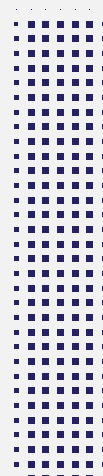




A SIX-WEEK  
DISCIPLESHIP  
MINISTRY  
FOR STUDENTS

# STARTING POINT





# INTRO PAGE

## **WHY STARTING POINT?**

Whether you have recently accepted Christ or you have been walking with Him for a while, we pray this six-week study will give you a foundation and an outline as you begin a discipleship relationship. When you are finished, we also pray that this will be something you can use to disciple someone else.

## **WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?**

Let's define it by looking at one of the most well-known passages in Scripture, the Great Commission, in which Jesus says, <sup>19</sup> *"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, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:19-20).

Here we are commanded to do three things:

- Evangelize ("make disciples")
- Baptize ("baptizing them")
- Teach ("teaching them")

*Discipleship* can be defined as "investing into others by teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded of us in order to multiply ourselves into them." This is what *Starting Point* is designed to do!

## **WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM THIS?**

First, you are going to get out what you put into it. If you invest yourself into this and read/study what you are supposed to each week, you will get much out of it. If you come unprepared and don't spend any time on it, you won't get much out of it.

Second, you will memorize a verse each week. You may be thinking, "I don't know how to memorize six different verses!" In order to help you accomplish this, scan the QR code to the right and you will find helpful apps and methods to aid you in your memorization.



Third, communicate. If you are going to be late or miss a session, text and communicate that. If you need to reschedule, call and let us know. If you have questions about something in this book, ask about it.

Lastly, you will be launched to disciple a younger believer after this. Begin thinking and praying about whom that will be.



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Making Disciples



# **FAITH FORMATION**

# **1**

If you want to break this session into days, use this guide:

Day 1: 6-7                  Day 4: 13-14  
Day 2: 8-9                  Day 5: 15-16  
Day 3: 10-12

Student-led pages: Empower your students to lead by giving them the following pages to lead during this session:

- Page 10
- Pages 11-12
- Pages 13-14

# HERE WE GO

Throughout our mentoring study, we will spend a great deal of time exploring what it means to have faith in God.

The Bible defines faith like this:

“Now faith is *the* certainty of *things* hoped for, a proof of things not seen.” —Hebrews 1:11

Although we may not be able to comprehend all the circumstances in our lives, we can feel certain that our Lord constantly has our well-being in mind.

## **MEMORIZE** *Romans 11:6*

**Write the verse to help memorize it.**

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For the purpose of this study, we will define faith this way:

**FAITH IS CHOOSING TO LIVE AS THOUGH GOD’S WORD IS TRUE, REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCES, EMOTIONS AND CULTURAL TRENDS.**

“And without *faith* it is impossible to please him (God)...”  
—Hebrews 11:6

“...whatever does not proceed from *faith* is sin.”  
—Romans 14:23

“for we walk by *faith*, not by sight.”  
—2 Corinthians 5:7



## CONSIDER THIS

When the Christian learns to live by faith, he or she learns to trust that, even though each day, each circumstance, and each trial may not make sense individually, God has a great, amazing plan in mind – an end product that will accomplish the goal. When you learn to live by faith, you learn to choose what God says in His Word over all else.

**For example, look up Jeremiah 31:3, and answer the question:**  
***“Does God love you?”***

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The process of working toward your end goal becomes much easier when you are all on the same page regarding what the end goal is and how to get there, even if you’re not involved in every step.

The Internet is full of information. Between the opinions of millions of people on social media and the ability to Google almost anything, there is an endless amount of information on any given topic.

There are tons of websites, apps and social media accounts devoted to encourage and help Christians develop a deeper relationship with Christ. While many Christians are familiar with these venues of information and encouragement, it is no secret that the lives of many who engage with these look no different than the lives of those who have no relationship with Christ.

*Want to go deeper?*

**SCAN THIS:**



## TALK IT OUT

With all the help that is available to this generation, why do you think people still struggle with living a successful Christian life? Write your answer below.

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Many begin their Christian walk with great enthusiasm, yet often find that they are struggling to live by faith (which means to choose to live as though the Bible is true). By applying God's Word to our daily lives, we can walk by faith rather than be tossed about by our emotions, circumstances or the perception of those around us.

List some circumstances in your own life with which you are struggling. For example, perhaps you are having problems in your friend group; maybe you're giving in to the popular way rather than the right way; or maybe you're having conflicts with your family members.

Even though most of us recognize the role that faith plays at the moment of conversion, we seem to forget that faith is also essential to living the Christian life. Paul tells us in his letter to the Corinthians that *"we walk by faith, not by sight"* (2 Corinthians 5:7). God also makes this clear in Hebrews: *"but my righteous one shall live by faith"* (Hebrews 10:38). These passages clearly state that faith is critical to living the Christian life, but what does it mean to "walk by faith?"

We discover in Ephesians 2:8 that we enter the Christian life by grace through faith. This means that it is because of God's kindness that we become rightly related to Christ through faith. It is through believing in the promises of God that we become His children. *"Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him"* (Colossians 2:6).

**Ask yourself: *How did you begin your Christian life? How do you live your Christian life?***

You will walk with Jesus as you began your life with Jesus. By grace through faith. We walk with Jesus day-by-day, moment-by-moment by grace through faith. Just as we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior by grace through faith, we also need to learn to live our lives as Christians by grace through faith. This will become clear as you discover the **Faith Formation** in the following pages.

What follows is called the Faith Formation. Romans 10:17 tells us: *“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”* Once we begin to renew our minds with what God says in the Bible, then we can learn to trust the Lord in every area of our lives with all our heart, rather than leaning on our own understanding. The Faith Formation involves three simple yet profound steps that will radically transform the way you live your life. As you apply this process to different areas of your life, you will find that the promises of God are rich and liberating, that the life of faith is indeed a wonderful journey, and that our God, whom we serve, is a faithful Father.

## » TRY IT

### THE FAITH FORMATION: STEP 1: MEMORIZE THE TERM

If faith is genuine, it always affects **HOW** the believer lives his or her life. James writes that, “*So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead*” (James 2:17). In other words, faith is never merely an intellectual experience; it always changes one’s life. The first step is to internalize what is meant by the word *faith*. Living by faith is meaningless unless the believer truly understands what faith means. A good way to begin the process of internalizing and understanding the life lived by faith is to memorize the definition of faith.

Faith is \_\_\_\_\_ to live as though God’s  
\_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ regardless of  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and cultural  
\_\_\_\_\_.

*What does it mean to live as though the Bible is true?*

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Regardless of the **circumstances** you may be facing, regardless of the **emotions** you may be feeling, and regardless of the **cultural** trends that may be influencing your life, you choose to live as though the Bible is true **by faith**.



## THE FAITH FORMATION:

### STEP 2: ASK THE FAITH QUESTION

The next step in the faith process will help you turn to the Bible as the object of your faith and begin living as though it is true, regardless of your circumstances, your emotions or the cultural trends that surround you. In order to live this way, you should begin asking the Faith Question in every situation in your life:

**Knowing that the Bible is true,  
how does it affect your life?**

In Romans 12:2, Paul tells the believers: *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...”* Notice how Paul connects *how a person thinks to how a person lives*. In other words, Paul is encouraging us to reject living life according to the world and its standards. The way you reject living life by the world and its standards is by renewing your mind, or changing the way you think. Continually asking the “faith question” will help you not only to renew your mind, but it will also help you in your effort to reject conformity to this world and its trends. Read Romans 12:2 and answer the questions on the next page.

## TALK IT OUT

Why should we not let the world shape our beliefs?

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What does it mean to renew our mind?

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Now ask yourself: Knowing that Romans 12:2 is true, how do I live it out? Write your answer below.

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Think back to when you experienced a time of intense uncertainty. Look up Isaiah 26:3. Knowing that Isaiah 26:3 is true, how would you live it out in a time of great uncertainty? Write your answer below.

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***Remember our first two steps?***

**STEP 1** was to memorize the term.

**STEP 2** was to ask the faith questions.

***Now on to STEP 3.***

## THE FAITH FORMATION:

### STEP 3: ASK FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT'S HELP

John's letter contains one of Scripture's most wonderful promises. He writes, *"And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him"* (1 John 5:14-15). Since God is more concerned with our obedience than we are, we should have the confidence that He will hear us when we ask Him to help us live according to His Word. The third step is simply to ask the Holy Spirit of God to help you live as though the Bible is true. Just as Jesus reached out His hand and took hold of Peter when his faith was weak (Matthew 14:22-33), He is ready and willing to do the same for you.

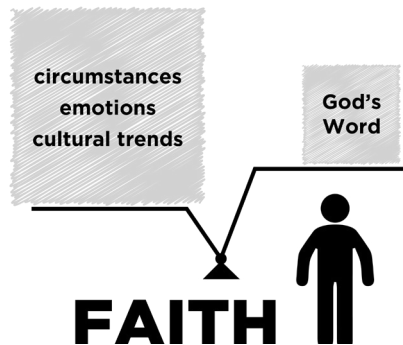
**Circle all the emotions, circumstances, or cultural trends that you tend to struggle with most.**

Divorce	Self-esteem/Self-worth
Drugs	Loss of a loved one
Alcohol	Depression/Anxiety
Possessions	Friendships
Anger	Relationships
Social media	



## FAITH

Everyone has two boxes in their life. The left box is where we keep all of our circumstances, emotions and cultural trends. The right box is where we keep God's Word. Unfortunately, because we live in a world that affects us every moment of every day, we tend to make the left box larger than the right box. See the next illustration.



The act of faith is simply making the right box larger than the left. Faith is the act of giving God's Word priority in our lives and choosing to live as though it is true regardless of our circumstances, emotions or cultural trends. We shouldn't eliminate our circumstances, our emotions or cultural trends since God has given us emotions to enjoy Himself and His creation. He has also placed us in our specific circumstances to affect culture for the kingdom. However, as Christians, God's Word should always hold priority in our lives and weigh heavier on our hearts in order to guide every decision we make.





In this lesson, as we have discussed the faith definition, we have laid a necessary foundation for the other biblical principles that we will discuss in the coming lessons. Throughout this study, you will discover how your relationship with God affects your relationship with others. Then, you will be able to apply these principles in your own life as you learn to make the decision to choose faith in every situation and circumstance of your life. Instead of acting on what your emotions, circumstances or cultural influences tell you, you are going to learn to trust God and to act on the truth of His Word.

### **The Faith Formation and the Temptation of Sin**

*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*

Let us look at some examples of how to work out this process in the reality of life. There may be times in your life when you are tempted to sin. What should you do when you desire to do something that goes against what God has asked us to do?

#### **First, you should recall the faith definition:**

\_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
as though God's \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_  
regardless of \_\_\_\_\_,  
and \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **Second, you should ask the faith question:**

**Knowing that the Bible is true, how does it affect your life?**

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**Third, you should ask God to help you live as though this is true and to take hold of you,** as He did with Peter, when the circumstances of your life are causing you to sink. For example, you could pray something like this:

*“Father, since you have promised me in 1 John 5:11-13 that I can live forever with You in heaven, I am choosing to live as though that is true. Would You help me make the choice to rest in the assurance of Your Word? Please remind me several times a day that I have a promised place in heaven because of Your Word.”*

## **BEFORE YOU FINISH**

The Faith Process starts now. Living by faith is a life-changing process; it is a process of taking the Bible and choosing of your own will to live as though it is true regardless of circumstances, emotions or cultural trends. Faith is vitally dependent upon the Bible; therefore, you should make spending time studying God’s Word a priority in your life, if it is not already. Start memorizing verses of Scripture that will help you in the Faith Process. Most importantly, begin the process today by asking God to show you areas where you are not already living as though the Bible is true. Start the Faith Process now. Do it for the rest of your life.

**Write the faith definition from memory.**

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**What did you learn from this session?**

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**CAN YOU  
TRUST THE  
BIBLE?**

**2**

If you want to break this session into days, use this guide:

Day 1: 18–21      Day 4- 35–38  
Day 2: 22–27      Day 5- 39–42  
Day 3: 28–34

Student-led pages: Empower your students to lead by giving them the following pages to lead during this session:

- Pages 33–34
- Pages 37–39
- Pages 35–36
- Pages 40–42

# HERE WE GO

This session will help you develop a better understanding of the divine origin and authority of the Bible. As you gain a better understanding of the purposes of the Word of God, you will develop a greater appreciation for the Bible and how you can use it in your own life.

## MEMORIZE *2 Timothy 3:16–17*

Write the verse to help memorize it.

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Remember...

**FAITH IS CHOOSING TO LIVE AS THOUGH GOD’S WORD IS TRUE, REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCES, EMOTIONS AND CULTURAL TRENDS.**

***Core Concept:** God has given us the Bible so that we may know who He is and be equipped to do what He says because of who He is.*

Knowing that 2 Timothy 3:16–17 is true, how do you live it out?  
Write your answer below.

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## CONSIDER THIS

Joan and Oliver were typical friends at school. They were close in age and they would be friends at times, and rivals at times. In high school, Oliver started to get up early every morning to read his Bible. His friend, Joan, was confused about why he would lose sleep just to read a book. She, too, had tried to read the Bible at different times throughout her life, but its references to the “Holy Spirit” and “the Lamb of God” made it seem so strange and irrelevant. Even though she liked some of the stories in the Old Testament, she felt it was always better to talk to a live person rather than try to search the Bible’s pages for answers when she really needed guidance and help. Sure, it had some good stories and morals, but she believed that it must have been altered and modified throughout the years. Now that Oliver seemed to enjoy his morning reading times, and he seemed joyful and content, she felt even more confused. *I never felt that way about my Bible. What’s wrong with me?* She began to wonder. Oliver, on the other hand, could not understand why Joan was having such a problem with the fact that he wanted to read God’s Word. Oliver was growing tired of Joan’s skepticism. Plus, he was frustrated that she did not seem to notice how much his daily time of reading the Bible was helping his relationship with her. Oliver wondered: *Can she not see that I am more patient and content than ever? Why is it so hard for my friend to see that I am learning how to be a better person through my daily time reading the Bible?*

How does Oliver feel about Joan’s confusion concerning his Bible reading? How would Joan feel about Oliver’s frustration toward her?

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***Before going further in the session, read “Can We Trust the Bible?”***

# CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE?

It has been called “The Greatest Book Ever Written.” Kings and rulers have sought to destroy it with intense fervor. Men, women and children have been put to death for claiming its teachings. Scholars have devoted their lives to proving or disproving its contents. It claims to be the Word of God and the source of absolute truth. If this book has made such astonishing claims about itself, one must ask, “Is it reliable? Where did it come from? Did the events described in the Bible really take place? Can I trust that it is God’s Word?”

In order to answer these questions, the Bible needs to be examined in terms of its uniqueness, preparation and confirmation through history, archeology and prophecy. These avenues of exploration will demonstrate the reliability of the Bible and why it has earned the respect and allegiance of millions throughout history.

## UNIQUENESS OF THE BIBLE

The study of the reliability of the Bible begins with its uniqueness. Webster defines unique as “different from all others; having no like or equal.” The Bible is different from all other human writings in its continuity, circulation and survival.

### A. ITS CONTINUITY

The first area of uniqueness of the Bible is its continuity. It is an amazingly unified document, despite factors which would lead to great disharmony in ordinary writings. Josh McDowell, noted author and lecturer on the historical evidences of the Christian faith, outlines some of these factors. He explains that the Bible was:

1. Written over a 1,600-year span;
2. Written by more than 40 writers from every walk of life – from king to peasant; philosopher to fisherman;
3. Written in different places – from the wilderness, to a comfortable room, to a dungeon;
4. Written at different times – from war to peace;
5. Written during authors’ different moods – from the height of joy to the depths of despair;
6. Written on three continents – Asia, Africa and Europe;



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7. Written in three languages – Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek;
8. Written concerning hundreds of controversial issues.<sup>1</sup>

Although the Bible contains this much diversity, its authors speak with harmony and focus on one theme: “God’s redemption of man.”<sup>2</sup> F.F. Bruce, Professor of Biblical Criticism at the University of Manchester, England, summarizes the Bible’s continuity:

*“The writings themselves belong to a great variety of literary types. They include history, law, religious poetry, didactic treatises, lyric poetry, parable and allegory, biography, personal correspondence, personal memoirs and diaries. For all that, the Bible is not simply an anthology; there is a unity which binds the whole together. An anthology is compiled by an anthologist, but no anthologist compiled the Bible.”<sup>3</sup>*

## **B. ITS CIRCULATION**

The second area of uniqueness for the Bible is its circulation. It has been read by more people and published in more languages than any other work.<sup>4</sup> At the end of 1993, United Bible Societies reported that 2,062 languages had access to at least one book of the Bible. The Cambridge History of the Bible reports, “No other book has known anything approaching this constant circulation.”<sup>5</sup> Although the widespread circulation of the Bible does not prove it is the Word of God, it does substantiate further the uniqueness of the Bible.

## **C. ITS SURVIVAL**

The survival of the Bible is the third way it is unique from all other books. Composed before the invention of the printing press, it was written on perishable material such as papyrus and parchment. For hundreds of years, it was copied and recopied by hand. Yet, this did not diminish its soundness. It has more manuscript evidence than any other piece of classical literature. John Warwick Montgomery, former Chairman of Church History at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, makes this statement:

*“To be skeptical of the resultant text of the New Testament is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament.”<sup>6</sup>*

The accuracy of the Old Testament manuscripts is the result of the Jewish system of preservation. Bernard Ramm explains this system:

*“Jews preserved it as no other manuscript has ever been preserved. With their massora [methods of counting] they kept tabs on every letter, syllable, word and paragraph. They had special classes of men within their culture whose sole duty was to preserve and transmit these documents with practically perfect fidelity. ... Whoever counted the letters and syllables and words of Plato or Aristotle? Cicero or Seneca?”<sup>7</sup>*

Not only has the Bible weathered the elements, but it also has withstood constant scrutiny and persecution. John W. Lea, author of *The Greatest Book in the World*, cited H.L. Hastings’s explanation:

*“Infidels for eighteen hundred years have been refuting and overthrowing this book, and yet it stands today as solid as a rock. Its circulation increases, and it is more loved and cherished and read today than ever before ... So the hammers of the infidels have been pecking away at this book for ages, but the hammers are worn out, and the anvil still endures. If the book had not been the book of God, men would have destroyed it long ago. Emperors and popes, kings and priests, princes and rulers have all tried their hand at it; they die, and the book still lives.”<sup>8</sup>*

## **TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE**

Not only does the uniqueness of the Bible support its reliability, but the methods of translation of this book also support its dependability. As previously outlined, the Bible was written over centuries by a variety of people. The original writings were composed in Hebrew (most of the Old Testament), Aramaic (parts of Ezra, Daniel and Jeremiah), and Greek (the whole New Testament).<sup>9</sup>

These writings have since been translated into most of the world’s known languages. This causes some to question the accuracy of the Bible. They ask, “If the Bible has been translated so many times, version upon version, how can one possibly trust its reliability?” The answer to this question is found in the translation process. While the Bible has been translated into

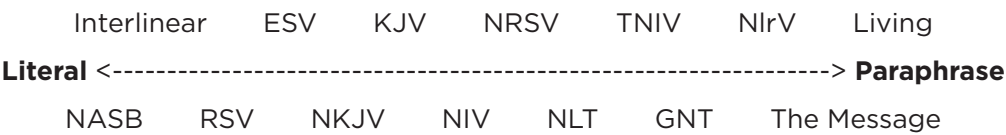


numerous languages, these translations are only one, or at most two, steps removed from the original text.

The Bible was translated into other languages soon after it was written. The Old Testament was translated into Greek during the third century B.C. From A.D. 383-400, Jerome, the secretary to the bishop of Rome, translated the Bible into Latin.<sup>10</sup> In 1382, John Wycliffe translated the Bible from Latin into English so the people could study the Bible in their own tongue. The Renaissance brought a renewed interest in the classics and the desire to study them in their original languages.<sup>11</sup> William Tyndale, who studied Hebrew and Greek, translated the Bible into English directly from ancient Greek texts.<sup>12</sup> Other English translations followed in quick order, but probably the greatest of all English translations was commissioned by King James of England in 1604 and was first published in 1611.<sup>13</sup>

Each of these works was taken carefully from the oldest writings of the Old and New Testament. Since the study of Greek and Hebrew was revived in the 15th century, scholars have been able to work directly from ancient manuscripts. Therefore, the belief is unfounded that today's Bible is based on a series of previous translations. We can be confident the Bible translations we have today are accurate and based directly on ancient manuscripts.

## Bible Translations



A further question arises, “Why are there so many current translations and why do they seem to vary at times?” Wycliffe produced his work because of his desire to present a translation in the common tongue.

Current translations are made with a similar motivation to produce a fresh version in the language of today. A careful comparison of a translation from 1960 with a more current translation would show subtle differences in word choice. Comparing both to the much older King James Version would show even greater differences.

Today's translations also will vary somewhat based on whether the translators made a word for word (NASB, KJV, NKJV, ESV) translation or one based on a thought for thought (NIV, NLT, TM) concept. The meaning remains the same, but word choices will vary.

## CONFIRMATION OF THE BIBLE THROUGH HISTORY

### A. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL TEST

The third means for verifying the reliability of the Bible is its confirmation by historical test. Josh McDowell argues that the Bible should be subjected to the same tests as any other historical document to determine its reliability. These tests are the bibliographical test, the internal evidence test, and the external evidence test.

1. **New Testament bibliographical test.** McDowell describes the bibliographical test as "... an examination of the textual transmission by which documents reach us."<sup>14</sup> This is accomplished by examining the number of manuscripts and the time interval between the original and the existing copy. The manuscript evidence of the New Testament is astounding. Today there are more than 5,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament in Greek and at least 15,000 more in other languages. No other ancient writing has anywhere near this abundance of existing manuscript evidence. Additionally, the interval of time between the composition of the New Testament books and the date of the earliest existing manuscripts is the shortest of any work of antiquity. Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, who was the Director of the British Museum, summarizes the manuscript evidence as follows:

*"The interval then between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant [existing] evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established."*<sup>15</sup>

2. **Old Testament bibliographical test.** This test for the Old Testament is more complicated. Given the age difference

between the New and Old Testaments, the number of surviving manuscripts for the Old Testament is much smaller.

Despite the small number of manuscripts (as compared to the New Testament), the accuracy of the Old Testament documents has been verified through the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. The Scrolls consist of approximately 40,000 inscribed fragments. More than 500 books have been reconstructed from these pieces. The Dead Sea Scrolls provide confirming evidence that Old Testament manuscripts date from before the time of Christ.

Gleason Archer, Chairman of Old Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, reports that the Isaiah copies "... proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text. The 5 percent of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling."<sup>16</sup> Dr. Henry Morris, President of the Institute for Creation Research, concludes,

"There is thus no reasonable doubt that our present Old Testament ... is practically identical with the text in use several centuries before Christ, practically extending back to the time when the last books of the Old Testament were originally written."<sup>17</sup>

## **B. INTERNAL EVIDENCE TEST**

The second test for the historical accuracy of the Bible is the internal evidence test. This test determines whether the written record is credible by analyzing the ability of the writer or the witness to tell the truth. The New Testament relies upon men who were eyewitnesses of the actual events and teachings of Jesus, or men who related eyewitness accounts of these details. Throughout the New Testament, the writers refer to what they had seen and heard. Many of their contemporaries also had witnessed Jesus' life. If they reported the facts incorrectly, these people would have challenged their writings. F.F. Bruce explains, "The disciples could not afford to risk inaccuracies (not to speak of willful manipulation of the facts), which would at once be exposed by those who would be only too glad to do so."<sup>18</sup>

An additional indication of the sincerity of the New Testament writers is their willingness to record incidents that portray themselves in a negative light, such as their flight after Jesus' arrest, their competition for a high place in the Kingdom of God, and Peter's denial of Christ.<sup>19</sup> Given these facts, we can trust the New Testament writers' portrayal of Christ.

### C. EXTERNAL EVIDENCE TEST

The external evidence test is the final one that historians use to verify the reliability of a document. This test seeks other historical material to substantiate the information contained in the document under review. One example of such confirmation is the testimony of a friend of the apostle John (who wrote five books in the New Testament). Irenaeus, who was the Bishop of Lyons in A.D. 180, was a disciple of John and wrote the following:

*"Matthew published his gospel among the Hebrews ... in their own tongue, when Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel in Rome and founding the church there. After their departure ... Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself handed down to us in writing the substance of Peter's preaching. Luke, the follower of Paul, set down in a book the gospel preached by his teacher. Then John ... himself produced his gospel, while he was living at Ephesus in Asia."*<sup>20</sup>

Along with the testimony of contemporaries, archeology also provides powerful external evidence for the reliability of the Bible. (This confirmation will be discussed at length in the following section.) Archeologist Joseph Free reports, "Archeology has confirmed countless passages which have been rejected by critics as unhistorical or contradictory to known facts."<sup>21</sup> Finally, the weight of historical evidence clearly upholds the reliability of the Bible as Dr. Clark Pinnock states:

*"There exists no document from the ancient world witnessed by so excelling a set of textual and historical testimonies and offering so superb an array of historical data on which an intelligent decision may be made. An honest [person] cannot dismiss a source of this kind. Skepticism regarding the historical credentials of Christianity is based upon an irrational (i.e., antiscientific) bias."*<sup>22</sup>

## THE WITNESS OF ARCHEOLOGY TO THE BIBLE

Archeology provides the fourth avenue of exploration of the reliability of the Bible. Archeology not only verifies certain biblical references, but it also provides a background for the message of the Bible.

### A. THE OLD TESTAMENT RECORD

William F. Albright, one of the world's greatest Near East archeologists, states, "There can be no doubt that archeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition."<sup>23</sup>

With more than 25,000 sites already discovered that show connections to the Old Testament period, the amount of archeological support is overwhelming. To demonstrate how archeology has confirmed the Bible, the controversy surrounding Abraham can be cited. Critics in the 19th century felt that Abraham could not have existed as he is described in the Bible. For example, they felt he would be unable to read and would lack knowledge of law and history.

Sir Leonard Woolley's excavations at Ur of the Chaldees show that it was a highly developed city. They discovered clay tablets that served as books and receipts for business transactions. Therefore, "it became clear that Abraham was a product of a highly developed culture. ..."<sup>24</sup> Sir Frederic Kenyon concurs:

*"It is therefore legitimate to say that, in respect of that part of the Old Testament against which the disintegrating criticism of the last half of the nineteenth century was chiefly directed, the evidence of archeology has been to re-establish its authority..."*<sup>25</sup>

Another example of the contribution of archeology is the discovery of the Ebla tablets in 1974. For years, the Genesis 14 account of the victory of Abraham over Chedorlaomer and the Mesopotamian kings has been held to be fictitious and the cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar as mere legend.<sup>26</sup> However, the Ebla tablets refer to all five



of these cities and in one document even lists them in the same sequence as Genesis 14.<sup>27</sup>

Lastly, in August 1993, it was reported that an Israeli archeologist had discovered the first known reference outside the Bible to King David. The inscriptions were found on a broken monument in northern Israel. Hershel Shanks, editor of *Biblical Archaeology Review*, said, "The stele [monument] brings to life the biblical text in a very dramatic way. It also gives us more confidence in the historical reality of the biblical text."<sup>28</sup>

## **B. THE NEW TESTAMENT RECORD**

The New Testament has also been substantiated by the archeologist's spade. The Acts of the Apostles most readily lends itself to archeological investigation because it contains so many references to customs, places and events of that time. Therefore, Luke, the author of Acts, has been subjected to intense scrutiny. For example, in his Gospel, it was believed that he was wrong about the events surrounding Jesus' birth. Critics maintained that there was no census at that time; people did not have to return to their ancestral home; and Quirinius was not governor of Syria.<sup>29</sup>

Archeological discoveries have upheld Luke's account on all three fronts. First, the evidence shows that the Romans held a census every 14 years and that the practice was initiated under Augustus. Second, an inscription in Antioch names Quirinius as governor of Syria in 7 B.C. and A.D. 6. Finally, a papyrus found in Egypt reads this way:

"Because of the approaching census it is necessary that all those residents for any cause away from their homes should at once prepare to return to their governments in order that they may complete the family registration of the enrollment."<sup>30</sup>

*Sir William Ramsay, who has completed the most extensive study, thus far, of the data recorded in Acts, concedes, "Luke is a historian of the first rank ... In short, this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians."*<sup>31</sup>

Other references in the New Testament to certain cities and regions, customs and political situations have also been confirmed

through archeology. In fact, Morris says, “...no statement in the New Testament has to this date been refuted by an unquestioned find of science or history. This in itself is a unique testimony to the amazing accuracy and authenticity of the New Testament records.”<sup>32</sup>

## CONFIRMATION OF THE BIBLE THROUGH PROPHECY

The final area of confirmation of the reliability of the Bible is prophecy. The inclusion of many specific prophecies sets the Bible apart from all other works. The fulfillment of these prophecies points to the reliability of the other information presented in the Old and New Testaments. The number of prophecies is astounding. Therefore, the following analysis is limited to a few messianic prophecies and prophecies related to a specific city. The fulfillment of these prophecies will amply demonstrate the reliability of the Word of God.

### A. PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE MESSIAH

The Old Testament contains more than 300 prophecies of the coming Messiah that were fulfilled in Jesus. For purposes of this discussion, a few of these prophecies have been selected. Their fulfillment is explained in the New Testament excerpts that are included.

It should be remembered that the prophecies were written by a variety of men over several centuries. At least 400 years passed between the last of these prophecies and the appearance of Jesus.<sup>33</sup>

PROPHECY	FULFILLMENT
<p><b>#1 BORN OF A VIRGIN</b></p> <p><i>“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”</i></p> <p>—Isaiah 7:14</p>	<p><i>“... she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit... Joseph...knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.”</i></p> <p>—Matthew 1:18, 24, 25</p>



PROPHECY	FULFILLMENT
<p><b>#2 BORN AT BETHLEHEM</b></p> <p><i>"But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days."</i></p> <p>—Micah 5:2</p>	<p><i>"... Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea ..."</i></p> <p>—Matthew 2:1</p>
<p><b>#3 HANDS AND FEET PIERCED</b></p> <p><i>"... they have pierced my hands and feet."</i></p> <p>—Psalm 22:16</p>	<p><i>"And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified Him ... "</i></p> <p>—Luke 23:33</p>
<p><b>#4 GARMENTS PARTED AND LOTS CAST</b></p> <p><i>"they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."</i></p> <p>—Psalm 22:18</p>	<p><i>"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 ..."</i></p> <p>—John 19:23, 24</p>
<p><b>#5 BONE NOT BROKEN</b></p> <p><i>"He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken."</i></p> <p>—Psalm 34:20</p>	<p><i>"But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs."</i></p> <p>—John 19:33</p> <p><i>(Historical note: The executioners normally broke the criminals' legs to hasten their death.)</i></p>

*(All Scripture quotations in this chart are from the English Standard Version.)*

Given the fulfillment in Jesus' life of these and many other prophecies, it becomes evident that God directed what has been written by the prophets. Josh McDowell makes this conclusion:



*“Certainly God was writing an address in history that only the Messiah could fulfill. Approximately forty major claims to be the Jewish Messiah have been made by men. Only one— Jesus Christ – appealed to fulfilled prophecy to substantiate His claims, and only His credentials back up those claims.”<sup>34</sup>*

## **B. PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE CITY OF TYRE**

In addition to the messianic prophecies, the Bible also contains many prophecies regarding the fate of certain cities and nations. As an example of the astounding accuracy of these biblical prophecies, the following is an analysis of the predictions related to the city of Tyre. This city of ancient Phoenicia is now in southern Lebanon. It was once an enemy of Israel.

In Ezekiel 26 (KJV), written between 592 and 570 B.C., the Lord declares His anger toward Tyre for her extreme arrogance. He predicts her invasion by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and her ultimate destruction. Verses 7, 8 and 14, declare her fate:

*“For thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I will bring upon Tyre from the north Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon... and he will make siege walls against you ...’*

*‘And I will make you a bare rock; you will be a place for the spreading of nets. You will be built no more, for I, the Lord, have spoken,’ declares the Lord God.”*

The fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy is explained by the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. It states, “After a 13-year siege (585-573 B.C.) by Nebuchadnezzar II, Tyre made terms and acknowledged Babylonian suzerainty [sovereignty].” It goes on to say:

*“In his war on the Persians, Alexander III ... marched southward toward Egypt, calling upon the Phoenician cities to open their gates ... The citizens of Tyre refused to do so, and Alexander laid siege to the city. Possessing no fleet, he demolished old Tyre, on the mainland...”<sup>35</sup>*

Philip Myers, a secular historian, summarizes the fate of Tyre:

*“Alexander the Great ... reduced [Tyre] to ruins. She recovered in a measure from this blow, but never regained the place she had*

previously held in the world. The larger part of the site of the once great city is now bare as the top of a rock – a place where the fishermen that still frequent the spot spread their nets to dry.”<sup>36</sup>

The record of history regarding Tyre makes it obvious that each prophetic detail recorded in Ezekiel was fulfilled just as the Bible predicted.

## CONCLUSION

The Bible’s uniqueness, its preparation, and the testimony of history, archeology and prophecy, all work together to confirm beyond reasonable doubt that it is totally reliable. Sir Frederic G. Kenyon makes this conclusion:

*“... it is reassuring at the end to find that the general result of all these discoveries and all this study is to strengthen the proof of the authenticity of the Scripture, and our conviction that we have in our hands, in substantial integrity, the veritable Word of God.”<sup>37</sup>*

*\* The preceding article is taken from the Practical Christian Living curriculum. Used with permission from Mentoring One 2 One.*

## END NOTES

1. Josh McDowell, Evidence That Demands a Verdict, 1972, p. 16.
2. Bill Wilson, ed., The Best of Josh McDowell: A Ready Defense, 1990, p. 28.
3. Wilson, op. cit., p. 28.
4. McDowell, Evidence, p. 18.
5. McDowell, op. cit., p. 19.
6. Wilson, op. cit., p. 30.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p. 3-31.
9. Charles C. Ryrie, Concise Guide to the Bible, 1983, p. 17.
10. Ryrie, op. cit., p. 21.
11. Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, From God to Us: How We Got Our Bible, 1974, p. 230.
12. Geisler and Nix, op. cit., p. 231-232.
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17. Henry Morris, Many Infallible Proofs: Evidences for the Christian Faith, 1974, p. 41.
18. McDowell, More Evidence, p. 52-53.
19. Ibid., p. 54.
20. Wilson, p. 54.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., p. 55.
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24. Paul Little, Know Why You Believe, 1968, p. 52.
25. Wilson, p. 93.
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27. Ibid.
28. John N. Wilford, “Israeli Archeologist Finds First Evidence Outside Bible for King David’s Dynasty,” New York Times News Service: Austin American-Statesman, August 8, 1993, p. A17.
29. Wilson, p. 109.
30. Ibid.
31. Morris, p. 26.
32. Ibid., p. 26-27.
33. Wilson, p. 210-211.
34. Ibid., p. 211.
35. Ibid., p. 61.
36. Ibid.
37. Morris, p. 23.



## TALK IT OUT

Write your answers below each question.

What new information did you learn from reading the article *“Can We Trust the Bible?”* What information was the most surprising to you about the article?

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What questions or concerns did you have regarding the reliability of the Bible prior to reading the article? Which aspects of the uniqueness of the Bible did you find most helpful?

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Refer to page 19 and the story about Joan and Oliver. Now what would you say to Oliver and Joan?

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**Is the Bible the Word of God?**

Jesus and the authors of the Scriptures clearly claim that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. These claims by themselves do not establish the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. However, since the Bible clearly claims divine inspiration, it must either be inspired or be in error. Consider the following:

2 Timothy 3:16 states that all Scripture is inspired by God (NASB), and *inspired*, when translated from the original language means “God-breathed.” This gives us the mental picture of God breathing His life into the writings of the authors. Just as the wind fills the sails of a sailboat and propels it, so the Spirit of God filled and moved the authors to write what they did. Naturally, the words in the Bible reflect the personalities, education and cultures of the people who wrote them, but the result is exactly what God intended.

Take time to fill in the following charts based on 2 Timothy 3:16. If necessary, refer back to the similar chart in the first lesson. Note the perception of your experience in the left box, and the truth of God's Word in the right box:

## What the World Says about the Bible

## What the Bible Says about Itself in 2 Timothy 3:16

[illegible][illegible]

**DO THE OLD TESTAMENT AUTHORS CLAIM  
THEIR WRITINGS ARE THE WORD OF GOD?**

Old Testament writers used many phrases to indicate that they believed they were writing God's words. For example, hundreds of times, Old Testament writers used the phrase, "Thus says the Lord..." Read the following verses and fill in the spaces with words or phrases that indicate that the authors believed they were writing the words of God:

**Exodus 7:17**

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**2 Samuel 23:1-2**

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**DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT CLAIM THE SAME  
DIVINE AUTHORITY AS THE OLD TESTAMENT?**

New Testament writers also claimed that they were writing the words of God. Read 2 Peter 1:16-21. What did Peter believe about Old Testament prophecy? Write your answer below.

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**Read 2 Peter 3:16 below. What does Peter call Paul's writings?**

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*... as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. —2 Peter 3:16*

Just as Peter saw the Old Testament as Scripture, he also talks about Paul's writings in the same light.

### DID JESUS ACKNOWLEDGE THE RELIABILITY AND DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES?

Jesus made extensive use of the Scriptures. Read Matthew 5:18. What did Jesus say in this verse to indicate that the Bible is reliable? Write your answer below.

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Read Matthew 22:23-32. What did Jesus say in verse 31 to indicate that the Bible is God's Word? Write your answer below.

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*Note on Matthew 22:23-32: The Sadducees were a Jewish religious group. They often asked Jesus questions with the intention of tricking Him. Jesus put an end to their hypocritical inquiries by quoting from the Old Testament book of Exodus. During the time of Jesus, the book of Exodus was already several hundred years old. Jesus boldly said that Exodus was not just God's revelation to those who were alive in the days of Moses, but also to those who were alive then.*

### IS THE BIBLE TRUE?

The Bible attests numerous times to its correctness, trustworthiness and flawlessness. For examples of these claims, read the following verses in an ESV Bible and fill in the blanks:

**Psalms 18:30** "The word of the Lord proves \_\_\_\_\_."

**Psalms 19:7** "The law of the Lord is \_\_\_\_\_."

**Psalms 119:160** "The sum of your word is \_\_\_\_\_,  
and every one of your righteous rules endures \_\_\_\_\_."

Given all these facts, you must still come to the place where you have to make a faith decision to accept the Bible as true or untrue, divine or fake, powerful or insignificant. You must choose of your own free will to have the faith to believe that the Bible is God's divine Word to you.

## WHAT ROLE DOES THE BIBLE PLAY IN MY LIFE?

Why did God give us His Word? The Bible plays a variety of roles in our lives. The following list is not comprehensive but addresses some important topics. Read the following verses and fill in each blank with the appropriate word.

God's Word lets us know that we have \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (1 John 5:13).

God's Word is useful for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_ and training us in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(2 Timothy 3:16-17).

God's Word is a \_\_\_\_\_ for our feet and a  
\_\_\_\_\_ for our path (Psalm 119:105).

Which of these three stick out to you the most? Why?

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## YOUR LIFE TODAY

Review 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Notice that the Bible is useful for our teaching, rebuking, correcting and training.

## WHAT PLACE SHOULD GOD'S WORD HAVE IN MY LIFE?

### PRIORITIZE GOD'S WORD

Read Deuteronomy 32:44-47. What did Moses call God's Word?

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Knowing that Deuteronomy 32:44-47 is true, how do you live it out? Write your answer below.

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Read Psalm 119:9-11. Where did David say he kept God's Word? Why?

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Knowing that Psalm 119:9-11 is true, how do you live it out? Write your answer below.

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## TALK IT OUT

What does it mean that God's Word is in your life?

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What things in your life are most important to you?

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How can you give God's Word a more important role in your life?

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**OBEY GOD’S WORD**

Read the following passages and fill in the chart:

Luke 6:46-49

Psalm 1:1-6

What are the results of obeying God’s Word?		
What are the consequences of not obeying God’s Word?		

Obeying God’s Word helps you build a strong spiritual foundation (Luke 6:46-49) and produce spiritual fruit even in times of trial (Psalm 1:1-6). If you do not obey God’s Word, your spiritual foundation will be weak and unsteady (Luke 6:46-49) and you will not be able to produce lasting spiritual fruit (Psalm 1:1-6).

**READ GOD’S WORD**

It is impossible to develop a friendship with someone that you never talk to; in the same way, it is impossible to grow in your relationship with God if you do not spend time reading the Word of God.

**BEFORE YOU FINISH**

## H.E.A.R. METHOD

An easy way to learn how to study God's Word consistently is by using the H.E.A.R. method. The following section explains how to do this.

### HOW DO I DO A H.E.A.R. JOURNAL?

- The H.E.A.R. journaling method promotes reading the Bible with a life-transforming purpose. No longer will your focus be on checking off boxes on your daily reading schedule; your purpose will instead be to read in order to understand and respond to God's Word.
- The acronym H.E.A.R. stands for ***Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond***. Each of these four steps contributes to creating an atmosphere to hear God speak. After settling on a reading plan and establishing a time of studying God's Word, you will be ready to H.E.A.R. from God.
- Notice that all of the words in the H.E.A.R. acronym are action words: Highlight, Explain, Apply, Respond. God does not want us to sit back and wait for Him to drop some truth in our laps. Instead of waiting passively, God desires that we actively pursue Him.
- For an illustration, let's assume that you begin your quiet time in the book of Daniel, and today's reading is the first chapter of the book. Before reading the text, pause to ask sincerely for God to speak to you. It may not seem like a big deal, but it is extremely important to seek God's guidance in order to understand His Word. Every time we open our Bibles, we should pray the simple prayer that David prayed: ***"Open my eyes so that I may contemplate wonderful things from your instruction"*** (Psalm 119:18).

### HIGHLIGHT

- After praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance, open your notebook or journal, and at the top left corner, write the letter "H." This exercise will remind you to read with a purpose. In the course of reading, one or two verses will usually stand out and speak to you. After reading the passage of Scripture, Highlight each verse that speaks to you by copying it under the letter "H."

- o Write the following:
  - Name of the book
  - The passage of Scripture that you read
  - The chapter and verse numbers that spoke to you
  - A title to describe the passage

## **EXPLAIN**

- After you have highlighted the passage, write the letter “E” under the previous entry. At this stage, you will Explain what the text means. By asking some simple questions, with the help of the Holy Spirit you can understand the meaning of a passage or verse. Here are a few questions to get you started:
  - o Why was this written?
  - o To whom was it originally written?
  - o How does it fit with the verses before and after it?
  - o In your own words, describe what this text is about.

## **APPLY**

- After writing a short summary of what you think the text means, write the letter “A” below the letter “E.” Under the “A” write the word “Apply.” This application is the heart of the process. Everything that you have done so far culminates under this heading. As you have done before, answer a series of questions to uncover the significance of these verses to you personally.
  - o How can these verses help me?
  - o What does this mean today?
  - o What would the application of these verses look like in my life?
  - o What is God saying to me through this passage?
- These questions bridge the gap between the ancient world and your world today. They provide a way for God to speak to you through a specific passage or verse. Challenge yourself to write two to five sentences about how this text applies to your life.

## **RESPOND**

- Finally, below the first three entries, write down the letter “R” for Respond. Your response to this passage may take on

different forms. Here are some potential questions for you to consider after reading the passage and applying it to your life:

- o In what ways does this passage call me to action?
  - o How will I be different because of what I have learned?
  - o Write a prayer to God in response to what you have learned today.
- This is a resource from Long Hollow Baptist Church and Pastor Robby Gallaty.

### **Be Accountable for Your Bible Reading Plan**

Discuss your Bible reading plan for the next week with your discipleship partner.

**What are you going to read?**

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**What's your goal on number of days of reading?**

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**What do you hope to get out of it?**

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**Write the faith definition from memory.**

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**What did you learn from this session?**

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**CAN YOU BE  
SECURE IN YOUR  
RELATIONSHIP  
WITH CHRIST?**

**3**

If you want to break this session into days, use this guide:

Day 1: 44-45      Day 4: 50-52  
Day 2: 46-47      Day 5: 53-55  
Day 3: 48-49

Student-led pages: Empower your students to lead by giving them the following pages to lead during this session:

- Pages 50-51
- Pages 52
- Pages 53-55

# HERE WE GO

## Be Accountable for Your Bible Reading

- Be sure to discuss your Bible reading time with your discipleship partner before you begin this session.
- What did you read?
- How did God speak to you?
- How did you apply your reading to your life?

We have talked about how, at the end of our discipleship time, you will begin meeting with a younger student to go through *Starting Point*. Let's begin praying about who that will be. Does anyone come to mind whom you would like to meet with? If so, who is that? If not, let's begin praying that God would give you a name of someone you would like to meet with.

### With whom could you begin to meet?

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In this session, we will learn the key principles of being eternally secure in our relationship with God, which means that we will find out how we can have confidence that our relationship with God is secure and unchangeable regardless of our performance, emotions or experience as His followers.

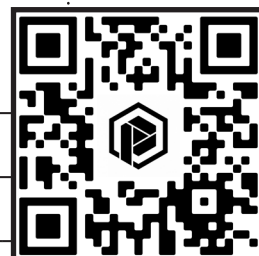
## MEMORIZE *1 John 5:11-12*

Write the verse to help memorize it.

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Fill in the blanks to help memorize it.

<sup>11</sup> And this is the \_\_\_\_\_, that God gave  
us \_\_\_\_\_, and this \_\_\_\_\_  
is in his \_\_\_\_\_. <sup>12</sup> Whoever has the \_\_\_\_\_  
has \_\_\_\_\_ whoever \_\_\_\_\_  
have the Son of God \_\_\_\_\_ have life.

Write the memory verse from last week on the lines below.

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Fill in the blanks for the faith definition.

\_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ as  
though God's \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ regardless  
of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and  
\_\_\_\_\_."

### **CORE CONCEPT**

*Entering into an eternal relationship with God  
is a gift that we received at the moment we  
trusted Jesus to pay the penalty for our sins.  
This gift will last forever.*



## CONSIDER THIS

Caleb attended church as a kid with his grandfather, but he quit going to church when he started high school. He spent most of his free time hanging out with his friends and playing sports. When he was 16, his parents bought him a new car and agreed to pay for his summer baseball league and private lessons if he made the team. Sure enough, he made the team. Life could not have been better.

Halfway through his junior year, however, things began to fall apart. Caleb and his friends started to party more than study, and his grades started to drop. The pressures from school and getting ready for college became more and more noticeable. Eventually he was kicked off the baseball team when he got caught for underage drinking at a party one weekend. This was not how he had envisioned his high school career.

As all this was happening, a friend from school invited him to church one Wednesday night. At church, Caleb heard the Gospel and made the decision to become a follower of Jesus. Initially, he was excited to explore his relationship with God. He attended a weekly Bible study with his friend, and he started to see some positive changes in his personal life, school and even in his relationship with his parents.

Over time, however, the partying started again. As the pressure started building up again, Caleb decided just to try to ignore it by messing around with drugs. During this time, Caleb attended the funeral of his grandfather. Although a solemn occasion, many people celebrated his life as a man who desired to follow God. As friends and family recounted memories of his grandfather, they also expressed their assurance that he was in heaven.

Caleb began to question whether he had a relationship with God in the same way that he had a relationship with his grandfather because he was not confident that his life had changed since his decision to follow Jesus. After all, his actions did not seem to match how he thought a Christian should live. He started to wonder whether Jesus was really in his life, and at times he questioned whether he had ever had a relationship with God in the first place.





## DISCUSS

- Have you ever felt as Caleb felt?
- Knowing this story, can Caleb be confident in his relationship with Jesus?
- Read Romans 7:24–8:2.
- Using this passage, how would you answer Caleb in the midst of his struggle?



## EXPLORE

### IS SECURITY POSSIBLE?

Many Christians have questions about the certainty of their relationship with God. Some may ask, “How can Jesus be in my life when my performance is so dismal?” Others wonder, “How can forgiveness and eternal life be a gift? There has to be more to it than accepting Christ.”

It is not uncommon for followers of Jesus to struggle with these thoughts. When these thoughts come, how should Christians respond? To answer this question, it is helpful to look at the role of your mind and your emotions in your relationship with God.

### THE ROLE OF YOUR MIND

Christianity is not a blind leap of faith. It is a personal relationship with the God of the universe, revealed in space and time through Jesus Christ.

It would be foolish to believe or trust in someone or something if there were no rational basis for that belief. For example, a person may believe with all his heart that he can jump off a tall building and not get hurt. Unfortunately for him, the law of gravity, not his leap of faith, will dictate the outcome of his decision to jump.

We first need to ask if there is any clear reason for following Jesus. Let us look at the claims Jesus made about Himself and see what evidence He provided to support those claims.

Match the Scripture reference with the Scripture below by looking up each one in your Bible.

**John 11:23-26**

*I and the Father are one. The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."*

**John 10:30-33**

*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. <sup>[a]</sup> From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"*

**John 14:6-9**

*Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. <sup>[a]</sup> Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*

Mohammed claimed to be a prophet; Buddha was an agnostic; Confucius was an ethical teacher. Jesus claimed to be God. Since Jesus was the only one to claim confidently His divinity, He is the only one who risked His reputation. If Jesus lied about being God, then He placed everything He stood for in jeopardy. If He claimed to be God, and then was proven to be wrong, His whole ministry would have been destroyed.

**Look up each of the two Scripture passages and fill in the blanks to complete the verses.**

*<sup>23</sup> And when he got into the \_\_\_\_\_, his disciples followed him. <sup>24</sup> And behold, there arose a great \_\_\_\_\_ on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the \_\_\_\_\_; but he was \_\_\_\_\_. <sup>25</sup> And they went and woke him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." <sup>26</sup> And he said to them, "Why are you \_\_\_\_\_, O you of little \_\_\_\_\_?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great \_\_\_\_\_. <sup>27</sup> And the men \_\_\_\_\_, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?" —Matthew 8:23-27*

*<sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ \_\_\_\_\_ for our \_\_\_\_\_ in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was \_\_\_\_\_, that he was \_\_\_\_\_ on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup> Then he appeared to more than five \_\_\_\_\_ brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. —1 Corinthians 15:3-6*

Think back to when you accepted Christ into your life. What does John 5:24 say Jesus did for you the moment you accepted Him as your Savior?

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What is the significance of knowing you have eternal life rather than just wishing that you have eternal life?

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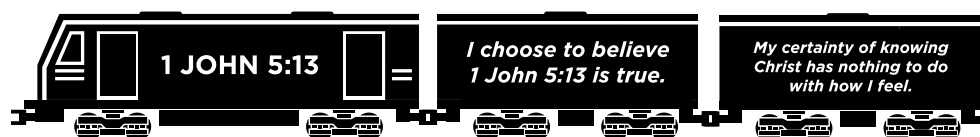
## THE ROLE OF YOUR EMOTIONS

Emotions can be defined as feelings or reactions to events or experiences. Since God created emotions, they are a very important part of your life and your experiences. Because emotions change often, however, they are not a valid basis for determining whether or not you have a relationship with God.

The following illustration shows the relationship between fact (God and His Word), faith (our trust in God and His Word) and feelings (the responses to our experiences).



Use 1 John 5:13 to illustrate this relationship:



Do not depend upon feelings. The promise of God's Word, not our feelings, is our authority. The Christian lives by faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God Himself and His Word. This train diagram illustrates the relationship between fact (God and His Word), faith (our trust in God and His Word), and feeling. The train will run with or without the caboose. However, it would be futile to attempt to pull the train with the caboose. In the same way, as Christians, we do not depend upon feelings or emotions, but we place our faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God (fact) and the promises of His Word.

*Probably no one thing has caused more people to lack the assurance of a vital, personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ than a wrong emphasis on emotions. Seeking an emotional experience contradicts faith – the very thing that pleases God. The Bible says, “And without faith it is impossible to please him (God)...” Hebrews 11:6.*

—Bill Bright

You can be sure of your relationship with God if you have responded to His offer of forgiveness through Jesus. The promise of God's Word, not your feelings, is your authority.

**Finish the following statement:**

**I know that I will go to heaven because**

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**Fill in the blanks to complete the verses.**

<sup>8</sup> For by \_\_\_\_\_ you have been \_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_. And this is not your \_\_\_\_\_ doing; it is the \_\_\_\_\_ of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. —Ephesians 2:8-9

## **TALK IT OUT**

**How certain would you be of your relationship with God if you trusted in your emotions?**

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**How certain would you be of your relationship with God if you trusted in His Word?**

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In a world full of uncertainty and hopelessness, to be able to live a life in which you were certain of your eternal salvation is revolutionary. Those who are able to grasp and hold to the assurance of their salvation are those who are able to live a life of hope and purpose.

**What happens if we do not accept God's gift of forgiveness?**

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**Have you ever felt insecure in your spiritual life? Explain.**

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## CONSIDER THIS

### YOUR SECURITY WITH GOD

From the moment you receive Jesus by faith, you can rest in the certainty that you will spend eternity with God.

**Put Romans 10:9-10 in the correct order below.**

\_\_\_\_\_ and is saved.  
\_\_\_\_\_ because, if you confess with your mouth  
\_\_\_\_\_ For with the heart one believes  
\_\_\_\_\_ that Jesus is Lord  
\_\_\_\_\_ and with the mouth one confesses  
\_\_\_\_\_ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead,  
\_\_\_\_\_ you will be saved.  
\_\_\_\_\_ and is justified,

**Knowing that Romans 10:9-10 is true, how do you live it out?  
Write your answer below.**

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**Look up John 10:27-30. Which of the below verses is correct?**

- A.** <sup>27</sup> My sheep hear my song, and I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my box. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one."
- B.** <sup>27</sup> My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has

given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one."

- C.** <sup>27</sup> My goats hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one."

**Knowing that John 10:27-30 is true, how do you live it out?  
Write your answer below.**

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**Write out Romans 8:38-39.**

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**Knowing that Romans 8:38-39 is true, how do you live it out?  
Write your answer below.**

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**Look up 1 John 5:11-12. Use the verse to fill in the blanks below.**

<sup>11</sup> And this is the \_\_\_\_\_, that \_\_\_\_\_  
gave us \_\_\_\_\_ life, and this \_\_\_\_\_ is in  
his \_\_\_\_\_. <sup>12</sup> Whoever has the \_\_\_\_\_ has  
\_\_\_\_\_; whoever \_\_\_\_\_ have the  
\_\_\_\_\_ of God \_\_\_\_\_ have life."



Knowing that 1 John 5:11-12 is true, how do you live it out?  
Write your answer below.

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Write the faith definition from memory.

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What did you learn from this session?

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**KNOWING  
WHO YOU  
ARE IN  
CHRIST**

**4**

If you want to break this session into days, use this guide:

Day 1: 58-59      Day 4: 65-66  
Day 2: 60-62      Day 5: 67-69  
Day 3: 63-64

Student-led pages: Empower your students to lead by giving them the following pages to lead during this session:

- Pages 60
- Pages 63
- Pages 66-67

# HERE WE GO

## Be Accountable for Your Bible Reading

- Be sure to discuss your Bible reading time with your discipleship partner before you begin this session.
- What did you read?
- How did God speak to you?
- How did you apply your reading to your life?

In this session, you will discover more about your identity as a Christian and how you are to view yourself as a follower of Jesus. Because of the forgiveness that God has provided for you through His Son, you can live securely in the confidence that God eternally loves you. Therefore, you do not need to focus on your own faults and failures.

## MEMORIZE *Galatians 2:20*

Write the verse to help memorize it.

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Fill in the blanks to help memorize it.

<sup>20</sup> I have been \_\_\_\_\_ with Christ. It is no longer \_\_\_\_\_ who \_\_\_\_\_, but \_\_\_\_\_ who lives in \_\_\_\_\_. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, who \_\_\_\_\_ me and gave \_\_\_\_\_ for me.



Write the memory verse from last week on the lines below.

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### FAITH DEFINITION

*Faith is choosing to live as though God's Word is true regardless of circumstances, emotions and cultural trends.*

"And without *faith* it is impossible to please him (God)..."

—Hebrews 11:6

"...whatever does not proceed from *faith* is sin."

—Romans 14:23

"for we walk by *faith*, not by sight."

—2 Corinthians 5:7



## TALK IT OUT

When we become Christians, we gain new identities, and God adopts us as His own children. Since we carry His name, we should strive to reflect His character. Changes are good and necessary in our lives. They affect us where we are today and are sometimes very difficult. There are times when we do not act or feel like children of God. Fortunately, no matter what we do or how we act, once we gain our new identity in Jesus at salvation, we can never act badly enough to lose that identity.

In Galatians 2:20, Paul wrote:

*"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

Paul mentions some important truths in the Scripture. Let us explore these truths and their significance to our daily Christian lives.

## **YOU HAVE TAKEN ON A NEW IDENTITY**

The New Testament Scriptures discuss our new identity in Jesus Christ. Google dictionary defines *identity* as “the characteristics determining who or what a person or thing is.” For the purposes of this study, we will look at these identity truths.

**You have been declared innocent of every charge against you.**

Look back at Galatians 2:20. To be “crucified with Christ,” means that when Christ died on the Cross, you died as well. Of course, you did not die in the flesh; you died to God’s wrath and the power of sin over your life.

**According to 1 Peter 2:24, what has Christ done with your sins?**

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**What is the result?**

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**Using 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Philippians 3:8–9, which of the following things has Christ given to us?**

- ☐ The righteousness of God
- ☐ Forgiveness of sin
- ☐ Entry into heaven
- ☐ Ability to read Scripture

**Knowing that 2 Corinthians 5:21 is true, how do you live it out? Write your answer below.**

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Knowing that Philippians 3:8-9 is true, how do you live it out?  
Write your answer below.

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The following image shows how God cannot look at us without seeing our sins.



The triangle represents the triune image of God.



The eye represents what God sees.



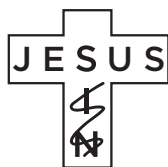
Sin represents your disobedience to God.



The person represents you.



Our sin separates us from God; therefore, when He looks at us, He sees our sin.



Then, when Jesus died on the Cross for our sins, He became the permanent sacrifice. We took on His righteousness. When God looks at us now, He sees us through the lens of the Cross!

## BEFORE THE CROSS

### JESUS

was righteous

was sinless

### WE

are unrighteous

are sinful



## THE RESULT OF JESUS' DEATH ON THE CROSS

### JESUS TOOK ON

our unrighteousness

our sinfulness

### WE TOOK ON

His righteousness

His sinlessness

*"He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son."*

—Colossians 1:13

## CONSIDER THIS

Imagine that you're waiting in your bedroom after being sent there by your parents. You know they are coming with punishment for your disobedience. You did exactly what they asked you not to do. You're just sitting and waiting to hear their footsteps coming up the stairs. You hear them approaching, however, they don't open your door, they open your brother's door. You hear conversation and then some tears. Your parents close the door to his room and then open your door. As they enter your room, a sense of anxiety rushes over you as you know what's coming. Your parents look at you and, to your disbelief, say, "Just so we're clear: You cheated on an exam, but your brother is going to take the punishment for you." Wait, what?! Why would he do that? Why would he take the punishment for something he didn't even do?



Your parents look at you one more time before leaving your room and say, "All right - you're forgiven for what you did. In fact, when you leave your room, it's as if you never cheated on that test."

**Read 1 John 2:1-2. What is your best friend's name?**

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**Write 1 John 2:1-2.**

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**What name is given to Jesus?**

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**What is an advocate?**

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**What does that mean for us?**

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## **TALK IT OUT**

**In your own words, clarify what it means that Jesus is holy.**

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**Do you think of yourself as a holy person like Jesus?  
Why or why not?**

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Read 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Philippians 3:8–9. The Bible definitely says that each Christian has been declared righteous and enjoys a holy standing before God. **Do you believe that for yourself? Why or why not?**

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**What would your life be like if you were to see yourself as a person who is holy before God?**

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**Write a thank-you note to God that includes all that Christ has done for you based upon this lesson.**

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**Sin no longer has power over you.**

**Read Romans 6:11–13 and explain how you are “dead to sin.”**

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Many people would like to believe that being dead to sin means you no longer have a desire to sin. Unfortunately, this is not true. Since you have died to sin, and Christ lives His life through you, you no longer have to give in to sin when you are tempted. You now have the power to choose not to sin.

## **You have hope.**

If you have invited Jesus into your life, you can know that you will spend eternity with Jesus. While you are free from the power and punishment of sin during this lifetime, you will also enjoy the absolute absence of sin in heaven.

Read the following Scriptures and record what they say about your eternal life.

### **What does it mean to have hope?**

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### **What happens when a person is hopeless?**

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## **CONSIDER THIS**

Jacob moved to a new town and, likewise, a new school. He loved his old school, and it had been really hard to move. When he arrived midseason, it was too late for him to join the soccer team. He had played his whole life and loved it. He spent every weekend on the soccer field traveling all over the country. Having this part of his life and identity taken away, he felt way out of place and confused as to what he should do and even who he was.

Jacob was having an issue with his new identity at this new school without soccer. He hadn't really accepted who he was at this new school and didn't really know what to do next.

### **Do new Christians face a similar situation? Why or why not?**

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Your identity is extremely important in your life to help you establish and determine who you are. When you become a Christian, you take on the identity of Jesus Christ instead of something that could be taken away in a moment. You have all the privileges and responsibilities that come with such an identity. Many Christians, like Jacob, do not understand their identity, and they go through life not truly understanding who they really are. If you do not understand and embrace your identity in Jesus Christ, you will have trouble completing all that God has intended for you to experience and accomplish.

**Where do you belong?**

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**What's your new identity?**

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## **TALK IT OUT**

God accepts us only on the basis of the death of Jesus Christ, His Son. It is a natural human response to believe that we should behave in certain ways in order to please Him and thus earn His acceptance and approval. If you believe that you must perform to earn God's acceptance and approval, then you will also believe that you must perform well enough to maintain His acceptance and approval.

**What are some things that replace God's approval in your life?**

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**What are some things that people do in the pursuit of God's acceptance and approval?**

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**Why is it that many Christians believe that if they do not perform adequately then they will not sustain God's approval?**

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Paul discussed the new Christian's position in Christ in Romans 6:1-18. Read this passage and keep in mind the following three principles that can help believers live in the reality of their new identities.

**Reflect on the truths of your identity (Romans 6:3, 6, 8-9).**

- a. Your past sinful behavior does not have to have power over you because you have died with Christ.
- b. You will never be alone again because you are joined with Christ in a new life forever.
- c. You do not have to live your Christian life on your own strength because you have the power of Jesus available to live through you.

**Which of these truths is most encouraging to you?**

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**Which of these truths is the most difficult to believe about yourself?**

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What have you found your identity in recently?

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**By faith, choose to see yourself in the light of your new identity (Romans 6:11).**

With your new identity come the truths that we just discussed. God loves you and will never leave you. Satan, however, still wants to trip you up and convince you that none of that is true. He may bring back memories of your sin from your life before Christ or even lead you to think that you can't be any different, even with a new life in Christ. It is crucial to understand and believe that these thoughts that Satan would lead you to believe are lies and have no basis in God's Word. In order to fight these thoughts, we must train our thoughts, emotions and actions to exist in the light of our new identity in Christ. We do this by studying God's Word and learning more and more about who He is so that we can reflect that same image. We call this "renewing your mind" because we are training our human mind to take on the mind of Christ.

**Why is it sometimes easier to focus on the old you rather than the new you?**

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**Yield to God's leadership (Romans 6:12-13).**

A way to live out this principle is to offer up a daily prayer to the Lord before you begin your day. While it does not have to be exact, such a prayer could resemble the following:

*Lord, thank You for the new identity You have given me because of Your Son. Thank You that when You look at me, You do not see my sin, but You do see Jesus. Help me to live as though that is true. I want to offer my life to You today. I give You my thoughts, my feelings, my attitudes and my actions. Please help me as I strive to yield to Your leadership today. Help me be an example of Your love to others. Amen.*

Set a goal to pray this prayer every day for at least the next week, if not the entire month.

**Write the faith definition from memory.**

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**What did you learn from this session?**

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# **TALKING WITH GOD**

# **5**

If you want to break this session into days, use this guide:

Day 1: 72-74      Day 4: 80-82  
Day 2: 75-77      Day 5: 83-84  
Day 3: 78-79

Student-led pages: Empower your students to lead by giving them the following pages to lead during this session:

- Pages 75-76
- Pages 80-82
- Pages 83-84

## HERE WE GO

### Be Accountable for Your Bible Reading

- Be sure to discuss your Bible reading time with your discipleship partner before you begin this session.
- What did you read?
- How did God speak to you?
- How did you apply your reading to your life?

The purpose of this session is to equip you to develop a more effective and intimate prayer life. While prayer is the way we communicate with God, it is not just the act of asking for what we want or need. Prayer is also listening to God so that we may develop a deeper relationship with Him.

### MEMORIZE *Philippians 4:6-7*

Write the verse to help memorize it.

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Fill in the blanks to help memorize it.

<sup>6</sup> do not be \_\_\_\_\_ about anything, but in \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_ and supplication with \_\_\_\_\_ let your requests be made known to \_\_\_\_\_. <sup>7</sup> And the \_\_\_\_\_ of God, which \_\_\_\_\_ all understanding, will \_\_\_\_\_ your \_\_\_\_\_ and your \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ Jesus.



Write the memory verse from last week on the lines below.

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**FAITH DEFINITION:**

Fill in the blanks from memory: “\_\_\_\_\_ is  
\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ as though \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ regardless  
of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and  
\_\_\_\_\_.”

“And without *faith* it is impossible to please him (God)...”

—Hebrews 11:6

“...whatever does not proceed from *faith* is sin.”

—Romans 14:23

“for we walk by *faith*, not by sight.”

—2 Corinthians 5:7



## CONSIDER THIS

Catherine was living the senior year she had always imagined she would. She was captain of the volleyball team, in the top 10 percent of her graduating class, and had already been accepted to college and been granted multiple academic and athletic scholarships. In the afternoons, she volunteered with younger children who needed help with their homework and helped take care of her younger brother. She was thankful for her loving family and how well they all got along.

Her spiritual life, however, was a different matter. She felt restless in her Christianity because she never felt connected to God. At church, people would talk about their relationship with God, but she did not feel as though she had her own personal relationship with Him. During church, she enjoyed singing worship songs, but she still felt disconnected. She tried spending time with God because she felt as though it was something she needed to do,

but she never knew what she should do once she opened her Bible.

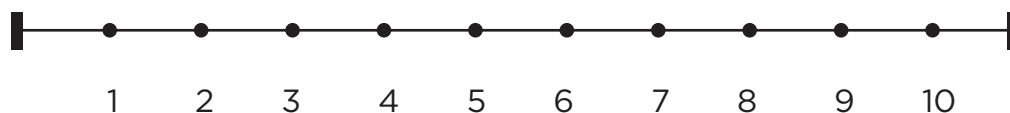
“What does God want from me?” she thought. “Why does a relationship with God have to be so much work?” she asked herself.

One day, while driving home from practice, Catherine was listening to a podcast from one of her favorite Christian speakers about prayer. She learned that the reason she felt disconnected was that she spent very little time in prayer. Rather than taking the time to be still and quiet, her prayer life consisted of quick one-liners like, “God, please get me through this test with a B or better,” or “God, please help me play well in our tournament today.”

Catherine also learned that her time communicating with God was important to every area of her life. She began to set aside a few minutes every morning before school to read her Bible and talk to God about the day ahead. Soon, as her relationship with God became deeper, she found herself getting up even earlier so that she could spend more time with Him.

Before too long, Catherine’s restlessness was gone, and her relationships with her friends and family grew even stronger. She knew this was a discipline she needed to uphold, not just for a short time, but also as a priority from now on.

**On a scale of 1 to 10, how strong is your connection with God?**



**In a different color pen/pencil, mark where you want your connection with God to be.**

**Now take five minutes to pray and ask God to help you work on your connection this week in a very practical way.**

**What impression do you get when you think of the word *father*? Circle all that apply.**

Detached	Accessible	Preoccupied	Adoring
Affectionate	Intolerant	Accepting	Cold
Present	Severe	Strict	Concerned
Gentle	Intentional	Sincere	Loving

**Read the following passages and respond.**

**1 Peter 5:6-7** – Circle the words used to describe God.

*<sup>6</sup>Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, <sup>7</sup>casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*

**Matthew 7:7-11** – Circle the words used to describe God.

Provider	Helper	Absent
Listener	Avoider	Uncaring

**Psalms 149:4** – List any words used to describe God.

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Consider the previous three passages. Below fill in your experience with your earthly father on the left side of the page. After that, fill in who our heavenly Father is on the right side of the page. Feel free to use your previous answers to help.

**Your Experience**

**What God's Word says in  
1 Peter 5:6-7; Matthew 7:7-11  
Psalm 149:4**

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Knowing that 1 Peter 5:6-7, Matthew 7:7-11 and Psalm 149:4 are true, how do you live them out? Write your answer below.

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What do the following verses say about prayer?

Psalm 62:8

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Hebrews 4:14-16

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James 1:5

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**Why is prayer important?**

Too many times, people think of prayer as a last resort. How many times have you heard someone say, “All I can do is pray”? Any energy you devote to prayer will accomplish more than anything else you might try to do to solve any of your problems because prayer is powerful. Other than the power that prayer can bring to your life, there are other reasons why it is important. A few of those reasons are listed below:

- **Prayer glorifies God.**  
Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son (John 14:13).
- **Prayer builds intimacy with God.**  
Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you (James 4:8).
- **God commands us to pray.**  
Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

- **Make prayer a part of your daily experience.**  
Continue in steadfast prayer (Colossians 4:2).
- **Prayer enables us to have an impact on the world.**

*Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*

—James 5:16

**List any other reasons you believe prayer is important.**

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*“To pray is to change. Prayer is the central avenue God uses to transform us. If we are unwilling to change, we will abandon prayer as a noticeable characteristic of our lives. The closer we come to the heartbeat of God, the more we desire to be conformed to Christ. To pray is to change.”*  
—Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*

*“Prayer lays hold of God’s plan and becomes the link between his will and its accomplishment on earth. Amazing things happen, and we are given the privilege of being the channels of the Holy Spirit’s prayer.”* —Elisabeth Elliot, Author and wife of slain missionary Jim Elliot

### **How are we to pray?**

Since prayer is basically conversing with God, we have not been given a set of guidelines to follow, and there are no certain words or phrases that we have to say. It can be helpful, however, to follow a certain pattern in prayer to become familiar with the different aspects of communication. The acrostic **ACTS** is one such pattern. It stands for:

**A**doration      **C**onfession      **T**hanksgiving      **S**upplication

We will explore the **ACTS** acrostic in further detail.

## ADORATION

Adoration is simply praising God. It means honoring and praising our Father and offering Him recognition for all of His marvelous characteristics.

Read Psalm 145:1-9 and circle the characteristics of God that cause you to want to praise Him.

- <sup>1</sup> *I will extol you, my God and King,  
and bless your name forever and ever.*
- <sup>2</sup> *Every day I will bless you  
and praise your name forever and ever.*
- <sup>3</sup> *Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised,  
and his greatness is unsearchable.*
- <sup>4</sup> *One generation shall commend your works to another,  
and shall declare your mighty acts.*
- <sup>5</sup> *On the glorious splendor of your majesty,  
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.*
- <sup>6</sup> *They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds,  
and I will declare your greatness.*
- <sup>7</sup> *They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant  
goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.*
- <sup>8</sup> *The LORD is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*
- <sup>9</sup> *The LORD is good to all,  
and his mercy is over all that he has made.*

**Give an example of a time when you were overwhelmed with the desire to praise God.**

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## CONFESSION

The word *confess* means “to agree with God about our sins.” When you become aware of an action or an attitude that is displeasing to God, you need to confess it. We need to admit our sin to God because our sins are, ultimately, against Him. That way we can maintain sincere and candid conversations with Him.



King David expressed his heart's desire in Psalm 139:23-24:

*Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

King David also cried out for God's forgiveness in Psalm 51. Read all of Psalm 51.

There are times when we will be aware of a sin immediately or soon after we commit it. However, it is also necessary to ask God to search through every crevice of our hearts. If we do so, He will be faithful to show us any sin we may have disregarded that needs to be confessed and of which we need to repent.

A prayer of confession does not have to be elaborate or wordy. Once God has revealed a sin, you merely have to talk to God about it. You might say, "God, I agree with You that when I did \_\_\_\_\_, I sinned against you."

**Spend a few minutes right now asking God to search and cleanse your heart. If He brings anything to mind, confess it and accept His forgiveness and move on. Share any thoughts you have concerning any disregarded sin God revealed to you.**

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### **THANKSGIVING**

**Read the following Scriptures and note what they say about expressing thanks to God.**

**Psalm 92:1**

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## 1 Thessalonians 5:18

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### TALK IT OUT

How can you be “thankful in all things?” What keeps you from feeling thankful?

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A prayer of thanksgiving will include the things in your life for which you are thankful. For example: “God, I thank You for the life You have given me. Thank You for Jesus, and all the changes You are making in my life. I also thank You for my family and friends who love me.”

In an attitude of thanksgiving, write a list of things you are thankful for that God has blessed you with.

1. 

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2. 

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3. 

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4. 

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5. 

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6. 

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7. 

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### SUPPLICATION

Supplication is what happens when you make requests of God, and when you pray for your needs as well as the needs of others. Read the following passages and underline the requests we can make of God:

- **Matthew 6:11** – Give us this day our daily bread,
- **Matthew 6:13** – And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
- **Colossians 4:3** – At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison

A prayer of supplication might look similar to the following:  
*“God, please guide my pastor and church staff as they face the challenges of directing our church. Please guide our country’s leaders to make the decisions that You want them to make. Please help me to overcome the guilt that Satan has been trying to place on me for not being a better Christian.”*

**Following the ACTS method, write a prayer to God for today below.**

**A**doration \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**C**onfession \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**T**hanksgiving \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**S**upplication \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **What hinders our prayer life?**

Satan does not want us to communicate with God, so he will attempt to throw many obstacles in our paths to hinder our prayer lives. Some of these things include the following:

- Doubt (James 1:6-8)
- Unconfessed sin (Psalm 66:18)
- Relational problems (1 Peter 3:7)
- An unhealthy fear of God (Hebrews 4:14-16)
- Past struggles (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- Lack of accountability

**How have any of these hindrances affected your prayer life?**

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**Who can you ask to hold you accountable with your prayer life?**

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### **What is prayer?**

**Prayer is simply having a conversation with God.**

When you enter into a relationship, the only way to keep it healthy and vibrant is to give sufficient time and energy to it. When you became a Christian, you entered into a relationship with God. That relationship needs time, energy and communication, too.

It is still not uncommon for believers to struggle with their prayer life. The list of reasons why Christians struggle in their prayer life can include:

1. Some hold on to unconfessed sin.
2. Some have difficulty putting words to their thoughts, especially to someone they cannot see.
3. Some have been discouraged by previous failed attempts at communication with God.
4. Some do not believe that God cares enough about them to communicate with them.

**Being honest with yourself, what are some ways in which you struggle with your prayer life?**

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Whatever may be hindering our prayer lives, the Bible is clear that God wants to communicate with us through our prayer lives. Let us take a closer look at the characteristics of a healthy prayer life.

### **CHARACTERISTIC 1**

**Your communication with God is like a child communicating with his or her father.**

Psalm 103:13 states that “As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.” Unfortunately, the term “father” sometimes leaves many people with the impression of someone who is harsh, disconnected or unavailable.

The next characteristic of a healthy prayer life is:

### **CHARACTERISTIC 2**

**You can talk to God about anything, at any time and in any place.**

Read the following passage that Paul wrote in Philippians 4:6-7:

*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

No matter what is going on in your life, God wants you to communicate with Him. You can talk to God about the good things as well as the bad things. You can go to Him when you have a pressing need, when you just feel like sharing a thought, or when you feel you need to hear from Him.

What does Hebrews 4:14-16 say a believer should do if he or she is afraid to approach God?

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What hindrances seem to affect your prayer life most?

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## **BEFORE YOU FINISH**

Take a few minutes and discuss the following questions with your mentoring partner:

In what area of prayer do you need to grow?

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Share a time when God answered a prayer that concerned you.

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What are some steps you can take to help make prayer a greater priority in your life?

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# **MAKING DISCIPLES**

# **6**

If you want to break this session into days, use this guide:

Day 1: 86–89      Day 4: 97–98  
Day 2: 90–94      Day 5: 99–100  
Day 3: 95–96

Student-led pages: Empower your students to lead by giving them the following pages to lead during this session:

- Pages 88–89
- Pages 91–94
- Pages 95–97

## HERE WE GO

### Be Accountable for Your Bible Reading

- Be sure to discuss your Bible reading time with your discipleship partner before you begin this session.
- What did you read?
- How did God speak to you?
- How did you apply your reading to your life?

In this session, we will discover the concept of spiritual multiplication. Then, we will discuss the biblical pattern of spiritual multiplication that is found in 2 Timothy. Finally, we will explore the basis of our motivation to multiply spiritually.

### MEMORIZE *2 Timothy 2:2*

Write the verse to help memorize it.

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Fill in the blanks to help memorize it.

<sup>2</sup>and what you have \_\_\_\_\_ from me in the  
\_\_\_\_\_ of many \_\_\_\_\_ entrust  
to \_\_\_\_\_ men, who \_\_\_\_\_ be able to  
\_\_\_\_\_ others also.

Write the memory verse from last week on the lines below.

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## FAITH DEFINITION

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“And without *faith* it is impossible to please him (God)...”

—Hebrews 11:6

“...whatever does not proceed from *faith* is sin.”

—Romans 14:23

“for we walk by *faith*, not by sight.”

—2 Corinthians 5:7

Faith definition:

## CONSIDER THIS

Cooper sat in the pew and listened to the visiting preacher speak on Matthew 28:18–20. He had heard that this passage was part of what is called the Great Commission, but this preacher made it seem so urgent. He compared the Great Commission to a relay race in which members of a team must successfully pass the baton in order to complete the race. “The key to winning the race ...” he said, “... is to pass the baton. If we do not pass the baton to the next generation of Christians, our society will be in trouble.”

Cooper thought the Great Commission was for missionaries and preachers. It had never occurred to him that the Great Commission was meant for him. Now, he saw that he could leave a legacy and impact the next generation.

In fact, when you think of an evangelist, you probably think of a big, grey-haired preacher in a suit. The reality is, when you look in the mirror, you see an evangelist. You are a missionary. You are an evangelist. You can change the world. Here’s how...read Matthew 28:18–20. In this passage, the main verb “make disciples” is a command. The verbs “go,” “baptizing” and “teaching” tell you how to do the command.

This passage means that we make disciples by:

### GOING

“Go” means being intentional about making disciples. We are to be intentional about making disciples as we go about our lives.

**List two or three areas of your life where you can be intentional about making disciples.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### BAPTIZING

“Baptizing” addresses the principle of helping others to be introduced to and identified with Jesus Christ.

**How does baptism identify us with Jesus?**

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**Why is it important for believers to be baptized?**

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### TEACHING

“Teaching” means that we should teach other Christians to obey God’s Word by faith.

Read the below verses and think about how they are similar to Matthew 28:18–20.

**2 Timothy 2:2** – *“and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.”*

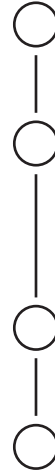
**Acts 1:8** – *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*



## Spiritual Multiplication Defined

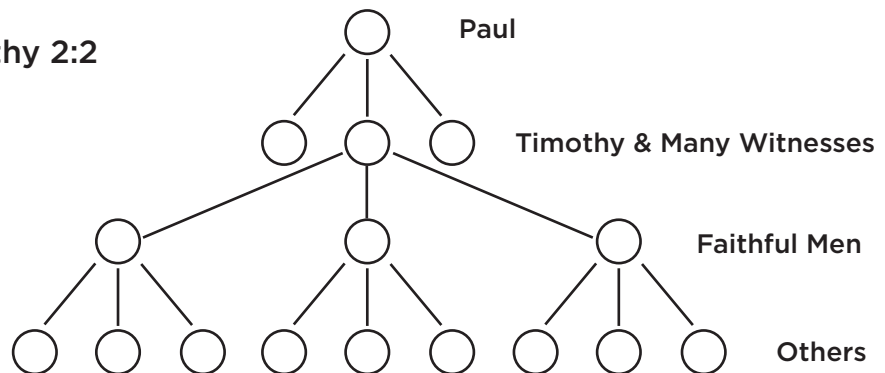
Spiritual multiplication is mentoring that equips a believer to evangelize and mentor others so that they can evangelize and mentor others, and so on, and so on. Spiritual multiplication is different from spiritual addition:

**Spiritual addition:** Leading someone to faith in Jesus Christ or helping a believer spiritually.



**Spiritual multiplication:** Mentoring and preparing someone to mentor and prepare others who will, in turn, mentor and prepare others.

2 Timothy 2:2



Anyone who wants to be involved in spiritual multiplication needs foresight as to how God wants to increase Himself through him or her. This involves fostering relationships, adhering to the truth, staying accountable, modeling godly living and having a desire to minister according to the pattern established in the New Testament.

## » EXPLORE

If you are going to understand what it means to spiritually multiply, you need to look at it from Paul's perspective in 2 Timothy 2:1-10. Read 2 Timothy 2:1-10, and note the necessary principles of spiritual multiplication.

### 1. Understand the motivation of grace.

*"You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:1).*

Someone who is passionate about mentoring does not mentor only because he has been commanded to do so; he does it because this is what he desires to do. He understands that God has done an amazing work in his own life, and he wants to share that with others.

**Why do some Christians not share the Good News of God's grace with others?**

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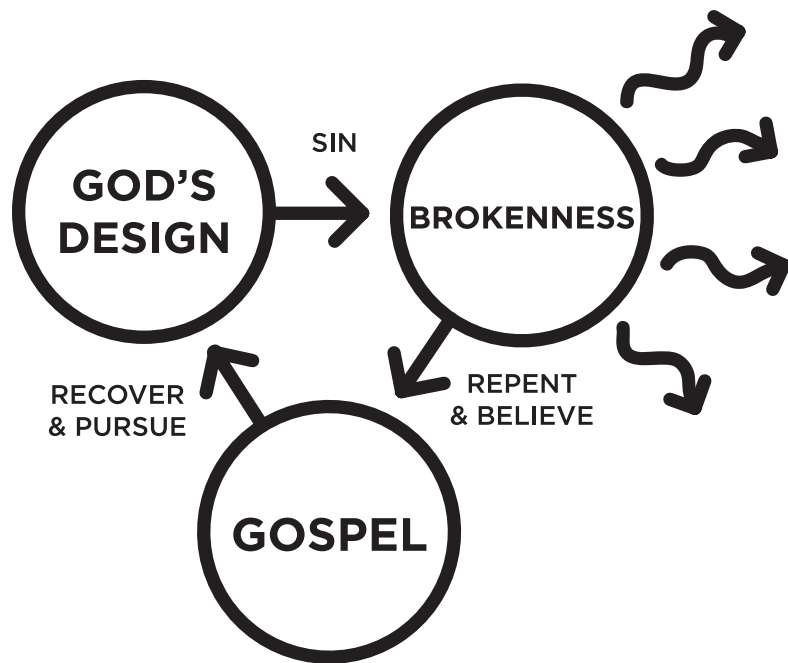
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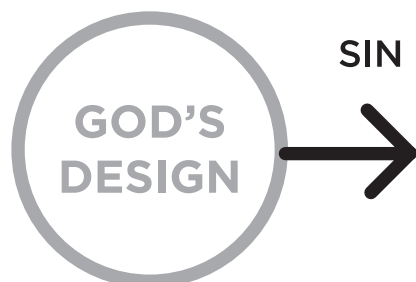
The following image sequence is a presentation of the *3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide from Life on Mission*. The illustrations have been created to be a tool to share the Gospel with other people, and have been designed so that they can be simple enough to draw on the back of a napkin. An illustration of the 3 Circles presentation and a helpful app can be found by scanning this QR code.





### CIRCLE 1: GOD'S DESIGN

From the very beginning, God had a plan for humans. Not only did God have a plan for humanity at large, He had and has a plan for every human individually. God has a design for the way we should treat our families, work our jobs, and interact with friends and strangers; the plan is perfect. The Creator who knit together every being desires nothing more than for His plans to be implemented in every life.



The challenge is that there is something within people that pushes us to depart from God's design, to go in our own direction. The Bible has labeled that departure from God's design "sin."

Sin leads to a world of consequences. When we sin, we find ourselves in a place of "brokenness."

## **CIRCLE 2: BROKENNESS**

The feeling of brokenness is the result of our poor choices or even the choices of others that negatively affect us. This state exemplifies itself in ruined relationships, addictions, unease, fear and a mountain of other negative circumstances and states of being. Our brokenness, the feeling of emptiness and desperation, leads us to look in many different directions for healing.



We turn to religion, success, beauty, substances, anger and many other seemingly filling solutions to fix the brokenness in our lives. The challenge is that none of the solutions we carve out for ourselves will work; the brokenness remains.

Although brokenness is bleak, God uses it for good. God uses brokenness to help people understand that there is a problem that needs a solution. When someone surveys his life and recognizes the destruction around him and acknowledges that his solutions have failed, he often becomes open to the idea of a different path. He becomes open to a genuine change. The Bible's word for change is "repent."

We want to change and repent but we realize that we can't do much on our own (as evidenced by our own solutions to our brokenness). The good news is that God has a plan to fix the problem of brokenness; it's called the "Gospel."

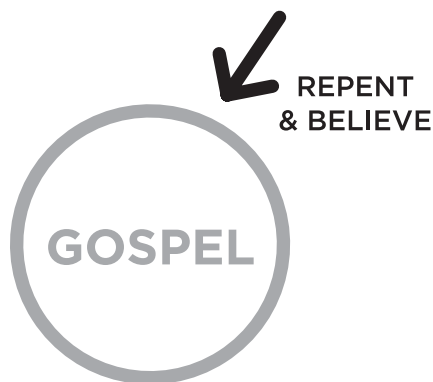
## **CIRCLE 3: GOSPEL**

The Gospel is the story of what Jesus did for us. Jesus, who is God in flesh, came and lived a perfect life. He never departed from God's design; He lived a life completely without sin. He taught people about God's love for them and His design



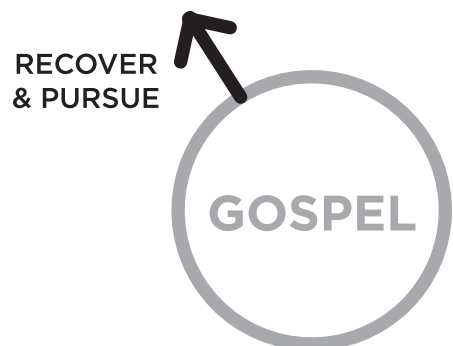
for their lives. He healed the sick, spent time with the poor, and sought the outcasts. When He was around 33 years old, people that He loved nailed Him to a cross and murdered Him. While Jesus was on the Cross, God did something incredible.

He took the sins of the world and placed them on Jesus. So in His death, Jesus paid the penalty for all of our sin. After He had accomplished His mission on the Cross (bearing the consequences of the world's sins), Jesus died and was buried in a tomb. Three days later, Jesus rose from the dead. In His conquering of death, Jesus proved that He was who He said He was, the Son of God. Jesus proved that He could do what He said He could do, forgive sin. And this is the Good News.



The death and Resurrection of Jesus opens up the path by which we might return to the design of God. God's provision means that we can do no good of our own to fix brokenness, nor can we lose that provision by making mistakes. The path to restoration and redemption is this: Repent and believe.

When we make the step of turning from our sins (repentance) and turning toward Jesus (belief), God restores us. He does a work in our hearts that helps us to recover and pursue God's design. No matter what our brokenness looks like or how deep we are in it, God restores us to a right relationship with Him through Jesus.



When we come to faith in Jesus and are restored to His original design for us, we begin to experience the good things that God intends for us to have: purpose, forgiveness, community, hope, joy. As we experience these blessings from God, He sends us back into the brokenness of the world to help others discover the Good News that we have found.

STAGE	SUPPORTING VERSES
<b>GOD'S DESIGN</b>	Genesis 1:31; Psalm 19:1
<b>SIN</b>	Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23a
<b>BROKENNESS</b>	Romans 1:25; Proverbs 14:12
<b>GOSPEL</b>	John 3:16; Colossians 2:14
<b>REPENT &amp; BELIEVE</b>	Mark 1:15; Ephesians 2:8–9; Romans 10:9
<b>RECOVER &amp; PURSUE</b>	Philippians 2:13; Ephesians 2:10

Many people understand what their culture expects of them (what they should or should not do), and they try to live by those expectations. They give money, volunteer or go to church because they feel they are expected to do so. Even though God wants us to do these things, He wants us to do them out of the overflow of our hearts.

Once people are discipled, and they understand grace, they are free to give money, volunteer and go to church because they are grateful to God. They are also excited about all He has done for them, and they are overwhelmed with gratitude.

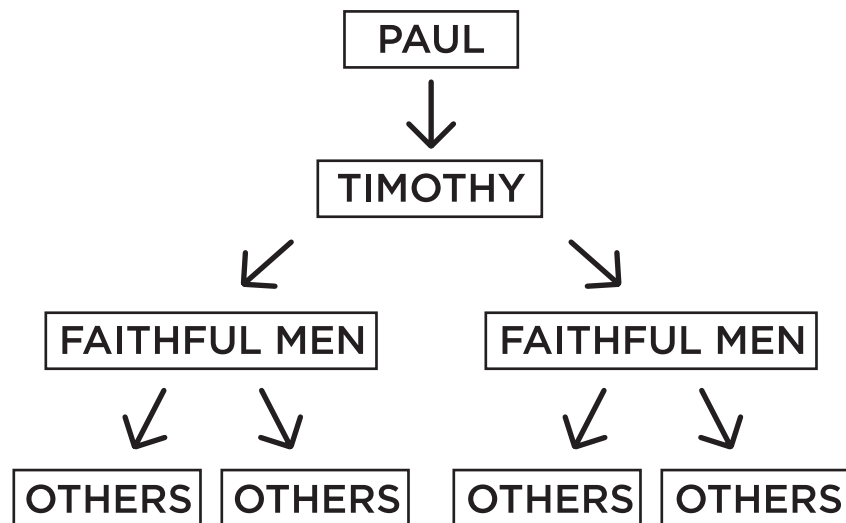
For a greater understanding of this gratitude, go back and review the 3 Circles illustration. Practice presenting the 3 Circles below:



## 2. Commit to a life of multiplication.

*“... and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2).*

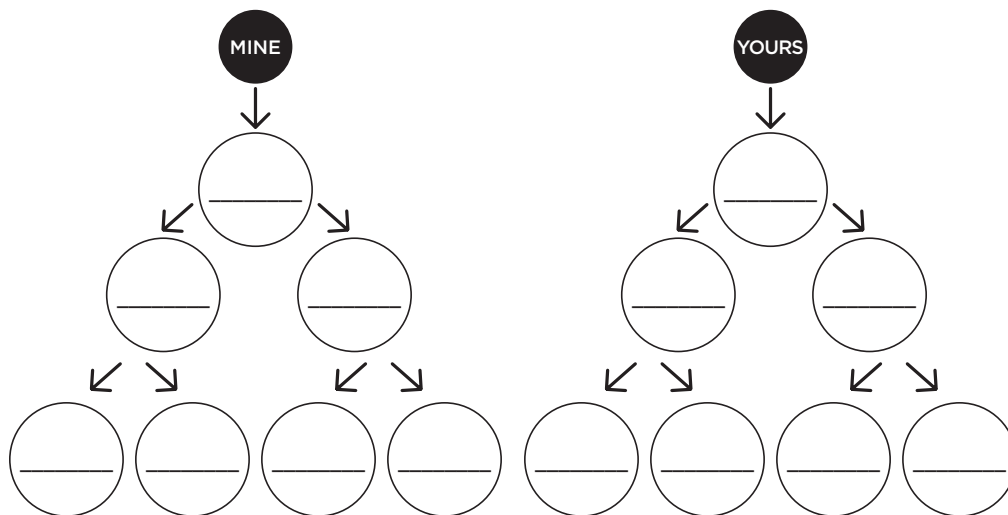
If you want to multiply spiritually, you must commit your life to investing in the lives of others and encouraging them to do the same. The chart below illustrates Paul’s ministry of spiritual multiplication. Paul only needed to mentor Timothy. Then Timothy needed to develop disciples who would develop disciples. This chart also illustrates why the selection of those to be discipled is so critical. If someone decides not to share what he or she has learned with others by developing his/her own mentoring relationships, spiritual multiplication will stall.



Think about the influence you could have many spiritual generations into the future. Begin now to pray for the person you will mentor and for the people he or she will mentor, and so on.

In fact, let’s begin to do this by prayerfully considering whom you will disciple. Take a moment to pray and ask God to give you names of friends, teammates, family members, etc.

Now, let's continue by putting pen to paper and writing it down. In the chart below, fill in the blanks with names of those that you would love to disciple once you are ready.



### 3. Look for the potential in others.

There are certain characteristics you should look for in someone you will ask to disciple. In fact, there are three main characteristics you should look for in the life of a person who is ready to be disciplined. These characteristics are:

- **Availability**  
Someone who is available will desire to be disciplined and make it a priority above other things. He knows he needs to mature spiritually and is excited to start the process.
- **Teachability**  
Someone who is teachable will desire to be disciplined and will be open to learning and applying what she learns. She knows she needs to be corrected and is wanting to change to become a better Christ follower.
- **Faithful**  
Someone who is faithful will desire to be disciplined and will be hard-working and committed. She knows she needs to be where she's supposed to be and be there on time. She will come prepared having done what you have asked her to do. She will have spent the necessary time to do it well.

#### 4. Be a model for change.

It is important to keep in mind that no one is perfect. As you begin mentoring others, you will likely encounter people whose lives are in need of certain changes. If you want to help someone change his or her life, then you have to be committed to be a model for change. In order to show someone how to allow God to change them, you must allow God to change you.

#### 5. Commit to live a disciplined life.

*Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything (2 Timothy 2:3-7).*

Paul uses three professions, the soldier, the athlete and the farmer, to illustrate the perspective and commitment that is needed to multiply spiritually. Note the principles that Paul teaches from these three professions.



### TALK IT OUT

#### **THE SOLDIER** (vv. 3-4)

- A good soldier is single-minded in purpose. He is willing to say no to good things in order to please his ranking officials.
- A good soldier is willing to suffer hardship.

**List some of the things you may consider to be “good things” to which you might have to say no in order to participate in spiritual multiplication.**

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### ***THE ATHLETE*** (v. 5)

- The victorious athlete is disciplined. He knows that hours of rigorous training and discipline lie behind every victory.
- The victorious athlete knows and follows the rules of competition.

**In what ways does one who wishes to participate in mentoring need to be disciplined?**

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### ***THE FARMER*** (v. 6)

- The successful farmer is unafraid of the hard work and patience needed to produce a harvest.
- The farmer enjoys a fruitful harvest. His patience and hard work are rewarded when the harvest is brought in.

**Describe how discipleship relationships require hard work and patience.**

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You must spend time studying the Bible and meeting with your discipleship partner. This will establish a great model for your mentoring partners, which will likely carry over into their subsequent mentoring relationships as well.

# **YOUR LIFE TODAY**

Applying the Faith Principle to Spiritual Multiplication

## **REVIEW**

Write out the faith definition below from memory.

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## **ASK**

Knowing that 2 Timothy 2:3-6 is true, how do you live it out?  
Write your answer below.

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## **PRAY**

Through the ACTS prayer model, take a moment to ask God to make these biblical truths a greater reality in your attitudes and actions. Share your thoughts below.

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# BEFORE YOU FINISH

## Your Ministry of Spiritual Multiplication

Take time to reflect on your ministry of multiplication. Answer the following questions:

**1. Are you able:**

- To be committed to spiritual multiplication?
- To be a model for change?
- To look for the potential in others?
- To be committed to live a disciplined life?
- To rely on the Holy Spirit to accomplish all of the above?

**2. What can get in the way of your ministry of spiritual multiplication?**

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**3. List some of the people you believe are ready to participate in spiritual multiplication:**

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Continue to pray that God would give you the opportunity to ask to disciple or begin discipling someone you listed out in this section. Be specific in your ask and watch God answer.

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# RESOURCES

After reading this guide, you may have further questions. That's not unusual! Salvation is just the beginning; most Christians spend the rest of their lives growing in their relationship with Christ. Below are some wonderful resources that will help you navigate this journey as a Christ-follower.

## **PRESTONWOODSTUDENTS.ORG**

The Prestonwood Students website is a great resource when it comes to your walk with the Lord, the church, and other believers. With resources from salvation to baptism to devotionals, it's a one-stop shop for many of your questions and needs.

## **PRESTONWOOD STUDENTS DEVOTIONALS**

Need somewhere to begin your daily walk with Jesus? Take out your phone and text DEVO to 74788. When you do this, we will send a short devotional to your phone every morning Monday through Friday. This is just the beginning but we pray it's a launching point for you each day.

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