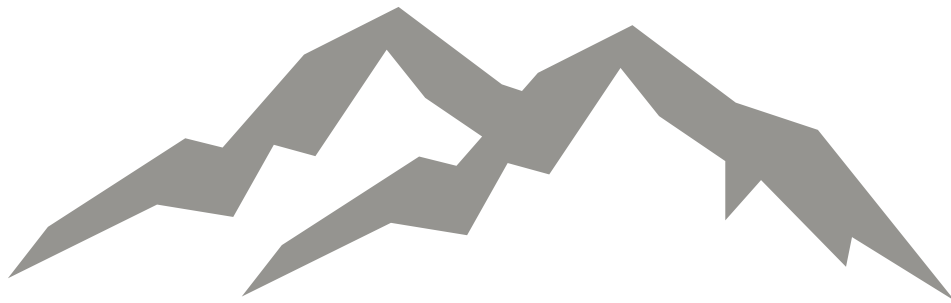


FAITH FOUNDATIONS

**A FIVE WEEK DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM FOR NEW AND
NON BELIEVERS FOCUSED ON TEACHING FOUNDATIONAL
TRUTHS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.**



***"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise
man who built his house on the rock." - Jesus
(Matthew 7:24)***

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

Faith Foundations is a discipleship curriculum inspired by the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:24.

"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock."

The purpose of this study is to use the Bible to teach the foundational beliefs of a Christian. In the sessions, the participants will learn how to approach the Bible while they read scripture in context and respond to what they hear from the Scriptures.

The study is best suited for groups of new or non-Christians seeking Christ.

The study covers the following topics:

Lesson 1: Laying the Foundation

- **Overview:** To help participants think about their own spiritual misconceptions and emphasize the role of the scriptures when building a faith foundation.

Lesson 2: Jesus is Plan A

- **Overview:** To help participants see that Jesus was always the plan to reconcile them to a perfect and good God.

Lesson 3: The Resurrection is Central

- **Overview:** To help participants see that the Christian faith hinges on the resurrection of Jesus.

Lesson 4: Faith Alone

- **Overview:** To help participants see that salvation is not earned but a gift given through faith in Jesus Christ.

Lesson 5: Made New

- **Overview:** To help participants understand and embrace the new life of a follower of Jesus.

CURRICULUM DESIGN

As with any study, you will need to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of your group. If time is an issue, consider taking out the icebreaker or subbing it for something else. If your group is small, add more questions to the large group session to make it more conversational. This study is a guide that you can easily adapt to meet the needs of those you teach.

Read the information below to best understand how to use this 8-week curriculum.



Anytime you see the stop sign, let that be your signal stop and pray.

It is easy to rush into a lesson, but as a teacher, you need to be extra intentional about thanking and relying on God.

LESSON SNAPSHOT

In the lesson snapshot box, you will receive a rundown of the lesson's purpose, the primary scriptures taught (though you will reference others in the study), and an overview of the big teaching points in the large group and small group sessions.

LARGE GROUP

Icebreaker: You will have an opening icebreaker game in the large group session. These games are optional but fun, especially when teaching a younger demographic (teens and college). If you skip the icebreaker, read over the "AFTER GAME" section for ideas to introduce the lesson.

SCRIPT:

A box with a slightly colored background, signifies a script.

The study is designed for you to take the information, study it, and then put your own words to the teaching.

There is extra space on each page to write notes to refer to as you teach.

SMALL GROUP

By taking the time to divide participants into smaller groups, they have an opportunity to engage with the Word of God with others in a more personal way.

Note to the small group leaders:

The purpose of the small group is to allow participants to actively interact with the scriptures and discuss topics that will connect to the main session.

During this portion, have participants take turns reading the scripture(s) and answering the questions. Some questions are straightforward and have one answer, while others have multiple.

Facilitators for the small groups will benefit from doing the following:

- Come prepared
 - Read the scripture(s) and questions beforehand
- Read the passage and questions slowly to the group
- Wait 7 seconds before repeating the question
- Re-word or explain the question if necessary
- Ask the group, "What else..." to encourage more responses
- Be okay with awkward silence
- Participate in the discussion, but do not dominate it
- Encourage participants to explain their answers with the scripture
- Avoid sarcasm during the group time

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

LESSON 1 SNAPSHOT

Purpose: To introduce the series by examining how dangerous it is to have misconceptions about the Christian faith and how we can build a strong and secure faith foundation by studying and obeying the Word of God.

Primary Passages: Matthew 7:21-23 (large group), Matthew 7:24-27 (small group)

Overview: In the large group session, participants will be challenged to think through what it means to be a Christian and how it is more than an oral confession or producing good deeds (though those are a part of the Christian faith). Participants will expand these ideas in the small group session by examining the importance of building their faith on a firm foundation of listening and obeying Jesus' words.

LARGE GROUP

A black octagonal icon with a white border and the word "PRAY!" in bold, black, uppercase letters inside.

ICE BREAKER: FACT OR MYTH

DIRECTIONS: Read the list of Facts or Myths below and have the participants indicate whether they believe the statement is a fact or myth, then reveal the truth to them.

Fact or Myth Statements (with answers):

- 1. Bulls get angry when they see the color red.** {**MYTH**. Bulls are red-green color blind. What incites their anger is the movement from the cape.}
- 2. Goldfish only have a three-second memory.** {**MYTH**. Some research even indicates goldfish could have a memory span of up to five months long.}

Fact or Myth Statements (with answers continued):**3. Cows can walk up stairs easily but can hardly walk down them.**

{**FACT**. The average slope of a staircase is 35 degrees, so humans can walk down it without a second thought. Cows, on the other hand, have a much different weight distribution and bone structure than we do, so it is difficult for them to move in the same manner.}

4. George Washington had wooden teeth. {**MYTH**. His dentures were composed of ivory, gold, lead, and even other human teeth—but never any wood.}

5. Most glue is made from horse. {**FACT**. Glue is historically made from collagen taken from animal parts like horse hooves.}

6. You'll get cramps if you go swimming right after you eat. {**MYTH**. The body requires extra blood in order to digest, but not nearly enough to prevent the muscles in your arms and legs from working as they should.}

7. It takes seven years for your body to digest gum. {**MYTH**. Your body actually can't digest gum at all, even in seven years. Gum doesn't stay in your stomach—it just moves quickly through your digestive system and exits through your stool.}

8. If you eat too many carrots you will turn orange. {**FACT**. Carotenemia (turning orange) is caused by having too much beta-carotene in your blood stream. Beta-carotenes is the pigment in certain red, orange and yellow fruits and veggies.}

9. Dogs only see in black and white. {**MYTH**. Dogs don't see all of the colors that we see, but they can actually distinguish between colors.}

10. Possums play dead. {**MYTH**. They pass out from fear.}

AFTER GAME: After the game, explain that everyone has some misconceptions, but the most dangerous ones revolve around faith. Explain that in this series, they will use the Word of God as a litmus test for truth and that their faith beliefs will be challenged and strengthened as they hear and obey God's Word.

Say something like:

The statements we just concluded as fact or myth are not really important in the grand scheme of things. You may have believed one or more of those statements, but even correcting any false beliefs about digesting gum or dogs seeing in black and white isn't going to change your life much. However, when it comes to spiritual beliefs, having a solid understanding of what it means to be a Christian, to be saved, to be secure in your identity and purpose is of eternal significance. The answers to those questions change everything about how we live on earth and who will enter eternity with God.

The purpose of the series you will be a part of is to create a strong faith foundation that answers some faith-related questions. As we study together, we will use the Bible as our source of truth because it is the one thing that will not change and can be forever trusted throughout the testing of time. In our world, it feels like what is “true” is constantly changing. But in Isaiah 40:8, we learn, “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.” Everything we believe should be rooted in God’s Word. By examining and discussing the scriptures, whatever you have believed to be true about Christianity will be challenged or strengthened through the Bible.

BIBLE STUDY

Since this study is for new and nonbelievers, give a brief overview of the Bible using the table of contents and explain where the book of Matthew fits into the Bible since this will be the book they will read from today. **Say something like:**

We are beginning a series called “Faith Foundations.” The heart of the study comes from a passage in the book of Matthew, which we will study today.

I want to make sure you have some basic Bible knowledge that will help you as we approach and interpret God’s Word. (Instruct participants to turn to their table of contents.)

- **The Bible consists of 66 books and is divided into two main sections: the Old and New Testaments.**
- **The Old Testament contains the accounts from creation until before the birth of Jesus. The New Testament recounts the details of Jesus’ birth, death, resurrection, and ascension, the expansion of the church, and the prophecy of Jesus’ return.**
- **The book of Matthew is known as a gospel book and is one of four gospel books in your Bible (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).**
- **All of the gospels are located in the New Testament and record the life, death, and resurrection account of Jesus. Matthew’s writing focuses on how Jesus fulfills the Old Testament prophecies.**

Introduce the passage they will read today (Matthew 7:21-27) by explaining that it comes at the end of a famous message from Jesus known as The Sermon on the Mount. Share that in chapters 5-7, Jesus explains what it looks like to be his disciple (follower). Wrap-up by saying that the end of his sermon warns against false disciples and what it actually means to have a good faith foundation.

Say something like:

Turn to Matthew 7:21. Today, we will read two passages towards the end of Jesus' famous sermon, which many people know as The Sermon on the Mount. The sermon begins in chapter 5 and ends in chapter 7. In the message, Jesus expands on what it means to be his disciple. A disciple is a follower or student of a teacher, but more than what you may be familiar with in your typical student-teacher relationships nowadays. It is a much more intimate relationship. A disciple is often hand-selected by their teacher and would spend a significant amount of time with their mentor learning their trade.

In the passages you will read today in Matthew 7, you will notice that Jesus concludes his sermon by addressing false disciples, those with misconceptions of faith or who have plain bad intentions, and what makes someone a wise and true disciple.

READ MATTHEW 7:21-23

TEACHING POINT 1: IT'S NOT ABOUT THE RIGHT WORDS.

Begin by recognizing how uncomfortable hearing these words from Jesus can be. It may cause the readers to think, "Then who can be saved?" Explain in this passage that they can see that Jesus is not interested in people playing the "Christian part." He is, however, interested in a relationship with them.

Explain that saying the right things does not necessarily mean someone is saved ("Lord, Lord..."). **Say something like:**

Here we see that people say the right things by titling Jesus as their Lord. "Lord" means boss. It's a sign of kingdom respect. Confessing Jesus as Lord is a part of placing your faith in Jesus, but saying specific words is not what saves you.

Many people claim they are Christian yet have no idea what a relationship with God is all about. During the lesson, I want you to examine your beliefs and heart and ask yourself: "Do I even know what it means to be saved?" "Have I been claiming the title "Christian," but I don't even know Jesus?" If those questions describe you, please listen extra closely to the scriptures we are about to read, and at any point, if you want to speak to someone about placing your faith in Jesus, please do so. Laying a firm faith foundation begins when you believe in Jesus.

TEACHING POINT 2: JESUS CARES ABOUT THE CONDITION OF YOUR HEART.

Explain that performing good or even mighty works does not make you right with God (“...did we not...in your name...”). **Say something like:**

Notice what Jesus said after the people in this text recounted their good deeds in verse 23. {“...I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.} Jesus wants a relationship with us conditioned on faith, not works. He is not interested in how good you look on the outside but in the condition of your heart.

Romans 3:10 tell us that there is no one righteous, not one. This means that no matter how good you try to make yourself look by building a “spiritual resume” to present at the end of your life to God, it is never going to be good enough because you are tainted with sin, and that sin separates you from a relationship with God.

But, praise God that in John 3:16, we learn that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” If you were wondering after reading Matthew 7:21-23, who can enter the kingdom of heaven, there is your answer. The one who believes in the risen Jesus will have eternal life.

Eternal life is often misunderstood. The Bible explains: “And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3) Christianity is not about getting to heaven but a relationship with God through Jesus; this is the heart of our Matthew passage. Jesus wants to know you intimately. He wants you to open your heart to him and place your faith in his works, not your own.

Transition by recognizing the power of God’s Word (the Bible). Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Then, explain what participants can expect to get out of their small group time. **Say something like:**

What we have examined in God’s Word so far is heavy and full of deep self-reflection. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says that all scripture is “breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” Throughout the series, we will build upon truths rooted in the Word of God.

During small groups, you will read more of Matthew 7 to understand what gives someone a solid faith foundation.



SMALL GROUP LESSON 1

1. In the large group, we read Matthew 7:21-23. Briefly explain the passage. How does this passage make you feel?
2. What are some misconceptions people have about the Christian faith? Is it possible you have some misunderstandings? Explain.

READ MATTHEW 7:24-27

3. According to Jesus, what makes someone spiritually wise and foolish?
4. Why is obeying God's Word important? Why isn't listening and knowing facts about Him enough?
5. Why is having a firm faith foundation necessary? How important is it to you? Do you live as if it is essential? Explain.
6. What steps can you take to build a solid spiritual foundation and ensure that misconceptions about the Christian faith aren't keeping you from a relationship with Jesus?
7. Is there someone you know who can help you grow in your faith? Who and why them?
8. How is God calling you to respond after today's passages?



JESUS IS GOD'S PLAN A

LESSON 2 SNAPSHOT

Purpose: To help participants see that Jesus was always the plan to reconcile them to a perfect and good God.

Primary Passages: Genesis 2 & 3 (large group), Romans 5:5-21 (small group)

Overview: In the large group session, participants will read Genesis 2 and 3. In chapter 2, they will explore the perfection of God's design for the world, while in Genesis 3, there will be two focuses: sin brings brokenness, and God brings redemption. In the small group session, participants will review the truths discussed while reading Romans 5:18-21.

LARGE GROUP



PRAY!

ICE BREAKER: HEADBANDS

DIRECTIONS: Pick four people to play two rounds of headbands in front of the large group. Have a lightning round for the teams if there is a tie. Congratulate winners and have the teams join the large group again.

AFTER GAME: Explain how being able to define concepts, like they did in the game, is an important life skill. Unfortunately, many people do not know how to express and explain their faith to others for various reasons. Share that the goal of the "Faith Foundations" series is to lay out the foundations for the Christian faith by exploring what the Bible says it means to be a Christian.

BIBLE STUDY

Introduce the lesson by **saying something like:**

Today, we will discuss how Jesus has always been God's plan A for maintaining a lifetime relationship with Him.

Once again, remind participants of the makeup of their Bible. Explain that because the Bible consists of 66 books and several different genres, they do not necessarily need to read them in the order they are listed. If they are new to reading the Bible, encourage them to begin reading a book from one of the gospels {Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John}.

Then, explain that they will read Genesis 2 and 3 today because it is the beginning account for creation (the word "Genesis" means "beginning") and it describes God's perfect design and the destruction of sin. These two chapters will give a solid foundation for understanding why there is a need for a Savior and how Jesus was always the plan. **Say something like:**

The Bible contains 66 individual books written in various genres; you do not necessarily need to read them in the order they are listed. If you are new to reading the Bible, I suggest beginning in a gospel book to get an up close look at Jesus' life and purpose.

Today, we are going to begin in Genesis because the word Genesis means beginning, and I want you to see how a relationship with God has always been the plan from the conception of time and understand how Jesus is the one who accomplishes God's mission.

Next, prompt participants to turn to Genesis 2 and explain that this chapter is a narration of the creation story and contains a detailed account of the formation of mankind.

READ GENESIS 2:15-24

TEACHING POINT 1: GOD HAS A PERFECT DESIGN.

Use the list to summarize the passage. Be sure to reference the verse, so the participants see you using the scriptures to justify your observations.

- God establishes a good home for man. (v. 15)
- God creates purpose through work & rulership for man. (v. 15)
- God is the provider of daily needs. (v. 16)
- God creates boundaries to protect man. (v. 17)
- God knows what's best for man. (v. 18)
- God creates community for man. (v. 21-22)
- In God's perfect creation, there is no shame for man. (v. 25)

Explain that in the selection, the participants can learn a lot about the relationship God desires for us and Him.

Next, ask the group how they would describe God's relationship with people from the selection. Then share some of your insights.

NOTE: Pause for responses and encourage more than one answer by asking, "what else?" For a visual, it is recommended you write down responses on a whiteboard and add to the list you began in this section when you read Genesis 3.

Transition by **saying something like:**

In Genesis 2, you learned that people benefit from God's goodness. God created a place that would fulfill every need and desire of humanity, including a perfect and good relationship with Him and others. Yet, we are about to read how quickly the human heart rebels against God and how sin has consequences.

READ GENESIS 3

TEACHING POINT 2: SIN SEPARATES US FROM GOD'S PERFECT DESIGN.

Use the list below to summarize the passage. Be sure to reference the verse, so the participants see you using the scriptures to justify your observations.

- God's word is questioned by Satan (v. 1)
- God's word is added to by Eve (v. 3)
- People did not trust God's word. (v. 6)
- People then experienced shame and hid from each other and God. (v. 7-8)
- God punished sin (v. 14-19, 23)

After reviewing the highlights from Genesis 3, ask the large group how they would now describe the relationship between God and people according to the selection. Include your insights as well.

NOTE: This is the same question that you asked of Genesis 2. Add participants' responses to the whiteboard and compare your findings to the last answers. They should begin to see a contrast in the relationship between God and people between the two chapters.

Explain that the story in Genesis 2 and 3 is our story too. God had a perfect design for our world, but sin created brokenness. Share that we, too, are responsible for our sins and the punishment accompanying them. Then transition by explaining how God has a plan that offers hope to all of us.

Say something like:

The perfect relationship described so peaceably in Genesis 2 has been torn in half because of people's rebellion against God, also known as sin.

It is easy to play the blame game and point to Adam and Eve as the reason for our sins, but we are also accountable. Romans 3:23 says, "for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." In addition, Isaiah 59:2 says, "but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear." The scripture teach us that our iniquities (i.e., transgressions; sins) separate us from God.

There was punishment for Adam and Eve's sin against a Holy and perfect God, and there is for ours. Romans 6:23 begins with, "For the wages of sin is death." Wages are something you earn. The Bible tells you that your sins have earned you death, not just a physical death, but a death that will place you in hell for eternity.

The story would seem incredibly bleak, except God offers hope within these despairing moments.

TEACHING POINT 3: JESUS WAS ALWAYS GOD PLAN TO REUNITE BROKEN HUMANITY TO HIMSELF.

Discuss the prophecy put in place by God in Genesis 3:15. **Say something like:**

A promise of hope is found within the list of punishments given by God. In verse 15, He says to the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."



Tell participants that you want to share an image that depicts two characters: Eve and a pregnant Mary (Jesus' mom), and helps to visualize what Genesis 15 is referring to. Explain the photo's connection to Genesis 3:15 and how Jesus was always God's plan to redeem humanity.

NOTE: You can easily find this image by searching, "The Virgin Mary Consoles Eve."

You can say something like:

Genesis 3:15 offers hope that one day a child (Jesus) would be born who would bruise the head of Satan (destroy the devil's work; 1 John 3:8) through His suffering (the bruise of the heal). This promise is fulfilled through Jesus Christ, who died on the cross to forgive sins. From the very first sin of the world, God had a plan in motion for Jesus to rescue you through His life, death, and resurrection.

Continue by reading Genesis 3:21 and discussing how God planned sacrifices to pay for sins. The sacrificial system He began and commanded pointed to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. Say something like:

In addition, we see evidence of more hope found in Jesus in this same chapter. (Read Genesis 3:21) Even in sin and guilt, God showed His love and mercy for His people by making the first sacrifice to cover their nakedness and shame.

Like Adam and Eve being clothed by an animal sacrifice to remove their shame of nakedness, Jesus clothes us with righteousness. He took our sins upon Him and became the perfect sacrifice for our sins when he died in our place on the cross (1 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus' sacrifice was the final sacrifice needed to pay for the sins of the world.

Remind participants of the first part of Romans 6:23, but this time include the second half of the verse. Describe the connection between the verse and the hope they read about in Genesis 3. **Say something like:**

Romans 6:23 mirrors today's passage: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Just like in Genesis 3, we see evidence of hope for our sinful condition. Salvation is a gift that has been prepared through Jesus since the very beginning. Anyone who receives the gift of eternal life by placing their faith in Jesus is restored to a perfect relationship with God. God wants what's best for you, and knowing Him is best. This is why Jesus has always been His plan A.

Transition participants to their time in their small group. Explain that they will read a scripture in the New Testament written by the apostle Paul. The scripture will reiterate what they heard during the big group lesson about sin entering our world through Adam, how it affects us all, and how Jesus is the only one who can solve our sin condition.



SMALL GROUP LESSON 2

READ ROMANS 5:6-11

1. How does sin damage your relationship with God?
2. What did Jesus save us from (v. 9)? How did Jesus save us (v. 8)?

READ ROMANS 5:17-21

3. Re-read verse 17. If Adam's disobedience brought death, how is it possible to "reign in life" (have eternal life with God)? Is this dependent on your good works? Explain.
4. Use verses 18 and 19 to describe the difference between Adam and Jesus. Discuss their actions and what is produced through their life.
5. To be justified means to be made right. Why do you need Jesus to make you right with God (v. 18)? How does Jesus accomplish this (look back at verse 8)?
6. How does it make you feel knowing that Jesus has always been God's plan to rescue you from your sins to give you a right relationship with God?
7. How would you describe to someone what Christians believe based on today's lesson?
8. Jesus said in Matthew 7:24 says, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock." How is God calling you to respond after today's scripture reading(s)?



THE RESURRECTION IS CENTRAL

LESSON 3 SNAPSHOT

Purpose: To help participants see that the Christian faith hinges on the resurrection of Jesus.

Primary Passages: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 (large group), 1 Corinthians 15:17-22 (small group)

Overview: In the large group session, participants will dive into the resurrection account and understand how critical it is for the Christian faith that Jesus is who he says he is. During small groups, participants will review 1 Corinthians 15 and discuss the importance of the resurrection story and the historical reasons surrounding the life-changing event.

LARGE GROUP



ICE BREAKER: GUESS THAT TUNE

DIRECTIONS: Pick four people to gather around a chair that has a bandana lying on the top of it. Explain that you will play part of a song and as soon as they can identify the song, they are to grab the bandana and announce the song title. Play several rounds of the game until there is a clear winner or a tie-breaker round.

AFTER GAME: Explain that people retain a ton of fun and useless information (like songs). Yet, many people who claim the Christian title know little about what the Bible says. Share that in today's lesson, they will learn and be able to share the core belief of Christianity: the resurrection story.

BIBLE STUDY

Remind participants of the purpose of the study and introduce today's lesson about how they will discuss that Jesus' resurrection is central to the Christian faith. **Say something like:**

We are going through a series that uses the Bible to examine some of Christianity's foundational beliefs.

Today, we will read a passage summarizing the central beliefs of the Christian faith, called the gospel. We will then discuss the validity of these claims.

Give some background information about the letter you are reading from and explain the controversy of the resurrection. If you would like to add a visual, you may consider showing a map of where Corinth is located to explain better the cultural influences that were swarming the church. **Say something like:**

1 Corinthians 15 is a chapter in a letter found in the New Testament (writings after Jesus' resurrection and ascension into heaven) that the apostle Paul wrote to a church in Corinth.

The church was located on a central trade route, which meant they were exposed to many different philosophies, lifestyles, and opinions that often threatened to influence their faith and caused divisiveness between the church people. To redirect the church to the truths about Christ, Paul wrote a letter addressing their many issues.

One conflict they had was about the resurrection of the dead. A religious sect taught there would not be a resurrection of believers on the final day. Paul wanted to correct that way of thinking by connecting the resurrection of Jesus to the future believers' resurrection. In his address to the church, you will find the central message of Christianity.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-4

TEACHING POINT 1: THE CENTRAL MESSAGE.

Explain that Paul is reminding the church people of the gospel message that led to their salvation. Point out that the word gospel means "good news."

Share that Paul explains the gospel message, the good news, in three specific and concise points: Christ died for sins, Christ was buried, and Christ was raised from the dead.

Suggestion: Have participants recite the three points a couple of times with you. This will help them recall the three critical points of the gospel.

Explain that these three points are the central message of the Christian faith and break them down. **Say something like:**

1. "Christ died for our sins." The first point teaches us that we have a sin problem. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Because Jesus had to die for those sins, we believe sin has a punishment (death). Romans 6:23a says, "For the wages of sin is death."

2. "Christ was buried." The second point reiterates that Jesus had to die to pay the punishment of death for us.

3. "Christ was raised from the dead." To be in a right-standing relationship with God, Christ must conquer sin and death by rising from the dead. Because he rose from the dead, we can confidently receive the gift of salvation that leads to eternal life, just like the rest of Romans 6:23 says, "but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus."

Transition by explaining the good news sounds great, but how does anyone know if this actually happened? Explain that the Christian faith is not blind faith but a belief that comes from reasonable evidence.

Explain that in this letter to the church, Paul shares some historical reasons to believe in the resurrection.

TEACHING POINT 2: THE RESURRECTION IS NOT A MADE-UP STORY.

Ask participants how often the phrase "in accordance with the Scriptures" comes up. [Twice]

Then share that what Christ did was not random but always planned. Briefly remind them of Genesis 3:15 and 3:21 (covered in lesson 2), but also share that there are glimpses of Jesus' coming throughout the Old Testament. One spot you may encourage them to read on their own is in Isaiah 53, which describes Christ before he was born. In addition, point out that Jesus and the New Testament gospel writers also use Old Testament references as proof of him being the Messiah (Savior).

Next, direct the participants to read the rest of the passage to receive more historical evidence to believe the gospel.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:5-11

Explain the importance of the eyewitnesses. **Say something like:**

Paul recounts the many eyewitnesses to the resurrected Jesus. It wasn't one person who had a "spiritual encounter," but a slew of people who had witnessed the risen Christ. These people included the disciples, 500 people, and the apostle Paul who had a radical change from being a Christian killer to someone who would die proclaiming Jesus as Lord.



Share that they will now watch a short video listing some strong reasons to believe in the resurrection of Jesus.

Show the 3:30 minutes long video from YouTube called "One Minute Apologist Proofs of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ?"

Link: <https://youtu.be/RzNREgNC11k>

Conclude that intellectual knowledge is not enough to save them, but placing their faith in what Jesus has done is. Explain that if they believe what the Bible says that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again for the forgiveness of sins, they can be saved by placing their faith in Him.

NOTE: If they are unsure how to respond, encourage members to find a leader to help walk them through beginning a relationship with Jesus.

Transition by explaining that they will continue reading the letter in 1 Corinthians in their small groups and discuss why the resurrection is essential to the Christian faith.



SMALL GROUP LESSON 3

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:17-19

1. If the resurrection never occurred, what does Paul say about the Christian faith? Why would he say this?
2. If the resurrection never occurred, should we worry about listening and obeying Jesus like he said to do in Matthew 7:24? Explain.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-22

3. What does Paul say is true?
4. Have you ever questioned whether Jesus' death and resurrection occurred? Why or why not?
5. What doubts have you had about the Christian faith? What do you do when you have doubts? What should you do?
6. What historical facts about the gospel story were most interesting or convincing to you? Explain.
7. Based on today's lesson, how would you explain to someone what Christians believe?
8. Jesus said in Matthew 7:24 says, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock." How is God calling you to respond after today's scripture reading(s)?



FAITH ALONE

LESSON 4 SNAPSHOT

Purpose: To help participants see that salvation is not earned but a gift given through faith in Jesus Christ.

Primary Passages: Ephesians 2:1-10 (large group), Romans 10:1-17 (small group)

Overview: The large group session will examine the life of a non-believer, how a person is saved, and the new life that awaits those who have been spiritually born into God's family. In the small group, participants will study Romans 10 and discuss who can be saved, how someone is saved, and the calling on the saved.

LARGE GROUP



ICE BREAKER: DOING THE IMPOSSIBLE

DIRECTIONS: Form groups of four. Give each group a bag of Hershey's Kisses. Tell the groups that the goal is to unwrap as many Hershey's Kisses as they can in 5 minutes, but the catch is they can't use their hands. At the end of the game applaud their efforts and ask:

Would you say this was an impossible task? Why or why not?

What are things that are impossible for us to do that God can do? Is there anything that is impossible for God to do? Why or why not?

AFTER GAME: Explain that they will examine the scriptures, the foundation for Christian beliefs, and learn that it is impossible for people to save themselves from the wrath of God, and that salvation is only available through Christ.

BIBLE STUDY

Quickly summarize the last two session. Remind participants that Jesus is God’s plan A for redeeming a broken relationship between us and God. Then remind them how God’s plan is fulfilled: through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.

Next, transition by sharing that today participants will read the scriptures to explore how someone becomes a Christian. Explain that they will be reading from the book of Ephesians, which is another letter in the New Testament written to a church by the apostle Paul.

Explain that you will break down Ephesians 2:1-10 in three parts: who we are apart from Christ, how Christ saves us, and who we are with Christ.

NOTE: Before the lesson, draw three columns on a whiteboard. Title the first column “Characteristics of a Non-Christian,” the second column “Characteristics of God/Jesus,” and the third column “Characteristics of the Christian.” If time is an issue, have the list on the board and covered with paper. As you discuss the characteristics of each column, you can remove the paper to reveal the descriptions.

READ EPHESIANS 2:1-3

TEACHING POINT 1: WHO YOU ARE APART FROM CHRIST.

Make sure participants understand that verses 1-3 remind the church (Christians) of who they once were and who non-believers still are. Perhaps, comment on the humility and love Christians should have for those not followers of Jesus because they, too, once walked in opposition to the cross.

Under the column “Characteristics of a Non-Christian” have the group list out observations from the text read and record their answers.

There is some unfamiliar terminology with these descriptions, so as you create the list, stop and explain the meaning behind the characterization.

QUICK REFERENCE



- **“You were dead”** - spiritually dead and cut off from God
- **“Trespasses and sin”** - violated God’s commandments and have offense against God in word, thought, and deed
- **“Following the prince of the power of air”** - Satan dominates his human subjects
- **“Son’s of disobedience”** - belonging to the family who rebels against God
- **“Carrying out the desires of the body and mind”** - following your sin nature’s lead
- **“Children of wrath”** - God’s condemnation for those who are born into sin

Transition by telling participants that the state of their lives before Christ is dark. But praise God that because of His great love and mercy, He did not leave us in that state.

READ EPHESIANS 2:4-9

TEACHING POINT 2: HOW CHRIST SAVES AND WHO YOU BECOME.

Under the column “Characteristics of a God/Jesus” have the group list out observations from the text read and record their answers.

Once the list is complete have them compare the non-Christian characteristics to God’s/Jesus’ characteristics.

Next, tell participants you want to make one more list, and this time it will be about the characteristic of a Christian according to the verses they read.

Re-read the selection one verse at a time and have the group add what they learn to the new list.

- **Rich in mercy** - v. 4
- **Loving** - v. 4
- **Powerful** - v. 5 & 6
- **Gracious** - v. 5 & 6 & 7
- **Savior** - v. 5
- **Kind** - v. 7
- **Generous (gift giver)** - v. 8

QUICK REFERENCE ↑

- **Loved** - v. 5
- **Alive** - v. 5
- **Saved** - v. 5 & 8
- **Heaven bound** - v. 6
- **Belong to God (“For we are his...”)** - v. 8
- **Special to God (“workmanship”)** - v. 8
- **Purpose (“created...for good works”)** - v. 9

QUICK REFERENCE ↑

Ask participants how it is possible for them in the state of their sin (the first list), to be radically changed and be characterized by the list in the third column.

At this point drive home that salvation is ONLY possible by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ and what he accomplished for them on the cross and through his resurrection. It is because of who God is in the second column that Christians can become who they are in the third. This transformation occurs when they place their faith in Jesus.

Next, explain that salvation unites them to Christ and redefines who they are. (This concept will be covered more in lesson 5). **Say something like:**

Immediately after learning how you can be saved (through faith in Jesus), Paul introduces you to your new self in verse 10. He says you are a new creation and that creation is united in Christ to produce good works. As someone whose life is interconnected to Christ, you can take confidence in the characteristics of the Christian listed in our third column. No longer does your sin and past define you, but God does.

Transition participants to their small groups and explain that they will continue discussing how someone can become saved while reading another letter to the church of Rome written by Paul.



SMALL GROUP LESSON 4

READ ROMANS 10:9-17

1. How is someone saved according to verses 9 &10?
2. An oral confession is not what saves a person (anyone can call Jesus "Lord," remember *Matthew 7:21?). However, why is an oral confession of faith important?
3. Intellectually knowing facts about Jesus does not make someone saved. What do you think it means to "believe in your heart?"
4. Why is there no more shame for those who believe in Jesus (v. 11)? How does this connect to God's perfect design in Genesis 2:25?
5. Is there anyone too far gone to be saved (v. 12-13)? How does that make you feel?
6. Who does God choose to use to share the news of salvation (14-15)?
7. Where does faith come from (v. 17)? Is hearing from God something you regularly do? Why or why not?.
8. Jesus said in Matthew 7:24 says, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock." How is God calling you to respond after today's scripture reading(s)?

*"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." Matthew 7:21



MADE NEW

LESSON 5 SNAPSHOT

Purpose: To help participants understand that they are new creations when they receive the gift of salvation.

Primary Passages: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 (large group), John 14:15-24 (small group)

Overview: In the large group session, participants will study the new life of a believer by focusing on two identity and purpose traits: believers are created in Christ and for good works. In the small group sessions, participants will read about Jesus' promise to dwell within believers and help them obey God because of their love for Him.

LARGE GROUP



ICE BREAKER: ALL TANGELED UP

DIRECTIONS: Divide players into small groups of 8-10 people. Everyone grabs the hand of someone not standing right next to them. Players cannot let go of the other person's hand, or they have immediately lost the game. In order to untangle, some players might go under some arms, some might go over, etc. The first team to get back into a circle wins.

AFTER GAME: Explain that when someone becomes a Christian, they are made into a new creation. Yet, because they still live on earth and struggle with sin, it's easy to forget that they are made new in Christ. Often Christians get "tangled up" with who they are in Christ and who the world says they are. Explain that this session is meant to help untangle confusions they may have had about their identity and purpose as a follower of Jesus.

BIBLE STUDY

Today's lesson begins with a review of the previous four sessions. Remind participants of the study's purpose and help them see how the lessons build upon each other. **Say something like:**

NOTE: Create a visual to represent how each lesson builds upon the other. Have the lesson titles written on large blocks. As you quickly review each lesson's purpose, stack the boxes to make a tower. If you do not have boxes, use construction paper to represent your building blocks and tape them to a board. The idea is for the participants to see how each topic is connected and built upon the last theme.

Everything we have covered is about laying a firm foundation for you to understand what followers of Jesus believe. Our focus is to teach foundational truths of the Christian faith while using the Bible as the ultimate authority. Let's review some of those foundational beliefs we have covered so far.

- 1. Laying the Foundation: A strong and secure faith foundation comes from studying and obeying the Word of God (Matthew 7:21-27)**
- 2. Jesus is Plan A: Jesus was always the plan to reconcile a broken humanity to a perfect and good God. (Genesis 3:15 & 21)**
- 3. The Resurrection is Central: The Christian faith hinges on the reality of the resurrection of Jesus. (1 Corinthians 15:3-5)**
- 4. Faith Alone: Salvation is not earned but a gift given through faith in Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 2:8-9)**

Next, transition to explaining that they will now study what the life of a Christian looks like and how they are made new once they place their faith in Jesus.

Say something like:

Today we are going to explore the new life of a Christian. If you have placed your faith in Jesus because you recognize the depth of your sins and that only Jesus can rescue you from the punishment of those sins by dying for you, you are a new creation. Today we will examine a few scriptures that will help shape how you view your identity and purpose. To begin our discussion, we will read Ephesians 2:10 once more.

READ EPHESIANS 2:10

Explain that the verse reveals much about their new identity and purpose as a believer. The key phrases you will focus on from the verse and in connection to other scriptures are: "created in Christ" and "for good works."

Say something like:

Ephesians 2:10 speaks to the new life of someone who has placed their faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. Paul explains that God has created a new identity and purpose for a believer when he states that you are "created in Christ" and "for good works." Both these phrases ("in Christ" and "good works") have significant meaning for someone who has placed their faith in Jesus. Today you will read 2 Corinthians 5 to explore in more depth what the apostle Paul means when he uses those two phrases.

Have participants begin turning to 2 Corinthians 5 and give background information on the book. **Say something like:**

2 Corinthians is the second letter written by the apostle Paul to the church of Corinth. In this letter, Paul urges the church to unite in his ministry of suffering for the gospel. In chapter five, Paul explains how all Christians are called to the Ministry of Reconciliation. The section will closely tie to the phrases in Ephesians 2:10 and help you understand what it looks like to live as a new creation once you have placed your faith in Jesus.

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:14-21

TEACHING POINT 1: YOUR IDENTITY IS IN CHRIST

Direct students to verses 14-15 and explain that the love a Christian has experienced from Christ stirs up affection and a great desire to live no longer for themselves but for Jesus. **Say something like:**

In verse 14, some Bible translations use the word "control," and some use the word "compel." The idea is not that you are God's robot but that knowing the love of Christ changes everything about the way you desire to live and, ultimately, who you are living for. Verse 15 states that Christians no longer live for themselves but for Jesus, who died to pay the punishment for our sins and reunited us into a relationship with God. Your affection for God is a reciprocation of the love he has shown you through Jesus, and knowing that great love frees you to live a new way, no longer enslaved to sin.

Next, explain that when a person enters into a relationship with Jesus, they have spiritually gone from death to life. As they will read during small group in John 14, God's Spirit will dwell within believers and empower them to live as Christ would. **Say something like:**

Paul continues that as a Christian, your eyes are open to the realization that this world is not all there is, and we are not to regard people as merely physical beings but spiritual. At one point, Paul viewed Jesus as a mere man who was a false prophet (v. 16), but when his eyes were opened to the truth and he placed his faith in Jesus, Paul entered into a new type of humanity.

In verse 17, to describe the newness of a Christian, Paul uses the same expression of "in Christ" that he had in the Ephesians letter. To be "in Christ" is to be made into a new creation. In fact, In Ephesians 2, Paul says you were once dead in your sins, but in Christ, you are alive. To go from death to life is a HUGE creation change. Again, God does not bonk you on top of your head at salvation and make you into a "Christian robot." Instead, as you will read during your small group time, God partners His Spirit within you to display His glory to the world.

TEACHING POINT 2: YOUR PURPOSE IS GOOD WORKS

Explain that the last few verses unite the idea of how your identity is tethered to Christ, and as a result, you will produce good works. Direct the participants to re-read verses 18-21 and explain the specific good works that Paul speaks about in the verses are about the ministry of reconciliation, which every believer is called to live out. **Say something like:**

God has given you a new purpose as a new creation in Christ. In Ephesians 2:10, that purpose is called "good works." In 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, you learn that one of those good works God created you for is the Ministry of Reconciliation. The title is a fancy way of saying your job is to tell others about how Jesus makes them right with God and how they can become a new creation by placing their faith in Jesus' work on the cross. To be a messenger or ambassador of Christ, as verse 20 says, is of great honor. You have a beautiful message of redemption, reconciliation, grace, and forgiveness that every person needs to hear.

And the message itself is not complicated. You all know the message from when we read 1 Corinthians 5 (Christ died for your sins, he was buried, and he rose again). After Jesus rose from the dead, he commanded his disciples to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." The commandment Jesus gave echoes in this passage. Go, produce good works by sharing, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (v. 21)

Transition to small groups by giving the context of John 14.

Say something like:

During your small groups, you will read a passage from the book of John. John is a gospel book; therefore, it records the life of Jesus. In chapter 14, Jesus promises his disciples that he will send a Helper, the Spirit of Truth, to dwell and take up residency in them when he leaves. This helper is the Spirit of God. You will discover that the Spirit of God in followers of Jesus helps produce the good works discussed in Ephesians 2:10.



SMALL GROUP LESSON 5

READ JOHN 14:15-24

1. Look at verses 15, 21, 23, and 24. What is the common theme in these verses? How does obeying Jesus show your love for Him?
2. What do you think it looks like to practically love Jesus in your everyday life?
3. Look at verses 16-17. What do you learn about the role of the Holy Spirit?
4. Look at verses 17 and 23. How will God make His home in followers of Jesus?
5. Who is someone in your life that loves God? How do you know they love God?
6. How does this passage help you understand what it means to be "in Christ."
7. How does this passage help you know what it means to live out "good works?"
8. Jesus said in Matthew 7:24 says, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock." How is God calling you to respond after today's scripture reading(s)?

