is helpful to write out names of the books in the New Testament, just to get familiar with them.

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Three

Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (page 49) and also 2 Peter 1:20-21.

What do they tell us about the origin of the Bible? Do you believe that the Bible is not a human book?

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Four: Notes on the Talk

Define three terms

1. "Revelation"

Definition: _____

2. "General Revelation"

Definition: _____

"What can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made" (Romans 1:19-20).

a.

b.

c.

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (Psalm 19:1-4).

3. "Specific Revelation"

Definition: _____

"The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb" (Psalm 19:7-8,10).

The Bible

The Bible is divided into two parts: the _____ and the _____ Testaments

Books are broken into: _____

Chapters are broken into: _____

Four important terms

1. "Inspiration"

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

"No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20-21).

2. "Authority"

3. "Canonicity"

4. "Trustworthy"

What do you do with the Bible?

1. _____ it!

a.

b.

c.

"Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2:12-13).

2. _____ on it

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither" (Psalm 1:1-3).

3. _____ it

“I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11).

4. _____ it

In the process of obeying it, you will come to trust it and be transformed by it.

Reflection Questions

1. As you look at creation, what are some of the things that stand out to you about God?
2. Do you have any questions about how the Bible is divided? Are you a little more comfortable getting around in it?
3. We covered a lot of ground when we looked at the four terms: "inspiration"; "authority"; "canonicity"; "trustworthy." You probably will have a lot of questions on these topics if you don't right now, but is there anything in general you need to ask?

For further study

See the first three lectures at www.BiblicalTraining.org in the section entitled, "Biblical Literacy" if you want to know more about these terms.

4. Think through what communication looks like in a healthy relationship. How can you transfer that information over to your relationship with Jesus?
5. When might be the best time for your quiet time?
6. Work through some examples of meditation.
7. Share some experiences from your last week when you were not sure what to do, and ask your mentor if he or she knows of any verses that apply. How would knowing these verses have changed how you handled the situation?
8. Have your mentor share some experiences of how he or she came to trust the Bible.

Day Five

Write out your memory verse: 2 Timothy 3:16

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Six

Meditation and memorization are often difficult for people. Minds wander during quiet, reflective times, and some of our minds simply go away when we try to memorize. What might help you be more successful? Talk with your mentor about this.

Suggested prayer topics:

5. Speaking With God

Healthy communication requires not only listening but also talking. Prayer is simply talking with God, about anything and everything. He is our new Father, and he wants to hear from you. How do you pray? What do you pray about? What if I have trouble listening to him speaking?

Matthew 6:7-15

Jesus' disciples wanted to learn how to pray, and this passage is Jesus' answer. It has traditionally been called, "The Lord's Prayer."

"And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this:

'Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.'

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Day One

Think through how you speak with your friends. What are some of the basic ingredients of effective speaking? Honesty? Forthrightness?

If you had a perfect relationship with God and could speak with him perfectly, what would be some of the characteristics of your communication?

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Two

The first half of the Lord's Prayer shows that we are supposed to start our prayers by focusing on God. "Hallowed" means "holy, without sin." God's "kingdom" is his kingly rule in the hearts of his children. Read and meditate on what the first four lines mean.

Write out 6 ways in which the truths of these four lines can become true in your life.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Three

Do the same with the end of the prayer that you did yesterday for the first four lines.

Write out 6 ways in which the truths of the final lines of the prayer can become true in your life.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Four: Notes on the Talk

Introduction

Define “prayer”:

“Pray like this”

“Our Father in heaven”

The familiarity of praying to God as our Father

“In heaven”

Balance of the familiar and the awe due God

Part 1: Prayer focuses first and foremost on God

Clarification: Verbs are imperatives

1. "Hallowed be your name"

Define "hallowed"

Meaning:

2. "Your kingdom come"

Define "kingdom":

Meaning:

3. "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"**Part 2: Express our total dependence on God for everything****4. "Give us this day our daily bread"**

More than just food:

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ... For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself” (Matthew 6:25,32-34).

Needs, not greeds

5. “Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

Define “debts”:

Meaning:

Relationship between forgiving and being forgiven

“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

“So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart” (Matthew 18:35).

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

"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire" (James 1:13-14).

Meaning:

Practical Suggestions

1. Speaking *with* God

2. Memorize it

Reflection Questions

1. What preconceptions did you have about prayer when you first became a Christian? Which ones were good, and which ones were bad?
2. Does your relationship with your earthly father help or hurt your relationship with your heavenly father? This is an important point; if your idea of a father is negative, you will have to consciously work through that as your relationship with God progresses.
3. What are some experiences you have had to which you responded in awe? The first time you saw the Milky Way? Your first glimpse of a giant redwood? How can these experiences help you understand the awesomeness of God?
4. What are some ways in which your life might hurt God's reputation? Why would someone praise God for what you do or don't do, say or don't say?
5. What are some ways in which God's kingly rule has been growing in your own life? How might that rule move out to people with whom you come in contact?
6. It's hard, isn't it, to keep saying "not my will but God's be done"? You can be honest; we all struggle with this in some areas of our life. What would be an encouragement to you to truly pray, "your will be done"? What would be an impediment?
7. Most if not all of your pre-conversion life was lived under the influence of the world saying, "Be self-sufficient!" "You don't need any help!" "God is only for weaklings." So admitting your dependence on God for all things and not just for salvation might be something you have to work at. Ask your mentor how God has provided for him or her. Have you had a chance yet to see this happen in your own life?
8. What is the difference between "needs" and "greeds"? How will you keep them separate?
9. Learning to forgive others is going to take most people some time. Have you ever been hurt so badly by someone else that you have not yet forgiven them? What is keeping you from forgiving them now? Would you be willing to commit this situation to the Lord in prayer, asking that he help you learn to forgive?

10. How can you remind yourself, when you are in the midst of a difficult situation, that God is with you, delivering you from evil and the Evil One?
11. Do some role playing with your mentor on conversational prayer. How might God's Spirit talk to you while you are reading your Bible? How could you respond?
12. Practice praying through the Lord's Prayer but inserting the specifics of your life into the prayer. For example, "Give us this day our daily bread. Father, you know that I cannot pay my medical bills. Please help me trust you with this."

Day Five

Memorize the Lord's Prayer. Be sure to think through what each phrase means as you memorize.

Pray through the Lord's Prayer, making it match some specific circumstances in your life. For example: "Father, thank you for talking with me, and listening. Thank you for being close to me as a dad. Help me to understand that you spoke the galaxies into existence; help me never to think of you as a small, unimportant, weak person."

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Six

Prayer is about God, his honor and our dependence upon him. Yes, God is concerned about the details of your life, but you need to learn not let your prayers be all about yourself. It is a difficult balance. List some ways that might help you focus on God while you at the same time ask him to meet your needs. This is a difficult question; you may want to ask your mentor for help.

6. Learning More about God

When you became a Christian, you understood certain things about God. But did you know that he knows everything? That he is present everywhere? That he is all-powerful? How then should we respond to a fuller knowledge of God? What is worship? How should we respond to what we know of God?

Psalm 139 (selected verses)

O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,' even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them.

How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.

Day One

1. What is Psalm 139 saying about God's knowledge?

2. What is Psalm 139 saying about God's presence?

3. What is the Psalmist's response to what he knows about God?

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Two

In the talk for this week we are going to try and enlarge our vision of God. We will talk about the fact that God knows everything, exists everywhere, and is all-powerful. It is hard for human beings to come to grasp with the enormity of God, but we will try to do so.

1. What does it mean for God to know everything? Does he know your thoughts? Your secrets? The things done in private? How does this make you feel? Does it bring you comfort? Why?

2. There is no place you can go where God does not exist. You are probably used to thinking that you can hide, but you can't hide from God. Does this bring you comfort or discomfort? Why? Are there places you go in life that cause you to fear? How does knowing that God is there affect your actions?

3. This is a hard one. God is all-powerful. Anything he wants to do, he can. Do you believe this? What might lead you to question the truth of the statement?

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Three

In Isaiah 6:1-8, the writer is given a glimpse of heaven and the throne room of God. What does Isaiah learn about God. How does he respond to each piece of information?

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Four: Notes on the Talk

Introduction

What are God's "attributes"?

"Incomprehensibility"

Definition:

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9).

1. "Omniscience"

Definition:

"O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether" (Psalm 139:1-4).

Past, present, and future

"I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done" (Isaiah 46:9-10).

"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!" (Romans 11:33).

"Omnipresence"

Definition:

"Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,' even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you" (Psalm 139:7-12).

"In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

"Omnipotence"

Definition:

"Sovereign":

“For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them” (Psalm 139:13-16).

“Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases” (Psalm 115:3).

How do we respond to this revelation? We worship him!

“Worth-ship”

Hebrew and Greek mean:

“Bowling all that we are before all that he is.”

a. Worship is our _____

b. Worship is then _____

Definition:

“In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!’ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: ‘Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!’

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.’

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I! Send me.’” (Isaiah 6:1-8).

Three cycles of revelation and response.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Challenge: Never let God become small

Reflection Questions

1. What were some of the pictures you had of God before you became a Christian? Which ones were accurate, and which ones were wrong? How will you go about unlearning the wrong pictures?
2. Does it bother you that you will never fully understand God? How will his “incomprehensibility” help you worship him more fully?
3. Do you believe God is omniscient? How will you come to a fuller understanding of what this means? List five ways in which God’s omniscience will impact your life. Please be specific.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
4. Do you believe God is omnipresent? How will you come to a fuller understanding of what this means? List five ways in which God’s omnipresence will impact your life. Please be specific.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.

5. Do you believe God is omnipotent? How will you come to a fuller understanding of what this means? List five ways in which God's omnipotence will impact your life. Please be specific.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
6. Did you have any ideas of Christian worship before you became a Christian? Were any of them wrong?
7. The Isaiah 6:1-8 passage is especially powerful. In preparation for this talk you listed what Isaiah learned about God. Try to put yourself in his shoes, and how would you respond to each piece of revelation about the character of God?
 - a. Holiness
 - b. Mercy
 - c. Will to have his message proclaimed

Day Five

Write out your memory verse: Isaiah 6:3.

Write out what you have learned about God's holiness

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Five

As you have been reflecting on the talk, what practical applications are you making about the four terms we learned?

1. "Incomprehensibility"

2. "Omniscience"

3. "Omnipresence"

4. "Omnipotence"

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Six

Suggested prayer topics:

7. Learning More about Who Jesus Is

Jesus is the best known person in history. He has had more affect on world history than any other leader or philosophy or political movement. Many people know the name, but who is he? What did he say about himself? What did his followers say about him? And what is the significance and relevance of these questions and our answers?

Acts 2:22-41 (selected verses)

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.... This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.... Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.’ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.’ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation.’ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”

Day One

Before you became a Christian, who did you think Jesus was?

Based on your conversion, who do you think he is now?

What led you to think differently?

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Two

Read Peter's sermon in Acts two (page 83 above).

What does Peter tell you about who Jesus is? List as many as you can see.

Suggested prayer topics:

Preparation Day Three

We are next going to look at the doctrine of Jesus' "incarnation," that he was God incarnate, God made flesh. This means we believe Jesus was fully God and fully human. If this does not make a lot of sense to you, welcome to the crowd. We believe it because the Bible teaches it, but it ultimately remains a mystery.

When you think of Jesus being fully human, as human as you and I are, what does that make you think of?

Read the following verses. What do they tell you about Jesus being a human being?

1 John 2:6

Hebrews 2:17

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Four: Notes on the Talk

Introduction: "Who is Jesus?"

"I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Common answers to this question:

Peter's first sermon in Acts 2 (on page 67)

"Jesus of Nazareth"

Jesus was a real human being

Jesus is "Lord"

kyrios means:

Jesus birth (Luke 1:35)

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

“Son of God” in John 20:31

“These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31).

“Son of God” in Mark 1:1

Not “son” in the sense that we use the word

“This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God” (John 5:18).

“Son of God” and “God” in the gospel of John

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

“No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known” (John 1:18; see also John 20:31).

“Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’” (John 8:58).

“Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” (John 20:28).

Christ's divinity outside the gospels

"Our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

"The righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1).

"Lord" in Acts 2:36

"Incarnation"

Definition:

Jesus was fully human

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Yet without sin

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15)

"For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26).

Jesus was fully God

Mystery

Is the Incarnation important?

1. The only way _____ could even be a possibility.

Fully human

“He had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17).

Fully God

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.” (Revelation 7:9-12).

2. Necessary if you are a _____

“By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God” (1 John 4:2-3).

“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

Reflection Questions

1. Before you became a Christian, who did you think Jesus was? It is important to identify these beliefs so that they do not creep into your thinking now.
2. Which of these previous ideas were the most wrong and potentially the most damaging?
3. Are you surprised that Jesus was as human as you are? How does that encourage you?
4. Do you believe that Jesus is fully God? If this is difficult for you to accept, be sure to spend some time talking about it. You really should not continue any further until this issue is settled.
5. Which two of the verses were the most helpful in showing you that Jesus is God?
6. How does it encourage you to know that Jesus is fully God?
7. How will you answer someone who says, perhaps as you used to answer, that Jesus was a good man but nothing more? If you were to ask them why they think Jesus was a good man, how do you think they would respond?
8. How does the fact that Jesus was fully human help you understand that salvation can be a reality?
9. How does the fact that Jesus was fully God help you understand that salvation can be a reality?

Day Five

Write out and memorize these two verses.

John 1:1

Romans 10:9

Suggested prayer topics:

Day 6

Read Philippians 2:5-11. It is a discussion of Jesus' humility, how being God he condescended to become a human being for our sake.

Identify what you learn about Jesus as God and about Jesus as human in this passage.

Suggested prayer topics:

8. Learning More about What Jesus Did

Jesus did many things while on earth, but the most significant of all was dying on the cross. But what exactly happened? What was accomplished? What does the Bible mean when it talks about Jesus being the "lamb of God"? Is there anything that can help me understand the significance of his death. Do I need to be reminded about it on a regular basis?

John 19:16-30 (selected verses); Mark 15:38

So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." So the soldiers did these things.

After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

Day One

700 years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah wrote about Jesus' death and what it would accomplish. Read these verses from Isaiah 52:13-53:12 and see what he tells you about Jesus, whom Isaiah calls God's "servant."

"He was despised and rejected by men;
a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (53:3).

"But he was wounded for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his stripes we are healed" (53:5)

"Yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted" (53:4).

"All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned every one to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all" (53:6).

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth" (53:7).

Suggested topics of prayer:

Day Two

All of the gospels tell the story of Jesus' death. We will be talking about the gospel of John, so you may want to read the account in another gospel, perhaps Mark 15:33-41.

There is a curtain in the temple that separates a place called "The Holy of Holies" from the rest of the temple. The actual presence of God used to dwell in this place. It is separated from the rest of the temple with a six inch curtain. Only the High Priest could go in, and only once a year, symbolizing the holiness of God and the sin fullness of people. The curtain represents God's presence among his people as well as their separation from him.

When Jesus died, he ripped this curtain in two. What do you think that symbolizes?

Suggested topics of prayer:

Day Three

The Bible says that only Jesus' death on the cross makes it possible to have our sins forgiven, and for you and me to be given access directly into God's presence. What are some ways that the world says our sins can be forgiven? Why do most people think that we should all get to go to heaven?

Suggested topics of prayer:

Day Four: Notes on the talk

Introduction

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Definition of the “atonement”:

“Lamb of God”

Sacrificial system

If his gift for a burnt offering is from the flock, from the sheep or goats, he shall bring a male without blemish, priests shall throw its blood against the sides of the altar. And he shall cut it into pieces, with its head and its fat, and the priest shall arrange them on the wood that is on the fire on the altar, but the entrails and the legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall offer all of it and burn it on the altar; it is a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD” (Leviticus 1:10-13).

Two principles that help us understand the cross

- 1.
- 2.

“Substitutionary Atonement”

“He was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:5-6).

“Who takes away the sin of the world”

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Ramification #1: Only the Lamb of God can take away sin

I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6).

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

Ramification #2: "Sufficiency of the cross"

He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1, NIV).

Definition:

Sufficiency illustrated

1.

"It is finished" (John 19:30).

2.

"The curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom" (Mark 15:38).

Religion tries to sew the curtain back up

Atonement requires response

“For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:40).

“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38).

“For by grace you have been saved through faith” (Ephesians 2:8).

Grace:

Faith:

Communion as a teaching tool

“Lord’s Supper”; “Eucharist”

History of Passover (Exodus 12)

Reinterpretation by Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

Bread now symbolizes:

Cup now symbolizes:

Reflection Questions

1. In our first time together we reviewed your conversion. Much of this talk covers the same ground, so it is important to revisit the question. Is there anything in this talk that made you wonder whether you really understand your conversion? Are you a Christian?
2. To many, the idea of animal sacrifice may be repulsive. And yet, the picture painted in Leviticus is helpful as we try to understand the holiness of God, the vileness of sin, the guilt of the sinner, and the mercy of our forgiving God. What in this picture do you find helpful?
3. The prophet Isaiah write over 700 years before the time of Christ, and his understanding of Jesus' death is pivotal in our understanding of the Atonement. Which statement in Isaiah's prophecy (53:4-6) do you find especially helpful? You may want to read the entire 53rd chapter as it all deals with Christ's death.
4. Jesus claims to be the unique path to God. How would you answer someone who says that "All roads lead to God," that all sincere people eventually will arrive at heaven?
5. The doctrine of the "Sufficiency of the cross" is important to understand. Is there anything in your past that may cause you to think that your sins can not be totally forgiven and that you can now come directly into the presence of God?
6. Are there any current religious practices in which you are engaged that might be suggesting Jesus' work really is not finished and that he needs your help?
7. The picture of the temple veil ripping completely in two is a powerful picture of what happened on the cross. How does the imagery help you understand the Atonement?
8. Time for a little more role playing. Let's say you meet someone who says that Jesus' death on the cross paid the sin of the whole world, and therefore everyone is going to heaven. How will you respond?
9. In your own words, explain the Jewish Passover. You may want to read all of Exodus 12.
10. In your own words, explain how Jesus reinterpreted the Passover to now point to his death.

Day Five

Write out and memorize John 1:29

Reflect on the imagery of a lamb being slaughtered by the hand of a sinner, which is you. What do you learn from the imagery?

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Six

Is there some way in your own culture to explain to someone else the significance of the temple veil ripping in two? Is there some way to use images common to where you live that might explain the same truth of the sufficiency of the cross?

Suggested prayer topics:

9. Learning More about the Holy Spirit

Christians are monotheists; we believe in one God. But we are also Trinitarians; we believe in three “persons” of the Trinity — God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Who is this third member of the Trinity? What actually does he do? What is his on-going role in my life? What does it mean to be led and empowered by the Holy Spirit? Do I have to do anything, or does he do all the work? Where would we be if it were not for the work of the Holy Spirit?

John 16:4b-11; Galatians 5:16-26

“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”

Day One

Jesus knew that he was going to die. In preparation he gave his disciples many last minute instructions. Among these was the news that just as Jesus had helped them, so also God was going to send “another Helper” who would never leave them.

Read John 6:14-11. Write out what Jesus tells us about this new Helper.

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Two

The Bible tells us about the many things about this “new Helper,” who we call the “Holy Spirit.” Here are a few. Summarize each passage in your own words.

“In him [i.e., Jesus] you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:13-14).

“But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior” (Titus 3:4-6).

“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:16-17).

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (Romans 8:26).

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Three

Paul tells the church in Galatia that they should “Walk by the Spirit.” This means that the Holy Spirit was present to help them by guiding them so they would know what to do and also empowering them to be able to do what is right. The “fruit” signifies the changes in their lives that the Holy Spirit would encourage them to do. Read Galatians 5:16-26.

Of the fruits that Paul lists, which ones have started to characterize your life? Which “desires of the flesh” still tempt you?

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Four: Notes on the talk

Introduction

Define “monotheists”:

Define “Trinitarians”:

First Activity: Regeneration

Definition:

1. Begins with _____ of sin

“And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment” (John 16:8).

2. The Holy Spirit _____ people to God

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (John 6:44).

3. The Holy Spirit is the actual _____ of regeneration

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

“Titus 3:4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (Titus 3:4-6).

4. The Holy Spirit _____ our regeneration

“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:13-14; see also 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5).

Second activity of the Holy Spirit: Indwelling

“I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14:15-17).

The Holy Spirit is personally involved in your life helping you

1. Daily he _____

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16).

a.

b.

2. Daily he _____

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil 2:12-13).

“Be keener than ever to work out the salvation that God has given you with a proper sense of awe and responsibility. For it is God who is at work within you, giving you the will and the power to achieve his purpose” (Phillips).

Empowerment

1. One way the Holy Spirit empowers is to _____

(Listed in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28-31; Ephesians 4:11-12; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

2. Purpose of the Spirit's guidance and empowerment:

"Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

3. Requires our co-operation

"Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30).

"How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:29).

4. What does it look like to be empowered?

"On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." ' " (John 7:37-38).

Reflection Questions

1. The Trinity can be a confusing teaching because it ultimately is a mystery. How would you explain it to another person, especially a child?
2. As you look back over your life before your conversion, can you think of any events in which you now see that the Holy Spirit was active, especially when you did not recognize him at the time?
3. Since the time of your conversion, have you noticed any events in which the Spirit has been active in sealing you, confirming your faith in Christ and protecting you from harm?
4. In what ways has the Holy Spirit been guiding you? What passages of the Bible have spoken directly to you? Have you experienced and recognized his leading?
5. What about his empowerment? How has he given you the strength to do something that previous to your conversion you were unable to do?
6. What are your natural gifts? What are you really good at? As you grow in your Christian walk, how might your new supernatural gifting add to your natural gifting? Do you see that you have a new ability that you never had before? This process may take some time to recognize, so don't be discouraged if you can't identify your spiritual gifting.
7. Given your personality, how might you quench or grieve the Spirit? How will you prepare yourself so that if (or when) you do, you can be sensitive to it and stop?
8. Given your personality, will it be difficult for you to confess your inability to do the work that God has placed before you? If so, what will you do about it?

Day Five

Write out and memorize John 3:5.

Suggested prayer topics: thankfulness to God for your regeneration; increased sensitivity to the Spirit's leading; willingness to let the Spirit work through you; a desire to never be lazy and sit back, doing nothing for your spiritual growth.

Day Six

Read Romans 8. This is a maravelous chapter on the role of the Holy Spirit in your life. There are many promises and some warnings scattered throughout the chapter. Write them down and claim them for your own.

Suggested prayer topics: thankfullness that even in the midst of difficult and trying time, there is no one to condemn you and nothing that can separate you from God's love.

10. Walking with God

When you became a Christian, you started to walk with God. It is a day-by-day process in which sin has less hold on your life and you more and more look like Jesus. But some days are more difficult than others, especially when difficult things happen. Why do these “bad things” happen? Can I keep back parts of myself from God if doing so helps me avoid pain? Are there any consequences to allowing sin in some parts of my life? What does it mean that Jesus is both “Savior” and “Lord”?

Romans 12:1-2 (in different translations)

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (English Standard Version).

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (New International Version).

“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is” (New Living Translation).

Day One

Over the past several weeks we have talked quite a bit about how your life as a Christian will be different from what it was before. What are some ways in which your life has been changing since you became a Christian?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Two

Spend some time reading through the different translations of Romans 12:1-2 (page 121). The latter translations are a little more interpretive because they want to help you understand what the verses mean.

What are some areas in your life where God might want to do some more changing. We will call these your “areas of challenge.”

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Three

Some of the things you will hear in the next talk may be a little strong. We are going to talk about some of the challenges you might have as the months go by, and perhaps you are already experiencing some of them right now.

Do you tend to get discouraged? Ask your mentor for practical ways to keep moving forward in your Christian walk.

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Four: Notes on the talk

Definition of "sanctification":

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:1-2).

What does spiritual growth look like?

Practical question of sanctification:

Role of difficult circumstances in your life

Did I do something wrong?

"All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12).

God wants to do something right!

“In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:6-7).

“We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope” (Romans 5:3-4).

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (James 1:2-4).

Temptation to compartmentalize

“Compartmentalize”:

“Life is a patchwork quilt.”

1. Compartmentalize your _____

2. Compartmentalize your _____

3. Compartmentalize your _____

But God wants _____

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34).

"Any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).

"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

Consequences of Compartmentalization

1. Harm _____.

2. Lose _____.

"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples" (John 8:31).

"But the one who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 24:13).

You and I have been reconciled, "if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard" (Colossians 1:23).

"For we share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end" (Hebrews 3:14).

3. Warning passages

"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples" (John 8:31).

"And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked" (1 John 2:3-6).

"I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent" (Revelation 3:15-16,19).

Jesus is "Savior" and "Lord"

Reflection Questions

1. In your own words, describe what it means to "walk" with God, what it means to be "sanctified."
2. How would you write Romans 12:1-2 in your own words, bringing out the full meaning of the passage?
3. God never promised that if you became a Christian all your problems would go away. Were you promised this by someone? If so, you need to find a mature Christian and talk through this issue.
4. Have any bad things happened to you since becoming a Christian? What were they? How did they make you feel? How did you respond?
5. Has anything happened to you that has proved and refined your faith?
6. Has anything happened to you that helped you "grow up" in Christ, that helped to produce Christian character in you?
7. Have you been tempted to compartmentalize God yet? Have you been tempted to keep back certain areas of your life, keeping doors to certain rooms in your heart closed? Giving all of yourself is often a challenging process, so don't be disappointed if you are compartmentalizing, but be aware. What can you do to open the doors of your heart that you perhaps have already closed? What can you do to not let this become a habit?
8. Does the image of a patchwork quilt help? Are there any other images that might help to drive the point home?
9. How are you doing with confession? Is it coming easier? When you know that something has come between God and you, what is helping (or hurting) you to confess and be honest with God?
10. If you are a new Christian, the discussion of assurance and the warning passages may have been a little frightening. Share with your friend how you felt about this. Remember that it is God who gives you the desires and the ability to grow in holiness; nevertheless, you still need to take that next step. What would encourage you in your spiritual walk?

Day Five

Write out and memorize Romans 12:1-2.

Day Six

The Bible has many images to help us understand that we are to be different from the world. One of my favorites is "salt" and "light." Here is the passage.

"You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it useful again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. You are the light of the world—like a city on a mountain, glowing in the night for all to see. Don't hide your light under a basket! Instead, put it on a stand and let it shine for all. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father" (Matt. 5:13-16).

Salt was used to preserve meat in the ancient world. How do Christians interact in the world such that they preserve it? What would you guess it means to "preserve" the world?

The second image is a little simpler. Jesus is the true light of the world, and through us he illumines others. In what practical ways can your new faith in Jesus Christ illumine the lives of those around you?

11. Walking Together

While we become God's children one disciple at a time, as children we are members of a new family with a new father, new brothers and sisters, and a new home. How do I relate to these people? Do I need to spend time with them? Is this an easy or difficult task? How does the early church help us understand these issues? How does my love for God show itself to others?

John 17:20-26; Acts 2:42-47

John 17 contains Jesus' pray to God for the church. "I do not ask for these only [i.e., his disciples], but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

Acts 2 gives a powerful picture of the early church. "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."

Day One

Even before you became a Christian, you most likely lived in some kind of community — family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, friends at school., etc. God did not create us to live in isolation but to live within “circles of relationships.” What are some of the things that you treasure the most about your relationships?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Two

The longer you are a Christian, the more relationships you should be building within the church, your new spiritual family. While there certainly will be some conflicts — after all, we are all still human — there will also be great joys. What are some of the things you are looking forward to in terms of spiritual relationships that you might not have experienced with your non-Christian friends?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Three

Read the description of the early church in Acts 2:42-47 (page 133 above) and list as many characteristics you can see of what healthy, biblical community looks like.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Four: Notes on the Talk

When we became Christians, we became part of a new _____

“... that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.... I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me” (John 17:21, 23).

Great challenges in creating community

Randy Frazee, *The Connecting Church* (Zondervan)

Problem: we were created for _____

Model of the Early Church (Acts 2:42-47)

All about _____

1. Growth into _____

“Him [i.e., Jesus] we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me” (Colossians 1:28-29; cf. Ephesians 4:11-15).

2. Growth into _____

“Christian crock pot”

“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

“Haven of Grace”

3. Growth into _____

Service _____ the body

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

“By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:16-18).

Service _____ the body

Hard work

Begins with a _____

May I encourage you to _____

Then we will be a _____

Reflection Questions

1. You will most likely bring much of your natural family into the family of God. It is inevitable. What is there from your past that should come, and what is there that should not come?
2. What was there about the church that enticed you to come to Christ as a new disciple? What was there that fought against your conversion?
3. What are the greatest secular forces working against you in your commitment to the family of God.
4. As Acts describes the early church, what stands out to you? What is the most desirable for you in your situation? Do you struggle with any of it?
5. I think we would all instinctively acknowledge that God demands the place of centrality in our life. Is he central in your life? What is competing with him?
6. Are you growing in Christ? Are you moving toward individual and corporate discipleship? How can we help?
7. Are you “devoted” to fellowship within the body. What forces fight against us making the church our central circle of relationships? How can we balance our commitment to our natural family with that of God’s family?
8. List some specific examples of how in the past month you have stirred up a brother in Christ to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24). If not, how can we encourage you to do so? Did you know this you were supposed to do this?
9. Are you involved in any cross-cultural missions outreach? This does not include giving money for someone else to do so, as important as that is.
10. This is hard work, isn’t it? How can you be encouraged, and how can you encourage others, to dig in and do the hard work? How can you allow God to use his energy to powerfully work within you to do this task?

11. Are you willing to simplify your life? Do you believe you need to in order to relieve your loneliness and give you a true sense of belonging?

12. What do you think this community would look like if it were truly a “haven of grace”?

Day Five

Write out and memorize Hebrews 10:24-25

Suggested prayer topics:

Day Six

None of this relational “stuff” comes automatically or naturally. It is hard work. It will probably involve you stepping out, extending yourself, and taking relational risks. Some people may not be interested in community and they will lose the privilege and joy of knowing you better and better. But don’t let that stop you. We are called to be radical, counter-cultural, just like Jesus. What do you believe will be the greatest roadblocks to you functioning as part of an authentic, biblical community?

1.

2.

3.

4.

What are you willing to do to overcome the obstacles and reach out, while at the same time receiving those who reach out to you?

1.

2.

3.

4.

Suggested prayer topics:

12. Inviting Others to Walk with You

Disciples are to make more disciples. This is one of most joyous experiences of your life as you share how God made you alive, and he will do the same for your friends, neighbors, and others. This isn't a frightening process; it is in fact natural for people who have been changed and are living changed lives. How will people respond to you? What is a "personal testimony"? How do I tell people they too can be a disciple of Jesus? What if they don't like me?

Walking with Jesus, and inviting others to walk with you

The following passages summarize this walk. Changed people live in a changed way, people will notice your actions more than your words, they will respond in one of two ways, and you should be prepared to explain why you are different.

Matthew 5:13-16 "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

1 Peter 3:1-4 "Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives—when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, or the putting on of clothing—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious."

2 Corinthians 2:14-16 "But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life."

1 Peter 3:15-16 "Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience."

Day One

When you became a Christian, you were changed from the inside out. God made you new, made you alive, gave you a new birth. Then he called you to live a changed life, which means that you are going to be different from people who do not follow Jesus.

As you live out your life, what have you stopped doing that might attract people's attention. How are you visibly different? (By the way, this should be an encouragement to you. Sometimes changes are gradual and we don't see them.)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

The reverse is also true. You will have started doing things that you didn't do before, and this too will attract the attention of your non-believing friends. List some of them.

1.

2.

3.

4.

Suggested prayer topics: thank God for these changes. Ask him to encourage you to continue living a changed life.

Day Two

Paul tells the Corinthians that we all have a fragrance to our lives. Some people think that we stink; in other words, they see the changes in your life and they don't like it. Has this happened to you yet? Explain.

Other people will think that we have a sweet fragrance that is inviting to them; they will see the changes in your life and want to get closer, to know why? Has this happened yet?

Suggested prayer topics: ask God for strength when people don't understand nor like the changes in your life; ask him that you see the positive ways in which people respond to your new life.

Day Three

As your life continues to change and people see the “new you,” some will want to know why you are different. You need to be ready to tell them what has happened and why. Think through the answers to the following questions.

1. What were you like before you became a Christian? You don't need to get into the lurid details (if there are any).

2. Why did you decide to become a disciple of Jesus? What were the events surrounding that experience?

3. How have you changed since then?

What you have just written out is called your “personal testimony.”

Suggested prayer topics: for clarity of expression as you try to explain your new faith, and for the opportunity to share these changes with a close friend who is not a believer.

Day Four: Notes on the talk

Jesus calls people to “follow me”

“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19).

People who follow Jesus are to invite others to join with them

“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age’ ” (Matthew 28:18-20).

“In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:19-21).

1. In conversion, God _____

2. As you live out a changed life, people will _____

“Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:14-15).

Christians are to be _____

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).

Christians are also _____

“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet” (Matthew 5:13).

Christ “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14 in the King James).

“He gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing what is right” (New Living Translation).

3. People will notice and wonder why you have changed

“Preach at all time; if necessary, use _____”

“Wives, be submissive to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives — when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external — the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, or the putting on of clothing — but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious” (1 Peter 4:1-4).

Two ways they will respond

“But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life” (2 Corinthians 2:14-16).

1. Aroma of _____

2. Stench of _____

“The time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead” (1 Peter 4:3-5).

4. If you smell like the aroma of life, they will _____

“Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” (Col 4:5-6).

Always be “prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience” (1 Peter 3:15-16).

Personal testimony (John 9:24-25; Acts 4:20)

1. KISS: _____

a.

b.

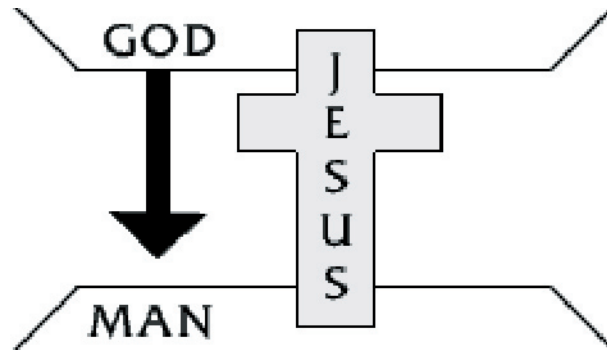
c.

2. Invite them to _____

ABC

John 3:16

Romans 3:23; 6:23; 10:9



3. Keep the focus on _____

4. Don't take too much _____

Christians are _____

Reflection Questions

1. How does it make you feel to know that just as Jesus invited you to walk with him, you also are to ask others along for the same walk? Frightened? Expectant? Joyous? What do you think is prompting this response?
2. Have you ever had any experience being an “ambassador” of any type, secular or religious? What are your memories of that time?
3. As you live out your changed life, what have you stopped doing and what have you started doing that might attract a friend’s attention? Are you doing any “preaching” with your life?
4. Has anyone reacted negatively to you about the changes in your life? Have they said you are critical or judgmental or that you think you are better than anyone else?
5. Has anyone reacted positively about the changes in your life? Have they said that you are nicer or kinder or gentler?
6. Have you ever heard someone give their “personal testimony”? What were your reactions to it?
7. Share the three parts of your testimony with your friend, but keep it under five minutes. Then try it again under three minutes. Hard, isn’t it?
8. How do you want to share the plan of salvation? Does one of the three I listed sound appropriate for you? Perhaps your friend has another idea. You probably should memorize the three passages from Romans regardless of which method you want to use.
9. Is there some illustration that you are comfortable using, perhaps the chasm or some other?
10. If you are talking to someone who does not want to become a Christian, what will you do? How can you keep from becoming discouraged or feeling rejected?
11. Ask your friend if they have a story they can share about sharing their faith with someone.

Day Five

Go back to Day Three and review your personal testimony. Now that we have gone over the talk and you have had more time to think about it, write out your testimony and practice it with your friend.

1. Life before becoming a Christian.

2. Why and how you became a believer.

3. The impact that decision has made on your life.

Suggested prayer topic: that God would prompt someone to ask you about why your life is different, and that you would respond naturally in joy and not with fear.

Day Six

Write out and memorize Romans 3:23, 6:23, and 10:9

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)

“The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

Suggested prayer topics: that God would give you the opportunity not only to share the plan of salvation with a friend who asks, but to bring to your mind another friend who perhaps needs to be challenged with the plan of salvation.

What's Next

Congratulations. You've taken the first steps of your Christian walk in the right direction. You will spend the rest of your life building on this foundation. What's next for you?

By now you should have become involved in a good church and have started to develop the spiritual disciplines of regular prayer, Bible reading, meditation, and application. Have you enjoyed journaling? These are the disciplines that you will continue to develop throughout your life.

Now that you have a grasp on the overall picture, you can start to center in on some specifics. Choose something you enjoy. Do you want to know more about Jesus? Read the gospel of Mark. Do you want to know more about how we all got here? Read Genesis. Do you want to learn more about worship? Read the Psalms.

But whatever you do, please continue in the same direction you have started. It's not just how you start, but how you finish the race that matters. May God richly bless you along the way.

