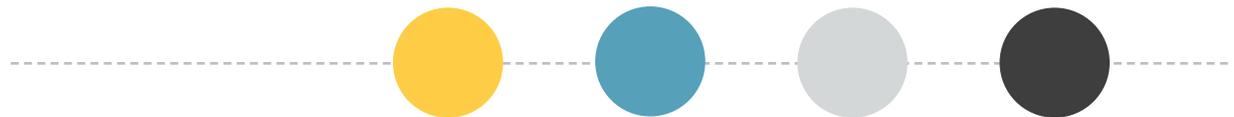




PARTNERSHIP GUIDE



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WELCOME

Welcome to Partnership at Christ The Rock! We are so glad that you are interested in joining us as we carry out the mission of Christ The Rock – making disciples of Jesus.

First, let's acknowledge that the term "partner" might be new to you in a church context. You might be more familiar with the term church membership. Maybe you have been a member of a different church in the past, and you are wondering why Christ The Rock has partners instead of members. What's the difference?

Think about other groups or organizations that have members. Write some examples here:

You may have listed a community organization like the Elks Club, a big box store like Costco, or a gym like your local YMCA. What do these groups have in common?

- There is an application or approval process.
- Members pay dues or a sign-up fee.
- Members receive some benefit or service in return for their money.

It is not our heart that partners at Christ The Rock see their relationship with the church as a transaction. Membership implies a "give-and-take" philosophy, I do something for the group, I get something back in return.



“You don’t attend church. You are the church.”

Carey Nieuwhof

A partnership is different. A partner inside the local church says, "I believe in the mission of this church, and I want to be an active participant in it." This partnership goes beyond passive attendance to full engagement with the mission. A partner does more than pay their dues and wait to reap the benefits – they are on the ground, working alongside other partners to see the group's mission fulfilled.

Consider one of the organizations you mentioned above. How would being a member of that organization look different from being a partner with that organization?

Think back to your time as a student – elementary school, high school, or college. Two words strike fear into students' hearts like no other – "group project." Most of us have had the dreaded assignment of doing a group or partner project.

What was your experience doing group projects in school?

Why do you think teachers assign partner work or group projects?

One of our current staff members used to be a middle school teacher for 15 years. She shared her experience with group projects saying, "I had to chuckle whenever I found myself assigning group work because I hated group projects when I was a student. My students also hated group assignments, but that never stopped me! Many times, the reasons I assigned partner or group work were as simple as these:

- It was too much work for one person to take on alone.
- When partners and group members worked together, they demonstrated deeper thinking about the topic and even enjoyment working together.
- Partners leaned on each other's strengths to make up for areas where they individually needed more skills to accomplish the work alone.

In church partnership we all work together using our unique gifts to see the church's mission carried out. We cannot do it alone. The pastors cannot do it alone. The paid church staff cannot do it alone. We all have a part to play in seeing God's kingdom come here and now in the Fox Valley. Being in community with other believers helps us grow individually and collectively.

The apostle Paul spoke of both reasons for partnership in his letters to the early churches. To the church in Corinth he wrote:

For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

1 Corinthians 3:9

We are called as co-workers and partners to work together in service of the gospel. Every partner has a vital part to play. God did not call Paul to spread the gospel alone – he was working side by side with the church body in Corinth. Each member of the church in Corinth was a partner in the mission.

Second, Paul encouraged partnership because it caused growth in the partners, both individually and as a community.

I thank my God every time I remember you.

In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:3-6

It gave Paul great joy to see how the church in Philippi partnered together for the sake of the gospel. Paul knew working together produced fruit in this church body. He was thankful for what the church had already done, but excited to see where else the church could go.

At Christ The Rock, our definition of a church partner is this:

A partner is a disciple committed to seeing God's kingdom purposes fulfilled through this local church by living the Intentional Life.

**For we are
co-workers in
God's service;
you are God's
field, God's
building.**

1 Corinthians 3:9



This partnership guide aims to help you fully understand how we view church partnership so that you can make an informed decision about partnering with our mission. We will divide our time together into three main components:

BELIEVE

First, we will look into the historical teachings of Christianity and what we believe as a church. We will give you time to ask some of your questions about these beliefs so you fully understand them and trust them.

MISSION

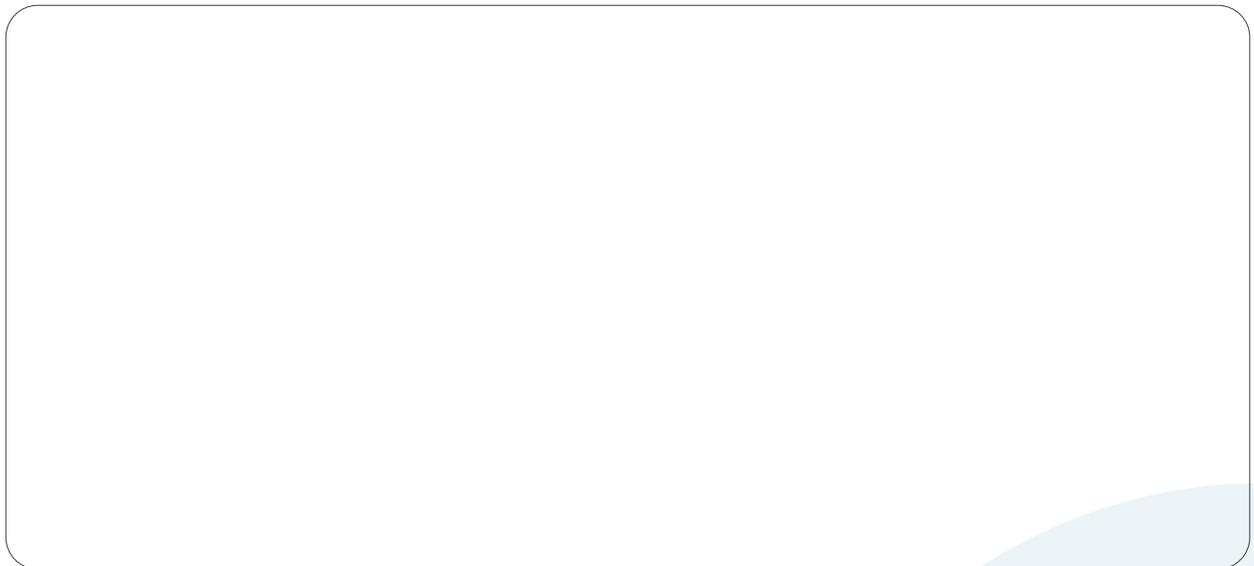
Second, we will share our mission as a church, where it comes from, and how we intend to see it fulfilled.

COMMISSION

Last, we ask you to partner with God through this local church by living the Intentional Life of a disciple.

Reflection: What are your initial thoughts or questions about the idea of church partnership?

What makes you either excited to jump on board or hesitant to commit?



**A partner is a disciple committed to seeing
God's kingdom purposes fulfilled through this
local church by living the Intentional Life.**

BELIEVE

In this section, we look through the lens of our Biblical Statement of Faith and wrestle with truth that is laid out in the Bible. We know that our beliefs drive our behaviors. If our beliefs are correct or true, they will line up with what God says is true and they will drive good conduct in our lives. If our beliefs are out of line with what God says is true our actions and behaviors will follow what is incorrect or untrue. What we base our truth on matters and must be trustworthy.

Take time in this section to do a deep dive into your personal beliefs and values and match them up against scripture and our beliefs at CTR. In choosing to become a partner you are saying that you agree to God's truth as outlined in our Biblical Statement of Faith.

BIBLE

THE BIBLE IS GOD'S INSPIRED WORD TO US.

We believe that the original manuscripts of the Old and New Testament comprise the full, word-for-word, truthful, inerrant, and inspired word of God which is the supreme and final authority in doctrine and practice. The Bible is truth without error.

Isaiah 40:8, John 1:1-5, 2 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 4:12, 2 Peter 1:20-21

When trusting something or someone, we should first carefully consider how trustworthy the source is. This section explores what the Bible is and examines different ways to assess whether the Bible should be trusted.

The above key scripture passages claim - in different ways - that the Bible is true. Yet believing that the Bible is true because the Bible says that the Bible is true is, by itself, circular logic. So, it seems additional reasons to believe in the trustworthiness of the Bible are needed. One approach would be to examine Jesus' views regarding the reliability of the Bible.

Isaiah 40:8: The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.

John 1:1-5: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

2 Timothy 3:16: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.

Hebrews 4:12: 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.

2 Peter 1:20-21: Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus affirmed that the Bible is divinely inspired, imperishable, unbreakable, and reliable. As Christians, if we have already placed our trust in Jesus, and Jesus trusts the Bible, then we should also trust the Bible.

What do you think about this line of reasoning? Are you able to trust Jesus as a reliable source?

Jesus as Evidence: Jesus frequently referred to the Old Testament in a manner that showed he fully believed scripture was the final authority. As Jesus was tempted in the desert by Satan, before the beginning of his ministry, Jesus famously responded to each temptation simply by quoting scripture. Likewise, Jesus elsewhere explicitly shares that even he submitted to scripture: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matt. 5:17). See Appendix 1

What do you think about how Jesus submitted himself to scripture and pointed others to scripture as the ultimate truth? What would your life be like if you always looked to the Bible as the supreme and final authority in your life?



Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.
Matt. 5:17

Historical Evidence: Suppose someone was skeptical of the trustworthiness of Jesus and wished to, instead, directly focus on the historical legitimacy of the Bible. In that case, we can use three basic principles of historiography for assessing tests: internal evidence, external evidence, and a bibliographical test. The internal evidence test assesses whether there are substantive and genuine discrepancies within the Bible itself. The external evidence test assesses whether other historical sources confirm or deny the internal testimony of the Bible. The bibliographical test examines how reliable the Bible is by evaluating the number of early manuscripts and the time between the original and earliest existing copies. See Appendix 2

We believe there is sufficient reason to believe the Bible passes all these tests. What do you believe and why?

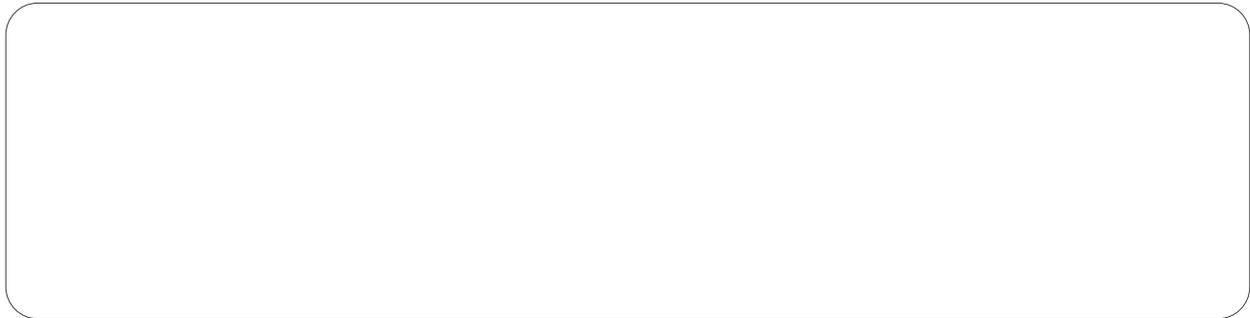
Yet another way to determine whether the Bible is trustworthy is to look more closely at inerrancy, the belief that there are no substantive errors in the Bible. There are two main ways to do this. A first option is to take an inductive approach. This approach begins by defining what would count as an error and then carefully examining the Bible from beginning to end to determine if anything is in error. A second option is to take a deductive approach. This approach starts with the belief that God is the author of the Bible. It then observes that God cannot make errors, so the Bible cannot have any mistakes. See Appendix 3

Which of these approaches, if either, are you more drawn to and why?

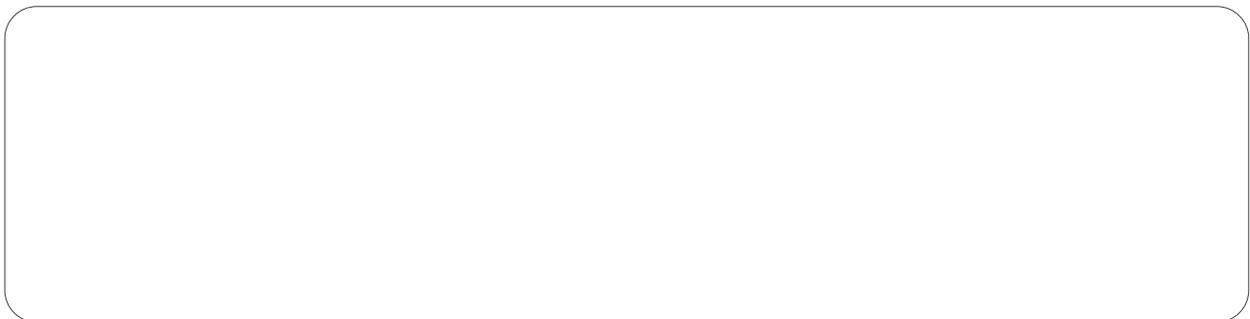


If God divinely inspired all of the Bible, then all of the Bible is true – not just some parts of it. Some people readily accept parts that feel comfortable and ignore sections that seem challenging or outdated.

Why do you think some people believe this and what does it reveal about their overall views of the Bible or God? What do you believe about the complete Bible being true?

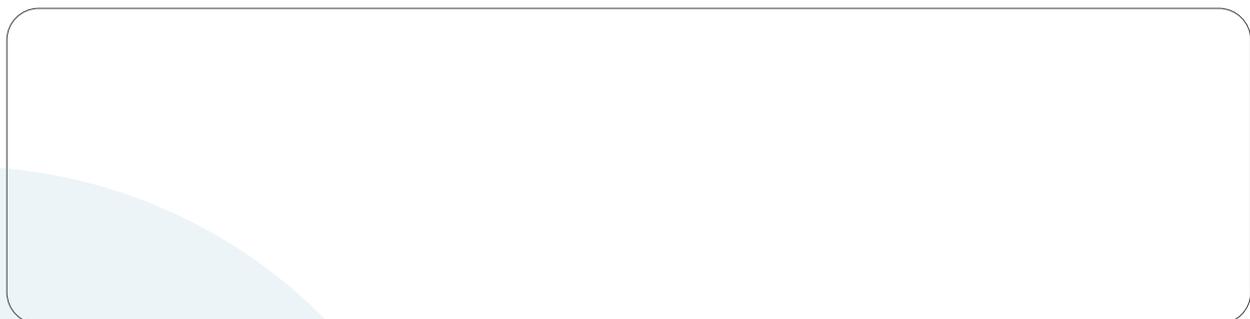


If the Bible is God's inspired word to us without error, why do you think some people disagree with that? And why do some Christians who believe in the authority of the Bible sometimes disagree about what the Bible says? Do such disagreements over interpretation necessarily mean the Bible is not from God or is not without error?



God communicated the Bible to humans over a period of 1500 years through 66 books, using 40 authors from dozens of radically different life positions like kings, military leaders, fishermen, shepherds, and more. It was written on three different continents and written in three languages.

The Bible is God's way of revealing more of himself, making himself known to us. Why do you believe God chose to transmit his will and story to us in this unique way?



We want to be clear when we say the Bible is God's inspired word to us. After all, "inspired" in this sense has a specific meaning among Christians. We often say a touching movie inspired us. Or we might say that drinking a cup of coffee inspired us to finally get the laundry done. When we refer to the Bible as God's inspired word to us, we mean more than a person feeling motivated to do something. Instead, we are saying that the Bible is authoritative because it is God-breathed, and God divinely guided the words in the Bible through human beings (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

What do you think about this type of inspiration? What questions do you have about it?

One common objection to all or parts of the Bible is the belief that truth evolves and changes. Therefore, the Bible, whatever it may have been worth at a previous time, was poorly translated or outdated. Yet Isaiah 40:8 says that the "word of our God stands forever."

How long do you believe the Bible is in effect and why? Does it have an expiration date?



... the word
of our God
stands forever.
Isaiah 40:8

2 Timothy 3:16 states, "All scripture is God-breathed," which claims two things: all, not just some, of the Bible comes from God, and how the Bible came into existence is that God breathed it.

Do you believe that all, not just some, of the Bible comes from God? Which parts of the Bible are you most drawn to, and which parts of the Bible are you least drawn to or challenged by? What do you take 'God-breathed' to mean?

2 Peter 1:20-21 says, "humans spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." This verse provides us with a general sense of how God worked through people to produce a written Bible.

What do you believe it means, that "humans spoke from God?" What does it mean that humans were "carried along by the Holy Spirit?"

All scripture is
God-breathed.

2 Timothy 3:16



Hebrews 4:12 states, “the word of God is living and active.” This verse makes a fascinating claim, revealing in part, how the Bible is different from every other book. Many books can educate, motivate, and inspire us. Some books may even teach us new things upon re-reading them. Yet this claim goes beyond what we can expect from other books by stating the word of God is ‘living and active.’ This points directly to the author of the Bible who is eternal – who always was, is, and always will be. So, in that sense, it’s not a surprise the words of this author, God, can still have such a powerful effect on those who read the Bible even today.

What thoughts do you have about the Bible being ‘living and active’?

REFLECTION: What’s your most important question from this section?

REFLECTION: What’s the most important thing you learned in this section?

... the word of God is living and active.
Hebrews 4:12



NATURE OF GOD

GOD IS ETERNAL.

God has eternally existed. God always was, is and will be.

Genesis 1:1, Psalm 2, Psalm 90:2, Jeremiah 10:10, Revelation 1:8

Human beings are bound by space and time. We're always somewhere physically and we're always somewhere in time. We came into existence on earth at a specific time and our lives will end at a particular time. Our concept of reality is shaped and restrained by always being in space and time. Yet God is not bound by such things. Indeed, God brought space and time into existence (Genesis 1:1).

Because we measure everything in time, it's difficult for us to conceive of something that has no beginning or end. At best, our finite minds can only partly understand the concept of God's infinitude. And it's probably impossible for us to completely grasp God's eternity.

What do you think about this? How much do you think we can know about eternity? Are you ok with not understanding eternity fully in your mind?

Genesis 1:1: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Psalm 2: see Bible.

Psalm 90:2: Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

Jeremiah 10:10: But the Lord is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath.

Revelation 1:8: "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."



God has eternally existed. God always was, is and will be.

A way to challenge our concept of eternity is to think about how old God is. We regularly use age to understand each other and the life around us. A birthday is a milestone to celebrate. There is an age when you start school, learn to drive, and get to vote. A child might imagine God as a wise, grandfather-looking being, thinking He must be older. However, eternity means God is neither younger nor older than us. He has no age. See Appendix 4

What do you think about age versus eternity? How do you feel that God never has a birthday?

Another way to understand God's eternal nature is to contemplate cause and effect. One logical implication of eternity is that it must be uncaused. That is, if something is eternal by nature, then nothing could have caused it. If something caused an eternal thing, it means something existed before eternity to cause eternity – but nothing can exist before or after eternity. Since God is eternal, he also is uncaused. Yet everything in our human experience, both present and past, has been caused. God, who is the cause for humanity's existence, will welcome into eternity those who believe in him, meaning followers of Jesus have a beginning and a cause, but no end.

Can you think of anything else that has no cause behind it? Does this help you to understand God's eternal nature better?

**If something is eternal by nature,
then nothing could have caused it.
Since God is eternal, he also is uncaused.**

In Eastern California there is a tree named Methusaleh that is said to be the world's oldest tree. The tree is named after Methusaleh, the grandfather of Noah who we read about in the book of Genesis. The tree is a Great Basin Bristlecone Pine, estimated to have been well established by the time the Egyptians built the Giza pyramids around 4,860 years ago. As human beings who often don't exceed life on earth beyond 100 years, it is hard for us to fathom thousands of years in existence, much less always being in existence and having no beginning and no end.

What is the oldest existing thing you can identify? What is the oldest thing you can conceptually imagine and how old is that? How do these things compare to God's eternity in your mind?



Methusaleh, in Eastern California, said to be the world's oldest tree.

God, being eternal, also promised the hope of eternal life for those who believe in him. This hope as mentioned in Titus 1:2 "...the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time," has also always been in existence.

As you think about God's eternity does it make you feel smaller? Do you find yourself feeling more insignificant? How does God's eternal nature give you hope? How does God's eternal nature give you hope for eternal life?

The Bible never tries to prove God's eternity. Yet, in some places, it provides imagery to help us better understand the enormity of God's eternity. For example, Psalm 90:2 says, "Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God." And Psalm 90:4 says, "For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has gone by, or like a watch in the night."

To what degree do such images help you to understand God's eternity?

In our next section, we examine the triune nature of God. In looking at God's triune nature we will see Jesus is God and we will dive deeper into what that means. If Jesus is God and if Jesus was born on earth and died on earth, then it may seem at first glance that Jesus isn't eternal and, therefore, God isn't either. However, it is important to remember here that Jesus existed before his physical incarnation on earth (Jn. 1:1-3; Col. 1:16-17) and continues to exist now at the right hand of God the Father (Heb. 8:1; Heb. 12:2; Col. 3:1).

When you think about God's eternity, do you also think of the eternity of Jesus? Why do you think the eternity of Jesus is essential for Christians in their hope for life after death?



GOD IS THREE IN ONE.

God is three persons in one: the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The three are coequal.

*Deuteronomy 6:4, Matthew 28:19, John 10:30, John 16:7-14,
2 Corinthians 13:14, 1 Peter 1:2*

The doctrine of God as three Persons in one is often called the Trinity. Similar to how our being bound by space and time limits our ability to fully grasp the eternal nature of God, the fact that none of us are three-in-one beings limits our ability to imagine the Trinity in our minds. It is tempting to use metaphors and analogies to explain this idea, however, all such illustrations are imperfect and some lead to serious errors. Since the Trinity is a doctrine revealed to us through scripture, not mere human reason, we will focus on what we can know about the Trinity from scripture.

The word 'Trinity' does not exist in the Bible. Instead, 'Trinity' is a word used to help describe the nature of God as three beings in one: Father, Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit.

When you hear the term 'Trinity,' what do you think of it? What, if any, positive connotations come to your mind? What, if any, negative connotations come to your mind?

Deuteronomy 6:4: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Matthew 28:19: 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.

John 10:30: "I and the Father are one."

John 16:7-14: Jesus explains how the Father and Spirit are present.

2 Corinthians 13:14: All God's people here send their greetings. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

1 Peter 1:2: who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

God is three persons in one: the Father, Jesus the Son,
and the Holy Spirit. The three are coequal.

The biblical God is one. The Bible advocates monotheism, not polytheism. That is, the Bible supports the existence of only one God and affirms this many times, perhaps most clearly here: “The Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Deut. 6:4). So when we refer to members of the Trinity [Father, Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit], these are not different gods but three persons of God, three-in-one. These three persons are each equally God (co-equal) and are each eternal (co-eternal).

The following identity statements about the persons of God are true: the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. However, God is not the Father, God is not the Son, and God is not the Holy Spirit. And the Father is neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit, the Son is neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son.

If you slowly and deeply tried to process all of that, your brain is now likely hurting a bit. And that’s okay – take some deep breaths. Which concepts or statements made the most sense to you and why? Which one was most challenging or confusing to you and why?

Though unified, the three persons of the Trinity each have distinct roles noted in various places in the Bible. Here’s an outline that helps to summarize some, but not all, of the unique roles. The Father is the Source, Sender, and Planner of Salvation. The Son is the Word, Savior, and King. The Holy Spirit is the Guide, Comforter, and convicts people of sin. Though co-equal, there is some subordination in these roles. For example, the Son and the Holy Spirit are sent by the Father and do the Father’s will.

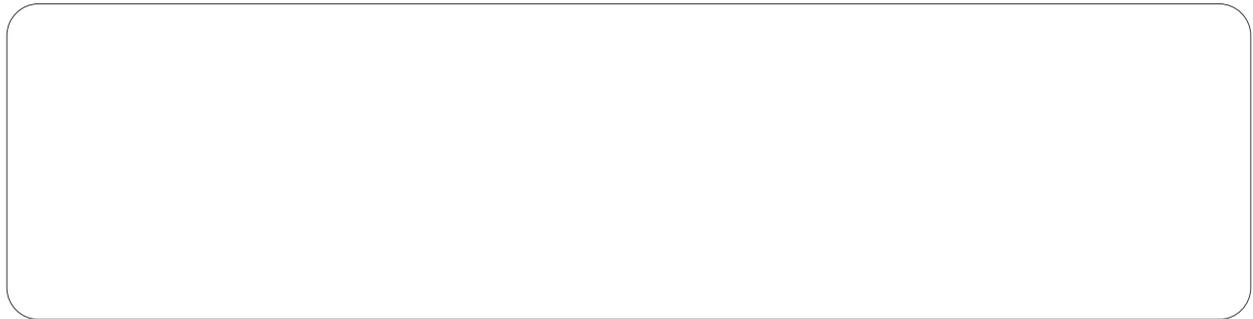
Please note that God is not one person who plays three roles; the Bible is clear that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct persons. Likewise, God is not one person who took on consecutive roles. For example, it’s not true that the Father became the Son, who then became the Holy Spirit. See Appendix 5



**The Lord our God,
the Lord is one.**

Deut. 6:4

Why do you believe God exists as a relational Trinity? How might it be helpful for us, as human beings, to have a three-in-one God rather than a one-in-one God?



There are many places in the Bible where it's clear that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct, for example in Matthew 28:19. There are many places in the Bible where the engagement between, or among, persons of the Trinity helps clarify their relationship to one another – one of the richest being found in John 16. Read John 16:7-16 below and map out how the three persons of the Trinity relate to each other. Try circling all the pronouns that correspond to Jesus, underlining all the pronouns that refer to the Holy Spirit, and putting a box around all the references to the Father. In these passages, 'Advocate,' Spirit,' and 'Spirit of truth' refers to the Holy Spirit.

⁷ “But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ about sin, because people do not believe in me; ¹⁰ about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹ and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

¹² “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.”

¹⁶ Jesus went on to say, “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.”

John 16:7-16

Many people find it easy to imagine a Father and Son relationship but struggle to apply that concept to the Holy Spirit. Yet throughout Scripture, the Holy Spirit isn't an 'it' but rather a 'he' who engages as persons engage. The persons of the Trinity are also equally persons.

**When considering the persons of the Trinity, is it challenging to think of them as persons? If so, why?
And is it difficult for you to consider them as equal persons? If so, why?**

As we seek to do the will of the Father in our daily lives, understanding the relational roles of the persons of the Trinity should be helpful and encouraging to us. We know we are in relationship with God, the creator of everything. We remember Jesus came to be our Savior and King and we know the Holy Spirit came to convict and comfort us.

Do you think about the Trinity in this kind of way in your daily life? In your prayer life? Do you believe that thinking about the Trinity daily in this kind of way might be helpful?

**We know we are in relationship with God, the creator of everything.
We remember Jesus came to be our Savior and King and
we know the Holy Spirit came to convict and comfort us.**

REFLECTION: What's the most important question you still have from this section?

REFLECTION: What's the most important thing you learned in this section?



CREATION

GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH.

There is a master designer with a master design. God is the master designer; he created the heavens and the earth and it was very good.

Genesis 1:1-31, Genesis 2, Psalm 19:1

Genesis 1:1-31: Creation story. (See Bible)

Genesis 2: Creation story. (See Bible)

Psalm 19:1: The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Thinking about creation forces us to ask the question, “What exactly is creation?” What does it mean to create something? Do you think that you are creative? What do you create? Who comes to your mind when you think of creative people and what makes a creative person?

Consider this, God created the universe *ex nihilo*, which means ‘out of nothing.’ Creating from nothing is unique. No artist or inventor has ever accomplished this. Even Leonardo da Vinci used existing items like pigment for color, tools for painting and recreated things found in nature. Artists, as we know them, simply shape existing objects in new ways. But not God.

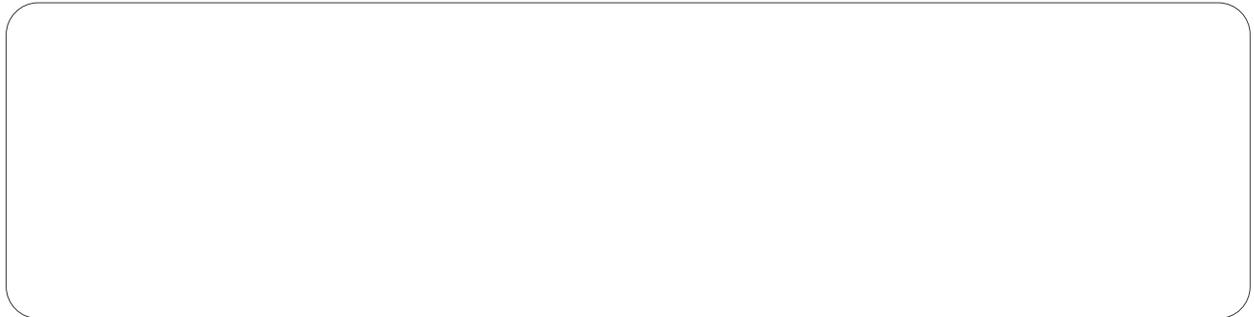
Why might understanding that God created the universe *ex nihilo* be important?

Consider this, God created the universe *ex nihilo*, which means ‘out of nothing.’



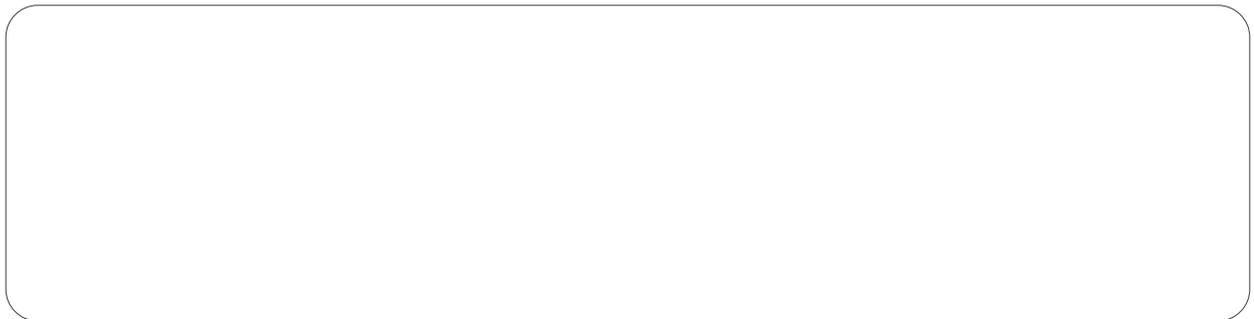
Another interesting characteristic about how God created is seen in the words that appear over and over in the creation story before He creates new things, "And God said." (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29).

God speaks and then that thing comes into existence! What do you think about this? What does this reveal about God?



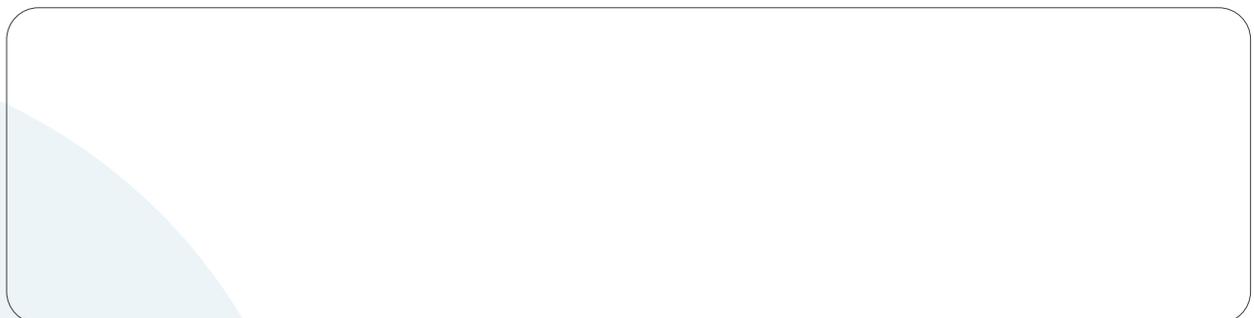
Creating from nothing is remarkable, but that isn't the end. Next, we see another pattern where after God creates, the Bible says, "And God saw that it was good" (Gen 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25). God didn't merely create - He created a good and beautiful order.

What does this tell us about God, the universe, humans and all created things?



Now we must confront a puzzle: We can easily see that evil exists in this world. If God created everything and if God created everything good, then it would seem to follow that everything should be good. No evil should exist, assuming that God is all-powerful and all-good.

We will address this more in a later section, but for now, what do you think about this? Do you believe the existence of evil undermines God's existence? If evil exists, is God still an all-powerful and all-good creator? From what you read this week, what is the biblical explanation for this?



The biblical account of creation is not the only account of creation – others exist. Many people today think of the Big Bang narrative or the concept of evolution. Competing accounts of the origins of the world date back thousands of years. See Appendix 6

Given multiple explanations for the creation of the universe and the creation of humankind, which version of creation do you believe is the most plausible? Why?

The bible tells us the creation of the universe isn't the beginning. Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning, God...". As we discussed with God's eternal nature, this tells us that God preceded even the existence of the universe.

Why do you think God created the universe and humans if he is eternal and self-sufficient?

The bible tells us the creation of the universe isn't the beginning.
Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning, God...".

GOD CREATED HUMANITY IN HIS IMAGE.

People are the supreme object of God's creation and were created in His image and likeness; we were created male and female.

Marriage is the union of one man and one woman. See Appendix 7

Genesis 1:26-27, Genesis 2:20-24, Psalm 8:1-6, Matthew 19:4-6

The Bible never tells us precisely what it means when it says God created humans in His image, the Imago Dei. We are left to observe what ways we are like God. From many Biblical examples, humans are spiritual, moral, rational, creative, and relational. See Appendix 20

We are created in the likeness of God...

- **...spiritually** in that we communicate with God and are both body and spirit. (1 Thessalonians 5:17, 1 Corinthians 2:11)
- **...morally** in that we understand the difference between good and evil. (Genesis 3:22; Psalm 34:14)
- **...rationally** in our ability to think and reason. (Romans 1:18-19)
- **...creatively** as we have the capacity to design, fashion, and build. (Exodus 35:30-35)
- **...relationally** as are in relationship with God and one another. (Genesis 2:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Mark 12:31)

What do you believe the Bible is trying to say when it claims that humans reflect God's image and why might this be important?

Genesis 1:26-27: Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 2:20-24: (The story of Eve) The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Psalm 8:1-6: (A poem of mankind's place in creation) When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet.

Matthew 19:4-6: "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate."



People are the supreme object of God's creation and were created in His image...

God used different methods when creating men and women (Gen. 2:20-23). Why was this so and what is important about this? Is this compatible with the claim that males and females are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27)? What do you think about how these passages present gender? See Appendix 7

Historically, people have tried to discover what uniquely separates humans from other animals. Popular answers, for example, have been that only humans possess things such as rationality or a concept of morality. Yet with time, we've discovered that some animals also have surprisingly advanced levels of rationality and morality. It seems that what uniquely separates humans from other animals is that humans are the only creatures that worship. See Appendix 7

What might this say about humans bearing the image of God? Is this the only difference?

GOD CREATED US TO BE STEWARDS OF HIS CREATION.

God commanded humanity to rule over and take care of the world he created.

Genesis 1:28, Genesis 2:15, Psalm 24:1, Colossians 3:23

God grants humans the power and authority to rule over all of his creation; thereby, God made humans stewards of his creation.

What does it mean to be a steward of something? What does it mean to be a biblical steward when interacting with God, other people, and creation?

Genesis 1:28: God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Genesis 2:15: The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Psalm 24:1: The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

Colossians 3:23: Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.

There was once a wealthy landowner who hired a steward to manage his property. The steward was entrusted with taking care of everything that the landowner possessed. This included watching over the landowner's vast property, his many business ventures, his dearly loved employees, and even his family while he was out of town on business. There was nothing that the landowner didn't entrust to his steward.

Each time the landowner left, he promised to come back. When he would return he required the steward to give an account of how he had managed his land, his business, his employees and even taken care of his family. Each time, the steward reported that he had faithfully taken care of all that belonged to the landowner including his family.

On one trip, the landowner didn't come back when he said he would. In fact, he didn't come back at all. It became weeks, months and then several years later and still the landowner had not returned. "What should I do now?" thought the steward. "What if he never returns, what am I to do with the property? Who is to care for his family?"

Each day, he wondered if today would be the day that his master would return, so he continued taking care of everything and everyone as he had done before.

In this story how much of the landowners entrusted estate belongs to the steward? Does the steward own more or less in the end than he started with? How much of the landowner's things was the responsibility of the steward?

In the same way consider if all of the earth and everything in it belongs to God, what has God given you to steward for him? How can you be a good steward of what God has entrusted to you? What areas of your life do you steward well? What areas are hard for you to see as God's first and not yours?

**“There is not a square inch in the whole domain of
our human existence over which Christ,
who is sovereign over all, does not cry, mine!”**

Abraham Kuyper

It is also notable that God does not give humans unlimited power or absolute authority. No steward is given that authority. Yet he gives us much authority over his creation.

How should being “made in his image” - the Imago Dei - affect how we rule? How does sin affect how we rule?

Take a moment to observe God’s creation through nature. Stare at the stars. Gaze over the water. Feel the ground. Pause and imagine God saying, “It is good.” As you rush through your day, pause for just a moment to appreciate the gift of creation that you are called to steward. Psalm 19:1 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”

If humans are the supreme object of God’s creation, does this mean other parts of God’s creation are less important to him? Why is it so significant that God made humanity both supreme in his creation and the steward of his creation?

“Look up on a starry night and you will see
the majesty and power of an infinite Creator.”

Billy Graham

REFLECTION: What's the most important question you still have about creation?

REFLECTION: What's the most important thing you learned in this section?



FALL

HUMANS SINNED AND SEPARATED THEMSELVES FROM GOD.

Sin was humans' desire to live independently of God on our own terms. The fall broke right relationship between ourselves and God, others, self, and nature. The image of God in humanity was distorted and defaced.

Genesis 3:8-24, Isaiah 53:6, Isaiah, 59:1-2, Romans 3:23

This section's purpose is to shed light on the fact that we are sinners, how this came to be, and the consequences of sin. The intent isn't to cause feelings of shame or condemnation, and this isn't the end of the story, as we'll see in the next sections. If sin is the problem, then Jesus' redemptive death, burial, and resurrection provides the means to the cure.

The story of Adam and Eve is widely known. Because it's such a popular story in our culture, it's easy for us to miss or disregard crucial details of the actual biblical account. To that end, please read Genesis 2-3.

After reading, consider these questions: What do you believe is the major point of the Adam and Eve story in these chapters? What did you learn from this re-reading that you didn't see or appreciate previously?

Some people are skeptical of the existence of the historical Adam and Eve. Do you believe Adam and Eve were historical people – that is, people who really lived and existed? If it's believed Adam and Eve did not actually exist, then how do we account for sin entering the world or that key biblical figures, such as Moses (see Genesis) and Paul (Ro. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:21-22, 45-49) refer to Adam as historical? How would you believe Paul when he refers to Jesus (a historical figure) as the 'Second Adam' or make sense of Paul's doctrine of original sin and guilt without Adam being a historical person? See Appendix B

Genesis 3:8-24: The story of Adam and Eve's fall.

Isaiah 53:6: We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah, 59:1-2: Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

Romans 3:23: For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Original sin is depicted in the Genesis account and refers to Adam and Eve's sin of disobedience when they ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Original sin affects all of humanity now and for all future generations (Ro. 5:12). Original sin is the sinful disposition each of us inherited as a result of Adam and Eve's sin. In contrast, personal sins are the sins we individually commit daily as a result of our inherited sin nature. Our personal sins are against God, others, ourselves, and nature.

How would you describe the relationship between original sin and personal sin? Do you believe it's possible for original sin to exist but not also personal sin? Do you believe it's possible to have personal sin without original or inherited sin? Why or why not?

Satan brought sin to the Garden of Eden when he tempted Adam and Eve by sharing that they would become like God if they ate the fruit that God forbade them from eating. Genesis 3 describes Adam and Eve's rebellion against God.

Do you believe this is how sin entered the world? Why? Do you believe there's an alternative explanation for sin entering the world? If so, what?



Satan brought sin to the Garden of Eden when he tempted Adam and Eve...

A typical day for any of us unfortunately has lots of examples of sin. Sin has become a normal and expected part of our world that often we don't even notice. We roll our eyes and mutter things under our breath. We catch a glimpse of ourselves in the mirror and scold ourselves for what we see. We snap at our families and coworkers. Often the thoughts of anger, disdain, or jealousy that are not said happen more than we care to admit.

Sin is multifaceted, but defined in its most basic form, is an attitude of opposition to God. Sin is rebellion against God and what is right and true (Deut. 9:7; Joshua 1:18) and disobedience of God's law (1 Jn. 3:4). Sin is a violation of relationship with God, people, ourselves, and nature. In other words, sin is missing the mark – where missing the mark is anything that “falls short of the glory of God” (Ro. 3:23).

What do you think about this explanation of sin? If you disagree with this definition, how would you define 'sin'?

If sin is opposition to God's ways, then the essence of the Fall is selfishness. Selfishness makes ourselves the object of our worship. Selfishness is a power that causes us to place our desires and interests first above all others, and proves to be fertile ground for related sins, such as pride and envy, to grow even when we seek to do good things. If left without correction, these sins become more powerful as they become habits or character traits. The growth of sin poses a threat to cause more destruction and eliminate joy.

Do you believe selfishness to be truly this dangerous? Do you believe anyone (including yourself) is completely unselfish? If selfishness is a core problem, then to what degree might we become unselfish and how?

**Sin is a violation of relationship with
God, people, ourselves, and nature.**

Sin can be subtle and sophisticated. Sin tempts us to do something which may appear pleasurable on the surface, but at its core is bad and destructive. We often succumb to the temptation of sin because of how sin is marketed to us – usually as something more attractive or more available than what God has for us. In short, sin disguises itself as something which is good.

We witness this kind of sophisticated deception at the temptation of Adam and Eve. After all, is food generally good? Yes. Is knowledge generally good? Yes. Is seeking to be like God generally good? Yes. Yet Satan twisted each of these slightly with just enough partial truths (and one lie) to entice Adam and Eve to sin.

Given the sophistication of Satan and the complexity of sin are you understanding and sympathetic towards others when they sin? Are you understanding and sympathetic toward yourself when you sin? Why or why not?

Sin is particularly dangerous due to where it resides. The problem is that sin arises from the heart. That is, the heart of the sinner is corrupted (Ps. 51:5; Jer. 17:9; Ro. 8:7). Therefore, when sin is in our heart, it pervades our entire self and reaches every part of ourselves. It can thus quickly spread to our minds and bodies and mutate in many ways that are destructive to ourselves and others. See Appendix 9

Do you believe our hearts are naturally good or bad? Why? Sin could primarily reside and work through the heart, mind, or body. Do you believe sin primarily resides and works through the heart, or elsewhere? Why?

**...when sin is in our heart, it pervades our entire self
and reaches every part of ourselves.**

'The Fall' refers to the historical event in which Adam and Eve disobeyed God and brought upon humanity the curse of original sin. On the surface one might object that this punishment is unfair because it punishes not only Adam and Eve, who disobeyed and clearly deserve punishment, but all future people, who didn't exist at the time.

Likewise, in a reversal of this, Jesus, who was completely innocent and committed no sins, took upon himself every sin ever committed by humans past, present, and future (Ro. 5:12-21). Does this also seem unfair?

What do you think of biblical cases (and there are others) in which entire communities of people can bear the negative consequences of a single person's sin? Likewise, in this sense, what do you think about a single innocent person, Jesus, taking on the sins of all humanity?

In our *Creation* section it was shared that humans were created in God's image. It was claimed that part of what this means is we were created as spiritual, moral, rational, creative, and relational beings. The image of God in humanity, however, was distorted and defaced through the Fall. Spiritually, this means our relationship with God was broken. Morally, we are no longer pure. Rationally, we have difficulty properly discerning the truth. Creatively, we use our imagination and creativity to make idols. Relationally, we tend to love ourselves in selfish ways.

Do you believe the above observations underestimate, overestimate, or accurately describe the effects of the Fall? What do you believe is the solution to this?



Another consequence of the Fall is that all our basic relationships are now broken. Our relationship with God is broken because we are separated from God. Our relationships with other people are broken and this leads to interpersonal and societal dysfunction. Our relationship with the created order is broken and we can selfishly be poor stewards. Our relationship with ourselves is broken and we often find ourselves alienated from our identity in Christ.

Do you believe the above observations underestimate, overestimate, or accurately describe the relational brokenness caused by the Fall? Which broken relationship most speaks to you and why?

It's clear there are many negative and grave consequences to the Fall, including physical death, spiritual death, and relational death. Despite directly disobeying God and thus deserving the punishment of immediate death, God still gave Adam and Eve considerable grace in the Garden of Eden and later yielded all of us ultimate grace through Jesus.

When God witnessed Adam and Eve sin he did not condemn them directly and immediately punish them. Rather, God engaged Adam and Eve in conversation (Gen. 3:8-13). This is grace. God gave Eve the gift of being able to give birth, thereby allowing humans to continue to exist (Gen. 3:16). This is grace. God gave Adam the gift of being able to procure food and have nourishment to survive (Gen.3:17-18). This is grace. God gave clothes to Adam and Eve in their new found state of shame while being naked (Gen. 3:21). This is grace. God protected Adam and Eve from further harming themselves by preventing them from eating from the tree of life while in their fallen state (Gen. 3:22). This is grace.

The Fall prompted God to impose severe punishments upon Adam and Eve. Yet even while giving out these punishments, God simultaneously bestowed grace after grace upon Adam and Eve. What do you believe this says about God's character? Does this give you hope considering God's promise of grace for all of humanity?

REFLECTION: What's the most important question you still have about this section?

REFLECTION: What's the most important thing you learned in this section?

Despite directly disobeying God and thus deserving the punishment of immediate death, God still gave Adam and Eve considerable grace in the Garden of Eden and later yielded all of us ultimate grace through Jesus.



REDEMPTION

JESUS IS THE ATONEMENT FOR SIN TO REDEEM HUMANS TO GOD.

Jesus is God's Son sent to make a way for right relationship with God. The gospel - or good news - of Jesus is an atonement of his death, burial, and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins. Salvation is God's gift to us, but we must accept it. We need to repent, believe, and choose to follow Jesus as a response to God's free gift.

Genesis 3, John 1:29b, John 14:6, Romans 1:16-17, Romans 6:23

Gospel means good news. The good news is that God provides salvation to us through the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The theological term for this is atonement, which describes how the actions of Jesus allow us to have a right relationship with God. The word's meaning is at-one-ment, or the state of being at one or reconciled. A helpful way to think of atonement is that it enables humans to be at-one with God in the sense that Adam and Eve were at one with God in the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 3: The story of the Fall and God's redemption anticipated.

John 1:29b: The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

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

Romans 1:16-17: For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

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

Do you believe the Gospel is good news? If so, why? What does it mean to you to be at one with God?

Salvation is God's gift to us. This is difficult for most of us to accept because we feel the need to earn our salvation. We desire to do things in our own strength to please God and earn God's favor. We believe we can receive salvation by our own deeds instead of depending on God and accepting what He freely offers us. This lie is rooted in the selfishness we inherited at the Fall - a reliance upon ourselves. The Bible says, "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." (Eph. 2:8-9)



The good news is that God provides salvation to us through the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

The truth is, we are sinful, and any amount of sin separates us from a perfect God. The wages of sin is death (Ro. 6:23). Fortunately, Jesus was sinless. He took on our sins, died, and was resurrected. So, we do not need to strive to please God. In fact, striving is futile because we can never be perfect. We simply need to confess and repent of our sins and believe and follow Jesus. Salvation cannot be earned, but this gift must be accepted to have a right relationship with God.

Do you believe salvation is a gift that can only be received, not earned? Do you tend to try to earn salvation or God's favor? If so, how, and why? If not, why not?

As explained in our *Creation* section, humans were created in God's image as spiritual, moral, rational, creative, and relational beings. Yet the image of God in humanity was distorted through the Fall.

In looking at God's redemption we see Jesus reverse the order of the destruction caused by sin in the Garden of Eden. If we trust and follow Jesus, then God will save us and bring us into a right relationship with him. As a result, we are redeemed spiritually, morally, rationally, creatively, and relationally. Redemption is the cure to the death caused by sin.

The apostle Paul is a clear example of the redemptive power of Christ. As Saul, he approved the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:58, 8:1) and persecuted Christians to destroy the early church (Gal. 1:13). After an encounter with Jesus (Acts 9:1-6), his name was changed to Paul. His name, however, was not the only thing that changed. Paul became a completely new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). His old ways were abandoned and the zeal he formerly used against God became a tool God used to spread the Gospel all over the world. Those who knew Paul both before and after his conversion saw evidence of a completely changed man, one whose life had new purpose after his redemption by his Savior.

**"Salvation is not a reward for the righteous;
it is a gift for the guilty."**

Adrian Rogers

Have you witnessed redemptive power in Christians that you know? If so, what does it look like?

Do you believe you have experienced redemptive power in your life? If so, how?

Jesus is unique among all major figures in world religions. Rather than pointing followers to a path or way, Jesus claimed himself to be the way. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn. 14:6). Jesus did not try to convince others to go a way that he did not walk himself. Instead he often said, "Follow me." Jesus was accurately described as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29). No major religious figure (like Buddha, Confucius, or Muhammed) claimed anything remotely like this about themselves. See Appendix 10

Jesus's perfect life, his death, and his resurrection demonstrated Jesus was who he claimed to be. Jesus was God incarnate or God in human form, and the perfect sacrifice necessary to forgive our sins and provide a way to have a right relationship with God. See Appendix 11

What do you believe about Jesus? Was he a good moral teacher, or one of several ways to be reconciled to God? Or do you believe Jesus is the one and only way to be right with God? Why?



Some people believe all religions are simply different ways to get to the same God. Yet based on the claims made, it is impossible for all religions to be equally valid. There are some overlapping claims among religions such as stealing is wrong, or murder is bad. However, there are some claims, like central claims of Christianity, that simply cannot coexist with beliefs from other religions.

For example, a central claim of Christianity is Jesus is the son of God. The law of non-contradiction states that two opposite statements cannot both be true at the same time. For example, apples are fruit and apples are not fruit is a contradiction. Both opposite statements cannot be true. In the same way, the claim Jesus is the son of God is either true or false. It cannot be both true and false. If a core belief of Christianity is that Jesus is the son of God and a core belief of another religion is that Jesus is not the son of God, then it is not logically possible that both religions are true, only one of them can be true. Given what has been shared about Jesus so far, there's strong reason to believe Jesus is the son of God.

Do you believe that all religions are different ways to know the same God? Why or why not? Is it comforting or concerning to you that Christianity claims that Jesus is the only way to God the Father? Why?

WE BELIEVE AND THEN ARE BAPTIZED.

We first believe in Jesus to forgive our sins and then become baptized as a declaration of our decision to be his disciple. Baptism is a sign that we have been rescued from sin and death, given new life in Jesus, and the Holy Spirit resides in us.

Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Ephesians 2:8

If we believe, what is the appropriate response to the gospel? We are to confess who Jesus is with our mouth, repent of our sins, and choose to follow Jesus. The only requirement for salvation is to put our faith in Jesus and his saving work on the cross, to trust in him as our Savior and King. In short, we should receive the gift of salvation that Jesus presents to us.

Mark 16:16: Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Acts 2:38: Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

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.



What do you believe personally about this? Have you received the gift of salvation? Of the things mentioned (confession, repentance, faith, trust), which feels like a strong area for you? Which feels like a weak area?

If we believe, as a response we are invited to be baptized. ***Being baptized does not secure our salvation.*** Rather, everything needed for salvation is mentioned previously – simply to receive the free gift of salvation God offers us through Jesus. If baptism does not save us, why should we get baptized?

Baptism is practiced and modeled throughout the New Testament, from John the Baptist to Jesus' commanding disciples to baptize others in the Great Commission (Mk. 16:15-16). Baptism is one of the first steps of obedience a believer takes to demonstrate faith in Jesus.

What baptism looks like from church to church can vary greatly. Many people, for example, were baptized as infants, even if they do not now identify as Christians. If baptism is meant to be a declaration of faith, then it makes sense that the person being baptized needs to be capable of making that declaration. A staff member at our church was baptized as an infant in the Lutheran church but decided to follow Christ as a college student. At 21, she decided to be baptized publicly. This was a step of obedience for her. "Baptism is faith in action. It is an outward expression of an inward faith." Watchman Nee

What is your personal baptism experience? If you've recently accepted Jesus as your Savior, have you been baptized? Do you plan to be baptized in the future?

**“Baptism is faith in action.
It is an outward expression of an inward faith.”**
Watchman Nee

WE ARE MEMBERS OF JESUS' CHURCH.

Jesus promised that he would build his church. The church is the body and bride of Christ and a living temple where God dwells in each of His people. Everyone that has accepted salvation and been saved is a member of Christ's church and becomes a part of His body.

Matthew 16:15-18, John 17:20-26, 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, Galatians 3:28-29, 1 Peter 2:4-5

When people use the word church, they often refer to a place or building. Yet church is translated from the word ecclesia, which means gathering, assembly, or congregation. The church is not a building where we meet, and it is not what we do. The church is us, who we are. Church simply refers to the entire community of believers in Jesus.

How does this understanding of church compare with your current understanding of church?

Matthew 16:15-18: "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

John 17:20-26: Jesus prays for all believers.

1 Corinthians 12:12-14: Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Galatians 3:28-29: There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

1 Peter 2:4-5: As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

If church refers to the gathering of a group of believers who have accepted the gift of salvation offered by Jesus, then it is important to recognize who the head of the church is. The head of the church is not any congregation, denomination, pastor, or leader. Jesus is the head of the church (Col. 1:18). This helps us understand why in scripture the church is referred to as the body and bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-30, Rev. 19:7). The members of the church body work side by side to see the Kingdom of God made manifest here on earth (Eph. 4:16).

The church is not a building
where we meet, and
it is not what we do.
The church is us, who we are.



Unfortunately, people have been hurt in the church, which can make being in a church community difficult. In some ways, such hurt is unsurprising because church is a “hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints” (Pauline Phillips). Perhaps you have been hurt by a church community or someone within it. If so, we grieve with you, this is not the way things should be. Our desire is that you would find healing and reconciliation with Christ’s people, in the same way Christ desires that his church would be one (Jn 17:21).

Are you comfortable with Jesus being the head of the church? How do you explain the existence of hurt and disagreements within the church if Jesus is the head of the church?

WE HAVE A DIVINE MISSION.

God calls each one of us to join his purposes here on earth. We are called to build the Kingdom of God by making disciples. Our faith is lived out in actions of obedience to God. We must partner with the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing the Kingdom of God on this earth.

Matthew 28:18–20, Mark 16:15, Galatians 5:25, James 2:26

Every person who has placed their trust in Jesus matters to him. Profoundly. Deeply. Eternally. Our relationship as sons and daughters of Christ allows us to spend eternity with him and invites us into his Kingdom on this earth. God calls every member of his church to join his purpose and mission on earth here and now. This means intentionally building the Kingdom of God by making disciples. Does this mean every believer needs to be a pastor or a missionary in a foreign country? No. The Bible is clear that the body of the church is comprised of many distinct parts (1 Cor. 12:12–27). God works through us right where we are. We live out his mission in our families, neighborhoods, workplaces, and all other spheres of influence if we remain in him. As we remain in Jesus, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to partner effectively with God for his purposes on earth.

Matthew 28:18–20: 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.”

Mark 16:15: He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

Galatians 5:25: Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

James 2:26: As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Do you believe that you matter deeply to Jesus? What do you think about God having specific and significant purposes here on earth for you?

Often we wrestle with the idea that our lives are our own. We forget that we have chosen to follow Jesus and in doing so have decided to give our lives to fulfill his purposes. When we are adopted as a child of God we inherit the privilege of being a steward and ambassador for God. With great power and privilege comes great responsibility.

As a result of the Fall, our sinful hearts tempt us to pursue our own desires and plans. We tend to idolize freedom, which we define as the ability to think, say, and do whatever we please. It is common for us to push against the notion that our lives belong to Christ because this limits our freedom. Yet, paradoxically, the highest freedom we can experience is freedom in Christ which looks like lovingly and obediently following the will of God. It is in our best interest to submit to God's will above our own because God is a gracious Father who loves, cares, protects, provides, and gives his children good gifts. The highest freedom and joy possible for humanity is drawing near to God in obedience, through the power of the Holy Spirit, such that all our thoughts, words, and actions are in accordance with and empowered by God's will.

To what degree do you believe your life is your own and why? To what degree are you committed to living out the mission of Christ's kingdom on this earth?

REFLECTION: What is the most important question you still have about this section?

REFLECTION: What is the most important thing you learned in this section?

RESTORATION

CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN.

Christ will come to judge the living and the dead and to receive those who belong to Him. Those whom Christ has restored to right standing with the Father are welcomed in heaven.

John 14:1-3, Acts 3:21, Philippians 3:20-21, 2 Timothy 4:1, Hebrews 9:28

The story of God's Kingdom does not end with redemption on this earth. Instead, God's Kingdom will be restored. Hebrews 9:28 says, "Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him." Jesus will come again to the earth – his second coming. When Jesus returns, he will judge the living and the dead and receive those who belong to him.

Our culture tends to dislike the concept of judgment and prefers tolerance. Do you have any concerns about Jesus judging people when he returns? Why or why not?

John 14:1-3: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Acts 3:21: Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.

Philippians 3:20-21: But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

2 Timothy 4:1: In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge.

Hebrews 9:28: So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

At the second coming of Christ, Jesus will appear differently and with different purposes than his first coming. At Jesus' first coming, he came humbly as a suffering servant and sacrificial lamb. He was born as a baby and fulfilled the work he set out to do on the cross. He fulfilled many biblical prophecies about the Messiah in his birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection, but not all prophecies about Jesus were fulfilled during his first coming. The remaining unfulfilled prophecies about Jesus show us how Jesus will return in his second coming. He will come boldly, like a lion, with the armies of heaven at his side, as a conquering king. See Appendix 12



In his second coming he will come boldly, like a lion, with the armies of heaven at his side, as a conquering king.

The hope of Christ's second coming and his plan for restoration can impact us today. Philippians 3:20-21 states "...our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." This verse invites us to remember that this world is not our home. Today's pain is temporary. Christ will restore everything to its original design when he comes again. Knowing Christ will return for us should motivate us to continually draw near to him and live with hopeful anticipation of what is to come. We are not just waiting for him; we are eager for him. Christ's return gives us an urgency to participate in his mission, loving others well and inviting them to accept Jesus as their Savior.

What feelings rise in you when you consider Christ's coming again? Does your life reflect your eagerness for his second coming and the restoration of everything?

GOD ESTABLISHES A NEW CREATION.

When Christ returns, he will establish a new heaven and a new earth.

Isaiah 65:17, Isaiah 66:22, Romans 8:18-25, 2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21:1

The Bible does not tell us everything about how life will be after the second coming of Jesus, but it does give some details about the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1-22:6). In Revelation 21:5, Jesus says, "I am making everything new!" The Bible paints the new creation as earth as God originally intended – restored to Eden-like conditions. In the new creation, Jesus completely eradicates sin. Because sin is gone, God will again intimately dwell among his people. Due to the destructive effects of the Fall, we only have imperfect and mediated access to God today. Yet the results of the Fall will be wiped clean in the new creation and we will have direct access to God – presumably like what Adam and Eve had in the Garden of Eden.

Earth itself will be entirely different. Revelation says there will be no more sea, death, mourning, weeping, pain, curse, or night (Rev. 22:1-5). Night will not exist because God's presence will ceaselessly provide us with light. While a world with no sea or night is overwhelming, it's even more amazing to realize that death, mourning, weeping, pain, and sin are only temporary and will not exist in the new creation.

Isaiah 65:17: "See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.

Isaiah 66:22: "As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the Lord, "so will your name and descendants endure.

Romans 8:18-25: Suffering when compared to the new creation.

2 Peter 3:13: But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

Revelation 21:1: Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

We also know this new heaven will be diverse. There will be people from every tribe, language, people, and nation (Rev 7:9). While we can see God at work in the our area, or America, we know he is actively pursuing his people worldwide. When Jesus returns and restores the earth, we will worship alongside our brothers and sisters from every continent, experiencing unity where language and distance currently divide us.

Can you imagine what life might be like in the new creation? How does it make you feel to think sin and the effects of the fall are eradicated with restoration? What do you believe you will enjoy most dwelling with God?

PEOPLE WILL EXIST ETERNALLY WITH OR APART FROM GOD.

God's free gift of salvation is available for all who choose to put their trust in Jesus and follow him. Those who are saved will spend eternity with God. Those who do not choose to follow him will spend eternity apart from God.

Ecclesiastes 3:11, Matthew 25:41, John 3:16, 2 Corinthians 5:8

While spending eternity with God is an exciting possibility to imagine, the return of Jesus will usher in the possibility of spending an eternity apart from God. There are no other options. We spend eternity with God in heaven or without God in hell. The reality of hell makes many people uncomfortable and can raise objections like, "how can a good and loving God send people to hell?" Let's examine some frequent questions and objections to the concept of hell.

What if someone is good, but does not put their trust in Jesus

The problem with this objection is the assumption that there are good people. Recall that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Ro. 3:23) and "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ro. 6:23). Heaven is not for those who didn't sin too often or too severely. Heaven is for sinful-but-forgiven people, people who recognized their need for a savior and humbly accepted God's offer of forgiveness by placing their faith in Jesus.

Ecclesiastes 3:11: He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

Matthew 25:41: "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'

John 3:16: 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.

2 Corinthians 5:8: We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

God's free gift of salvation is available for all who choose to put their trust in Jesus and follow him.

If God is loving, how can he judge people at all?

This argument focuses on God's goodness and loving character but ignores that God's character is also just. God is loving, good, just, and holy – not just one of these things. God's love is a holy love and his love and judgement cannot be separated. Do you get upset when those you love suffer wrongs or injustice? Why? We desire justice because God invites us to be just like he is just. God, as holy and just, cannot simply overlook that hell is the rightful place for anyone who has ever sinned. Because all of humanity has sinned, we all deserve eternal separation from God. The only reason anyone receives eternal life with God instead of apart from him is because they placed their faith in Jesus, who took on their sins, paid the price, forgave them, and restored them as blameless before God.

If God is love how can he send people to hell?

Often, we think that those who do not go to heaven are *sent* to hell, but truthfully God does not actually send or force anyone to hell. It is more accurate to say that people choose to trust in Jesus or not trust in Jesus. If they decide to trust in Jesus, then they will go to heaven. If they do not trust in Jesus, then they will go to hell. We can choose to do God's will, or we can choose to do our own will, and God recognizes the consequences of our choice. Those in hell are not there passively; they have freely made a choice. It is because God is love that he both gives humanity a choice and a way back to him.

John 3:16-18 says "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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

Remember, God does not desire that anyone makes the choice to be apart from him. Jesus's sacrifice was at a great cost, a cost he determined was worth paying. In Ezekiel 33:11, the Lord says, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways to live." In 1 Timothy 2:4, God "wants all men to be saved." 2 Peter 3:9 says the Lord "is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." Like C.S. Lewis writes, "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says, in the end, "Thy will be done." All that are in hell, choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. Those who knock, it is opened."

See Appendix 19

Do you believe people choose heaven (eternity with God) or choose hell (eternity apart from God)?

Do you agree that God is both loving and just?

One thing to remember is that love requires free will. Have you ever witnessed someone loving another but the other not reciprocating this love? God cannot force us to love Him because love can only be given and received freely. God, who is love (1 Jn. 4:8), truly and deeply loves us. Therefore, God must allow us the freedom to choose not to love him – even if this is against his desire for us. Love without choice is not true love.

Since God is good and loving, then all his ways are good and loving, despite our opinion. If God is all-loving and all-good and also allows some people to go to hell, it follows that it's loving and good for God to let some people go to hell. This idea is still challenging for us to accept because we don't like the idea of people going to hell. Yet if we claim God is not loving or good because he allows some people to go to hell, then this implies we know more about love or goodness than God or we are more loving or good than God. Yet, we are not more knowledgeable, caring, or good than God. Therefore, despite our opinions, we must trust God's perfect plan, including hell.

Do you believe God is all-good and all-loving? Can you trust that his perfect plan allows some people to live apart from him for eternity? Does this motivate you to share God's love with others?

As Christ followers, one thing to examine is how we respond to people we love who have not yet chosen Christ. Considering loved ones who may not be on the path to heaven is a painful question without easy answers. The apostle Paul responded like this: "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers" (Ro. 9:2-3). Paul's reaction is extreme, but let's highlight two things. The thought of others being cut off from Christ caused Paul's heart great anguish, and the anguish Paul felt prompted him to want to do something about it. We cannot force others to follow or love God, but we can join God in his mission to seek and save the lost.



We cannot force others to follow or love God, but we can join God in his mission to seek and save the lost.

Do you struggle with the concept of hell? Does the possibility of people spending eternity apart from God motivate you to live out the mission? In what ways?

REFLECTION #1: What's the most important question you still have about this section?

REFLECTION#2: What's the most important thing you learned in this section?

MISSION

**“The church changes the world not by making converts,
but by making disciples.” John Wesley**

Over 40 years ago, a handful of young adults began reaching out on the streets and in bars in the Fox Valley to tell people about the God who loves them deeply. The street outreach led to a crisis hotline and many became new followers of Jesus. As they began pursuing healing and growth in Christ, they met weekly at Riverside Chapel and eventually became Christ The Rock Community Church. Our heart remains the same as it was in those first days. We want to share God’s story of love and redemption and make disciples who make more disciples of Jesus Christ.

See Appendix 13

This simple statement – to make disciples of Jesus – is the mission of Christ The Rock. This is the mission we invite you into as a church partner.

Have you ever watched the Mission: Impossible movies or a similar spy series or action movie? The characters in these dramas take their work very seriously. The music soars and your heart starts to pound as the heroes risk everything in pursuit of the mission. The fate of the world rests on their shoulders and they will do anything necessary to see their mission succeed. As a viewer you are on the edge of your seat, invested in the outcome because this isn’t just a job, a chore, or a duty – it’s a mission. A mission has vital importance.

You’ve probably never had to save the world but think of a time when you were “on a mission” to achieve something. Who sent you on that mission? What did you need to accomplish it? How did calling it a “mission” affect your perspective on it?



This simple statement
to make disciples of Jesus
is the mission of Christ The Rock.
This is the mission we invite you
into as a church partner.

A mission is not something you take lightly. It requires effort, intentionality, and planning. A mission carries great significance because the outcome matters; the mission must be accomplished. Our mission at CTR declares why we exist as a church. Christ The Rock exists to make disciples of Jesus. Disciple-making is a task we believe is of the highest importance. Why do we believe this mission is so important? It was given to us by Jesus himself.

**“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

These verses in the book of Matthew are known as the Great Commission. Jesus commissions his disciples to make disciples. He charges them with the command and empowers them by giving them his authority and presence in the mission.

How do you feel about making disciples knowing that Jesus gives us his authority to do so? Is it a comfort to you that Jesus' presence is with us always in the process of making disciples?

Do you see the word *mission* inside of *commission*? Our calling is quite literally a co-mission – a mission Jesus calls us to complete together, working with his power and presence and alongside one another as the church. A CTR partner commits to this mission and will work alongside Jesus and other partners in the body to see this mission realized.



If we are going to commit to the mission of making disciples, we need to be clear about what we mean by a disciple. Here is our definition of a disciple.

“A disciple is someone who is following Jesus, being changed by Jesus, and committed to the mission of Jesus.”

This definition comes from the words Jesus used to call his first disciples.

And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Matthew 4:19

In this short invitation Jesus captured the heart of a disciple with **three** characteristics.

The first part of Jesus’ invitation is “follow me.” **A disciple follows Jesus.** In becoming a follower of Jesus, we choose to commit our life to Christ’s authority, understanding that our life is not our own. We choose God’s ways over our own desires and follow God’s will for our life.

What does following Jesus look like? What does a follower of Jesus do?

The second part of Jesus’ invitation is “I will make you.” **A disciple is being changed by Jesus.** Jesus transforms, or makes, a disciple increasingly more like him. It is important to remember that being changed by Jesus is not a one-time event nor is it something for which you take charge. Becoming more Christ-like is a lifelong process and is led by the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life.

How has Jesus changed you? How is the work of the Holy Spirit still transforming you today?

Lastly Jesus' invitation gives us the mission of being changed "into fishers of people." **A disciple is committed to the mission of Jesus.** Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He deploys his people as ambassadors for the good news of who he is so that every person will have the chance to hear, repent and choose to follow him as a disciple.

What is the mission of Jesus, as stated in the Great Commission? What do you think it looks like for you to commit to the mission of making disciples?

Our mission is to make disciples who follow Jesus, are being changed by him, and who are committed to his mission of making disciples. So how do we do that? How do we make disciples?

The Intentional Life is how we realize and see our mission lived out at Christ The Rock. It is the lifestyle of a disciple that makes disciples. As you live the Intentional Life, you will see yourself following Jesus more closely, continually being changed by him, and living on mission for him.

"Discipleship is the art and science of helping people find, follow, and fully become like Jesus. Discipleship happens as God's people show love, share truth and live life with one another, making new disciples along the way."

Brandon Cox



THE INTENTIONAL LIFE

Have you ever tried to keep a New Year's resolution? Were you successful? The failure rate of New Year's resolutions is somewhere around 80%. So if you weren't successful, don't worry you're not alone. Most people who set a New Year's resolution desire to see something change in their lives but they are missing a plan, structure, or accountability. What 80% of resolution-makers find out every year is that wanting something to change isn't enough. It doesn't make you committed to the resolution. There must be intentionality for commitment to happen.

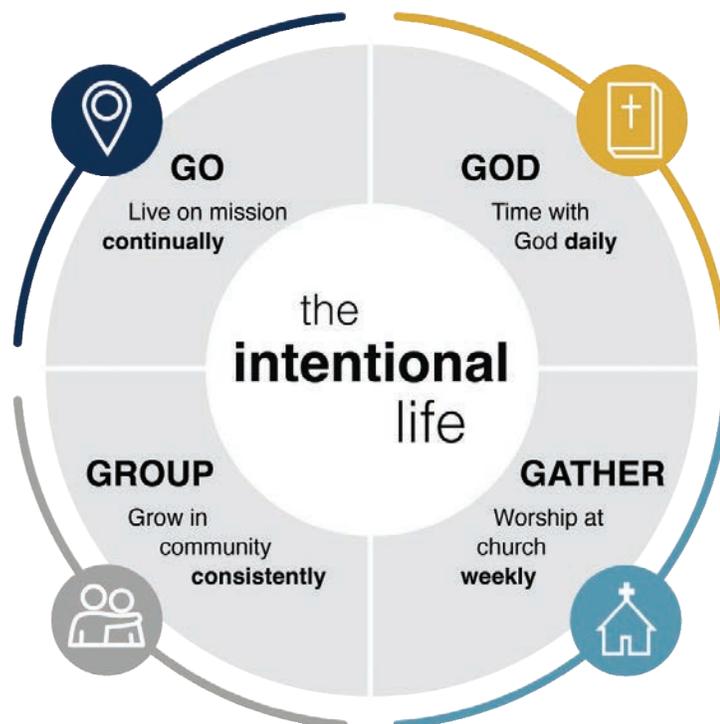
At Christ The Rock, our mission is to make disciples. Jesus commands us to do this in the Great Commission and defines *disciple* in his invitation in Matthew 4:19.

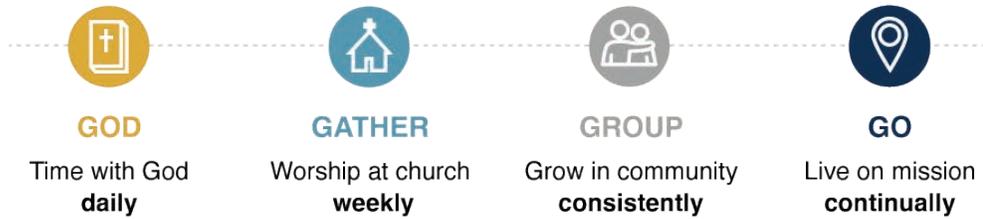
What are the three characteristics of a disciple?

A disciple is someone who _____ Jesus, is being _____

by Him, and is committed to the _____ of Jesus.

As we noted with resolutions, wanting something doesn't mean we're committed to getting it done. Becoming and making disciples requires intentionality. So, what does that look like? How can we be purposeful about living a life that makes disciples? The good news is we don't have to wonder, Jesus showed us the way. Jesus modeled a disciple-making lifestyle as he taught his disciples. The same simple practices that Jesus used can easily be incorporated into our lifestyle as disciples today. At Christ The Rock, we call this lifestyle shift The Intentional Life.





These 4 specific practices have served to grow Christ followers into mature disciples for over 2000 years. Research today supports what history has taught us. A recent Lifeway research study identified 8 core attributes for growing disciples by surveying 1000 pastors and 4000 followers of Jesus. When the 8 attributes are further distilled they become the 4 attributes of the Intentional Life. We believe these 4 practices will bring you into a closer relationship with Jesus and equip you to be a disciple who makes disciples. See Appendix 18

-  **GOD TIME** - Bible engagement and personal time spent with God
-  **GATHER TIME** - Regular attendance and participation in a local body of believers
-  **GROUP TIME** - Intentional discipleship in a relational group environment
-  **GO TIME** - Missional mindset, living the lifestyle of a Christ-follower in all aspects of life

Are any of these practices already a part of your walk with Christ? Do any seem unattainable or difficult?

GOD TIME

The first step in the Intentional Life is God Time. We ask disciples to devote at least 15 minutes daily to reading scripture and prayer. Why do we talk about God Time first? God Time is the foundation of the Intentional Life. My personal relationship with Jesus and walk with him must get my first fruit or my best attention. Without spending time with God, reading his word, and speaking with him through prayer, we cannot be effective disciples. Therefore, the foundation of the Intentional Life is abiding with God.



John 15:5 says “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” See Appendix 14, 15

Abide is not a word most of us have in our everyday vocabulary. Some translations of the Bible use the word “remain” in place of “abide.” To abide can also mean to live or to dwell within a place. If we are abiding in Christ, we remain in him and with him, living in him and with him, the same way the branch lives in and with the vine. Living the Intentional Life means we are intentional about spending time with Jesus every day, incorporating practices that help enable us to abide with him.

When do you feel most connected to Christ? What spiritual disciplines help you remain in him throughout your day? What ways do you desire to grow in abiding?

Jesus modeled abiding for us in his relationship with the Father and then with his followers. He frequently made time to spend with God meditating on scripture and praying. Consider these examples in scripture.

**And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark,
he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. Mark 1:35**

**And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.
When evening came, he was there alone. Matthew 14:23**

**But he answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:4**

Scripture and prayer are not the only elements Jesus used to spend time with the Father. We can see in the verses above that when Jesus prayed, he withdrew to desolate places for silence and solitude. Silence and solitude are practices that can enable us to hear the voice of God. We must invest time in pursuing God and hearing his voice to know his will and direction in our lives.

**If we are abiding in Christ, we remain in him and with him, living in him
and with him, the same way the branch lives in and with the vine.**

Do you spend time listening to God in silence and solitude? If so, how often? Do you ask God for his will and direction in your life? What does that look like?

Another spiritual practice that Jesus modeled was fasting (Matthew 4:1-11). Fasting is to purposefully abstain from food (or some other item or activity) with the intention of developing a deeper connection with God. When we fast, something is removed from our sight so we can focus more clearly on hearing God's voice. The physical hunger of fasting reminds us of our spiritual hunger for God.

"That's what I think fasting is at heart. It's an intensification of prayer. It's a physical exclamation point at the end of the sentence, "We hunger for you to come in power." It's a cry with your body, "I really mean it, Lord! This much, I hunger for you." John Piper



Why do you think fasting draws us into deeper connection with God? What type of fasting brings about the deepest hunger for God in you?

A fifth practice to include in your God Time is worship. Jesus told the woman at the well, "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). The temptation to focus inwardly during God Time can be immense. I pray for things that I want, fast for an outcome that I desire, and read Bible passages that I hope will speak to me. In worship, our focus turns outward, and we fix our eyes entirely on the only one worthy of worship and praise.



When used together, these five practices: scripture reading, prayer, silence and solitude, fasting, and worship, can transform your God Time into a time of deep connection. What practices do you typically include in your God Time? What would you like to start incorporating more often?

While many imagine God Time sitting in a chair with a cup of coffee and an open Bible, not all personalities find success that way. You may exercise God Time by making your morning commute a sacred time, worshiping while you fold laundry and do the dishes, praying at night before you fall asleep or starting a devotional with your family around the dinner table.

Regardless of how you spend time with God, abiding is a spiritual discipline (root word being “disciple”) that takes an active decision on our part to step into and prioritize. There is a spiritual battle for our time and attention, and many things can take our focus off what is most important. We must remember God is asking us to surrender our lives to him. Surrender starts with daily submission to him as the Lord of our life and intentionally connecting with him.



What are the obstacles that are keeping you from God Time? What distractions are fighting for your attention?

Regardless of how you spend time with God, abiding is a spiritual discipline (root word being “disciple”) that takes an active decision on our part to step into and prioritize.

We also need to ensure we are not just “punching the clock” to our 15 minutes with God. God Time is not an item to check off the list but a practice that gives life. We don’t want you to be limited to just 15 minutes a day either. If you are beginning the habit of God Time, 15 minutes is a great starting point. As you mature as a disciple and learn to abide with Christ, you can, should, and will want to spend more time with God daily.

So how can we know if we are genuinely abiding or just going through the motions? We should see the fruit of the Spirit become evident in our lives. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” Galatians 5:22-23

As we spend time with God, we become more Christ-like, and our hearts will become aligned with the heart and will of Christ. Abiding with Christ is the first step in becoming a mature disciple who makes disciples of Jesus.

Write out your plan (or current practice) for devoting 15 minutes daily to prayer and the Word. Consider when and where you will spend time with God, what practices you will use and how you will deal with distractions and interruptions.

GOD TIME REFLECTION:
I will abide in the
Father to produce fruit.
Apart from Christ’s work
in me, I can do nothing.
I will be sustained for
God’s purposes if I give
my time to him.





GATHER TIME

Consider your family and close friends. How often do you get together with them? What do you do when you are together? Why is it important for you to continue meeting with them? The second step in the Intentional Life is Gather Time. This is the time we spend every week worshipping in community with other believers. We gather as the body of believers for worship, teaching of the Word, unity and encouragement, and to exercise our gifts within the body. Mature disciples who make other disciples prioritize gathering weekly. They follow Jesus' example as Jesus made worshipping in community a priority. See Appendix 16

“He (Jesus) went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day, he went into the synagogue, as was his custom.” Luke 4:16



What benefits do you see in the corporate gathering time? Why do you think Jesus modeled gathering with the church?

We gather as the body of believers for worship, teaching of the Word, unity and encouragement, and to exercise our gifts within the body.



The early church modeled how and why we should gather as a community of believers. Acts 2:42-47 says “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”



The early church meeting together led to the multiplication of disciples. Churches today exist because the early disciples committed to worship, teaching of the Word, and fellowship. The early church modeled themselves after the Old Testament community of Jews who gathered weekly to honor the commandment God gave on Mount Sinai to keep the Sabbath holy (Exod. 20:8).

While practicing Sabbath can be part of our personal time spent with God, it is also a practice we can do in community. It is intentional rest to remind us our worth does not come from what we do but rather who we are in Christ. Gathering with the church can be part of a sabbath day, or a day set aside to rest and honor God.

Do you practice the sabbath? Is Sunday a day you intentionally rest or is there a different day you practice sabbath?

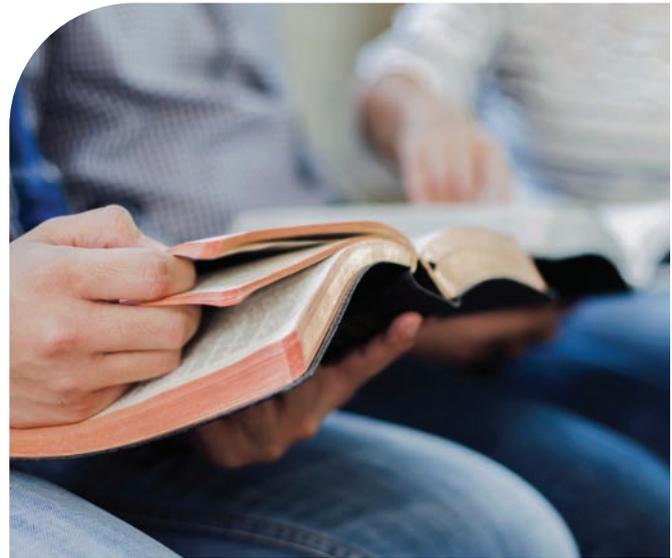
There are many reasons the gathering of believers is important in the life of a disciple. The first reason we gather is for a time of worship. Psalm 22:22 says “I will declare your name to my people; in the assembly, I will praise you.”

While individual worship is a part of our God Time, corporate worship is crucial to Gather Time. Scripture tells us where people gather in Jesus’ name, he is there in the midst of them (Matt. 18:20). We can praise and experience God together in a way we cannot on our own. The Holy Spirit joins us in a powerful way when we choose to worship in unity and God is glorified by us standing together in praise.



Have you ever been moved by the Spirit during worship at church? How was the experience impacted by being present with a large group of believers?

Gathering is a time to hear and receive the teaching of the Word. As we see in Acts 2:42, the disciples devoted themselves to the apostles teaching. At Christ The Rock, our community meets on Sunday mornings to engage the Bible through reading and teaching. Hebrews 4:12 says God's word is living and active. His word penetrates our hearts and moves within us to instruct and convict. While studying the Bible is part of daily God Time, in Gather Time, we share a common experience with fellow believers in hearing biblical teaching and instruction together.



Why do you think scripture encourages us to gather together to hear the teaching of the Word? Can you think of a recent time that the Bible has felt living and active to you?

... in **Gather Time**, we share a common experience with fellow believers in hearing biblical teaching and instruction together.

Gathering as a body of believers is important for establishing unity and for fellowship. Hebrews 10:24-25 says “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Walking the Christian life alone is difficult if not impossible since God did not create us to be alone. The early church in Acts 2 shows us the importance of community. We can experience the goodness of fellowship and friendship when we meet regularly. We can learn from each other (Romans 15:14), love each other (Romans 12:10), and hold each other accountable (Ephesians 4:32). We are more likely to be a unified force for fulfilling the mission of Jesus in our community when we do not give up on being together.



Can you think of a time when you experienced love, friendship, or accountability from a fellow believer at a weekly service? Does it encourage you to gather and build relationships with those on mission with you?

Another purpose for gathering is to bring together the gifts of the body and encourage one another. 1 Corinthians 14:26 says “What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.”

In his infinite wisdom, God designed each of us differently, with unique gifts, talents, and abilities that make up the church. Each of our God-given wirings are purposeful to see the mission of Christ fulfilled. In meeting weekly, we can bring our gifts together, spur one another on and encourage each other, and form a more complete picture of the bride of Christ. In sharing our gifts with one another we become a unified and strengthened body, complementing one another in our strengths and weaknesses, and becoming more equipped to complete the task of bringing the gospel to a lost world.



What gifts, talents, or abilities do you have? How have you, or how can you in the future, use these to support the mission of Christ and encourage other believers?

Weekly gathering as the church is an integral part of living the Intentional Life. Jesus practiced gathering, the early believers gathered, and the historical church at large has always prioritized coming together for worship, teaching, and fellowship. Attending and participating in the weekly gathering is a spiritual discipline. Do you see the word disciple as the root word in discipline? A discipline requires planning and intentionality as we saw when we examined God Time. As a Christ follower and a CTR Partner, we encourage you to prioritize Gather Time as a regular rhythm of your week and a commitment in your life as a disciple.

What things hold you back from gathering weekly for Sunday services? How can you and your family prioritize weekly church attendance? Are there any changes you need to make to your current routine?



GATHER TIME REFLECTION:

I am a part of the Body of Christ and called to do my part to see the body built up. I will be encouraged, inspired, and taught in the gathering time to grow my knowledge of God and his purposes.



GROUP TIME

Christian life is the disciplined life and the discipling life. ... It is for a people traveling together down the narrow path that leads to life. You must follow, and you must lead. You must be loved, and you must love. And we love others best by helping them to follow Jesus down the pathway of life.

Mark DeVe

Our mission at Christ The Rock is to make disciples of Jesus. A disciple is someone who follows Jesus, is being changed by Jesus, and is committed to the mission of Jesus. The process of becoming a disciple who makes more disciples, is called discipleship.

Discipleship Groups are the vehicle to hold disciples accountable for living the intentional life that Jesus modeled. Discipleship groups may look slightly different or similar to the small groups or Bible studies you have experienced, but they are the consistent community in the church to grow mature followers of Jesus and disciple-makers. As a CTR Partner we invite you to grow in community consistently by being part of a Discipleship Group. See Appendix 17



Have you ever participated in a Bible study group or a small group? What was the purpose of the group? How did being part of that group help you to grow?

In living the Intentional Life you commit to participating in Group Time. While the Gathering Time on Sunday morning is an opportunity for fellowship with the body at large, Group Time has a different purpose. In being part of a Discipleship Group, disciples connect to form deeper relationships, spend time in dialogue about God's Word, and learn to apply what the Spirit of God is teaching them as individuals. Our Discipleship Groups are modeled after Jesus' disciple-making and include the following: a Biblical Foundation, an Intentional Leader, a Relational Environment, and a Reproducible Process. We believe these components are essential for making disciples and we encourage our whole church family to be connected in a Discipleship Group community.

A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

We believe the Bible transforms our minds and renews our spirits into more Christ-likeness. Discipleship Groups use the Bible as its curriculum and build a foundation on understanding and applying the Word. In Discipleship Groups participants learn to share the Bible as story so that the words of scripture are hidden in our hearts and useful in day-to-day interactions. Participants apply what the Bible says to their personal lives and practice obedience to the Word in practical ways. The commitment to gathering with the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and the people of God builds a strong foundation for discipleship and helps equip disciples to live out what they read and learn in scripture.



“Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.” Psalm 1:1-3

How comfortable are you sharing what the Word is teaching you with others? To what degree do you use the Bible as your foundation for life?

AN INTENTIONAL LEADER

We teach and train intentional leaders, modeling that training after Jesus’ intentionality with his disciples. Jesus was intentional with his time, his conversations, and his challenges for those following Him. In the same way, disciple-makers invest in the people in the group, intentionally pointing them to Jesus and challenging them to grow. An intentional leader looks for where the Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of those they are leading, partnering with what God is doing in each person. Each leader uses the same Reproducible Process of disciple-making so group members become disciples who mature and make disciples.



Consider if someone has ever intentionally disciplined you. In college, I met a friend who offered to disciple me. She saw that I was shy, introverted and had only accepted Christ a few short months before, so she intentionally led me toward growth. She would show up unannounced at my dorm room, frequently invite me to dinners at her home and was never afraid to ask tough questions. She patiently answered the questions I had and as I grew, she encouraged me to serve in an on-campus ministry so I could use my gifts and abilities there. By the time I graduated from college, I was ready to be an intentional leader and disciple-maker myself because she invested in me and showed me how.

Who has intentionally invested in you during your walk as a disciple? How did they pursue you? How did they challenge you to grow?

A RELATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Jesus modeled discipleship inside of relationships, not apart from them. We are relational in Discipleship Groups by modeling authenticity, mutual accountability, safety, and meeting one another's needs within the group. These relational characteristics are life-giving, but they can also be scary. We don't always like being vulnerable, having others hold us accountable, or admitting that we need help. However, without this essential relational environment the group remains superficial. When authentic connection does not happen, growth stops in its tracks. When we balance the challenge of authenticity and fighting for relationship with the love, care, and commitment to meeting one another's needs and actively being the body of Christ for one another, the group will grow and flourish.



A married couple in a Discipleship Group were both struggling with some deeply personal things and were embarrassed to share them with the group. Led by the prompting of the Spirit, they courageously shared their struggles with the group and watched God minister to them through their group. The group responded gracefully because they were safe people who loved them. They came around the couple and surrounded them with prayer. They challenged them bravely, sharing that the couples' attempt to deal with the pain on their own had led to them distancing themselves from the rest of the group. Because their group was a relational environment, they were able to bring something into the light that the enemy wanted to keep in darkness.

The love of a community of disciples is transformational and sharpening for our journey as a believer. “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” (Proverbs 27:17)

What does it take for you personally to feel safe, be vulnerable, and be authentic with what is going on in your heart? How comfortable are you asking for help or being held accountable?

A REPRODUCIBLE PROCESS

Discipleship Group leaders use a process to lead called Share, Connect, Minister, Disciple (SCMD). Discipleship is a journey of maturing in faith, just like our bodies develop physically, so our spirits grow to become more mature in Christ. Through the SCMD process, leaders invest intentionally by assessing where a person is spiritually, partnering with the Holy Spirit, and giving them what they need to grow beyond their spiritual stage. As group members experience this process, they are equipped to turn around and do for others what their leader did for them. This reproducible process creates disciples who are equipped to make more disciples.

Jesus proclaimed the importance of this process when he gave the disciples the Great Commission before ascending to heaven. “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 28:19-20)



Jesus gave his disciples a biblical foundation, served them by being an intentional leader, and provided them with a relational environment. When they were ready, he told his disciples to go and teach others everything he had commanded. His time on the earth was complete and the mantle of responsibility now rested on his disciples to bring the message to the world, using the same process Jesus himself had modeled.

Why is Group Time so essential to us? Small group discipleship was Jesus' strategy for making disciples. He led in a relational environment, trained them in what they needed to know before he left the earth, and handed off the mission. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we can carry on the mission of Jesus today by making disciples of Jesus with his methods.

Are you currently part of a Discipleship Group? If not, what is holding you back? Ask God to show you what your obstacles might be. Pray for the desire to commit to Group Time.

If you are currently in a group, how has this group spurred you on to growth? Do you feel a tug at your heart to begin to learn how to become a disciple-maker yourself? If you are interested in becoming a Discipleship Group leader, Christ The Rock will train you in this reproducible process.

GROUP TIME REFLECTION:

I will remain in discipling relationships consistently to be held accountable to trusting God and living in obedience to the purposes he has for me.



GO TIME

“Making disciples of Jesus is the overflow of the delight in being disciples of Jesus.”

David Platt

We have seen Jesus model the Intentional Life for his disciples and we can follow him as we pursue God Time, Gather Time, and Group Time. These practices, used together, grow disciples of Jesus. However, God calls us to more than personal growth. If we maintain the inward focus on becoming a mature disciple and do not carry it forward into making disciples, then we have left the Great Commission unfulfilled. Christ calls us to look beyond ourselves and live a discipleship lifestyle consistent with the mission of making disciples. The Bible says, “Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the Word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.” (James 1:22-24)



The final component of the Intentional Life is Go Time. Go Time is living a life on mission. It is denying ourselves and choosing daily and in each moment to follow Jesus. We remember we are ambassadors in God’s kingdom and bearers of the good news of Jesus wherever our two feet are. In living the life of a disciple we live on mission continually by demonstrating and proclaiming the love of Jesus.

In your own words, define what it means to demonstrate and proclaim. What is the difference between the two?

... we are ambassadors in God’s kingdom and bearers of the good news of Jesus wherever our two feet are.

Demonstration is the outward behavior of a missional lifestyle, while *proclamation* is using words to live missionally.

We continually *demonstrate, or show*, the love of Jesus through our *character* and our *conduct*. Our character is the essence of who we are. We show Jesus by reflecting Christ-likeness in our character, living by the Spirit instead of the flesh. We can only live this way through the work of the Spirit in our hearts as we willingly submit to him. As we are transformed others can observe the changes in our character. We are continually on mission, living the intentional life of a disciple by exuding the attributes of Jesus in our lives.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” 2 Corinthians 5:17

“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” Ephesians 4:22-24

Can you think of someone you know who exudes the character of Christ? What does this person do to demonstrate to the world that they are his disciple?

Conduct is *what* I do because of *who* I am. My actions flow from who I am in Christ, my character. We show Jesus to the world by conducting ourselves in the manner Christ would, by doing what Christ would do. A disciple living on mission offers Jesus to others by how they respond, think, and act. This results in the disciple considering the areas in which they can serve, give and show Jesus’ love. Their conduct reflects how they use their time, talents, and resources to make Christ known and to build his kingdom on earth. We are continually on mission living the Intentional Life of a disciple through our actions.

“Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” Philippians 1:27

“In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” James 2:17



As humans, we fall short of Christ's perfection regularly. Philippians 3:12-14 reminds us that even Paul, an apostle and author for so much of the New Testament, never achieved complete Christ-likeness. Instead, he encourages us, saying, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." We will fail as we seek to have our conduct match our character. When that happens, there is repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation with anyone we have harmed, and a calling to continue toward Christ.

Are your character and conduct consistent in all areas of your life? If someone were to see you in action outside of church, would you be displaying the character of Christ? Would you be doing the things Christ would do? Do you embrace God's grace and continue toward Christ when you fall short?

We continually *proclaim, or share*, the love of Jesus through the *Gospel* and our *testimony*. Proclamation means to use words to shout out a message of good news! We must keep our eyes open for opportunities to have meaningful conversations with others about the Gospel and our testimony. "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." (1 Peter 3:15)



We define the Gospel at Christ The Rock as *the Good News of Jesus Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation*. The Gospel is how we describe to others the story of scripture, the problem of sin, and how Jesus was the perfect fulfillment of God's plan for redemption. As ambassadors for Christ, we watch for opportunities to share the Gospel. We earn the right to share the Gospel and our testimony by demonstrating Christ-likeness through our character and conduct. The words we use are meaningless if our lives do not reflect the truth we share.

What happens if I share the Gospel, but my character and conduct do not support that message? Why do my character and conduct need to be in harmony?

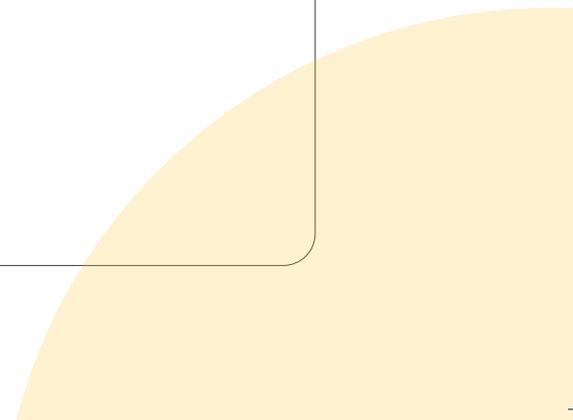
We define our testimony as *where our story intersects with God's story*. Your testimony is your personal experience of how the Gospel of Jesus has changed you. Consider answering these questions: What led you to believe you needed Jesus? What's different now that you've decided to follow Jesus? You can also think about your testimony in three parts:

- Your life before Christ
- Your life when you heard and received the Gospel
- Your life after accepting Christ



These elements present the good news of Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God, and salvation on a personal, relatable level. Our testimony gives confirmation that the Gospel is living and active today. Our testimony will reflect how our character and conduct have changed and continue to change, by Christ's work in our lives. If we live on mission, we are in a constant state of readiness to share the love of Jesus and God's redemption in our lives with those God puts in our path.

What is your testimony? Write out some key points here using the three parts.



Often we fall into the trap of thinking we must be sitting in a coffee shop, locked in a serious, pre-scheduled conversation, to share the Gospel or our testimony. However, God schedules divine appointments for us all the time without checking our calendars or expectations first. The cashier at the grocery store? God lays a verse on your heart to share with her. The guy sitting next to you on an airplane? Instead of putting on your headphones, you could engage with him in conversation. Living on mission means we are considering our opportunities to represent Christ and his kingdom wherever the Spirit leads.



Have you ever shared the Gospel or your testimony with someone? Have you ever felt convicted after you missed an opportunity? How can you continually seek opportunities to share Jesus?

When we engage in God Time, Gather Time, and Group Time, our character and conduct grow, and our knowledge of the Gospel and our testimony deepens. But the Intentional Life doesn't stop there. Disciples will demonstrate and proclaim the love of Jesus like Jesus did. Jesus lived out the Great Commission before he gave it to us. When we demonstrate Christ-like character and conduct and proclaim his good news, the world around us takes notice.

Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear the Gospel or your testimony? Practice sharing your testimony with someone close to you, even if they have heard it before. How can you demonstrate the love of Jesus in your actions this week?

GO TIME REFLECTION:

I will live continually on mission as a disciple of Christ, demonstrating and proclaiming the love of Jesus to partner with God's purposes. I will use my time, talents, resources, and areas of influence to build the kingdom.

REVIEW

1. A disciple is someone who _____ Jesus, is being _____ by Him, and who is _____ to the mission of Jesus.
2. What is the mission of Christ The Rock, given to us by Jesus in the Great Commission?
To _____.
3. What is the basis for the Intentional Life?
We practice the Intentional Life because _____ modeled it for us.
4. In your own words, summarize each of the four components of the Intentional Life. What is the time commitment of each one? What do you do as you practice each one? Which area(s) do I need to be more intentional about practicing?

GOD TIME:

GATHER TIME:

GROUP TIME:

GO TIME:

COMMISSION

We are so glad you have taken this partnership journey with us. We have shared what we believe in as Christ followers, our mission of making disciples of Jesus and how we fulfill our mission in living the Intentional Life of a disciple. Hopefully you have had a chance to ask your questions in considering what this commitment means. We ask you now to partner with us by making the choice to live the Intentional Life of a disciple.

What does it mean to be a Christ The Rock Partner?

A CTR Partner is someone who has received God's free gift of salvation, agrees with our Biblical Statement of Faith and commits to live out the mission to make disciples of Jesus by living the Intentional Life. In committing to be a CTR Partner we ask you to declare your agreements with the following statements:

- I believe the Bible is God's inspired Word to us.
- I believe God is eternal.
- I believe God is three in One.
- I believe God created the heavens and the earth.
- I believe God created humanity in his image.
- I believe God created us to be stewards of his creation.
- I believe humans sinned and separated themselves from God.
- I believe Jesus is the atonement for sin to redeem humans to God.
- I believe we are to believe and then be baptized.
- I believe we are members of Jesus' church.
- I believe we have a divine mission.
- I believe Christ will come again.
- I believe God will establish a new creation.
- I believe people will exist eternally with or apart from God.



In choosing to be a CTR Partner you acknowledge you have received God's gift of salvation and commit to live as his Disciple.

- I believe that God the Son, who is Jesus Christ lived a sinless life, was crucified for our sins, and resurrected on the third day defeating sin and death.
- I believe Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Christ, Savior and King of Kings who brings his Kingdom in and through our lives.
- I believe I am saved by grace through faith, not of my own works.
- I have repented of my sin and confessed Jesus as Lord turning from my ways to follow Jesus as Lord and King.
- I will continue to repent and confess my sins as I grow and am transformed more into Christ-likeness.
- I choose, or have chosen, to be baptized as a result of my faith and as a physical symbol of this spiritual reality.
- I choose to live as an ambassador and citizen of the Kingdom, as a disciple and a son or daughter of God.
- I choose to live a life of generosity in being a good steward of all God has entrusted to me; my time, finances, resources, skills and giftings, and to use my unique part in the body for Kingdom purposes.

In choosing to be a CTR Partner I commit to live the Intentional Life of a Disciple.

- I choose to intentionally practice God Time by daily spending a minimum of 15 minutes reading the Word and in prayer.
- I choose to intentionally participate in Gather Time by attending the Sunday service weekly and participating in worship and hearing the teaching of the Word.
- I choose to intentionally participate in Group Time by consistently leading or participating in a Discipleship Group to grow as a disciple and disciple-maker of Jesus.
- I choose to intentionally practice Go Time by continually demonstrating and proclaiming the love of Jesus.

I agree with these statements and commit to seeing God's purposes fulfilled through this local church by living the Intentional Life of a disciple of Jesus. In declaring this, you are commissioned as a Partner of Christ The Rock Community Church.

Signature _____ Date _____

GETTING STARTED

You may think you want to commit as a Partner at CTR, but there are changes you will need to make to live the lifestyle of a disciple. If so, we understand! We invite you to participate in being a CTR Partner and take your next step in living the Intentional Life. We know that lifestyle change does not happen overnight and we will all continue to grow in deeper understanding and commitment to Christ and his purposes for our life. We invite you to partner with us and one step at a time, be challenged to grow in greater investments of time and commitment as a disciple of Jesus.

Consider these examples in getting started:



Start by spending 15 min with *GOD DAILY*.

If you are abiding occasionally start by building that habit. Try establishing a committed time to read the bible. Practice active and listening prayer.



Be intentional about coming to *GATHER WEEKLY*.

Look at scheduling changes or activities that challenge your participation in Sunday services and make habit and lifestyle changes to grow in making church a priority. Encourage those you know in the church to make this commitment with you.



Look at making margin in your life for Discipleship *GROUP CONSISTENTLY*.

What day and time weekly or bi-weekly could you participate in a Discipleship Group? Consider being trained to be a leader for a discipleship group. Eliminate things that compete with prioritizing intentional discipleship in a relational environment.



Examine how your life can reflect the mission and you can *GO CONTINUALLY*.

Practice sharing your testimony with family and friends. Look for opportunities to share the gospel and practice sharing the gospel in your Discipleship Group. Examine what areas of your life you look like Jesus and what areas people would not think of you as a Christ-follower. Look for ways to be the hands and feet of Jesus, showing his love by meeting needs and going above and beyond. Remember God has strategically placed you where you are for his kingdom purposes.

→ Scan QR code to sign and reply:
'I'm committing to live the Intentional Life.'



We encourage you to keep this workbook as a reference guide and a reminder of what we believe, what the mission is, and how we commit to living as a Partner at CTR.

APPENDIX

Statement of Faith

https://www.christtherock.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Christ-The-Rock_Statement-of-Faith.pdf

Supplemental Resources

1. Jesus' perspective on scriptures

- What did Jesus say about the reliability of the Bible?
(<https://www.newyorkapologetics.com/what-did-jesus-say-about-the-reliability-of-the-bible/>)
- Why is the Bible reliable? | Tim Keller at Columbia University
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZAPFKXMy_Y)

2. Historical evidence for the scriptures

Is the Bible truly God's Word? (<https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-God-Word.html>)

3. God inspired the writing of scripture

What does it mean that the Bible is inspired? (<https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-inspired.html>)

4. God is eternal

What does it mean that God is eternal? (<https://www.gotquestions.org/eternal-God.html>)

5. God is three in one

- What does it mean that the Trinity is God in three Persons?
(<https://www.gotquestions.org/God-in-three-persons.html>)
- The Trinity & God's Identity Podcast | BibleProject™
(<https://bibleproject.com/podcast/theme-god-e21-trinity-gods-identity/>)

6. God created the heavens and the earth

Evolution vs. God (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0u3-2CGOMQ>)

7. God created humanity in his image

- What is a Christian Worldview? TRUELIFE (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hkepw1xh3KQ&t=144s>)
- Is Genesis Just One of the Many Creation Myths? (https://breakpoint.org/is-genesis-just-one-of-the-many-creation-myths/?_hsmi=243853280&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--uNS9eVQf_sEf5fjRxr9FH9zvePA5f22M-LDAtGyrABaJTBp_6RvJ7UobZDeXcZyXxaU_8H5hURTI6EWe5k6LynMUxZDMi7euMsAGUXq0h30I70c)
- Biblical Sexuality (<https://cbmw.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/The-Nashville-Statement.pdf>)
- Summaries of the Egalitarian and Complementarian Positions (<https://cbmw.org/2007/06/26/summaries-of-the-egalitarian-and-complementarian-positions/>)

8. Is the Adam and Eve story to be understood literally?

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/Adam-and-Eve-story.html>)

9. How did the Fall affect humanity?

(<https://www.gotquestions.org/fall-affect-humanity.html>)

10. **Did Jesus really exist? Is there any historical evidence of Jesus Christ?**
(<https://www.gotquestions.org/did-Jesus-exist.html>)
11. **The Resurrection of Jesus: Fact or Ancient Fiction?**
N.T. Wright (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cz2010d_Xe4)
12. **What are the New Heavens and the New Earth?**
(<https://www.gotquestions.org/new-heavens-earth.html>)
13. **I am an atheist. Why should I consider becoming a Christian?**
(<https://www.gotquestions.org/new-heavens-earth.html>)
14. **How to Have a Quiet Time - Bible Time | How to Do Devotions**
(<https://www.thenivbible.com/blog/quiet-time-god/>)
15. **How to Read the Bible Overview**
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plSNlwhAn5o&t=35s>)
16. **Does a Christian have to attend every service a church has?**
(<https://www.gotquestions.org/church-service.html>)
17. **What is the value of group Bible study?**
(<https://www.gotquestions.org/group-Bible-study.html>)
18. **What practices help Christians grow?**
(<https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/transformational-research-attributes-of-growing-disciples>)
19. **C.S Lewis on Heaven and Hell**
(<https://cbmw.org/2007/06/26/summaries-of-the-egalitarian-and-complementarian-positions/>)

Citations

- Real-Life Discipleship Training Manual: Equipping Disciples Who Make Disciples, by: Jim Putman, Bill Krause, Avery Willis, Brandon Guindon | Concepts of Biblical Foundation, Intentional Leader, Relational Environment, and Reproducible Process (SCMD) | pg. 69 - 71
- A Christian Worldview, Ways we are like God by: Dr. Bruce Ashford | pg. 27
- Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by: Biblica, Inc.® All rights reserved worldwide.

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