

DISCIPLESHIP TO JESUS

Basics

*The beginning of a spiritual journey of faith
that will transform you from the inside out.*

Learning the basics of the Christian faith and taking your
next steps of discipleship to Jesus.

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Introduction

Congratulations on taking your first steps in following Jesus! This is the beginning of a spiritual journey of faith that will transform you from the inside out. But the Christian faith can also seem overwhelming. This guide is meant to help you learn the basics of the Christian faith and take your next steps of discipleship to Jesus. Whether you're simply exploring Christianity, new to the faith, interested in baptism, or just want to learn more about what discipleship to Jesus means, our prayer is that Basics is a helpful first step.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Each session is designed to give you a **Teaching**, **Reflection**, and a **Practice**:

- The **Teaching** introduces you to a basic concept of the Christian faith.
- The **Reflection** is your chance to wrestle with and respond to that concept.
- The **Practice** is a way to integrate that concept into your daily life.

There are two ways you can use Basics:

1. During a Basics Workshop offered a few times throughout the year.
2. With a Basics Mentor at any point during the year.

Though you're welcome to read through Basics on your own, Basics works best when worked through in community, either with a Basics Mentor or in one of our Basics Workshops. You're welcome to move through Basics at your own pace, spending a few days or even weeks with just one Session. The goal isn't to get to the content, but rather to learn to walk with Jesus through the story of the Gospel and begin following a new way of life entirely.

Our prayer is that through Basics you encounter Jesus. Not just facts and theology, but the Source of Life Himself.

PART ONE

Orthodoxy

Christians throughout history have shared a common set of beliefs about God, the world, salvation, and the future of creation. We call this Orthodoxy. These beliefs help us understand who Jesus is, what he came to do, and why his life, death, and resurrection matter. In this first part of Basics, you'll learn basic truths that make up the foundation of the Christian faith. You'll explore the story of God through the Bible, discover who Jesus is, what the gospel is, and what it means to live out this Gospel story today.

01 *The Story of God*

02 *Jesus & the Good News*

SESSION 01

The Story of God

TEACHING

Christianity isn't just a religion or a set of beliefs. It's a story. According to the Bible, the story of Jesus is a story that goes back to the beginning of time and continues into eternity. It's the story that explains where everything came from, why the world is the way it is, what God is up to in the midst of it, and it's a story that you're stepping into when you decide to follow Jesus.

The Bible isn't a textbook or a rulebook. It's a story that unfolds in 6 movements:
Creation, Fall, Israel, Jesus, the Church, and New Creation.

1 Creation	<i>Genesis 1–2</i>
2 Fall	<i>Genesis 3–11</i>
3 Israel	<i>Genesis 12–Malachi</i>
4 Jesus	<i>Matthew–John</i>
5 Church	<i>Acts–Jude</i>
6 New Creation	<i>Revelation</i>

1. Creation (*Genesis 1-2*)

The opening pages of the Bible serve as the “once upon a time” of Christianity’s story. It begins with “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1). In these first chapters, God, existing as a transcendent personal being, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, created the world. Not because he needed to, but because he wanted to. Creation — the world and everything in it — was created by God out of love. Every stage of creation, from the physical world to the waters, to the plants and animals that fill the world, to the light that gives life to the plants and animals, is a beautiful reflection of God’s goodness and creativity. And the pinnacle of God’s creation is Humanity (Genesis 1:26-27). This means that you were created with a purpose: to know God intimately and reflect his presence and goodness back to the rest of creation.

2. Fall (*Genesis 3-11*)

Adam and Eve, the first Humans, are put on earth in the Garden of Eden as representations of God himself. They’re tasked with cultivating creation and reflecting God’s goodness and beauty to the rest of the world. And for a while, all is as it should be. There’s no fear, shame, or evil present. Humans have full and beautiful communion and fellowship with God, with each other, and they work joyfully to cultivate creation and expand the Garden. But soon, evil enters the world. Adam and Eve are given free will in the Garden. They have the choice to co-rule over the Garden under God’s authority, accepting what he says is good and evil. Or they can rebel against God and his rule. Instead of choosing to submit under God’s authority, they choose autonomy and seek to rule by themselves. This introduces Sin into the world. But they don’t make this decision alone. Eve is tempted by a serpent, Satan, who deceives her and encourages her to rebel against God and seek to rule on her own. Adam follows his wife, and as a result, their relationship with God is broken. Because of their Sin, Death spreads to the Garden, and God banishes them from the beauty and goodness they once ruled over. This is a pivotal part of the story. In the Fall, Humans introduce sin and disorder into the world. Humanity’s relationships with God and with each other are broken, and the three main enemies of the world are introduced: Sin, Satan, and Death. After being kicked out of the Garden, Humanity is left to spread and inhabit the rest of the world. But as they spread, Sin and Death spread with them. The rest of the story of the Fall, from Genesis 3-11, is all about this spread. Wherever Humans go, Sin and Death go with them. And with each new generation, Humanity’s Sin gets worse.

This chapter is vital to the biblical story. Sin explains why the world is the way that it is with all the violence, corruption, injustice, and brokenness that we see today. But sin also explains why we are the way we are as well. All of us are born for communion with God and selfless love for others. But our sin is what turns our attention and focus inward towards ourselves. Sin is like an infection.

3. Israel (*Genesis 12–Malachi*)

Back to the story — though Humanity spreads Sin and Death throughout God's good creation, God doesn't abandon them. Instead, from the first moment of their rebellion, God seeks after them (Genesis 3:8-9). God initiates his plan to save Humanity from the enemies of Sin, Satan, and Death by choosing a people group to restore his communion with. Israel is meant to be a nation of priests who will represent God to the world around them, bringing the goodness and blessing of a restored communion with God. But like Humanity in the Garden, Israel fails. Repeatedly. Instead of following God's Law and representing God to the world around them, Israel often repeats the same Sin of Adam and Eve: seeking control and autonomy for themselves. They assimilate with other nations around them, abandon their worship of God for the worship of false gods and pagan idols, and are punished by God. The rest of the Old Testament is the telling of this same story, over and over again: Israel is with God, Israel abandons God, Israel is punished by God, then Israel comes back to God. But throughout all of this, God still maintains his faithfulness to his people by promising a King who will bring about a new Kingdom, where things will be put back to the way they were in the Garden. When the Old Testament ends, the story is left on a cliff-hanger: how will God restore the nation of Israel? How will God restore all of his creation? Who can save Humanity from the enemies of Sin, Satan, and Death? Where is this King?

4. JESUS (*Matthew–John*)

The first pages of the New Testament answer the questions raised in the Old Testament. The four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, introduce us to Jesus. To bring restoration and salvation to the world, God himself comes to earth as a man, Jesus. In the Gospels, Jesus comes to bring the good news of the Kingdom and provide a way for us to be reconciled back to God. He is the promised and long-awaited King, and his Kingdom is a restoration of God's rule and reign here on earth. But this Kingdom isn't like anything that anyone has seen. It's made up of people who do God's will by loving their enemies, serving those around them, and giving their lives to follow their King. This Kingdom is open to anyone who "repents and believes the Gospel." This means anyone willing to relinquish control of their own rule and reign and come under the rule of Jesus can have life in the Kingdom.

Living the perfect life untainted by Sin and undeserving of Death, Jesus shows us in the Gospels what it looks like to live in this Kingdom. Each Gospel account tells the story of Jesus from a different angle, but all four of the Gospels describe Jesus' death and resurrection. The final decisive victory over our enemies of Sin, Satan, and Death doesn't come by force. It comes from Jesus allowing himself to be overcome by these enemies on the cross. In his death, Jesus takes our Sin on himself and experiences the wrath of God against Sin, Satan, and Death. But in his resurrection, Jesus proclaims these powers powerless that once held us captive and at enmity with God. By believing in Jesus, we're counted clean and forgiven, and our communion with God can be restored.

5. Church (*Acts–Jude*)

Most of the New Testament after the Gospels tells the story of the Church, a new group of humanity empowered by the Holy Spirit. What begins as a small community of Jesus-followers meeting in an attic becomes a worldwide movement of disciples bringing about God's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. And as the Kingdom spreads, so does the church. The book of Acts tells the amazing origin story of the Church, and the letters after are all written to encourage, teach, and empower the Church to keep doing what Jesus commanded them to do: spread the Kingdom by inviting people wherever we go to follow Jesus. When we read these letters in our contemporary world, we learn how we should live as a part of the Kingdom today. We learn how to continue fighting Satan and the Sin that still remains in us. And we learn about how God is still active in the world today through his Spirit. This part of the story is likely the easiest to read, and it has the clearest connection to our modern world. But we also learn that the story is still incomplete. While we continue inviting others into the Kingdom through the Church, we look forward to the last chapter of the story.

6. New Creation (*Revelation*)

In the final act of the story of Scripture, God restores all of creation back to him. Revelation is the last book of the Bible and describes this restoration in great detail. While much of the mechanics of this final restoration is up for debate, the one thing that's clear is Jesus is coming back. And when he does, he's going to right all of the wrongs brought into the world by Sin, Satan, and Death. As a Judge, Jesus will distribute justice and destroy Sin, Satan, and Death for good. Those who believe in Jesus will see the final restoration, while those rejected Jesus will get what they wanted in this life — eternal separation from God.

But the story doesn't end with Christians going to a spiritual heaven and escaping earth when we die. The final act recorded in the Story of Scripture is a lot like the first. God will recreate the world and everything in it. Revelation 21 and 22 tell us God will make a New Heaven and New Earth where those who believe in Jesus will live forever. It's a complete restoration of what was lost in the Garden: communion with God, fellowship with each other, and all things being as they were meant to be. With heaven and earth united, humanity will dwell in the New Creation with resurrected bodies and God's presence all around us (1 Corinthians 15:1-58). There will be no more weeping, no more Death, no more pain, no more suffering, and God will be in communion with his people forever.

WHY THE STORY MATTERS TODAY

We live in a world that tells competing stories about our world, what went wrong, and how we can fix it. These stories influence what we believe about why we're here, what makes up the good life, how we find hope and meaning, and what obligation we have to love those around us.

Some of these stories are good and helpful. For example, our culture typically values hard work and bearing good fruit from our labor. We like to hear stories of strong people who solve their own problems, pull themselves up by their bootstraps, and don't depend on others to fix them. This is an echo of the Genesis story: you were created to work, cultivate, and make the world better around you. However, our culture tells an incomplete version of this story: you're only as valuable as you are successful, you alone are responsible for your success, and your freedom comes from self-sufficiency. According to the Bible's story, your value comes from being made in the image of God, and your salvation, hope, and healing can't come from you or your work. It has to come from God and your communion and reliance on him.

Another example: our culture tells us that it's good to be happy, to become an authentic version of ourselves, and to be confident in who we are. Again, this is an echo of the Gospel story, but incomplete. You were created uniquely and should explore the person God made you to be. But the Gospel story also tells us about sin, the part of you that's in rebellion against God and his ways. Sin is a warping of our souls and desires, our motivations and behaviors. Sin turns our focus inward on ourselves rather than outward to the love and service of others. To assume that all of our desires and behaviors are a part of who we truly are is to reject a core part of the Bible's story.

The Gospel is a story. It's meant to give us hope, explain the world around us, and show us a better way to live. By choosing to follow Jesus and become a Christian, you're choosing this Gospel story above all others.

REFLECTION

- 1** *What are some other stories that try to answer questions about life, purpose, happiness, and healing? Think about the stories our culture tells about success, money, work, laziness, sexuality, family life, etc.*
- 2** *How does knowing that you were intentionally created by God out of love affect the way you see yourself?*
- 3** *How would you describe sin? In the Bible, sin is more than just bad behaviors. It's a heart-level condition, an illness, something we need healing from. How does this change the way you think about the sin done by you, to you, and around you?*
- 4** *How does the story of the Bible impact the way you see the brokenness in the world around you?*
- 5** *If the Bible ends with God coming down to unite heaven and earth rather than us escaping earth for heaven, how does this change the way you live now?*

PRACTICE

The goal of this session's practice is to help you notice the competing stories all around you. You'll spend time examining what stories have been motivating your thoughts and behaviors in different areas of your life, and you'll imagine what might change if you were to orient these parts of your life around the gospel story.

Here's how to do that this week:

1. Pick one area of your life:
 - a. Work
 - b. Family
 - c. Money
 - d. Politics
 - e. Parenting
 - f. Success
 - g. Sexuality
 - h. Identity
 - i. etc.
2. Take some time, 10 minutes or so, and write down what stories have shaped what you believe, how you feel, and how you act in this area. Be honest here, and try to name exactly what drives or motivates your desires here.
3. Next, spend another 10 minutes or so reading through the following passages and writing down what they say about this area, how they challenge the stories you believe, and how your motivations and behaviors might change if you were to apply the Gospel's story to this area:
 - a. Work — Genesis 1:26-31, Colossians 3:23-24
 - b. Family — Ephesians 5:21-6:4
 - c. Money — Deuteronomy 15:7-11, 1 Timothy 6:6-10
 - d. Politics — Jeremiah 29:4-7, Philippians 3:20
 - e. Parenting — Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Ephesians 6:4
 - f. Success — Matthew 6:25-34, Mark 8:34-37
 - g. Sexuality — Genesis 2:18-25, 1 Corinthians 6:18-20
 - h. Identity — Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 1:3-14

SESSION 02

Jesus & the Good News

TEACHING

At the center of the Bible's story is Jesus, God in human flesh. Most societies throughout history recognize Jesus as a great spiritual teacher, a moral inspiration, or simply a historical religious figure. Even within the church, many people describe Jesus in different ways; Jesus is a Friend, a Savior, a Teacher, a Revolutionary. Some just refer to him as the Son of God and leave it at that.

But in the Bible, Jesus is much more than that. He's God in human flesh, the Messiah who's come to save humanity, the center of the universe, and the One holding all of creation under his rule and reign today. We'll unpack all of this in this session, but first, we need to learn about the Trinity.

The Trinity

When we talk about God, we're talking about the Creator of everything, the one who exists beyond the universe and yet is deeply involved with it. God isn't distant or detached. He wants to be known. But God reveals himself to us in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These aren't distinct "gods," and they're not different forms of the same God. Rather, Christians believe there is one God who exists eternally as Father, Son, and Spirit. They are not three gods but one God, united in character, purpose, and love. Together they create the world, sustain it, and work to rescue and renew it.

This concept of the Trinity can be confusing, but it's helpful to keep these truths from scripture in mind:

1 The Father is God	<i>Deuteronomy 6:4, John 17:1-3, Ephesians 4:4-6.</i>
2 Jesus is God	<i>John 1:1, Colossians 1:15-20, and Philippians 2:5-11.</i>
3 The Spirit is God	<i>Psalm 139:7, Acts 5:3-4, 1 Corinthians 2:10-11.</i>
4 The Son and Spirit are not created	<i>Genesis 1:2, John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:16</i>
5 The Father, Son, and Spirit all participate in salvation	<i>Matthew 28:19, John 10:28-30, Ephesians 1:13-14.</i>

With that in mind, let's talk about how Jesus fits into the story.

Savior, Lord, and King

The Bible begins with God creating a good world and filling it with his goodness and presence. Humans were made to partner with God and spread his life, goodness, and beauty with the rest of creation. But pretty quickly, things go bad. Instead, humanity chose its own path, and the result was a world fractured by sin, injustice, suffering, and death. But rather than abandoning his creation, God began a long rescue mission. Through the story of Israel, the prophets, and generations of waiting, God promised that he would come and set things right. Christians believe Jesus is the fulfillment of that promise.

Jesus enters the human story in the Gospels to confront the powers that have enslaved humanity: sin, evil, and death. Through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus opens the way for us to be forgiven, healed, restored, and brought back into relationship with God.

But Jesus didn't only come to save us from something. He also came to show us what true humanity looks like. In Jesus, we see a person completely aligned with God's wisdom, love, and will. He shows us the kind of life humans were created for from the very beginning.

Because Jesus lived faithfully where humanity failed, he alone could deal with the problem of sin at its root. On the cross he took the full weight of humanity's rebellion and its consequences upon himself. And in his resurrection he defeated the power of death and began God's new creation here on earth.

Jesus is our Savior. To trust Jesus as Savior is to recognize that we cannot heal or rescue ourselves, *because sin is more than just bad behavior*. It's a disease that distorts our desires, fractures our relationships, and bends the world around us out of shape. When you see injustice, suffering, oppression, violence, and exploitation around you, it's because of sin. Jesus comes to us as a Savior to do what we could never do for ourselves: he breaks the power of sin at its root, he forgives us for it, heals us, and leads us into new life.

Jesus is also our Lord. Throughout the New Testament, the word "lord" is a title of respect. You would call someone a "lord" if they were higher on the social ladder than you. But the word "Lord" is also a title given to someone you would submit your life to, like a boss or a master. Calling Jesus "Lord" means more than just intellectually agreeing with his teachings. It means trusting his leadership. It means reorienting our lives around his vision of what is good, true, and beautiful.

Lastly, Jesus is our King. When Jesus began traveling throughout Israel teaching and healing, his central message was about what he called "the Kingdom of God." This wasn't a place people go after they die, and it wasn't a political revolution. It was the announcement that God's rule was breaking into the world in a new way through Jesus himself. The Kingdom of God is wherever God's will is done here on earth.¹ In God's Kingdom, the poor are blessed, the last are first, and those who give their lives for the sake of God and others find more satisfaction and joy than those who live for their own gain. To follow Jesus as King means more than believing the right things about him. It means giving him our allegiance. It means learning to live by his values, participate in his mission, and trust his leadership even when it challenges our own desires. As citizens of God's kingdom, we are invited to become the kind of people who reflect the character of our King.

One day, we believe Jesus will return to complete what he started. The brokenness of the world will be healed, evil will be removed, and God's presence will fill creation once again (Revelation 21:3-4). Until then, followers of Jesus live as signs of that coming kingdom. To be a Christian is to become a person who embodies the way of the King in the world right now.

SAVIOR He rescues us. Jesus comes to us as a Savior to do what we could never do for ourselves.	LORD He leads us. Calling Jesus "Lord" means more than just intellectually agreeing with his teachings. It means trusting his leadership.	KING He is bringing God's reign into the world. To follow Jesus as King means giving him our allegiance.
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REFLECTION

- 1 *How would you describe who Jesus is?*
- 2 *Why do you think many people are comfortable calling Jesus a teacher or moral example, but uncomfortable calling him Lord or King?*
- 3 *Can you think of a moment or season of your life when you tried to fix your life on your own? How did those attempts work out, and what might it look like to trust Jesus instead?*
- 4 *If sin is more than bad behavior and is instead a disease that distorts our desires, where do you see its effects in your own life?*
- 5 *What do you think our culture teaches about freedom, happiness, and success? How does Jesus' vision of life challenge those ideas?*
- 6 *What area of your life would be hardest to surrender to Jesus' leadership? Why?*

PRACTICE

The practice this week is meant to help you encounter Jesus for yourself by reading selections from the gospels. The goal is not simply to learn about Jesus, but to encounter him through the Gospel stories and reflect on what it would mean to follow him as Savior, Lord, and King.

Over the next 7 days, read one story about Jesus each day. Try to stick to one passage a day, and don't feel pressured to move on to the next passage if you're not ready. And as you read, consider asking God to reveal himself to you through these stories, even if you're unsure what you believe:

- a. Mark 2:1-12
- b. John 8:1-11
- c. Luke 7:36-50
- d. Matthew 14:22-33
- e. Mark 9:14-27
- f. John 20:19-31

As you read, imagine yourself in the story. Pay attention to what Jesus says, what he does, and how people respond to him. After reading, spend a few minutes reflecting on these questions:

1. What do I notice about Jesus?
 - a. How is he acting and interacting around others?
2. Where do I see myself in this story?
 - a. Which person do you identify with and why?
3. What does Jesus seem to be inviting me to trust him with?
 - a. Is there an area of your life where you need healing, freedom, forgiveness, guidance, or hope?
4. What does Jesus seem to be asking me to surrender?
 - a. Is there an area of your life where you resist his leadership or prefer your own way?
5. If Jesus really is Savior, Lord, and King, what would it look like to respond to him today?
 - a. Consider talking to God about what you noticed, what challenged you, and what you'd hope for him to do in your own life.

¹ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, pg. 25.

PART TWO

Baptism

At this point, you know enough about the story of the Gospel and the person and work of Jesus to make a decision. In this section, we'll explore what the Gospel is, what it means to repent and believe, and why baptism has been the first public step of discipleship for Christians since the earliest days of the church.

03 *From Death to Life*

SESSION 03

From Death to Life

TEACHING

If the way of Jesus is a story, we have to choose to live in it. In this session, we'll cover what exactly it means to become a Christian by surrendering our lives to Jesus and choosing to follow him.

What is the Gospel?

The word “gospel” comes from the Greek word “euangelion,” which simply means “good news.” At the time the New Testament was written, the word “gospel” was a political word, not a religious one. To “spread the gospel” was to make a public announcement about a significant event that changed the world around you. News of a military victory, the arrival of a new ruler, or the beginning of a time of peace would be proclaimed as a “gospel.”

When the Gospel of Mark opens by announcing the “good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God,” it is making a bold claim: Jesus is the true King, and his Kingdom has arrived.

Simply put, the gospel is this: Jesus has come to rule and reign over the world through His death and resurrection, and anyone can live in the Kingdom here on earth and into eternity if they repent from their sins and align themselves with King Jesus.

The Two Ways

If the gospel is a public announcement, we have to respond to it. Even ignoring it is a response. The earliest Christians described the choice between following Jesus and rejecting him as “two ways”: the Way of Life and the Way of Death.²

THE WAY OF DEATH

The Way of Death is life apart from God’s rule and reign. It’s the path Humanity has taken ever since the Garden.

It’s the belief that freedom comes from autonomy and self-rule rather than communion with God.

THE WAY OF LIFE

The Way of Life is life in communion with God, under the leadership of Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

It’s the restoration of what Humanity lost in the Garden: union with God, freedom from the power of sin, and participation in God’s work of renewing the world.

The Way of Death

If you choose to ignore the gospel, you’re choosing the Way of Death. This doesn’t mean you become a worse person than everyone else around you, nor does it mean your life will immediately fall apart. In fact, the Way of Death can often look successful, comfortable, and easy from the outside.

The Way of Death is life apart from God’s rule and reign. It’s the path Humanity has taken ever since the Garden. It’s the pursuit of life on our own terms, trusting ourselves to decide what is good and evil, right and wrong, true and false. It’s the belief that freedom comes from autonomy and self-rule rather than communion with God.

The problem is that this way never delivers on its promises. We aim for freedom but get slavery. Our goal is life, but we ultimately find death. Though it promises fulfillment, choosing autonomy and self-rule rather than submitting to the gospel story leaves us restless and searching for more. This cycle is repeated throughout the Bible, throughout human history, and throughout our own lives as well. The Bible calls this condition sin.

Sin

Sin includes our bad behaviors and actions. It includes all of God's laws that we break. But by now you've learned enough about sin from the previous sessions to know that sin is much more than simply doing bad things. When the Bible talks about sin, it's talking about the cycle of death that we can't free ourselves from.

The New Testament author Paul puts it this way: "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it." (Romans 7:18-20).

This is the Way of Death. It's a way of living that promises freedom but slowly enslaves us. It distorts our desires, damages our relationships, and pulls us further away from God. And the deeper we look, the more we discover that sin isn't merely something we do. Ever since Humanity chose autonomy in the Garden, sin has worked its way deeper and deeper into human life. It affects not only our actions, but also our desires, habits, relationships, and ultimately what we place our trust in. Christians throughout history have recognized that sin operates like a spiral, affecting all levels in our lives:³

1 Obvious Sins

Surface-level sins that most people, Christian or not, would acknowledge.

2 Persistent Sins

Behaviors and thought patterns we hold onto and struggle to let go of.

3 Hidden Sins

Parts of us, impacted by sin, that even we aren't aware of.

4 Attachments

The things we rely on to find our value, meaning, and hope.

1. Obvious Sins

The most obvious surface-level sins are those that most people, Christian or not, would acknowledge: lying, stealing, sexual immorality, violence. It's easy to look around and recognize that these things are wrong. Some of us struggle with addictions, either to substances like drugs or alcohol, to sexual immorality, or even just to entertainment, social media, comfort, and distraction. Others of us wrestle with anger, dishonesty, unhealthy relationships, or patterns of behavior we know are destructive but feel powerless to change.

These obvious sins are the things we do that are most blatantly opposed to the way of Jesus and out of alignment with his will. We might even feel guilty about these things before we actually decide to follow Jesus. These sins are easy to recognize because they're visible. But sin doesn't stop at what we do. Often it remains in our lives even after we recognize it and want to change.

2. Persistent Sins

We also deal with persistent sins. Behaviors, actions, thought patterns, and addictions that may even seem culturally and socially acceptable but still fall out of line with God's will. These are things that we hold onto and struggle to let go of like bitterness, envy, pride, gossip, or self-righteousness. These sins are deep and aim at our identities and self-value, often getting woven into our habits, relationships, and sense of identity. Over time, they begin to shape the kind of people we are becoming.

Persistent sin could also include what we watch and consume, how we speak about others, what our minds wander to, or the ways we spend our money. These patterns can become so normal that we stop questioning them, even as they slowly pull us away from the life Jesus offers. But sin goes even deeper than that.

3. Hidden Sins

There are parts of us that even we aren't aware of that have been impacted by sin. These are what David in the book of Psalms calls "hidden faults" (Psalm 19:12). There are parts of us that are so deep that we only begin to recognize them after a long time of following Jesus.

These hidden sins often reveal themselves as blind spots. We may be more selfish, fearful, controlling, judgmental, or prideful than we realize. We may assume our motives are pure when they're actually mixed. We may hurt others without intending to. We may be shaped by cultural values and assumptions that are completely out of step with the Kingdom of God. These sins are deep, and take time to come to the surface.

4. Attachments

The last level of sin is the deepest. Sin affects what some call our “trust structures,” the things we rely on to find our value, to create meaning, and to find hope. These can be good things that become bad things because of how they subtly pull us away from God and towards ourselves. It's the way our careers and vocations, our families, our friends, or even our hobbies can become warped so that we use them for our own gain.

What all of this means is that sin affects every part of our lives. Sometimes it appears as obvious behaviors that harm ourselves and others. Sometimes it appears as attitudes and habits we know are wrong but continue to nurture. Sometimes it exists in blind spots we can't see yet. And sometimes it hides in our attachments to good things that we trust more than God. The point of all of this is that, like Paul, we're powerless to defeat the power and cycle of sin in our lives. Whatever form it takes, sin pulls us away from communion with God and toward self-rule, which will always end in spiritual death.

The Way of Life

But that's why the gospel, the announcement of our Savior, Lord, and King, the story of Jesus that we're invited into, is such good news. **The gospel isn't just about going to heaven when we die. It's about finding freedom from sin and communion with God in this life and in the next.** The good news is that there is a better way to live, what Jesus calls “life and life to the full,” (John 10:10) and it's on offer to anyone willing to accept it. Jesus didn't *just* come to forgive sins. He came announcing the arrival of God's Kingdom and inviting people into it. The good news is that Jesus has come to bring his rule to the world so we can find freedom from the Way of Death by following The Way of Life.

The Way of Life is life in communion with God, under the leadership of Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit. It's the restoration of what Humanity lost in the Garden: union with God, freedom from the power of sin, and participation in God's work of renewing the world.

Repent and Believe

So, how do we live in this Kingdom? How do we choose The Way of Life? Jesus' instructions are simple: "Repent and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). To enter the Way of Life, we must leave behind our old way of living and give ourselves to the King who offers us a better one.

Repentance is kind of a foreign word in our culture. We don't use it that often, but it's littered throughout Jesus' interactions with the people he encounters in the gospel (Mark 1:15, Luke 13:3, and Luke 24:47). **To repent means to turn away from our default ways of thinking and living, and turn towards Jesus.** Simply put, repentance is about where we put our trust, hope, and allegiance. This doesn't mean we'll be perfect, sinless, or without any faults. But it does mean that as we follow Jesus, we constantly turn our minds, hearts, and actions towards him. We allow ourselves to be confronted by the Spirit, by Scripture, and by our fellow Christian brothers and sisters. We submit all of our selves, all of our sins, from the obvious to the deepest, to Jesus, and we trust that he'll change us from the inside out.

This is what it truly means to have faith, to trust, or to believe in the gospel. It's more than just our doctrine, opinions, and theology. It's where we put our trust. The word "faith" in the Bible is best defined as trust, allegiance, and loyalty. To believe in Jesus is not simply to agree that certain facts about him are true. It is to trust him as Savior, submit to him as Lord, and give him your allegiance as King. Faith means entrusting your whole life to Jesus and learning to follow him one step at a time. It is choosing to build your life around his story rather than your own.

Baptism

When Christians turn from the Way of Death to the Way of Life, we celebrate that decision through baptism. Baptism is the first public act of discipleship. It is an outward sign of an inward reality. Through baptism, we publicly identify ourselves with Jesus, his death, his resurrection, and his Kingdom. Going under the water symbolizes the death of our old life. It's a symbol of our commitment to "putting to death the sin in our bodies" (Romans 8:23). Rising out of the water symbolizes new life in Christ. Just as Jesus died and was raised again, baptism declares that we have left behind the old way of living and entered into a new way of life with him.

From the earliest days of the church, those preparing for baptism would publicly renounce Satan and his works before confessing their faith in Jesus Christ.⁴ The early Christians understood that following Jesus wasn't simply adding a new belief to their lives. It meant leaving one kingdom and entering another. Today, we summarize this renunciation as turning away from the **world, the flesh, and the devil**. To renounce the **world** is to reject the competing stories, values, and ways of living that stand opposed to God's Kingdom. To renounce the **flesh** is to turn away from our old patterns of self-rule, sinful desires, and distorted loves. To renounce the **devil** is to reject the lies and spiritual powers that seek to draw us away from God. As we renounce these things, we also make a public confession that Jesus is our Savior, our Lord, and our King. Baptism is both a declaration of what we are leaving behind and a celebration of the new life we have found in Christ. It's a transfer of our allegiance from ourselves, the world, and Satan, to Jesus.

RENOUNCE THE World Reject the competing stories, values, and ways of living that stand opposed to God's Kingdom.	RENOUNCE THE Flesh Turn away from our old patterns of self-rule, sinful desires, and distorted loves.	RENOUNCE THE Devil Reject the lies and spiritual powers that seek to draw us away from God.
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It's important to say that baptism does not save us. Rather, it is our response to the salvation God has already offered us through Jesus. Throughout the New Testament, those who trusted Jesus were baptized as a public declaration of their faith and allegiance to him.

REFLECTION

- 1 Which of the four layers of sin do you most recognize in your own life? Why?
 - 2 Where do you see yourself choosing self-rule over God's rule?
 - 3 Is there an area of your life where you sense Jesus inviting you to repent and trust him?
 - 4 What makes it difficult to surrender your life to Jesus?
 - 5 What does it mean to you that Jesus offers freedom from the Way of Death and an invitation into the Way of Life?
 - 6 Have you made the decision to follow Jesus? Why or why not?
 - 7 If you have decided to follow Jesus, what is keeping you from being baptized?
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2 The Didache, 1.1

3 Robert Mulholland Jr. *Invitation to a Journey*, pg. 97-100.

4 Hippolytus of Rome, *The Apostolic Tradition*, 21.9.

RESPONSE

At this point, you've learned the basic story of the Gospel, who Jesus is, and what it means to follow him. Before moving on, take a moment to consider where you are. Following Jesus means trusting him as Savior, submitting to him as Lord, and giving him your allegiance as King. Here's a summary of the essential doctrines we've covered so far:

1. There is one God who exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. God created the world and everything in it, including you, out of love.
3. But humanity has been separated from God by sin.
4. Jesus is God in human flesh, our Savior, Lord, and King, who came to earth to save us from sin, Satan, and death.
5. Jesus died for our sins on the cross and physically rose from the dead.
6. Salvation, freedom from the power and punishment of sin, is found in Jesus alone.
7. Following Jesus requires repentance, faith, and ongoing discipleship.
8. Jesus will return to renew all things and establish his Kingdom forever.

If you believe these things and are ready to follow Jesus, your next steps are simple:

1. Repent from your sin.

Name the ways you've lived outside of God's will, and the ways you've tried to save yourself. Turn away from self-rule and begin trusting Jesus as Savior, Lord, and King. You can do this by praying to God honestly, just speaking to him about where you're at, what you're struggling with, and about your desire to follow Jesus.

2. Believe in Jesus.

Place your faith, trust, and allegiance in Jesus and his Kingdom. This is a one time decision that you can make by simply praying and telling God that you're trusting in him for your salvation. Tell God that you're deciding to put your trust in him.

3. Get baptized.

Celebrate with the rest of your church family here at Passion Creek by declaring your allegiance to Jesus through baptism.

Next Steps

After working through the first half of Basics, which statement best describes where you are today?

I'm ready to follow Jesus. You've decided to trust Jesus as Savior, submit to him as Lord, and give him your allegiance as King. NEXT STEPS <i>1 Tell your Basics Mentor or Workshop Leader.</i> <i>2 Schedule your baptism.</i> <i>3 Continue with Sessions 4-6.</i>	I think I'm ready, but I still have questions. You believe the gospel is true, but you still have questions about Jesus, faith, baptism, the Bible, or the Christian life. NEXT STEPS <i>1 Write down your questions.</i> <i>2 Schedule a conversation with your Basics Mentor or a pastor.</i> <i>3 Continue with Sessions 4-6.</i>	I'm still exploring. You aren't ready to make a commitment yet, but you're interested in learning more. NEXT STEPS <i>1 Keep reading through Basics.</i> <i>2 Continue attending workshops or meeting with your mentor.</i> <i>3 Keep asking questions and exploring the teachings of Jesus.</i>
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Wherever you are today, you're welcome to continue with Basics. Following Jesus is a lifelong journey, and we want to help you take your next step, whatever that might be.

PART THREE

Orthopraxy

Following Jesus begins with a decision, but it doesn't end there. Christians have always believed that faith is more than what we believe. It shapes how we live, how we relate to God, how we spend our time, and how we participate in the world around us. When Jesus called people throughout the Gospels, he didn't simply ask them to believe certain things about him. He invited them to follow him. The invitation to become a Christian is also an invitation to become a disciple. In the second half of Basics, you'll learn some of the foundational practices that help us grow as disciples of Jesus. We'll explore spiritual formation, Scripture, prayer, and life in community as we learn how to live in the story we've chosen to follow.

04 *What Is Discipleship?*

05 *Scripture & Prayer*

06 *Life in Community*

SESSION 04

What Is Discipleship?

TEACHING

At this point, if you've decided to follow Jesus, you're at the beginning of your spiritual journey, not the end. In this session, we'll talk about what exactly it means to be a Christian, to live out the gospel, and to follow Jesus with all of your life.

Many people assume the Christian life is primarily about believing the right things or trying harder to become a better person. We think that if we gain enough knowledge, avoid enough bad behaviors, and become disciplined enough, we'll eventually become the kind of person Jesus wants us to be. But most of us know from experience that change doesn't work that way.

Even after choosing to follow Jesus, you will still struggle with temptation, sin, unhealthy habits, distorted desires, fear, anxiety, selfishness, and old ways of thinking. This is the case for new believers and those who have been following Jesus for decades. We may genuinely want to change, but we often find ourselves falling back into familiar patterns. The problem isn't that we lack information. The problem is that we need transformation. This is what discipleship is all about.

When Jesus walked the earth, he invited people to come and follow him. The people who responded to that invitation were called disciples. In the first century, a disciple wasn't simply a student who learned information from a teacher. A disciple was an apprentice. They organized their entire lives around becoming like their teacher. They spent time with him, adopted his way of life, and learned to do what he did. When Jesus invites us to follow him, he's inviting us to adopt the life he lived so we can become people like him.

Discipleship is the lifelong process of being formed into the image of Jesus alongside others, for the sake of others. The aim of Christianity is not simply to know more about Jesus. The goal is to become more like Jesus. Throughout the New Testament, we see that God's desire isn't just to forgive us, but to transform us. Salvation is more than being rescued from sin. It's being restored into the kind of people we were created to be from the beginning. Humanity was created to reflect God's character and participate in his work in the world as they communed with him. Sin distorted that calling, but Jesus came to restore it. As disciples, we are learning how to become the kind of people who naturally think, act, love, serve, forgive, and live the way Jesus did, the way God created us to live. This is what Jesus calls "life and life in abundance." (John 10:10).

But, this process takes time.

The Holy Spirit

Most of us want immediate change. We want God to instantly remove our temptations, heal our wounds, and fix our habits. Sometimes God does work in miraculous moments. But more often, transformation takes place over the marathon. It happens over years rather than instances. The Holy Spirit, God's personal and empowering presence within us, slowly forms us into the image of Jesus through daily and ordinary faithfulness.

Following Jesus is less about gritting our teeth and mustering up discipline to avoid sin, and more about slowly opening more of our selves and our lives to the Holy Spirit, giving him access to our inner and external worlds, and allowing him to move us from our old selves to our new selves. This process is what we call "formation." It's the journey of allowing the Holy Spirit to transform us into people who look, think, feel, and act like Jesus. Less like our old selves and more like the people God created us to be.

We'll talk more about how to do this practically later in this session and the next, but first, we need to understand the alternative to discipleship to Jesus.

Intentional vs Unintentional

Everything around you is forming you. The narratives you believe, the community you surround yourself with, and the habits you engage in are all predetermined by the cultural waters you swim in. Like we learned in session 3, you're already living in a kingdom, following someone's rule, and usually, by default, it's your own.

This is what we call **unintentional formation**. It's the default way of living that all human beings have. It's the stories we believe, the media we consume, the people we spend time with, the habits we practice, the schedules we keep, and the values of the culture around us that are all forming us into a certain kind of person. To put it simply, ***you are already a disciple of something***. Our culture constantly teaches us lessons about success, happiness, freedom, sexuality, identity, money, power, and purpose. Most of those lessons are not neutral. They shape what we desire and what we trust. And these trusts and desires ultimately shape the rest of our lives through our schedules, budgets, and daily habits. For example, our culture often teaches that your value comes from your productivity. If you're successful, busy, and constantly achieving, then you've made it. Without realizing it, we begin organizing our schedules around work, sacrificing rest, relationships, and even our communion with God because we've come to believe our worth must be earned. Or we're taught that happiness comes from getting whatever we want. So when we're anxious, lonely, or bored, our instinct is to buy something, binge another show, scroll social media, or distract ourselves rather than bringing those desires before God. Over time, those habits shape what we trust to satisfy us. Without realizing it, we can become deeply formed by stories that have very little to do with the Kingdom of God.

The question is not whether you are being formed. The question is who or what is forming you?

Following Jesus requires **intentional formation**. To be a disciple is to aim your practice at someone or something. Your energy, thoughts, affection, time, schedules, calendars, hopes, dreams, and relationships are already aimed at something. So, as disciples of Jesus, we choose to place ourselves before him, aiming our schedules and habits at him so that he can reshape our desires, our rhythms, and our imaginations. We intentionally immerse ourselves in the story of Scripture rather than the competing stories around us. We learn to recognize the ways our culture has shaped us and allow Jesus to reshape us according to his Kingdom. This is why the practices matter.

In Colossians 3:5-10, 12-14 the apostle Paul tells us this:

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator...

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

In other words, the good news of the gospel isn't just that you've been forgiven for your sins. It's also good news that you've been given a completely new "self." You have a renewed spirit, you have a new self, you're made in God's likeness, you carry his righteousness, you have purity, you know the truth. But notice Paul's language here: you have to actively practice taking off your old self and putting on your new self. Before following Jesus, we were shaped by self-rule, sin, and the patterns of this world. Now we are learning a new way of life. We are learning to leave behind old habits and adopt the way of Jesus. But you have to choose that life. You have to choose to let go of the default, reorient your mind around the truer story, live out life-giving habits and patterns, say no to deceitful desires, or, to use Paul's language here, take off your old self and put on the new. Our discipleship isn't proven from our doctrine. Our discipleship is proven in our daily lives, the insignificant choices we make when we wake up, how we spend our days. As we surrender ourselves to God, the Spirit produces fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These qualities are not manufactured through willpower alone. They grow naturally as we remain connected to Jesus. Discipleship is ultimately about becoming the kind of person who naturally lives in the way of Jesus.

Practice then, is about intentional counter-formation. We choose to reorient our lives around our King by intentionally leaving our default ways of living and giving more of our lives to Him.

The Practices

The good news is that you can habituate the way of Jesus into your daily life, choosing to live in the Kingdom of God rather than the Kingdom of the World, Flesh, or Devil. We can slowly, piece by piece, orient all of our lives around Jesus. This is exactly what “discipleship” means, and it’s what the first followers of Jesus did after they encountered him and gave their lives to following him. These practices help us live in and live out the salvation we’ve received, they help us slowly loosen sin’s grip on our lives, and they help us learn how to follow Jesus in all areas.

The spiritual practices are daily, weekly, and seasonal habits and rhythms that help us create space for God to work in our lives. At Passion Creek Church, we’ve chosen 9 core practices that make up the communal discipleship rhythm of our church. They are:

01 Sabbath	02 Scripture	03 Simplicity
04 Hospitality	05 Peacemaking	06 Generosity
07 Fasting	08 Prayer	09 Witness

Each of these practices are designed to help us counter our “old selves,” the default ways of the culture around us. Sabbath reminds us that our value comes from God rather than our productivity. Scripture teaches us to think God’s thoughts and live out the Gospel story. Generosity loosens the grip of greed. Fasting teaches us that we don’t live by bread alone. Prayer teaches us dependence on God rather than ourselves. These practices don’t change us by themselves. God changes us. But practices position us to receive God’s transforming work in the slow, ordinary routines of our daily lives.

Following Jesus doesn’t happen accidentally. Like learning an instrument, playing a sport, or learning another language, becoming like Jesus requires intentional practice. They don’t earn God’s love or make us more acceptable to him. Instead, they create space for the Holy Spirit to continue transforming us into the image of Christ.

The Gospel

When Jesus came proclaiming the gospel, he didn’t simply invite people to receive forgiveness and wait for heaven. He announced the arrival of God’s Kingdom and invited people into an entirely new way of life. The gospel isn’t only the good news that your sins have been forgiven. It’s also the good news that you no longer have to live as the person sin made you to be. Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, you’ve been given a new identity, a new King, a new family, a new Spirit, and a new future. The same grace that forgives us is also the grace that transforms us. The story of the Bible shows us that God is committed to restoring people into his image so they can once again reflect his goodness in the world.

Discipleship isn’t an optional “next step” for mature Christians. It’s simply what happens when we start living out the gospel story.

REFLECTION

- 1** *In your own words, what do you think it means to “follow” Jesus? Do you think this is different or the same as believing in Jesus?*
- 2** *We are all being formed by something. What people, habits, media, or cultural messages have had the greatest influence on the kind of person you’re becoming? How have they shaped your desires and priorities?*
- 3** *If someone looked at your calendar, spending habits, conversations, and daily routines, what do you think they would conclude is most important to you? What might those patterns reveal about what is forming you?*
- 4** *Where do you most notice the tension between your “old self” and the “new self” Paul describes in Colossians 3? Is there an old habit, mindset, attachment, or pattern of living that Jesus may be inviting you to put off?*
- 5** *Discipleship is the lifelong process of becoming more like Jesus. When you imagine becoming more like him, what part of his character do you most long to see formed in your own life? Why?*

PRACTICE

Habit Audit. The goal of this week's practice is to help you notice the habits that are already forming you. Throughout this session, we learned that everyone is being discipled by something. The question isn't whether you're being formed, but who or what is forming you. This week, you'll spend time examining your daily rhythms and considering whether they're shaping you into the kind of person Jesus is inviting you to become.

Over the next week, set aside 20–30 minutes to reflect on a typical day in your life. Start from the moment you wake up until the moment you go to bed. Write down the ordinary habits and rhythms that make up your day. Consider questions like:

- What is the first thing I usually do when I wake up?
- How do I spend my commute or free moments throughout the day?
- What occupies most of my attention?
- Where does most of my time go?
- What habits shape my evenings?
- What media do I consume?
- When do I feel most distracted, anxious, hurried, or restless?
- What habits consistently move me toward God? Which ones pull me away?

Be as honest and detailed as you feel comfortable. Try to resist the temptation to alter your days so they feel more “holy” than normal. The goal here isn't to self-condemn or lead you to guilt. It's simply to become aware of the things that are already shaping you, for better or worse. In the next session, we'll cover two small practices you can slowly introduce to your daily rhythms.

SESSION 05

Scripture & Prayer

TEACHING

In the last session, we learned that discipleship is the lifelong process of becoming more like Jesus. We also learned that transformation doesn't happen by accident. The Holy Spirit forms us into the image of Jesus through practices: daily, weekly, and seasonal habits and rhythms that help us create space for God to work in our lives. Two of the most foundational practices are Scripture and Prayer.

It's clear from the gospels that Jesus himself had an incredibly high view of the Scriptures. He also regularly withdrew to pray. In fact, throughout the history of God's people, Scripture and Prayer have served as daily anchors that help ground busy lives in the presence of God. When we read Scripture and pray, we aren't trying to earn God's love or just become better Christians. We're trying to remain with Jesus, connected to him as the source of life and the author of the story we're living out. God speaks to us through his Word. We respond to him through prayer. Over time, these two practices slowly transform us from the inside out. In this session, you'll learn about these two practices and how to integrate them into your own life.

We'll start with Scripture.

What is the Bible?

The Bible is an amazing book. It's a collection of stories, documents, poems, prophecies, and letters written thousands of years ago by a strange cast of people. It's the divinely inspired Word of God, meaning it's how God has chosen to speak and reveal himself to us today. And it's a book with an agenda. Its agenda is to lead us to Jesus, God himself, who has the power to change our lives.

But the Bible is also a confusing book. Again, it's a collection of stories, documents, poems, prophecies, and letters written thousands of years ago by a strange cast of people. It's ancient, at times archaic, and more than a little troubling to our modern worldview. There's violence and miracles and parables and stories of people doing terrible things and stories of people doing amazing things. It makes bold claims about who we are and what our purpose in life is. And if we read it carefully, it confronts us by making us examine our own thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors.

So, what do we do with the Bible? How should we read it? How should we approach it? What exactly is the Bible and its purpose in our day-to-day lives as disciples of Jesus?

Let's start with what the Bible is not:

1. The Bible is not a textbook.

The Bible contains timeless truth, but it's not simply a collection of timeless truths. Its primary job isn't to give you information. If you approach the Bible the same way you'd approach an encyclopedia or systematic theology textbook, you'll probably become confused pretty quickly. God has revealed everything we need for life with him, but he hasn't answered every question we can think of. The Bible isn't meant to satisfy our curiosity. It's meant to cultivate our communion with God.

2. The Bible is not a storybook.

Some of us have the opposite temptation. We treat the Bible like a collection of inspirational stories with simple moral lessons. It's tempting to walk away from the Bible thinking we have to be brave like David, have faith like Daniel, or fight our own giants. And while there are lessons, practices, and examples we can follow from these great stories, Scripture isn't primarily about heroes for us to imitate. It's about a Savior for us to follow. The people throughout Scripture are often deeply broken, imperfect, and fallen. But that's the point. Their stories ultimately point beyond themselves to Jesus.

3. The Bible is not a rulebook.

Many of us grew up hearing the Bible described as "Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth." We assume that the main purpose of the Bible is to give us rules to follow while we wait for Jesus to return. And it's true that the Bible certainly teaches us how to live by showing us God's will for humanity. But Christianity isn't about earning God's approval by following enough rules. The Bible contains God's wisdom and God's commands, but its main purpose isn't simply to make us behave better. It's to help us know Jesus.

So what is the Bible?

The Bible is a unified Story, both human and divine, that leads to Jesus.

It's a collection of scrolls and narratives, poems and prophecies that lead us to encounter Jesus. The words within the Bible, according to Jesus, contain words of life that can set us free if we let them (John 6:63, 8:32). The Bible is a source of truth and hope for us today. It's how God has chosen to reveal himself, Jesus, to us. And it's how we can continue to learn more about Jesus, ourselves, and our role within the gospel story.

With that, here's a quick overview to help you better understand the Bible:

1. The Bible is more of a library than a single book.

When you read the Bible, you're not technically reading a single book. You're actually reading a collection of documents, all within different genres, that work cohesively to tell a single story. It's important to understand this, because the way you approach each genre changes what you expect from it. For example, the way you approach and read Moby Dick is different from the way you approach and read an IKEA instruction manual. Similarly, the Bible contains poetry, narrative, law, history, discourse, wisdom literature, and more. Each of these genres is communicating in a different way, but all to tell us more about God and humanity. You don't need a PhD in literature to understand the Bible, but you do need to learn how to recognize what part of the story you're in.

2. The Bible is both Human and Divine.

Human

The Bible is a collection of 66 books written over the span of roughly 1,500 years by at least 40 different authors. Each author is writing from a different perspective, time period, context, and even from different nations. We got the Bible from these human authors who, open to the Spirit of God and inspired by their encounters with him, knew to write these experiences and revelations down.

The Bible also contains 3 different languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The Old Testament is primarily written in Hebrew with a small portion of Aramaic, and the New Testament was written in Greek. The Bible wasn't "put together," but rather discerned by church leaders in the decades after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Guided by the Holy Spirit, these leaders discerned which writings were divinely inspired based on their connection to Jesus' disciples, transformational power, and consistent truth.

Divine

But Christians also believe that Scripture is divine. 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that all of Scripture is "God-breathed," which literally means "inspired by Him." The Bible isn't like other ancient books, spiritual books, or even other religious books. Though it was written by human authors, it carries God's authority, weight, and power. We believe the Scriptures are authoritative, meaning they reveal who God is, his will for humanity, and require our obedience. Something happens when we submit ourselves to its story. If this is how God has chosen to reveal himself to humanity, then as we surrender our lives to its story, the Holy Spirit begins reshaping our minds, our desires, and our lives. Scripture doesn't merely give us new information; it participates in our transformation. This is why reading the Bible is more than an intellectual exercise. It requires the very Spirit of God who inspired its authors to illuminate its meaning, convict us of sin, reveal Jesus, and transform us into his image.

When we read the Bible, we're entering what some have called a new world, where the mysteries of God are revealed, God's will and wisdom are revealed, and where our true selves are revealed. Through the Bible we're introduced not just to God, but to ourselves. Each narrative, poem, discourse, and letter reveals the complexity of the human condition. We see ourselves reflected in the fear and selfishness of Jacob, the courage of Esther, the arrogance of the apostle Peter, and the loyalty of the apostle John. As we immerse ourselves in God's story, we begin to discover our place within it. Scripture exposes our sin, confronts our assumptions, reshapes our imaginations, and reminds us of the gospel again and again.

The Bible does so much more than just inform us. It transforms us. We're not just reading facts about God. We're interacting and engaging with reality, God Himself.

What about prayer?

If the goal of the Bible is to help deepen our relationship with God, then we have to learn how to respond. This is the role of prayer.

Prayer is simply the act of communing with God. Notice, it's not simply about communicating. The goal of prayer is to do more than talk at God. Prayer, at its deepest, is a form of being with God in our present moment, the way you can be connected with your spouse simply by being present with them. Prayer is about learning to enjoy God's presence, surrender our lives to him, and slowly become aware that he is with us. Like any healthy relationship, prayer is less about mastering the right words and more about cultivating the right posture. This is why prayer naturally follows Scripture. Through Scripture, God speaks to us, reveals himself to us, and invites us into communion with him. Prayer is our response. We listen to God's voice in his Word, and then we respond with gratitude, confession, worship, questions, silence, and dependence. Over time, Scripture and prayer become foundational practices through which we commune with God and by which the Holy Spirit slowly forms us into the image of Jesus.

The Lord's Prayer

While this might sound interesting or even compelling, there are all sorts of barriers we face when it comes to prayer. Often we're distracted, uncertain of what to pray for, or even unsure of how to start. The first followers of Jesus faced these challenges as well. When they asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, he answered by giving them this simple structure:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."
(Matthew 6:9-13).

From this prayer, we can learn a few key things about how to pray:

1. Prayer is relational. The prayer Jesus models starts by addressing God as a Father. When you approach God in prayer, you're not talking to a distant spiritual being who's waiting for you to do or say the right thing before he responds. You're talking to someone who wants to be near to you. Prayer is less about finding the right words and more like a child sitting in their father's lap. God wants us to approach him.

2. Prayer aligns us with God's will. Before Jesus teaches us to pray for our own needs, he teaches us to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done." Prayer isn't primarily about convincing God to do what we want, answering our requests, or giving us divine insight. It's about allowing God to shape us into the kind of people who want what he wants. As we pray, our hearts are slowly formed to love what God loves, desire what he desires, and participate in his work in the world.

3. Prayer teaches us dependence. Jesus teaches his disciples to ask God for daily bread, forgiveness, and deliverance from evil. We're invited to bring all of our needs and desires to God. This isn't a method for controlling God, but rather an invitation to learn to rest in his presence and provision as we learn more about his will through Scripture.

Scripture and prayer have anchored the lives of God's people for thousands of years, and they can anchor yours as well. You don't need to become a Bible scholar or a prayer expert overnight. You simply need to learn how to integrate these practices into your regular rhythms of life. As you consistently open the Scriptures, listen for God's voice, and respond to him in prayer, you'll slowly discover that he is already at work. Over time, these simple, ordinary practices become the means by which the Holy Spirit shapes you into the image of Jesus.

REFLECTION

- 1** *Before today, how would you have described the purpose of the Bible? Has anything in this session changed the way you think about Scripture?*
- 2** *When you think about prayer, what emotions come to mind? Excitement? Anxiety? Guilt? Curiosity? Why do you think that is?*
- 3** *When you think about the Bible, what emotions come to mind?*
- 4** *What barriers make it difficult for you to consistently read Scripture or pray?*
- 5** *What does prayer look like in your own life? Have you ever tried to pray before? How did that go?*
- 6** *When you pray, how do you imagine God? As a distant being, a close Father, or something else?*
- 7** *In what area of your life do you need God's guidance the most right now? Think about your family, finances, work, or any other area.*

PRACTICE

Lectio Divina. One of the most ancient practices followers of Jesus have used throughout history to combine Scripture-reading and prayer is called lectio divina. This Latin phrase literally means “divine reading,” and simply describes the way in which disciples have learned to read Scripture and respond through prayer. The goal in this type of reading isn’t to get through as much as possible or gain more information. It’s to slowly read Scripture so that we can hear God’s voice, commune with him, and be transformed by the Holy Spirit.

This week, choose one of the following passages to practice with. Then, read through that passage using the method below. Try to set aside 10-20 minutes to start, but feel free to linger longer if you feel led to:

Jesus Calls Peter*Luke 5:1-11*

The Prodigal Son*Luke 15:11-32*

Jesus and the Woman*John 8:1-11*

The Two Ways*Psalms 1*

Confession of Sin*Psalms 51*

God’s Presence*Psalms 63*

Fruit of the Spirit*Galatians 5:13-25*

Jesus’ Humility*Philippians 2:1-11*

Read. Once you've chosen a passage, read it slowly once or twice. Pay attention to any words, phrases, or images that stand out to you. Don't rush. Remember, you're not simply reading an ancient book. You're opening yourself to God's Word and allowing him to speak.

Reflect. Read the passage again slowly, and this time reflect on what God might be revealing to you based on what stood out. What does this passage reveal about God? What does it reveal about humanity? What does it reveal about you? Where do you see yourself in the story? Allow Scripture to expose your sin, confront your assumptions, reshape your imagination, and remind you of the gospel again.

Respond. Finally, respond to God in prayer. Thank him, worship him, or confess your sin. Ask questions, or sit in silence. Pray for yourself and for others. Surrender your desires to him and ask the Holy Spirit to continue forming you into the image of Jesus. Remember, prayer is simply the act of communing with God. Through Scripture God speaks to us, and through prayer we respond.

As you practice this rhythm day after day, you'll slowly discover that Scripture and prayer become more than spiritual disciplines. They become a way of abiding with Jesus, hearing his voice, and participating in the work the Holy Spirit is already doing in your life.

SESSION 06

Life in Community

TEACHING

Throughout Basics you've learned about the gospel story: how God created you out of love and saved you from sin so that you can reflect his goodness and presence to the rest of the world through your discipleship to Jesus. In this last session, we'll cover the final part of living as a disciple of Jesus: life in community.

When the Bible opens its story, we see God creating Adam and putting him in a garden to live and work by himself. But soon, God says that his loneliness isn't good. So God creates Eve, and commands both of them to reflect his goodness and presence to the rest of the world. In fact, God's method for saving the world is always to save a group of people, not just individuals, in order to spread his presence to the rest of creation. This is a pattern that's repeated throughout the entire story of the Bible. God calls Abraham and promises that through his family all the nations of the earth will be blessed. He rescues that family, Israel, from slavery in Egypt and forms them into a people who would reflect his character to the surrounding nations. In the gospels, Jesus gathers twelve disciples around himself, not simply to teach them individually, but to form them into a new family centered around the Kingdom of God. After Jesus' resurrection and ascension, the Holy Spirit comes upon the Church, the group of disciples left, to empower them as ordinary people so they can continue Jesus' mission together.

From beginning to end, the story of Scripture reminds us that God doesn't simply save us *from* something. He saves us *into* something. He saves us into a family.

In Ephesians 2, the apostle Paul writes this:

“In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope. But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ. For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us...He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death...Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us. So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God’s holy people. You are members of God’s family. Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord.” (Ephesians 2:12-21).

In other words, following Jesus was never just about you. While faith is deeply personal, it was never intended to be individualistic. We don’t simply have a personal relationship with Jesus. We also become part of his Body, his Church, and his family.

The Church as a Family

When most people hear the word “church,” they think of a building or a long Sunday morning service. But in the Bible, the word “church” simply means “gathering.” The church is the gathering of God’s people who meet regularly to hear God’s word, worship together, pray with each other, and encourage one another as they commit to following Jesus together.

But the church is much more than a weekly gathering. The New Testament describes the Church in many different ways. It’s called the Body of Christ, reminding us that every follower of Jesus has an important role to play. It’s called the Temple of the Holy Spirit because God now dwells among his people. It’s called the Bride of Christ because Jesus loves, pursues, and remains faithful to his people. But when the people of God are described throughout the Bible, they’re most often described as a family.

In Ephesians, we’ve already seen how Paul calls us God’s “household.” In Galatians 6:10, Paul also instructs believers to work for the good of those within God’s “family.” And in Revelation 7:9, the Bible ends with an image of people from every tribe, tongue, and nation united in God’s family together in the New Creation. In other words, when we place our faith in Jesus, we aren’t simply forgiven of our sins or given the hope of eternal life. We’re adopted into a new family made up of people from every nation, language, background, and generation. We become brothers and sisters because we now share the same Father.

The Cost of Community

But this kind of community isn’t easy. Community today is valued by the world, but not in the same way the Bible describes it. Our culture encourages us to build relationships around shared interests, similar lifestyles, common opinions, or personal preferences. We naturally surround ourselves with people who think like us, vote like us, enjoy the same hobbies, or affirm the choices we make. When those relationships become difficult or inconvenient, it’s often easier to move on and find a different community.

But the Church is meant to be different. Biblical community isn't built on convenience, comfort, or similarity. It's built around Jesus. The Church brings together people from different backgrounds, generations, personalities, cultures, and life experiences into one family. Our unity isn't found in our preferences or politics, but in Christ.

This means living in Christian community requires something the world often avoids: commitment. It requires humility when we're wrong, patience when others disappoint us, forgiveness when we're hurt, honesty when we've sinned, and sacrificial love when it's inconvenient. Rather than walking away when conflict arises, followers of Jesus are called to work toward reconciliation because that's exactly what God has done for us through Christ.

This kind of community is costly. It asks us to put others before ourselves, to bear one another's burdens, to celebrate one another's victories, to grieve together, and to remain faithful even when relationships become difficult. The Church itself is made up of ordinary people who are still learning to follow Jesus. We'll misunderstand one another, disappoint one another, experience conflict together, and even hurt one another. But these moments aren't reasons to give up on the Church. They're often the very places where God teaches us humility, patience, forgiveness, grace, and sacrificial love. The Church then isn't the place where only our needs are met and our preferences satisfied. It's where we're transformed slowly, through highs and lows, over the long haul, into the image of Jesus. In other words, community is the place where people actually change.

Communion

One of the most common and ancient ways the Church has remembered this is through the practice of Communion.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus is constantly sharing meals with people. He eats with his disciples, religious leaders, tax collectors, sinners, and outsiders. This is significant, because in Jesus' day and age, meals weren't simply about eating. They were opportunities for fellowship, hospitality, teaching, forgiveness, and celebration. When Jesus, God himself, was present at the dinner table, meals were a means of grace.

On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus gathered his disciples around one final meal. Taking bread and a cup, he gave them a practice that Christians have continued for thousands of years: Communion. Communion reminds us that Jesus gave his body and blood for us through his death on the cross. It reminds us that we've been forgiven, welcomed, and invited into God's family. Every time we come to the Lord's Table in Communion, we're remembering what Jesus has done, celebrating what he's doing among his people today, and looking forward to the day when we'll feast together in God's Kingdom. Communion isn't just an individual moment between you and God. It's a family meal. We come to the table together because we've all been welcomed by the same grace. We eat bread and drink juice as a way of reorienting ourselves back towards God and towards each other, reminding ourselves that we're a part of a new humanity, God's new family, given the same task that God has always given his people: reflect his goodness and presence to the rest of the world through our discipleship to Jesus and commitment to each other.

Sunday Gatherings & Together Groups

At Passion Creek, our desire is to become a community of ~~attenders~~ disciples who are formed by Jesus, together, for others. Everything we do is aimed at becoming the types of disciples we've been describing throughout Basics.

PRACTICE TOGETHER

Sunday Gathering

Where the church gathers weekly to reorient ourselves back to Jesus through Scripture, worship, Communion, and fellowship.

PRACTICE TOGETHER

Together Groups

Small groups that meet in homes throughout the city to take communion, pray, discuss Scripture, and practice our formation together.

Sunday Gathering. Our Sunday gatherings are meant to be a space where the church gathers weekly to reorient ourselves back to Jesus. We encounter Jesus through his word, learning more about the story of the Gospel and our part in it. We encounter Jesus through worship, declaring to God and each other our gratitude and adoration for him. We encounter Jesus when we take Communion, remembering that we've been saved as a part of God's household to continue his purpose here on the earth. And we encounter Jesus through fellowship with each other. In moments of prayer over one another, conversations in the lobby, and encouragement from people near us, we receive God's love for us through others. This is why we're commanded, as disciples of Jesus, not to "neglect meeting together." (Hebrews 10:25). You cannot be a follower of Jesus without this Sunday practice.

Together Groups. If Sundays are where we gather to learn more about Jesus and his way, Together Groups are where we put what we learn into practice. Together Groups are small groups that meet in homes throughout the city to take communion together, pray together, discuss Scripture, and practice our formation together. Our Groups aren't simply Bible studies or places to make friends. They're communities of practice where we learn to follow Jesus together. They're where strangers become friends, friends become family, and disciples slowly become more like Jesus.

Following Jesus was never meant to be a private journey. God has adopted you into his family, invited you to his table, and called you into a community that is learning to become more like Jesus together. As you commit yourself to the rhythms of gathering with the Church, participating in Communion, and investing in a Together Group, you'll discover that God often does some of his deepest work in and through his people. Life in community isn't an extra activity or an optional step for "super Christians." It's one of the primary ways we're formed into the image of Jesus.

REFLECTION

- 1** *When you hear the word “church,” what emotions or experiences immediately come to mind? Why do you think those experiences have shaped your view of Christian community?*
- 2** *Our culture often tells us to be independent, self-sufficient, and not need anyone else. In what ways have those ideas shaped the way you approach relationships, vulnerability, or asking for help?*
- 3** *Is there a past experience of rejection, disappointment, conflict, or hurt that makes it difficult for you to trust or commit to Christian community? What might it look like to bring that experience honestly before God?*
- 4** *What are some barriers or resistance you feel when it comes to the idea of committing to a practical Christian church community?*

END HERE

Now What?

Congrats on finishing Basics! If you've made it this far, you've seen that following Jesus is about much more than believing the right things. It's about entering God's Story. Through Jesus, you've been forgiven, welcomed into God's family, filled with his Spirit, and invited to participate in his mission to the world.

As you continue reading Scripture, praying, gathering with the Church, participating in Communion, and committing yourself to a Together Group, trust that the Holy Spirit is continuing the work he began in you. Discipleship isn't a destination you arrive at overnight. It's a lifelong journey of being formed into the image of Jesus alongside God's people.

With that, here are three next steps you can take at Passion Creek as you continue to follow Jesus:

1. Get baptized.

If you haven't already but feel that it's the next step for you, consider scheduling a baptism by visiting passioncreek.church/baptism.

2. Join a Together Group.

If you aren't currently a part of a Together Group, you can join one by visiting passioncreek.church/groups. You'll be invited to attend a Groups Orientation, then have a chance to sign up during a groups enrollment period.

3. Participate in the Sunday Gathering.

Keep coming to the Sunday Gathering to learn more from Scripture, fellowship with other believers, and worship Jesus together. If you'd like to take a next practical step, consider attending Serve Here in order to start serving in one of the gatherings.

FOR REFERENCE

Appendix

A few resources to help you go further: a simple meeting guide for Basics Mentors, the historic creeds of the Church, and a fuller summary of the essential beliefs of the Christian faith.

A1 *For Basics Mentors*

A2 *The Creeds*

A3 *Summary of Essential Beliefs*

APPENDIX A1

For Basics Mentors

If you're walking through Basics as a Mentor, here's a simple meeting guide you can use to help structure your time together:

1. Open with prayer.

If the person you're meeting with is comfortable, begin by offering a short prayer over your time together. You can also spend a few moments catching up, asking how their week has been, or simply getting to know one another better. Building trust is just as important as covering the material.

2. Read or Recap the Teaching.

Walk through the Teaching section together. If they've already read it beforehand, spend a few minutes summarizing the main ideas in your own words. Ask questions along the way and don't be afraid to pause if something deserves more discussion!

3. Reflect together.

Work through the Reflection questions together. Don't rush to answer every question or fill every silence. Give them time to think, share, and ask questions of their own. The most meaningful conversations can happen here.

4. Review last session's practice.

Ask how last week's Practice went. What stood out? What was encouraging? What was difficult? Celebrate small steps of growth rather than looking for perfect completion.

5. Prepare for this session's practice.

Before you finish, look over the Practice for the coming week together. Make sure they understand what they're being invited to do and encourage them to approach it with curiosity rather than pressure. End your time by praying for them as they continue following Jesus.

A few tips:

- 1. Be casual and conversational.** This isn't a classroom or an interview. You're not trying to lecture someone or quiz them on the right answers. Listen well, ask thoughtful questions, and create a space where people feel safe to be honest.
- 2. Don't feel pressured to answer every question.** It's okay to say, "I don't know." If a difficult question comes up, explore it together or encourage them to write it down and talk with one of the pastors. Your role isn't to have every answer, it's to faithfully walk alongside someone as they learn to follow Jesus.
- 3. Take your time.** Basics isn't a race. Some sessions may take one meeting, while others might lead to longer conversations stretching a few weeks. It's perfectly okay to spend extra time or even weeks on a session or topic if it's meaningful or a struggle for the participant.
- 4. Model discipleship.** Keep in mind that if you're mentoring someone, they're likely watching how you live and follow Jesus yourself. Be honest and vulnerable about your own story and struggles, because authenticity builds trust.

APPENDIX A2

The Creeds

From the earliest days of the Church, Christians have summarized the core beliefs of the Christian faith through short statements called creeds. The word “creed” comes from the Latin word *credo*, meaning “I believe.” Rather than replacing Scripture, these creeds summarize the essential teachings of the Bible and have helped Christians faithfully pass down the faith for nearly two thousand years.

The two most widely used creeds throughout church history are the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed. Christians from many different traditions continue to confess these words together today. While churches may differ on many secondary issues, these creeds remind us of the foundational truths that have united followers of Jesus across cultures, denominations, and generations.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
begotten from the Father before all ages,
God from God,
Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made;
of the same essence as the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven;
he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit
and the virgin Mary,
and was made human.

He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered and was buried.
The third day he rose again,
according to the Scriptures.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again with glory
to judge the living and the dead.
His kingdom will never end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life.
He proceeds from the Father and the Son,
and with the Father and the Son
is worshiped and glorified.
He spoke through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic
and apostolic church.
We affirm one baptism
for the forgiveness of sins.
We look forward to the resurrection
of the dead,
and to life in the world to come. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand
of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge
the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.

Amen.

APPENDIX A3

Summary of Essential Beliefs

The following is a more detailed summary of the essential beliefs of the Christian faith from Session 3.

1. There is one God who exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

DEUTERONOMY 6:4 • MATTHEW 28:19 • JOHN 1:1-3 • JOHN 14:16-17 • 2 CORINTHIANS 13:14

Christians believe there is one God who has revealed himself as three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father, Son, and Spirit are fully God, equal in glory and united in character, purpose, and love.

2. God created the world and everything in it, including you, out of love.

GENESIS 1:1-31 • PSALM 8 • COLOSSIANS 1:15-17

God created the heavens and the earth, and everything he made was good. Human beings were uniquely created in God's image to know him, reflect his goodness, and participate in his work in the world.

3. But humanity has been separated from God by sin.

GENESIS 3 • ROMANS 3:23 • ROMANS 6:23 • EPHESIANS 2:1-3

Rather than trusting God's wisdom, humanity chose autonomy and rebellion. Sin has fractured our relationship with God, one another, and creation itself. Sin affects all of us, and we're born with it. Left to ourselves, we cannot overcome the power of sin or restore ourselves to God.

4. Jesus is God in human flesh, our Savior, Lord, and King, who came to earth to save us from sin, Satan, and death.

JOHN 1:1-18 • MATTHEW 1:18-25 • LUKE 1:26-38 • COLOSSIANS 1:15-20 • PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

Jesus is fully God and fully human. Conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, he entered human history to reveal the Father, announce God's Kingdom, and rescue humanity from sin, Satan, and death.

5. Jesus died for our sins on the cross and physically rose from the dead.**ISAIAH 53 • LUKE 24 • 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-8 • ROMANS 5:6-11**

Through his death on the cross, Jesus bore the consequences of our sin. Through his bodily resurrection, he defeated sin, Satan, and death, opening the way for forgiveness, new life, and the restoration of all creation. In his ascension, he rules over creation at the right hand of the Father.

6. Salvation, freedom from the power and punishment of sin, is found in Jesus alone.**JOHN 3:16-17 • JOHN 14:6 • ACTS 4:12 • EPHESIANS 2:8-9**

No amount of good works, morality, or religious effort can save us. Salvation is God's gift of grace, received through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

7. Following Jesus requires repentance, faith, and ongoing discipleship.**MARK 1:15 • LUKE 9:23-25 • MATTHEW 28:18-20 • ROMANS 12:1-2 • PHILIPPIANS 2:12**

To follow Jesus is to turn away from sin, place our trust in him, and continually learn to live under his leadership. Discipleship is the lifelong process of becoming more like Jesus alongside others through the work of the Holy Spirit.

8. Jesus will return to renew all things and establish his Kingdom forever.**ACTS 1:9-11 • 1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-28 • REVELATION 21-22**

Jesus will return to judge evil, raise the dead, renew creation, and dwell forever with his people in the New Creation. The ultimate and final end of the Gospel story isn't a disembodied heaven, it's a physical resurrection and New Creation. Christians live with hope, anticipating the day when God's Kingdom comes in its fullness.

OUR PRAYER FOR YOU

Not just facts *but the Source of Life.*

*Our prayer is that through Basics you encounter Jesus.
The goal isn't to get to the content, but rather to learn to
walk with Jesus and begin following a new way of life
entirely.*