



Jesus never intended for His followers to stay stagnant. On the contrary, He said His followers in His kingdom would grow. We're being built into a Temple of which He's the cornerstone (**Ephesians 2:20-22**). We're called to bear fruit (**John 15:1-5**). His kingdom is growing like a seed into a tree (**Matthew 13:31-32**).

And we know this. All of us are in the process of becoming more or less of something. As Christians, what is it that we should be growing into, and how can we take steps to grow in that way?

GROW is intended to help point you in the direction of Christlike growth by giving you some tools that will help you grow in your knowledge of and relationship with God.

GROW is broken up into six sessions, each of which focuses on learning more about God but also putting that knowledge into action. As we grow in our faith, it is very important that we grow in both head and heart. In other words, what we know must always be connected to what we do.

SESSION 1 | *The Bible (Part One)*

- What is it?
- How is it organized?
- What does it say about itself?
- What's the point?

SESSION 2 | *The Bible (Part Two)*

- How did we get it?
- Can we have confidence in it?
- What about extra books and all the translations?

SESSION 3 | *The Gospel—Good News for Lost People*

- What actually is the Gospel?
- How does the good news become good news for me?
- What is true of me because of the Gospel?
- How does the Gospel become my motivation?

SESSION 4 | *The Gospel—Good News for Saved People*

- What does it mean that God saves me?
- How is my salvation both a past, present and future reality?
- How does the Gospel free me from sin?

SESSION 5 | *The Triune God*

- What is the Trinity?
- Where do we see “Trinity” in the Bible?
- Why does it matter?

SESSION 6 | *The Whole Story*

- What story are we telling?
- Where are we in the story?
- Where does the story end?

HOW TO USE THE GROW CURRICULUM

Each of the six sessions of Grow includes a video which introduces the topic in detail, as well as a corresponding section in this booklet. Each section is divided into the following parts:

While You Watch

- Quotations of note
- Scripture related to the teaching
- Some blanks to fill while you listen and space to take notes
- Discussion questions corresponding to the video

With Your Group

- Spiritual discipline to read about and practice
- Discussion questions about the reading

On Your Own

- Includes an extension activity to be done later
- Practical and measurable ways to apply what has been learned
- A list of recommended additional resources related to the topic

Our hope and prayer is that the material in these sessions will not only increase your knowledge of God, but will also grow your love for and commitment to Him.

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

- 2 Peter 3:18 -

WHILE YOU WATCH

What is the Bible?

“The Bible is a collection of writings that Christians consider uniquely inspired by God and authoritative for life. While it is one unified book, it is made up of sixty-six books, written over a period of roughly 2,000 years by 40 different authors from three different continents who wrote in three different languages.”

The Bible is one book, made up of 66 books, and is divided into the Old and New Testaments. Testament is a word that simply means _____.

THE OLD TESTAMENT			
LAW	HISTORICAL BOOKS	WISDOM BOOKS	PROPHETIC BOOKS
Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	Joshua Judges Ruth 1 & 2 Samuel 1 & 2 Kings 1 & 2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah Esther	Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon (Song of Songs)	MAJOR PROPHETS Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel MINOR PROPHETS Hosea - Malachi (The Twelve)

** Chart from 40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible by Robert L. Plummer, Page 24.*

IS THE OLD TESTAMENT THE SAME AS THE JEWISH BIBLE?

Yes and no. If you were to walk into a Jewish synagogue today, their “Bible” would contain the exact same contents of our Old Testament. However, it would have a slightly different arrangement. The Jews arranged their books into three major sections – The Law, the Prophets, the Writings. They also combine some books that we break apart. For instance, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles are all single books, and the twelve minor prophets are combined into one book known in Judaism as The Book of the Twelve.

THE NEW TESTAMENT		
GOSPEL & ACTS	PAULINE LETTERS	GENERAL LETTERS AND REVELATION
Matthew Mark Luke John Acts	Romans 1 & 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians 1 & 2 Thessalonians 1 & 2 Timothy Titus Philemon	Hebrews James 1 & 2 Peter 1-3 John Jude Revelation

** Chart from 40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible by Robert L. Plummer, Page 27.*

What does the Bible claim about itself?

All Scripture is divinely _____ . **(2 Timothy 3:16)**

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.

- 2 Peter 1:20-21

The phrase, "Thus says the Lord" is used over _____ times in Scripture.

*Jesus viewed Scripture as authoritative. He said: "Scripture cannot be broken."
(John 10:35b)*

- 2 Peter 3:16

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

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Chapter & verse divisions found in our English Bibles weren't originally part of the Biblical writings. They were added later as a way to navigate the Bible. Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, added the chapter divisions in the early 13th Century. Verse divisions were later added by Robert Estienne, a printer from Paris, in 1551.

In **1 Timothy 5:18**, Paul says, "For the Scripture says..." and then quotes Deuteronomy from the _____,
as well as _____ from the New Testament.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17

The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

- **Hebrews 4:12**

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness...

- **Hebrews 3:7-8**

What’s the point of the Bible?

The Bible is a grand narrative of God’s plan seen through the lens of _____.

In some way every part of the Bible points us forward or backward to Christ.

Christocentric = “Christ-centered”

He said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

- **Luke 24:44**

The Bible is one story, and it’s a story where _____ is always the hero.

WITH YOUR GROUP

Discuss:

- Why do we need to see the Bible as more than just a good book or something merely inspirational?
- “When we read the Bible, it reads us.” From what you have watched and read today, how would you explain this statement? How have you seen this happen in your own life?

So now what?

It's critical that *what we know* informs *what we do*. **Romans 12** tells us to be transformed by the renewal of our minds. Knowing more facts about what the Bible is and what it claims to be is great, but it needs to lead to a life of reading and studying the Bible in order to know the God of the Bible more greatly.

Jesus once said, “Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it” (**Luke 11:28**). In order to obey it, we need to know it. In response to Satan's temptations, Jesus quoted **Deuteronomy 8:3**. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Discipline: Bible Reading

We want to close this session by thinking about reading the Bible. What follows are a few suggestions for helping incorporate regular Bible reading into your life.

Remember who's speaking

With our busy schedules, it's easy to get distracted, and it's easy for something like Bible reading to become one more item on our to-do list. That's why we need to remember that the one true and living God, the one who spoke the world into existence and upholds it by the word of His power, He is the one speaking to us through His Word.

God cannot lie (**Titus 1:2**), so we know that He'll show us what's true. God's power is unlimited (**Jeremiah 32:17**), so we know that He will fulfill all of His good and wise purposes. Scripture is breathed by Him (**2 Timothy 3:16**), so take confidence in His ability to use His Word to equip you for everything He has planned for you.

Ask the right questions

Every time you read a verse, chapter, or book, there are two important questions to ask.

- What does this passage say about God?

- What does this passage say about me?

No one-size-fits-all

There are many ways to read the Bible, and we aren't commanded to read it any one certain way. We're just told to read it. Sometimes it's good to read wide swaths of Scripture – multiple chapters at a time, reading through all of it in a year. Other times, it's good to read a verse or a paragraph and spend a week pondering it. The important thing is reading it and trusting that God will use it how He wants to.

Stick with it

Think of Bible reading as a marathon, not a sprint. Sometimes reading will be thrilling; other times will give you more questions than answers. That's ok. God's promise is to give you a delight for His Word as He shapes your thoughts, desires, attitudes, and actions.

Discuss:

- From your own experience, share what you have found helpful in your Bible reading habits. What methods or habits have been beneficial to you? (time, location, reading plans, studies, etc.) What do you hope to implement in the future?

- What's one new or interesting thing that stood out to you from this session? What's one thing you can incorporate into your life because of it?

ON YOUR OWN

Take a few minutes and read **Psalm 119** and answer the following questions.

- What phrases does the psalmist use to describe God's Word?

- What emotions and attitudes does he express toward God's Word?

- According to this psalm, what are some of the things God does for us through His Word?

Recommended Resources

Taking God at His Word | Kevin DeYoung

Can I trust the Bible completely? Is it sufficient for my complicated life? Can I really know what it teaches?

How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth | Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart

Reading the Bible isn't only for a few people. It was meant to be read and understood by everyone. This book gives essential insights that help us grasp the meaning of Scripture and how to apply it in the 21st Century.

The Story of the Bible – Episodes 1 & 2 | The Bible Project |

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ak06MSETeo4>

These short videos explain what the Bible is, where it came from, and summarizes the overall story of the Bible.

Bible Reading Plans | <https://bibleplan.org/>

Bible Plan has twenty-three different Bible reading plans – some long, some short – designed to help you get into the Bible.

WHILE YOU WATCH

This session focuses on two things:

- How we got the Bible
- Why we can trust the Bible

Canonization: _____

*We don't make something Scripture. We recognize what God
has already decided is Scripture.*

2 mistakes we can make when we consider canonization:

1. Assume that the Bible just came out of thin air.
2. Assume that people created the Bible out of convenience or to further an agenda.

ORDERING OF HEBREW SCRIPTURES IN THE FIRST CENTURY	
JEWISH SCRIPTURE (24 BOOKS)	THE CHRISTIAN OLD TESTAMENT (39 BOOKS)
<p style="text-align: center;">LAW</p> <p>Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">HISTORICAL BOOKS</p> <p>Genesis Ruth Exodus 1-2 Samuel Leviticus 1-2 Kings Numbers 1-2 Chronicles Deuteronomy Ezra Joshua Nehemiah Judges Esther</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">PROPHETS</p> <p><i>FORMER PROPHETS</i></p> <p>Joshua Judges Samuel Kings</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WISDOM BOOKS</p> <p>Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon (Song of Songs)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">LATTER PROPHETS</p> <p><i>MAJOR PROPHETS</i></p> <p>Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel</p> <p><i>MINOR PROPHETS</i></p> <p>Hosea-Malachi (The 12 in one book)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">WRITINGS</p> <p>Psalms Job Proverbs Ruth Song of Solomon (Song of Songs) Ecclesiastes Lamentations Esther</p> <p>Daniel Ezra-Nehemiah Chronicles</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PROPHETICAL BOOKS</p> <p><i>MAJOR PROPHETS</i></p> <p>Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel</p> <p><i>MINOR PROPHETS</i></p> <p>Hosea-Malachi (12 different books)</p>

* Chart from **40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible** by Robert L. Plummer, Page 62.

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

- Luke 24:44

The early church came up with 3 criteria for canonization:

- _____: written by or tied closely to an Apostle, those who were eyewitnesses of Jesus
- _____: widely read and used by many churches. An individual letter might contain good information, but if it wasn't widely circulated, the assumption was that it wasn't Scripture.
- _____: taught doctrine in agreement with the rest of
- recognized Scripture.

The New Testament books are categorized in this way by scholar T.C. Hammond:

- The New Testament books were written between AD 45-100.
- They were widely used in churches across the Empire during that time.
- There was complete agreement on the list of books by the early church councils of Hippo (AD 393) and Carthage (AD 397).

MUCH MORE THAN COINCIDENCE. HAD TO BE PROVIDENCE.

The fact that substantially the whole church came to recognize the same 27 books as canonical is remarkable when it is remembered that the result was not contrived. All that the several churches throughout the Empire could do was to witness to their own experience with the documents and share whatever knowledge they might have about their origin and character. When consideration is given to the diversity in cultural backgrounds and in orientation to the essentials of the Christian faith within the churches, their common agreement about which books belonged to the New Testament serves to suggest that this final decision did not originate solely at the human level.

The New Testament Speaks | Glenn W. Barker, William Lane, Ramsey Michaels

Inerrancy of Scripture

When we say _____, we mean that the original writings of Scripture are without error when properly understood.

Manuscript Evidence

HISTORIC MANUSCRIPTS	
LITERATURE	# OF MANUSCRIPTS
New Testament manuscripts	5,752
<i>Caesar's Gallic War</i>	10
<i>Livy's Roman History</i>	35
<i>Histories of Tacitus</i>	4.5
<i>Annals of Tacitus</i>	10
<i>History of Thucydides</i>	8
<i>History of Herodotus</i>	8

“No other ancient book comes close to the wealth of diverse preservation that we have for the New Testament. Not only is the number of manuscripts remarkable, but also the antiquity.”

— **John Piper** —

The words of the Lord are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times.

- **Psalm 12:6**

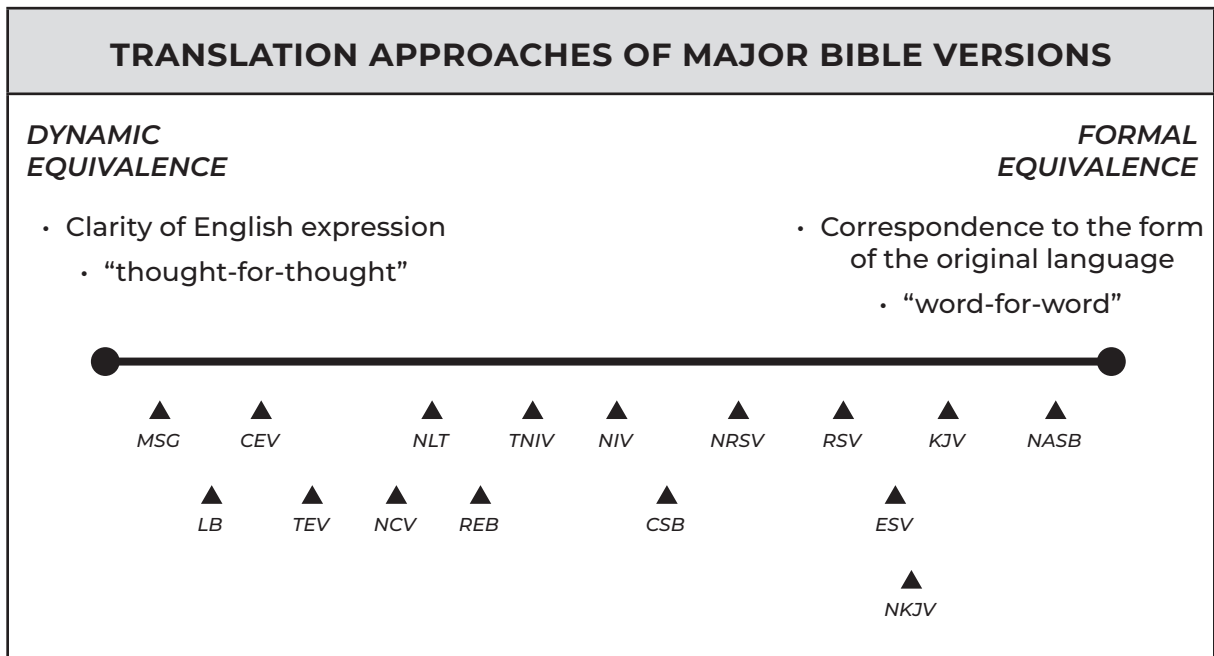
*We don't interpret everything **literally**;
we interpret it **literarily**.*

The Apocrypha & Extrabiblical Literature

We don't consider the Apocrypha to be Scripture for several reasons.

- 1) Jews never considered it Scripture.** The Jewish people who authored these books and were the recipients of these books never considered them Scripture. In fact, they went out of their way to place them in a completely different category.
- 2) Theological Error.** There are teachings in the Apocrypha that run contrary to orthodox Christianity. For instance, 2 Maccabees 12:43-45 teaches praying for the dead.
- 3) Lack of New Testament Citation.** While there are several allusions to the Apocrypha, the New Testament authors, who were very aware and grew up with the Apocrypha, nowhere cite it as Scripture. Almost every other Old Testament book is cited specifically as Scripture in the New Testament.
- 4) Responsive Recognition.** The Roman Catholic Church only came to recognize the Apocryphal books as canonical at the Council of Trent in the 1500s. In fact, The Vulgate, the official Latin Bible for more than a thousand years, claimed that the Apocrypha was edifying but not to be used for the establishing of doctrine. It was only after the newly formed Protestants rejected these books that Roman Catholics recognized them as Scripture.

Translations of Scripture



* Chart from *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible* by Robert L. Plummer, Page 72.

WITH YOUR GROUP

Discuss:

- What stood out to you from this session?

- If a friend asked you, “How can you trust the Bible is true?”, how would you respond?

- **What translation of the Bible have you found helpful in your personal Bible reading?**

So now what?

Knowing more facts about the Bible isn't the goal. The goal is letting those facts shape our confidence and trust in the Bible, so that the God of the Bible can shape us. For this reason, we want to close this session by thinking about being people who are shaped by God's Word, so we want to talk about meditation and memorization.

Disciplines: Scripture Meditation and Memorization

Memorization

Scripture memorization is vital for the Christian life. When Scripture is stored in your mind it is available for the Holy Spirit to take it and use it when you need it most. In **Psalm 119:11**, David said, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." The Apostle Paul commands us in **Colossians 3:2** to, "Set your minds on the things above, not on earthly things."

When we memorize verses, like the ones above, the Holy Spirit can bring them to mind at just the right moment. A biblical truth brought to mind at just the right moment can be a powerful weapon in our fight to live as Christians. This is why **Ephesians 6:17** refers to "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

Jesus Himself modeled Scripture memorization. There's no better example than Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. Each time Satan tried to entice Jesus, He responded with the sword of the Spirit, memorized Scripture, which helped Jesus overcome the devil.

If you're looking to start memorizing Scripture, here are a few recommended verses.

- **Genesis 1:1**
- **John 3:16**
- **Romans 5:8**
- **Romans 8:28**
- **2 Timothy 1:7**
- **Matthew 11:28**

Meditation

Meditation is another way to hide God's Word in your heart. In Psalm 1, the psalmist says, "Blessed is the man...whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night." The word "blessed" could literally be translated "Oh the many happinesses." The Bible promises an unwavering joy to those who delight and meditate upon God's Word.

Reading large chunks of God's Word, listening to sermons, podcasts, etc. can be beneficial. But one author compared hearing God's Word to a short rainfall on hard ground. It's beneficial, but most runs off rather than sinking into the ground. However, slowing down, pondering, and reflecting upon Scripture opens up the soil of the soul and allows God's Word to percolate deeply.

We think about what we delight in. When we delight and meditate upon God's Word, the Holy Spirit will bring it to our minds throughout the day.

If you've never meditated on the Word:

- Pick an appropriately sized passage
- Read through it.
- Pray through it as God brings different things to mind
- Read through it in a different translation
- Try writing it out by hand

Discuss:

- **What has been your experience with Scripture memory? Why do you think it could be an important habit?**

- **Discuss the differences between memorization of God's Word and meditation on God's Word? How are they connected, and how are they both beneficial to the believer?**

Take a few minutes to meditate on **Psalm 1**.

- Read through it.
- Pray through it.
- Read through it in at least one different translation.
- Write out a verse or two by hand.

What stuck out to you through this process? How was it different than just simply reading through it?

Recommended Resources

Why Trust the Bible? | Greg Gilbert

The Bible stands at the heart of the Christian faith. But why should we trust what it says? This book helps us think about and articulate why we can trust the Bible.

Is the Bible Reliable | Focus on the Family |

<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/faith/is-the-bible-reliable/>

“I’m glad your faith works for you, but can you really know whether or not the Bible is reliable? Wasn’t it written thousands of years ago? How do you know it hasn’t been translated and re-translated so much that it no longer says what it used to say?” This resource answers many questions about the Bible’s reliability.

Praying the Bible | Donald Whitney

It’s easy for our prayer life to become repetitive and stale. This book shows readers how praying through portions of Scripture helps keeps our prayer focused and fresh.

WHILE YOU WATCH

What is the Gospel?

The word “gospel” simply means _____.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

- Romans 3:23

Sin includes every _____, every _____,
and every _____ that goes against God.

God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

- John 3:16

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- 2 Corinthians 5:21

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the ***gospel*** I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

- 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

How does the Gospel become my salvation?

Knowing who Jesus is, knowing the stories of the Bible, or even going to a church do not give us the salvation that comes from God. Doing a quota of good things or trying to meet a certain standard is not what makes us Christians. The Bible teaches that the gospel becomes good news for us personally when we receive it.

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

- John 1:12

*Faith in Jesus Christ and in his work for us is the way that we get the gospel.
It's the way the Gospel becomes our salvation.*

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

- Ephesians 2:8-9

Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations.

- Luke 24:46-47

Repentance—changing our minds about who God is and who we are and what we have done.

Repentance is the proper response to hearing the Gospel and it provides the heart posture for receiving it by faith.

What's true of me because of the Gospel?

When we experience salvation in Jesus Christ, our life is changed. The past is forgiven, our present identity is transformed, and the future of eternal life is secured.

(See also, **Romans 5:1, 8:1, John 17:3, Galatians 2:20** and **Ephesians 1:13**.)

We have:

- Peace with God
- No condemnation
- Righteous standing with God
- Identity as God's children
- The Holy Spirit living in us
- Promise of eternity with God

How does the Gospel become my motivation?

The identity we have in Christ because of the Gospel does not only change our future, but it also affects the things we do and the motivations we have to do them. What Jesus did for us changes the way we live and act, it changes our priorities and our motives. We don't do things for God or others in order to gain acceptance from God; rather, we are accepted by God and therefore live and act accordingly.

The fact that we have received the Gospel affects every area of our lives:

(See also: **Colossians 3:23-24** and **1 Corinthians 15:58**)

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

- **Titus 3:3-7**

WITH YOUR GROUP

Discuss:

- How does the video help us understand that sin is much more than our visible actions? What else does it include?

- If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, what are some ways that you can see that the Gospel has transformed your decisions and priorities?

So now what?

The beautiful reality for believers in Jesus Christ is that they suddenly have access to God in a way that was impossible before salvation. Sin had broken the relationship between God and humans, but for believers in Christ that is now restored. **Romans 5:1** tells us that we have peace with God as a result of our justification by faith. Christ's work for us on the cross affords us the privilege of going directly to God with our requests and our needs. The author of Hebrews reminds us that because Jesus is our high priest, we can go with confidence before God's throne of grace, finding mercy and grace for our time of need (**Hebrews 4:16**).

Spiritual Discipline: Communing with God

What the gospel means for the believer is that communing with God is possible in a whole new way. It's a beautiful privilege. Disciplines such as prayer, fasting, and solitude all serve to bring us into a deeper relationship with God.

Prayer

Many people treat prayer like an emergency contact or a last resort option when things really get tough. But the model of prayer we see in the Bible is that rather than using prayer to get what we want, prayer is what gives us God himself. Prayer is seen not as a practice for some who are interested or “good at” it but rather a necessary part of the Christian life.

The God who spoke us into existence and who has spoken to us by His Word and rescued us through his Son’s sacrifice is also the God who desires to hear from us. He desires our praise, our adoration, our confession, and our petition. The New Testament believers were devoted to prayer (**Acts 1:14**) and instructed to “pray without ceasing” (**1 Thessalonians 5:17**). One of the most important things we can do in relation to God is to spend time with Him in prayer—publicly and privately, at home and at work, out loud and in our hearts.

Fasting

Fasting is an expression of a need for God, a non-routine abstaining from something for a spiritual purpose. Fasting can be done to strengthen one’s prayer life, to seek guidance, to demonstrate humility, but most of all fasting is an expression of love and worship to God. Quite simply, fasting is temporarily abstaining from something good in order to point our hearts and desires to the greatest thing, which is God. At times, it is only when we temporarily remove the things that we enjoy that we realize the dependence we have on them rather than on the Lord. Fasting is designed to strengthen our affections for God, who is our ultimate source of satisfaction and life.

Silence & Solitude

In a frenetic, fast-paced world that has fewer and fewer moments of pause, the practice of silence and solitude is increasingly rare. However, sometimes what we need most to fuel connection with God is a temporary removal of the many voices which drown Him out.

Like fasting, silence and solitude are not meant to be the norm but practiced for a specific time and purpose. These can be daily moments of pause, something as small as driving home from work in silence, as a way of creating space to commune with God rather than. At other times, this practice can be a longer period of retreat and silence in order to focus more on prayer and studying the word without the normal distractions in our lives.

These three disciplines are just a few of the ways we can commune with God. Since in Christ our relationship with Him has been restored, the pathway is open for us to come before Him. Practicing these things with the goal of knowing Him better will surely be beneficial to our spiritual health and relationship with Him.

Discuss:

- **Have you ever known someone whose life was marked by any of these three spiritual disciplines? What difference did it make in their life?**

- **Where in your life do you need to adjust your time and priorities in order to begin practicing these disciplines?**

ON YOUR OWN

With the goal of communing with God in the days to come, choose one or more of the the disciplines we've just looked at and commit to practicing them this week.

Prayer | Fasting | Silence & Solitude

These spiritual practices aren't necessarily meant to be practiced on your own. Find one or two individuals to do these with you.

Recommended Resources

***The Explicit Gospel* | Matt Chandler & Jared Wilson**

This book reminds believers of what the Gospel is and emphasizes its importance for every area of life.

***What is the Gospel?* | Greg Gilbert**

The author writes a straightforward and simple summary of the gospel, explaining it in 4 parts: God, man, Christ, and response. A helpful resource for not only understanding the Gospel but also its implications for the lives we live.

***What is the Gospel?* | D.A. Carson**

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/what-is-the-gospel/>

A brief video explanation of the Gospel, as well as a concise written summary. This site also includes links to other Gospel-centered resources.

***Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* | Timothy Keller**

This book shows the necessity of prayer for the life of the believer, offering biblical guidance for not only what prayer is but also how to do it in specific and personal ways.

WHILE YOU WATCH

“As a result of grace, we have been saved from sin’s penalty. One day we will be saved from sin’s presence. In the meantime we are being saved from sin’s power.”

– **Alistair Begg** –

Freedom from sin’s _____

None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God.

- **Romans 3:11**

Romans 3:24-25 says that we “are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.”

Justification—being declared _____

“Justification is not a synonym for amnesty, which strictly is pardon without principle, a forgiveness which overlooks—even forgets—wrongdoing and declines to bring it to justice. No, justification is an act of justice, of gracious justice... When God justifies sinners, he is not declaring bad people to be good, or saying that they are not sinners after all. He is pronouncing them legally righteous, free from any liability to the broken law, because he himself in his Son has borne the penalty of their law-breaking.”

– **John Stott** –

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

- John 3:18

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

- Romans 8:1

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- 2 Corinthians 5:21

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Romans 5:1

Freedom from sin's _____

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us *who are being saved* it is the power of God.

- 1 Corinthians 1:18

Sanctification—made _____, set apart for a special purpose

As Christians, we can walk one of two ways:

According to the _____

OR

According to the _____

For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

- Romans 8:6-9

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

- Philippians 2:12-13

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

- Titus 2:11-14

Freedom from sin's _____

Already/not yet

This is the idea that we have experienced forgiveness and enjoy the fellowship of knowing God and communing with him, and yet we still struggle with sin and still walk by faith and not by sight. This "already-not yet" tension will be with us as long as we are on earth, but we look forward to the day when our salvation will be fully realized.

Salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.

- Romans 13:11

(See also: 1 **Peter 1:3-9** and 1 **Corinthians 15**.)

“Our complete freedom from sin is certain, but it is not sudden. So we rest confidently in our justification, we labor diligently in our sanctification, and we hope expectantly in our glorification.”

– Jen Wilkin –

WITH YOUR GROUP

Discuss:

- How would you explain what sanctification is to a child, or to someone new in their faith?

- What are specific ways that you've grown to look more like Jesus?

So now what?

If our salvation is indeed as great as we have seen here, then our ever-increasing knowledge of its power and promise should drive us to act in a certain way. We should want those who don't know about it to see and embrace it for the first time. We should desire that those who have been saved may continue to grow in their walk with the Lord, in sanctification and in relationship with Him. Our perspective should result in action.

Discipline: Sharing the Gospel

Evangelism and discipleship cover two different aspects of what it means for someone to hear the gospel and respond to it. The first (evangelism) is sharing the Gospel so that others can believe in Jesus for salvation. The second (discipleship) is essentially sharing implications of the Gospel so that others can grow in that relationship with God that they've been given through faith in Jesus.

These two disciplines often get classified separately but in reality they both are commanded in Jesus' final words to his disciples in **Matthew 28:19-20**, also known as the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Evangelism

Scripture speaks of those who have the gift of evangelism, but it never assumes that only those few who have the gift will share their faith. The model given in Scripture for sharing the good news with others is that anyone who has repented and believed in Jesus for salvation will then in turn be someone who shares the Good News with others. The woman at the well, who encountered Jesus face to face, reacted by going and telling about him to everyone she knew. When the church experienced great persecution and Christians were driven from Jerusalem, "those who were scattered went about preaching the word" (**Acts 8:4**).

The New Testament also teaches that we should be people who are ready to share about our faith. **1 Peter 3:15** tells says to "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." Clearly the Gospel and God's work through it in our lives is something we should not keep to ourselves. It is something to be shared. Do you know the Good News well enough to tell it to someone else? If you had a minute, could you share the Gospel clearly?

Mark Dever, in his book on evangelism, challenges believers to share their faith with these three things in mind—honesty, urgency, and joy. We are to be honest with people about what God says in the Bible regarding sin, the condition of the human heart, salvation in Christ, and the realities of living out one's faith as a believer. Recognizing the urgent need of people to hear the good news should also motivate us to share our faith, not to put off telling them about Jesus. And since it is indeed good news, the joy it brings as we now have relationship with God should be the motivator for us to share this with others. We have something that others need, and it should bring us great delight to share it with them.

Discipleship

In the same vein, the joy of seeing others grow in their faith and in the knowledge of the Gospel is something that drives our discipling of them as well. Until we are in glory, our sanctification process is ongoing. The need for us to grow in our love for God and others will always be there for us while we are on this earth, and that process of disciple making also includes this aspect.

Discipleship (or discipling) is in its essence similar to evangelism, in that it is bringing others closer to Jesus. Most Christians use this term to refer to people growing in their faith after they've believed in Jesus for salvation, but actually, discipleship occurs at every point in the life of a believer. As believers we should be both discipling and

being disciplined. There is always someone who has been a Christian longer than you, and there will always be someone newer in their faith that you can be discipling as well.

Many times the question is how exactly discipleship should be done. Of course there are a variety of methods through which a person grows in his or her faith, but the at the core of a person growing in faith is the same gospel that saves a person. As Jonathan Dodson says in his book on discipleship, “the gospel is for not-yet disciples and already disciples. The gospel people believe to be baptized is the same gospel people believe to be sanctified (through the work of the Spirit).” To be disciplined at any stage of the Christian life is to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (**2 Peter 3:18**).

“The Gospel makes and matures disciples.”

– **Jonathan Dodson** –

Discuss:

- **Have you ever been tempted to think that “sharing the gospel” is just for pastors or missionaries, or maybe those who are good at it?**

- **How should knowing the Gospel more make us want to share it more?**

ON YOUR OWN

Sharing the Gospel, whether with unbelievers or with believers, is something modeled in Scripture and not reserved for those who are good at it or more passionate about it.

On your own, read these questions and look up the verses which correspond to them.

Who in your life is not a believer? What steps can you take to live out and speak the Gospel to them? (**1 Corinthians 9:22-23**).

Who in your life can you emulate in their faith? (**1 Corinthians 11:1, Philippians 4:9**)

Who in your life can you grow with? Are you surrounding yourself with people who love Jesus and will help you follow him? At church? At LifeGroup? (**Hebrews 10:24-25**)

Our Efforts, God's Ability

As with any spiritual discipline, the fruit of our effort is not guaranteed by our determination or will to succeed. As we've seen through this lesson, God's work in us both before and after we are saved is undeniable. The same goes for His work in the lives of others. 1 Corinthians speaks about this, where one plants, another waters, but ultimately it is God who gives the increase. He is what caused the seed of the Gospel to grow in your heart and it will only be he who can do it in the heart of another who has yet to receive the good news or to let it bear fruit in their life. This shouldn't keep us from seeking to evangelize or disciple others; rather, we should be motivated by the fact that we are serving and testifying about a powerful God who gave his own Son to save sinners. It's our job to tell the good news; it is God who will take that and do with it what he wills.

Recommended Resources

How Salvation Brings Freedom | Jen Wilkin

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-salvation-brings-freedom/>

Many believers struggle to understand the relationship between our salvation and how that relates to our current life. This article provides a concise summary of the way the gospel affects our past, present, and future.

The Gospel and Personal Evangelism | Mark Dever

This book explores what evangelism is, why we fail to practice it, and how and why it should be done. It couples practical advice with a clear explanation of the good news that God has commanded us to share.

Gospel-Centered Discipleship | Jonathan K. Dodson

A book that provides a balanced and practical approach to discipleship. The author helps the reader understand that discipleship is more than just evangelism, more than just spiritual growth, but is indeed both driven by and centered on the gospel.

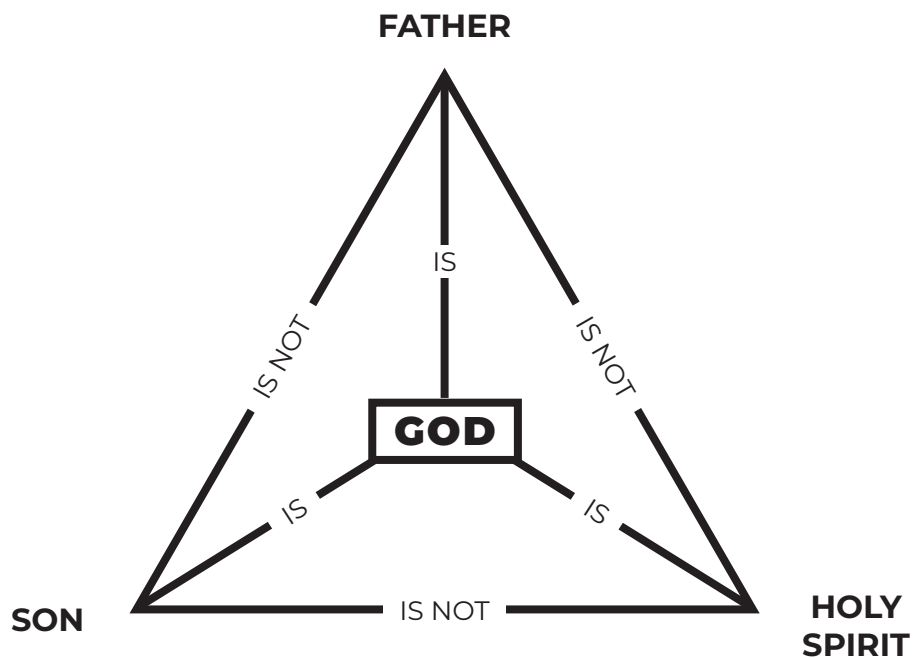
God Tools | an App from Cru | <https://godtoolsapp.com/en/>

This app walks through a number of approaches to sharing your faith. It gives multiple step-by-step plans for evangelism and is a helpful resource for those of us who struggle to know where to start when it comes to evangelism. Download the app at the link above.

WHILE YOU WATCH

The Trinity—One God in Three Persons

- God is one. There's only one God.
- The Father is God.
- The Son is God.
- The Holy Spirit is God.
- The Father is not the Son.
- The Son is not the Spirit.
- The Spirit is not the Father.



The Trinity in Scripture

Monotheism: the belief that there is only one God.

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

- Deuteronomy 6:4

Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts:
“I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.”

- Isaiah 44:6

Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

- 1 Corinthians 8:6

“You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased”

- Luke 3:22

Common Heresies regarding the Trinity

- Arianism:

- Modalism:

The Trinity in Creation

“You loved me before the foundation of the world.”

- John 17:24

(See also: **Genesis 1, John 1, Revelation 4:11, Hebrews 1:2, John 1:3**)

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

- Colossians 1:15-17

“It was his overflowing love for the Son that motivated the Father to create, and creation is his gift to his Son....the Son is not only the motivating origin of creation: he is its goal.”

- Michael Reeves -

The Trinity in Salvation

The Father initiated and planned our salvation,
the Son accomplished it, and the Spirit applies it.

Hebrews 1:3 tells us that in relationship to the Father, Jesus “is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.”

“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”

- John 14:9

“All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he [the Holy Spirit] will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

- John 16:13

“I in them and you in me...that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me”

- **John 17:23**

(See also: **John 14:9, Colossians 1:3, Romans 8:11, Ephesians 1:10, John 17**)

WITH YOUR GROUP

Discuss:

- How does the doctrine of the Trinity help to explain that God is a loving God?
- Knowing God more fully will help us to worship him more completely. Can you give an example of how that might look in your life?

So now what?

The often-forgotten reality of the believer is the joy of access to God that we have. It's easy to take for granted the fact that as Christians we can go to God boldly before the throne of grace. Another thing we often miss is that this access that we have is another reminder of God as a triune being. **Ephesians 2:18** demonstrates this when it says “For through him (Jesus) we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.”

Discipline: Worship

The discipline of worship is an appropriate response to an increased understanding of the Trinity.

Worship, while perhaps by many only thought of as “singing in church,” is definitely that but so much more. Worship flows from a right understanding of the worth of who God is. It is a heart response to and understanding of that worth. We then display that worth of God to him and to those around us when we worship Him.

Hebrews 13:15-16 tells us: “Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.” These verses

show worship to be something that is done both with our mouths (a sacrifice of praise, fruit of lips), but also with our bodies (do good, share what you have). All are sacrifices to a God who is worthy of this worship.

Furthermore, our worship of God should show a recognition of God's triunity, because it's made possible by a triune God. We go to God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son, and the very act of worship is enabled by the presence of the Spirit in our lives. The way that God reveals himself is trinitarian, and so the way we respond is as well. Consider this quotation:

"The reason true worship is Trinitarian is that God's revelation of Himself to us, especially His saving revelation, is Trinitarian. When the Father sent the Son, the Son came in the power of the Spirit. Since the Father saved us through the Son by the power of the Spirit, we approach Him using the same pathway: through Christ we all have access in one Spirit to the Father. It becomes clear that our worship is our response to the Gospel of Christ. Our way of approaching God reflects the way He has approached us."

— **Allen Vander Pol** —

As a guide for our worship then, we respond to God in the way that he has reached out to us, and in doing so we demonstrate an understanding of the trinity. This doesn't just mean our worship will talk about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; it also means that our worship will be formed by an understanding of how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit relate to one another and to us.

Any grace we receive in worship is appointed by God the Father, brought to us in the Son, and made applicable to our lives in the Holy Spirit. When we pray, we pray to God the Father in the name of Jesus by the Holy Spirit. When we serve God, we serve with the strength he supplies, in the name of Jesus, enabled by the Spirit to do so.

The more that we worship the triune God, the more that we will know him and be transformed into his image. **2 Corinthians 3:18** reminds us of this truth, saying "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."

Discuss:

- **How would you define worship in your own words?**

- What are some practical ways to help ourselves see worship as Trinitarian?

ON YOUR OWN

Take time this week to read through **John 15-17**. Make note of where the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are mentioned in these chapters.

Recommended Resources

***Delighting in the Trinity* | Michael Reeves**

This book demonstrates the foundational truth that our God is Triune and explores the implications of that in a variety of theological topics. The author explains how God's love, creation, salvation, sanctification, etc., are all possible because God is a Trinity. This book will be very helpful for anyone looking not to just increase their knowledge but also grow in their worship and love of God.

***The Holy Trinity — Explainer* | The Village Church Resources**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5-rwRLHK6Y>

This brief video is a concise explanation of the Trinity and provides answers to some of the most common questions about this doctrine.

***The Doctrine of the Trinity* | The Gospel Coalition**

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/the-doctrine-of-the-trinity>

If you want to dig deep into the doctrine of the trinity, this free course lets you walk yourself through a variety of videos, articles, and documents which will help you grow in the knowledge of our Triune God.

***Thirty-Three on the Three-in-One* | Tim Challies**

<https://challies.typeform.com/to/l1ntTT>

In quiz form, you can test your knowledge of the Trinity. Each answer includes an explanation, making this a fun educational tool for learning this doctrine.

WHILE YOU WATCH

In the Bible, we find God's story for helping us understand where we've been, where we are, and where we're going.

The Bible is first and foremost a book about God.

Moses said: Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh? (**Exodus 3:11**)
God said: I will be with you. (**Exodus 3:12**)

When we know who God is, then we will know what he wants us to do.

Every page, every story in the Bible, shows us something about God. For example:

Genesis—He's the creator

Exodus—He's the Redeemer who delivers His people

Psalms—His power, majesty, strength, other attributes

Prophets—His wrath over sin, His promise of salvation

Gospels—the character of God as expressed through the person and work of Jesus

The Epistles—how we should live in light of who God is

Revelation—His redemptive plan throughout history and in the future

The Big Story

Creation—How did it all begin?

In the beginning God created—

God gives us revelation, so we don't have to rely upon speculation.

Shalom—just as it should be.

Fall—What went wrong?

Genesis 3

Sin—doing anything that would go against or challenge God's rule.

Results of sin—brokenness, death, tragedy, dysfunction, separation from God

The wages of sin is death (**Romans 6:23a**).

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he will crush your head, and you shall strike his heel.”

- Genesis 3:15

protoeuangelion – the first promise of the gospel

Redemption—Is there any hope?

For generations, God promises that He will send a Redeemer.

Examples of prophecies made about the Messiah's arrival:

Micah 5:2 prophesies that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

Isaiah 7:14 says He would be born of a virgin.

Isaiah 53:4-6 - Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (*This was written 700 years before Christ.*)

That's just a sampling. Scholars suggest that there are *322 direct prophecies in the Old Testament of what the coming Savior* would be like.
Jesus fulfills every one of those prophecies.

Examples of types—small pictures of what the Savior would be like:

_____, who stood by himself against the enemy on behalf of the people.

_____, who was innocent, thrown in a pit with a stone rolled over the entrance, only to come walk out alive.

_____, who mediated between God and His people. Just as Moses led Israel out of Egypt, into the wilderness, up on the mountain to give the people the Law, Jesus went up from Egypt (as a child), through the water (baptism), into the wilderness (where He was tempted) and up on the mountain where He gave God's people the Law.

The point is that when Jesus showed up, people should have thought, "This seems familiar." Ultimately, the grand narrative of Scripture climaxes in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- Romans 5:8

The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Romans 6:23

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, and kept in heaven for you.

- 1 Peter 1:3-4

Re-Creation—What does the future hold?

And the one who spoke with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia (1,400 miles). Its length and width and height are equal.

- Revelation 21:15-16

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

- Revelation 22:1-3

God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

- Revelation 21:4

WITH YOUR GROUP

Discuss:

- In your own words, briefly describe the four movements of the big story.

- What competing stories are you tempted to listen to, rather than the true story of God that is told in the Bible?

So now what?

As we've been saying, it's critical that we know things, but knowing things has to lead to doing things. In this session, we want to end by thinking about stewardship. In light of the whole story being about God's creation and redemption of a fallen world, we want to think about our role in that world.

Discipline: Stewardship

You and I don't own anything. Everything is owned by God. Every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills (**Psalm 50:10**). The whole earth is mine (**Exodus 19:5**). Because He's the creator, He's the owner.

So the things we have – money, possessions, relationships, jobs, skills, etc. – have merely been entrusted to us. We're stewards. The Apostle Paul tells the church in Ephesus. Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil (**Ephesians 5:15-16**).

Stewardship is a call to recognize that everything we have has been given to us by God and should ultimately be used for God's kingdom and His glory.

Discuss:

- Make a list of some of the major things you own. Make a list of skills you have. Make a list of major things on which you spend your time. Discuss these things in light of the topic of stewardship and the fact that we are stewards of what God has given us.

- Define the words “owner” and “steward.” Now think about the things God has given to you. How can you have a mindset of stewardship with all God has given to you? What do you need to start doing? Stop doing?

ON YOUR OWN

Take a few minutes and read through **Genesis 1-2** and **Revelation 21-22**. Make a list of the things or themes that are repeated in both chapters.

Stories matter. In the space below, write in your own words the story of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Re-Creation in a way that you could explain it to someone else.

Recommended Resources

***From Eden to the New Jerusalem* | T. Desmond Alexander**

Starting with Revelation and moving backward, this book pieces together Scripture's storyline showing how the entire Bible is God re-creating Eden.

***Temple* | The Bible Project | <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/temple/>**

This short video traces the theme of God's dwelling presence through the Temple motif.

***Even Better Than Eden* | Nancy Guthrie**

From the very beginning, the whole story has always been headed toward consummation, toward glory. This book traces nice key themes that reveal how God's plan for the new creation will be far more glorious than the original.

***Money, Possessions, Eternity* | Randy Alcorn**

Why is money so important to God? What should we do about debt? How much does God want us to give? In light of our place in the story, this book presents a comprehensive view of how we should understand money and possessions.