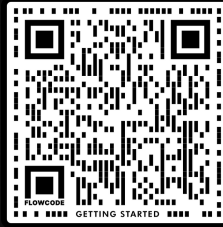




# GETTING STARTED

GROWING AS A FOLLOWER OF JESUS

Dr. Eric Smith & Seth Jones



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with a video  
lesson.**

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# Contents

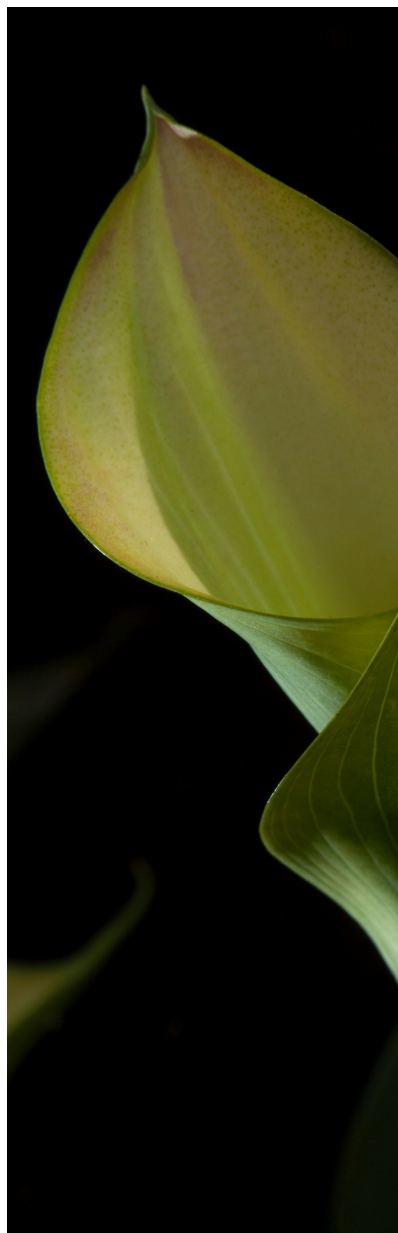
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Session 1: Salvation</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Session 2: God's Security</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Session 3: Baptism</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Session 4: The Bible</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Session 5: God's Love For Us</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Session 6: Who Is God The Father?</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Session 7: Who Is Jesus The Son?</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Session 8: Who Is The Holy Spirit?</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Session 9: The Grace of God</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Session 10: The Church In Your Life</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Session 11: Our Eternal Hope</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Session 12: Living A Life of Worship</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Session 13: Learning To Study The Bible</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Session 14: Building Your Prayer Life</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Session 15: Sharing The Good News</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Session 16: Living As A Servant</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Session 17: Eternity</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Session 18: Spiritual Warfare</b>	<b>37</b>

Welcome to this exciting new adventure of discovering more about your new relationship with Jesus. Dedicating your life to Jesus is the most exciting decision you can make, but it can also seem overwhelming on how to get started.

I can remember when I first began my journey with God, I didn't know where to start, what to read, how to pray, and the list goes on.

Thankfully, God put people into my life to come alongside me and help me get started. So, I want to do the same thing for you. I want to come alongside you and give you some of the essentials of the Christian faith, so you can be grounded and grow in this amazing new journey.

Maybe you recently accepted Jesus Christ and you are starving to grow and learn more about God. For others, maybe you trusted in Jesus Christ for your salvation in the past, but you never took the next steps necessary for growth, and now you are ready to take the key steps for growth in your relationship with the Lord. Either way, I am excited about your decision to deepen your relationship with the Lord and honored to help you discover key principles that will help you on this fulfilling journey.



The Christian journey is incredibly exciting as you discover more about who God is and who He has called and created you to be. This study will be an eighteen-part series as we lay the groundwork for some of the key things you need to know about God. You will also learn about the new identity that you have received in Jesus and what it means to live a life of faith and obedience. The studies we will do together will be an essential foundation for you in this new journey. The key teachings in this study are not topics that you learn and then move away from to something else. These studies are going to be foundational elements that will be critical for the rest of your life. You will continually come back to these truths as you grow in your faith in Jesus.

I want to give you a strong challenge to not give up. Often when we begin to learn new things it can feel overwhelming. The same is true in our relationship with the Lord. There are ups and downs in our spiritual journey. Some days we have struggles that make us feel like giving up and putting down our Bible. Giving up is NOT God's plan for you. Don't give up, keep going. If you find yourself overwhelmed with not understanding something or wanting to know more faster than you are learning, remain patient and take one step forward a day. Over time you will see incredible growth in your relationship if you just remain faithful, patient, and committed. Let's get started!

SESSION

01

# Salvation: New Life In Jesus

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ.”*

## **2 Corinthians 5:17-18a**

We learn in Romans 3:23, that all of us have sinned and fallen short of the standard God requires to be in right stand with Him. This sin problem that we all have creates a big challenge for all of us; it is a problem that we cannot fix by ourselves. We need a solution to our problem! The good news of God’s love for us is that from the time sin entered the world, God’s plan to redeem and restore began, which ultimately led to Jesus.

Romans 5:8, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Jesus, being fully God, came to us to give us access to have our sins forgiven, He humbled himself, became human, lived a sinless life, died a sacrificial death, and was raised from the dead. In Ephesians 2:4-5 Paul wrote, “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.” In spite of our sins and failures, there is hope.

According to Romans 10:9, “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Instead of receiving the judgment we deserve for our sins, we can be forgiven and restored to a right relationship with the God who created and loves us. We have a place to belong in God’s family, our lives on earth have real purpose, and we have a hope of eternal life. Our salvation is also what the Bible refers to as being “born again”. This supernatural salvation that you receive from God through Jesus, is a new birth into God’s family by the work of the Holy Spirit of God. You will learn more about this in an upcoming session.

**Reading:** Read these same verses each day this week and see what God can teach you.

**Romans 6:23**  
**John 3:16**

**Acts 16:31**  
**Romans 8:31-39**

**Questions:**

1. What are some things that God’s plan of salvation reveals to us about God’s character?
2. How does the fact that we have been saved by God’s grace shape our identity?
3. How should the gift of salvation change our everyday lives? What are some action steps you can take this week to live in this reality?

# God's Security

*“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake, we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* **Romans 8:35-39**

In session one, we celebrated this new life that you have in Jesus Christ. The Bible calls it “salvation” or being “born again”. This supernatural work of God is the most amazing gift a person can ever receive or experience. Christians believe it is a gift from God, it is not something you can earn. Ephesians 2:8-9 says “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.” This salvation given by God through His grace was never earned but given to a person because they placed their faith in Jesus. Our human nature is to think in religious terms, not grace terms. This religious thinking can cause us to believe that our salvation can be obtained through our efforts, so if you can earn it, then you can lose it. The reality is that you never earned it, but God gifted it to you.



This gift of salvation is so powerfully described in the Bible as becoming a member of the family of God. He adopts us and we become co-heirs with Jesus. This description of relationship and family is not one that is religious and transactional, but instead of grace, family, and love. The thing that makes us right with God is the sacrificial work of Jesus being transferred to us and through that transfer (Imputed Righteousness) we become blameless before God. The blamelessness that we received was because of Jesus and never because of us. We are also given the Holy Spirit of God and we are marked with a seal as described in Ephesians 1:13-14.

**Reading:** Read these same verses each day this week and see what God can teach you.

**Ephesians 1:13-14**

**John 1:12-13**

**Romans 8:14-17**

**Galatians 3:26**

**Galatians 4:3-7**

**Questions:**

- Do you ever doubt the security of your salvation? If yes, then why?
- How can you remind yourself daily of God's grace to you and adopting you into His family?
- How should the security of your salvation change your obedience toward God?

# Baptism

*Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

**Matthew 28:18-20**

Baptism is a beautiful gift that God gave His people to publicly declare the eternal spiritual cleansing that God has provided through His Son. Jesus commands His followers to be baptized and to baptize those whom they reach with the Good News. This public declaration of an internal spiritual transformation declares to the world what has taken place in the life of the person being baptized. They have now identified with Jesus in His death and resurrection through their water baptism.

New Testament Baptism is the process by which a person makes a public profession of faith and discipleship. In the waters of baptism, a person says, through their actions, not words, “I confess faith in Christ; Jesus has cleansed my soul from sin, and I now have a new life in Jesus Christ.”

Baptism is an act of obedience to the Lord after salvation; although baptism is closely associated with salvation, it is not a requirement to be saved.

A new Jesus follower should desire to be baptized as soon as possible. This is a matter of obedience to God and the starting point of telling others your testimony.

The practice of baptism in the Bible only took place after someone personally trusted in Jesus Christ. Of course, the practice of baptism is practiced by some Christian groups before someone makes a personal decision to trust in Jesus for salvation. This IS NOT found in the Bible. This has become a very common practice in some Christian circles, but it is not a practice found in the Word of God. The only practice of baptism found in the Bible is after a person's salvation. If you have not been baptized since you personally trusted in Jesus, you should follow the command of Jesus and be baptized. You will never regret being obedient to God's word.

**Reading:** Read these same verses each day this week and see what God can teach you.

**Romans 6:4**

**Acts 2:38-41**

**Colossians 2:12**

**Ephesians 4:4-6**

**Questions:**

1. Have you been baptized since you believed? If not, take the next step and be obedient.
2. Why do you think God gave us the practice of baptism?  
When you see someone baptized how does it impact you?
3. Why did Jesus command His followers to be baptized after faith in Him?

## SESSION

## 04

# The Bible: *The Gift of God's Word*

*“For the Word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” **Hebrews 4:12***

The Bible is a priceless gift. In a world that is constantly changing, God and His Word remain. It is not only true, it is the ultimate source of truth. Isaiah 40:8, “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.” It is one unified work that ultimately leads to Jesus, who is “The Way, the Truth, and the Life.” (John 14:6) Let's be honest, learning to read scripture well is not easy, but it is worth it. Here are a few things to consider while reading scripture. The first objective when reading scripture is to know God. Too often readers are looking for answers to questions, motivational quotes, instructions, or other similar things first. All of these things are important, but they are not the most important. Our greatest need and deepest longing, whether we realize it or not, is to know God. The more we get to know God and learn his character, the more we will be transformed.

When you read your Bible, first ask yourself “What does the scripture I am reading reveal about God’s character and nature?’ Second, it’s important to approach God’s Word as a humble learner. Isaiah 55:9 states, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” We are reading the inspired Word of One who is far greater than us in every possible way. Third, it is important to read and apply scripture in context. This involves considering scripture as a whole, considering what the Bible verses meant at the particular time and place it was written, and then how those principles apply to our lives today. The more we read and study scripture, the more we learn to understand and apply it better.

**Reading:** Read these same verses each day this week and see what God can teach you.

**2 Timothy 3:16-17**

**Psalms 119:105**

**Proverbs 3:5-6**

**Luke 11:28**

**Matthew 7:24**

**Questions:**

1. How does learning that the Bible is “alive and active” change your perspective of how it can change your life?
2. What time during the day will you dedicate to reading the Bible?
3. We are called to read God’s Word, but also to be doers of the Word of God. Make a list of three ways God is showing you to be a doer of His Word.

## SESSION

## 05

# God's Love For Us

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” **John 3:16***

In the first few pages of the Bible, we learn that God created humanity in his image, or as the Psalmist put it in Psalm 139:14, *“fearfully and wonderfully made.”* Being an image bearer of God means that we have intrinsic worth, dignity, and purpose. The challenge that we all face is when we face difficulties and challenging times, we can feel like God doesn't love us. We have probably all questioned God's love during seasons in the valley of life. We have probably thought to ourselves in times of failure in our lives *“There is no way God could love me now”*. The amazing news is that God's love is greater than human failure. Romans 5:8 says, *“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

It was through His unexplainable love for us, that Jesus came into the world, lived a perfect life, and laid his life down taking upon himself the consequences of sin. Through his sacrificial death, he conquered sin and death. Embracing God's matchless love for us changes us. It empowers us to live a life that reflects his goodness, character, and love in the world.

In doing so, we are living out our purpose as his image bearers in the world. This begins with knowing and resting in God's love for us, or as Jesus put it in John 15:9, "*Abide in my love.*"

**Reading:** Read these same verses each day this week and see what God can teach you.

**1 John 3:16**

**Romans 5:8**

**Genesis 1:26-27**

**John 15:9-11**

**1 John 4:7-21**

**Questions:**

1. What do these texts reveal to you about God's love for you?
2. How should the fact that you are fully known and loved by God impact your identity and mindset?
3. What action steps can you take this week to live in this reality?

## SESSION

## 06

# Who Is God The Father?

*“If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God’s child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. For everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new and better than the Old, everything that is distinctively Christian, is summed up in the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God the Father.” - J.I. Packer*

Scripture reveals that God is one, but exists in three persons. According to the Athanasian Creed, *“The divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal.”* Same essence, complete unity, but three persons. The next three sessions explore the nature of God’s essence as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

One of the most powerful images in all of scripture is God as a perfect, loving Father. In fact, family language is used throughout scripture. As a Father, God loves perfectly and unconditionally. In Galatians 4:5, Paul describes putting our faith in God as adoption into His family. God loves us where we are, but loves us too much to leave us where we are. As any good human father, God calls us higher. He sees beyond what we are and calls us to what we could be.



According to Hebrews 12:6, *“The Lord disciplines the one he loves.” Sometimes that involves challenges, or even hardship. James 1:2-4, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”* God loves, corrects, and challenges us to be what he designed us to be for a purpose that is far greater than ourselves.

The “Gospel” also known as the “Good News” is that our Heavenly Father sent Jesus the Son to come and live a sinless life that we could not live, die the death we deserve for our sins, and overcome the grave so we could have forgiveness and eternal life. This is who our Great God is and how He loves us.

**Reading:** Read these same verses each day this week and see what God can teach you.

**1 Timothy 2:5**

**Matthew 6:26**

**Ephesians 2:17-18**

**John 1:1-5, 9-14**

**Psalms 103:13**

**Questions:**

1. What do these texts reveal to us about God’s nature?
2. How does the fact that you are a beloved son or daughter of God form your identity?
3. How does the fact that God is our Father affect how you live? What are some specific action steps you can take this week?

# Who Is Jesus The Son?

*“The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”* **Colossians 1:15-20**

Throughout the Old Testament, through different stories, events, characters, and poems, God’s character is being unveiled. Then, in Christ, it all comes together. As Paul put it in Colossians 1:19, *“In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.”* Though He was fully God, as the second person of the Trinity, he humbled himself and became human. We believe that Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died a sacrificial death on the cross, and was raised from the dead three days later. This life and purpose conquered sin and death on our behalf.

It is through Christ's victory that God's plan to restore the world and lives was revealed. In Philippians 2:10-11 Paul wrote, "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." As Jesus' followers, our lives are to be lived reflecting to others the life Jesus lived and the sacrifice Jesus made. As we represent Him as His disciple, we do so sharing the Son of God to the world.

**Reading:** Read these same verses each day this week and see what God can teach you.

**1 Timothy 2:5**

**Ephesians 2:17-18**

**John 8:58-59**

**Hebrews 7:27-28**

**John 1:1-5, 9-14**

**Questions:**

1. What do these texts reveal to you about Jesus?
2. How does the fact that Jesus humbled himself and laid down his life for you impact your identity?
3. What difference does this make in your everyday life?  
What are some specific action steps you can take this week?

# Who Is The Holy Spirit?

*“If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. - **John 14:15-17***

*“The presence of the Spirit of God is the principal expression of God’s life-giving activity at the creation of the world and is further accentuated by the assertion that the continued sustaining of life also demands the continuing divine presence.” - **Wolfgang Vondey***

The Holy Spirit is promised to us by God and in John 14, Jesus tells His disciples that if you ask God, He will give the Holy Spirit to you. This promise is unleashed on His followers in Acts 2 at Pentecost. This is the promise being fulfilled and we as Jesus followers receive this incredible gift from God who is the third person of the Trinity. This is almost too good to believe, but God in His amazing grace seals us and fills us with His Spirit. In Ephesians 1:13b-15, *“When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.”* This is amazing!

As we study God's Word, we learn that the Holy Spirit is present and active throughout scripture. The word for spirit used in scripture means breath or wind. It is associated with life and vitality. The Holy Spirit testifies to and exalts Jesus. Jesus told his followers, John 16:7 "It is for your good that I am going away." He was pointing to the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy that God would pour out his Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God's active presence empowering, purifying, unifying, and bringing life to his people and his church. In Galatians 5:16 Paul emphatically stated, "*Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*" The Holy Spirit is at work in us and around us. The more aware we are of his constant presence, power, and love, the more sensitive we will be to the Holy Spirit's loving guidance.

**Reading:** Read these same verses each day this week and see what God can teach you.

**Titus 3:5-7**

**John 15:26-27**

**John 14:16-17, 23, 26**

**John 16:7-15**

**Romans 8:2-6**

**Questions:**

1. What does this session reveal to you about the Holy Spirit?
2. How does the fact that the Holy Spirit has breathed new life into us and empowers us, impact how you see your new identity in Jesus?
3. What are some specific action steps you can take this week to "walk by the power of the Holy Spirit in your life?" (Galatians 5:16)

## SESSION

## 09

# The Incredible Grace of God

*“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” - **Ephesians 2:8-10***

The word “Grace” is used 123 times in the New Testament alone! It refers to the unmerited favor granted to us by God. As Paul stated in Ephesians 2:8, *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”* The gift of a restored relationship with God, a place in God’s family, a life of true purpose, and hope of eternal life is greater than anything we deserve or could ever earn. God the Father extends His grace to us through Jesus the Son. When a person receives the gift of salvation, it is not something that can be earned – it is a free gift. It is the amazing grace of God!

St. Augustine wrote, *“For grace is given not because we have done good works, but in order that we may be able to do them.”* This is the amazing truth that we learn in Ephesians 2:10, *“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”* We don’t earn God’s grace through our works, but we have been saved by grace to do the work God has called us to do through His great commission in Matthew 28:19-20.

Of course, receiving God's grace does NOT give us a license to live however we please. Grace inspires us to live differently. When we truly encounter God's grace it begins to reorient our desires to God's. D.A. Carson refers to it as a "Grace-driven effort." Inspired by our love for God and gratitude for His unmerited favor, we are intentional about living a life that reflects his goodness.

**Reading:** Read these same verses each day this week and see what God can teach you.

**John 1:17**

**Titus 2:11**

**Ephesians 4:7**

**Hebrew 4:16**

**2 Timothy 1:9-10**

**Questions:**

1. What does this session teach you about God's grace and your work?
2. Often our identity is based on what we produce/do. How does the truth of grace transform how you should see yourself and your identity as a producer for God?
3. How does God's grace change the way we live? What are some specific action steps you can take to live the reality of God's grace?

## SESSION

## 10

# The Church In Your Life

*“For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”*

**Romans 12:4-8**

God has a purpose for you. His purpose is to be part of a spiritual family and serve in a spiritual family. We all need the church community. We were designed for relationships, both with God and others. In Mark 3, Jesus cast a vision of his people, the church, as family. As beautiful and special as family is, it is also messy and imperfect. Church is no different. Charles Spurgeon made a powerful statement, *“If I had never joined a Church till I had found one that was perfect, I would never have joined one at all!... If I had found one, I should have spoiled it, for it would not have been a perfect Church after I had become a member of it... The Church is not an institution for perfect people, but a sanctuary for sinners saved by grace... who, though they are saved, are still sinners and need all the help they can derive from the sympathy and guidance of their fellow believers.”*



As imperfect as we are, we are better together. There is wisdom, healing, strength, and safety when we are living in family-like community. Also, together we can accomplish our God-given purpose. In Romans 12, Paul compares the church to a human body. It is made up of different parts with different functions, but work together. When we bring our unique passions and gifts to the table united by our commitment to God and his cause there is no telling what God can and will do! God is not calling you to sit in a church, but rather to be an engaged participant in your church. To be a contributor to the spiritual family and see the people whom you serve and serve with as God's people.

**Reading:** Read these same verses each day this week and see what God can teach you.

**Titus 2:11-14**

**1 Thessalonians 5:23-24**

**1 Timothy 6:11**

**2 Timothy 2:22**

**Acts 20:32**

**Questions:**

1. What does this session show you about the importance of your church family?
2. How important is church in the development of your life as a learner and servant?
3. What difference does Christian community, or as Jesus put it "family," make in the way we live? What is an action step you can take to move forward into "family," and use your gifts to serve?

## SESSION

## 11

# Our Eternal Hope

*“Hope is called the anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6:19) because it gives stability to the Christian life. But hope is not simply a ‘wish’ (I wish that such-and-such would take place); rather, it is that which latches on to the certainty of the promises of the future that God has made.” - RC Sproul*

One of the most thrilling things about being a Christ follower is that we live with hope, both in this life and eternal. We have a hope that is far greater than the best and worst of earthly circumstances. This hope is an anchor for our lives. In Romans 8:24-25, Paul stated, *“For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”* This hope is an ever-present source of peace, joy, and purpose.

If we are mindful of the hope that we have in Christ, both now and forever, it is going to work itself out in our lives. C.S. Lewis once wrote, *“If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next.”* A life of hope is a life of purpose. When life seems overwhelming and things seem hopeless, remember the eternal hope that you have been given in Jesus Christ. This hope can calm the storm, this hope can make the enemy flee, and this hope can restore despair in your life.

**Reading:** Read these same verses each day this week and see what God can teach you.

**Hebrews 6:19-20**

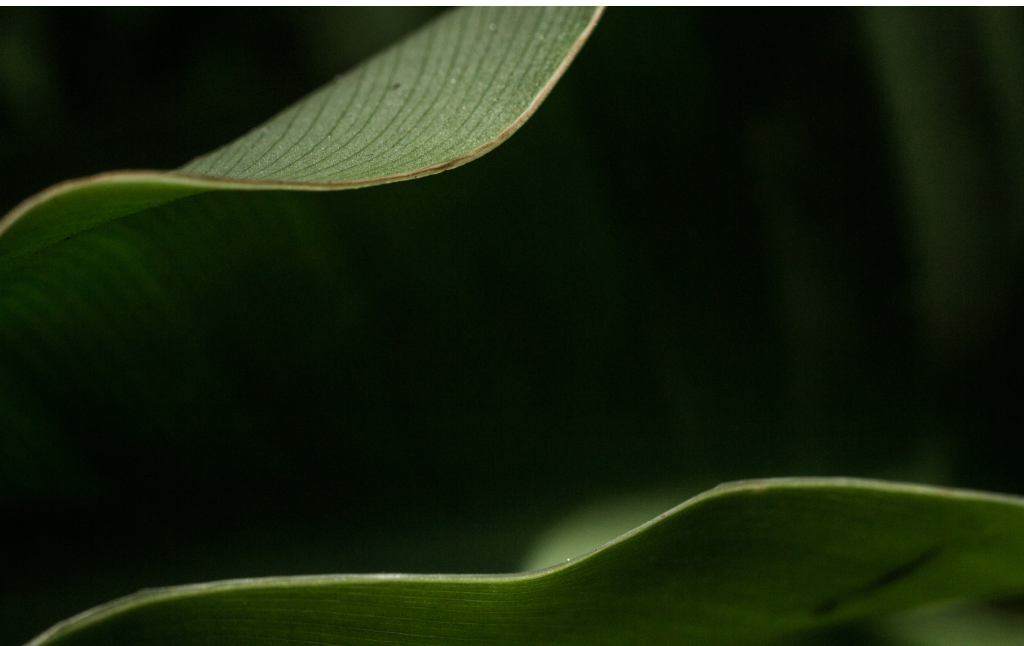
**Hebrews 10:23**

**Romans 5:1-5**

**1 Corinthians 15:12-28**

**Questions:**

1. What does the hope of Jesus give you in moments of despair?
2. How does your salvation in Jesus give you comfort and hope in this crazy and broken world? How does this impact your life decisions?
3. What are some specific things you can do this week to remind yourself of the hope we have in Christ and live that out?



## SESSION

## 12

# Living A Life of Worship

*“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.” The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.” **John 4:23-26***

In John 4, Jesus has a conversation with a Samaritan woman that reveals He is the one to be worshiped as the Messiah. He also teaches us through this encounter that true worship is more than a religious activity, and is a posture of our heart. True worshipers will worship in Spirit and in truth. We can oftentimes boil down worship into a song we sing or a sermon that is preached, but worshipping God is so much more than just songs and sermons. Worship is a way of life.

Psalm 145:3 says, *“Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.”* In worship, we acknowledge the unmatched power, wisdom, love, and greatness of God. The word used in scripture for worship refers to bowing down, which was a show of deep respect and submission. In worship we acknowledge, express, and enjoy the goodness of God. Scripture is clear that God delights in our praises, but God is God, whether we acknowledge him or not.

Therefore, to worship God is also a gift to us. C.S. Lewis wrote, *“In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him.”* We were created to worship. Therefore, we are going to worship something or someone. There is nothing worthy of our deepest loyalty, affection, and worship other than God. There is an overwhelming freedom and joy when we live our lives from a posture of gratitude and worship unto God.

**Reading:** Read these same verses each day this week and see what God can teach you.

**Psalm 121:1-2**

**Psalm 42:1-2**

**1 Chronicles 16:23-31**

**Hebrews 10:19-25**

**Revelation 5:11-13**

**Psalm 99**

**Questions:**

1. Describe from your own perspective how worthy God is of our deepest honor, loyalty, and love.
2. How does our worship shape our identity?
3. Are there any other things, maybe even good things, that you find yourself giving god-like status in your life?

## SESSION

## 13

# Learning To Study The Bible

*“Your Word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws.” - Psalm 199:105-106*

As you follow Jesus on this journey, having a plan to study the Bible is essential. The Word of God is the water to nurture the soil of your soul. If the Word of God is not a consistent part of your life, you will waver and find yourself often off track spiritually. God’s Word is not only essential, but it is also true, it is the source of all truth. Immediately after Jesus was baptized, he spent forty days fasting in the wilderness. During this time, he was tempted to turn stones into bread. Jesus replied in Matthew 4:4, *“Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”* Throughout scripture, God’s Word is often referred to as food. As food strengthens and nourishes our physical body, God’s Word strengthens and nourishes our soul. As we read, think about, and discuss scripture regularly, not only do we learn more about God and life, but we are also continually refocusing our attention and directing the loyalty of our hearts toward God. Scripture can be tough to understand, and it takes time, but nothing is more worthwhile. In a constantly changing world, God’s Word is our anchor.

There are multiple Bible reading plans and strategies out there, so I will share one plan that can be very beneficial. It is called SOAP, it is a way of reading your Bible and applying what you read in a practical way.

**SOAP** stands for:

**Scripture** – Read a passage of scripture and write down a verse or two that jumps out to you.

**Observation** – What are your personal observations that you note from this scripture?

**Application** – How does it now apply to your everyday life? What can you do to apply it today?

**Prayer** – Write a personal prayer based on your observation and application.

**Reading:** Read these same verses each day this week and see what God can teach you.

**2 Timothy 3:16**

**Psalms 1:1-3**

**Psalms 119:1-8**

**Questions:**

1. How does the fact that God has revealed Himself to us through His Word show you who He is?
2. How can studying the Bible shape your perception and identity?
3. What barriers keep you from God's Word?

## SESSION

## 14

# Building Your Prayer Life

*"To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing." - **Martin Luther***

I love the quote above from Martin Luther. Prayer is like our spiritual breath and without it, we suffer spiritually. We must pray and communicate with God to have a growing relationship with Him. As human beings, we were uniquely created by God for a relationship with him. So, there is a deep longing inside of each one of us to call out to something or someone who is greater than ourselves. As Christians, we know who that someone is. Not only are we allowed, but we are welcomed to approach the throne of our all-wise and all-powerful Creator God in prayer.

Prayer is multifaceted, but simply put it is communing with God. Prayer is acknowledging the goodness of God, praising, and giving him thanks. Prayer is releasing our deepest cares, burdens, joys, and frustrations to God. Prayer is making our request known to Him, but trusting His wisdom on how and when He chooses to answer. In prayer, we come to know God and continually re-orient our life around His character. In prayer, we also see our truest self. Tim Keller stated, "God is the only person from whom you can hide nothing. Before him, you will unavoidably come to see yourself in a new, unique light." This is both humbling and uplifting.



Prayer is essential for our spiritual vitality and one of the greatest privileges human beings have been granted. For most of us, if we have a plan for prayer, we will witness our prayer life deepening. There are multiple prayer models, but the ACTS model is easy to remember and covers all aspects of our lives. It also puts prayer in a healthy order. I have listed out the ACTS model, so start practicing it and see your prayer life blossom!

**ACTS – Prayer Model (Start 1-2 minutes for each step)**

1. **Adoration** – Praise God for who He is.
2. **Confession** – Confess your sins to God.
3. **Thanksgiving** – Give thanks to God for His blessings.
4. **Supplication** – Pray for your needs and the needs of others.

**Reading:** Read these same verses each day this week and see what God can teach you.

**Matthew 6:5-13**  
**Ephesians 6:18-20**  
**Mark 1:35**

**1 Thessalonians 5:17**  
**Luke 18:1-8**

**Questions:**

1. How does the fact that we can approach the throne of God in prayer stir your affection toward God?
2. Why should prayer be such an important part of your life as a Jesus follower?
3. Where are you in your prayer life? What is an intentional step you can take toward becoming a person of deeper prayer?

## SESSION

## 15

# Sharing The Good News

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” - Acts 1:8*

God has not only saved you, but He has invited you to be His witness. He actually promises that His followers will receive the Holy Spirit, which gives power to accomplish the mission. So often we think about sharing the Good News as a duty or chore, but it is an honor and privilege to share the life-changing message of Jesus.

We see in Acts 4, after Jesus had unleashed the power of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, Peter and John were threatened by the authorities to stop talking about Jesus. Then in Acts 4:20, they made a bold statement, *“We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”* God created each of us differently. We all have unique gifts, creativities, and ways of communicating that are as unique as we are. If the good news of Jesus has truly captivated our hearts, like it did Peter and John, then somehow or some way we have to share it.

*“Our faith becomes stronger as we express it; a growing faith is a sharing faith.” - Billy Graham*

**Reading:** Read these same verses each day this week and see what God can teach you.

**2 Corinthians 5:20**

**Acts 4:8-22**

**Ephesians 6:19-20**

**1 Peter 3:13-18**

**Questions:**

1. How do you think sharing your faith would strengthen your relationship with God?
2. Is there someone God has placed in your life that you know you should share your faith with?
3. Take the time to write down your story, so you can be ready to share when the opportunity comes up.

**WHAT'S YOUR STORY?**



## SESSION

## 16

# Living As A Servant

*“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” - Matthew 20:26-27*

When Jesus is mentioned in most circles, people think of Jesus as a servant. Even in circles that are not Christian, there is a view of Jesus that he served people. Obviously, we know that Jesus was so much more than just a servant, He is the Son of God who gave His life for our sins, but He was also the ultimate servant. Though He was and is the greatest, he embraced the role of “*servant*.” In John 13, Jesus caught his disciples completely off guard by washing their feet, which was a task reserved for the lowest servant. Then in John 13:15, Jesus said, *“I have given you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”* So, as Jesus’ followers, we are called to model our lives after Jesus and live as servants of God.

In this world, there is a high value placed on things like status, wealth, and titles, but the Kingdom of God operates on a different set of values. It is not that any of these things are wrong, but love, humility, sacrifice, and service are valued more. As you continue to grow as a disciple of Jesus, make sure you are living as a servant. The crazy thing is that as you serve others, you will actually experience purpose and fulfillment.

**Reading:** Read these same verses each day this week and see what God can teach you.

**Colossians 1:28-29**

**Romans 8:28**

**2 Corinthians 8:7**

**Colossians 3:17**

**1 Corinthians 12:1-11**

**Questions:**

1. How does serving others draw us closer to God?
2. Why is serving so important in shaping our identity as Jesus' followers?
3. How can you serve your local church, right now?

SESSION

17

# Eternity

*“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.” - **John 5:24***

*“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” - **Matthew 24:14***

*“Knowing we will be with Christ forever far outweighs our burdens today! Keep your eyes on eternity!”*  
– **Billy Graham**

*We learn throughout the Word of God that the end of this life and world as we know it will come to an end. We do not know the time or every detail, but we do know that Jesus is coming again. We know that there will be judgment for sin and there will be a separation between those who are covered by the work of Jesus and those who did not trust Him. This is a topic that is very encouraging for the Jesus follower, but also very serious because of the weight of eternity. As Christians, we believe Jesus is the only way for a person to be saved and rescued from the judgment of sin that is coming. Jesus said in John 14:6 that He is the way, the truth, and the life, and no man can come to the Father except through Him.*

That is completely and totally clear. Jesus also describes himself as the “*gate*” or the “*door*”. These descriptions teach us that Jesus made a way for all people, but they must enter to receive His gift.

This truth should radically change how we live our lives. We should live with the incredible excitement of eternity, but also with a conviction of eternal judgment. This should lead to great humility and gratitude in our lives, but also motivate us to share this message of Jesus with others. Lastly, as Billy Graham said, the hope of eternity far outweighs the burdens of today. May we live with this hope!

**Reading:** Read these same verses each day this week and see what God can teach you.

**John 14:6**

**I John 5:13**

**Matthew 25:31-46**

**John 3:36**

**Romans 6:23**

**Questions:**

1. How does the reality of eternity change how you live today?
2. We know based on the teaching of the Bible that eternal judgment will take place and Jesus will judge all people, who should you tell about Jesus in light of this reality?

SESSION

18

# Spiritual Warfare

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” - John 10:10*

The longer I have been a follower of Jesus, the more clearly I have seen the war that wages. There is a spiritual war that is very real and an enemy who wants to destroy your life and take you out. Jesus in John 10:10, calls the enemy a thief and that he wants to steal from you, kill you, and destroy you.

These words from Jesus are words of war! As someone who is beginning this journey of following Jesus, it is essential for you to understand the situation you are in and how the enemy works. The Bible teaches that after you become a follower of Jesus you become a Spirit-filled person. When this happens a war now begins to wage within your life between the flesh (sinful nature) that is you before trusting in Jesus and the Spirit that you have now that you have Jesus in your life. This is why all throughout the Bible, God teaches us to “walk in the spirit”. The flesh and spirit are both wanted to be fed and the one you feed the most will dominate how you live your life. The flesh wants the things of this world to feed upon, but your Spirit wants the Word of God to feed upon. It is critical that you feed the Spirit and reject the flesh.



It is very important to understand that we also live in a world in which the Bible describes Satan as the god of this world. Satan is working in this world to lure your flesh away from the truth of God. This is a deep spiritual war that can only be won by the power of God. The world and Satan's tactics are always going to work to deceive and manipulate you. This is why you must be a person who is committed to God's word and God's church. This is the battle plan for victory, so if either is neglected there is no way to live in victory. As you pursue God's plan, learn from the strategy of Jesus in Matthew 4:1-11. He used the word of God and the power of the Spirit that led Him to overcome Satan and be victorious. The Good News of the Gospel is everything Jesus did on our behalf gives victory, so we can win the war in our lives by building our lives on this Good News and living in His power over sin and death.

**Reading:** Read these same verses each day this week and see what God can teach you.

**Galatians 5:16-17**

**Ephesians 6:11**

**2 Corinthians 4:4**

**2 Corinthians 11:14-15**

**1 Peter 5:8**

**Questions:**

1. Read I John 2:15-16. What did you learn from these verses about spiritual attack?
2. Read Ephesians 6:10-18. What does God want you to do to prepare for the calling in your life?
3. How can you dedicate yourself to God's word and His church to build the foundation you need in your life to be victorious?

# GROWING AS A FOLLOW OF JESUS

*The Christian journey is incredibly exciting as you discover more about who God is and who He has called and created you to be. This study will be a seventeen-part series as we lay the groundwork for some of the key things you need to know about God. You will also learn about the new identity that you have received in Jesus and what it means to live a life of faith and obedience. The studies we will do together will be an essential foundation for you in this new journey. The key teachings in this study are not topics that you learn and then move away from to something else. These studies are going to be foundational elements that will be critical for the rest of your life. You will continually come back to these truths as you grow in your faith in Jesus.*