

JOURNEY OF GRACE

JOURNEY TO JESUS

(Leader's guide)

Living Hope Church of the Nazarene
Langley, British Columbia, Canada

Journey to Jesus

(Leader's guide and Participant's booklet)

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INTRODUCTION FOR LEADERS

Thank you! for doing your part in making disciples of all nations as expressed by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 28:19, ¹⁹*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.* It is a high calling and we trust you will commit to it with passion and prayer. Please remember at all times this course is designed to help the participant make a decision for Christ and you are representing not only your local church, but also Jesus Christ Himself. Therefore, we expect that all sessions will be conducted with grace and compassion towards those who don't know Christ, but also with holiness from those who do.

Please keep in mind at all times that these courses are designed to be work shops, so your role is not to lecture but to facilitate the participants to discover the truth revealed in Scripture by themselves. The following tips might help you.

- Pray on your own before the session.
- Open the session with a simple and short prayer.
- Keep the discussions flowing.
 - Do not let anyone use up the time, including yourself.
 - Handle all questions with respect.
 - Redirect topics out of context to a later time, place or person.
- Use words that encourage participation.
 - Use phrases like, *That is a good question, or, I am glad you made that point.*
 - Encourage those who don't talk as much. Ask them questions directly when you think they won't feel threatened by it.

May the Lord cast your blessing upon you. Remember we are praying for you and the outcome of your course and that you can seek for help anytime with the ministry coordinator or the pastor.

COURSE OUTLINE and GOALS

MAIN GOAL. (The participant will understand the implications of the gospel and will define his or her commitment to it.)

- I. Is this it? Goal. (The participant will decide upon different world views about God)
 - A. Is there evidence for God?
 - i. World views
 - a) Atheists, Agnostics, Deists, Polytheists, Pantheists, Theists
 - ii. What kind of tests can we run to discover God?
 - a) Observation and testimonies
 - b) Your experience
 - iii. What does the Bible have to do with all this?
- II. Has God revealed Himself? Goal. (The participant will distinguish why the Bible is a unique book and what kind of God it depicts)
 - A. God revealing Himself to Israel before Christ
 - i. The difference between the appearance to Abraham vs. Moses
 - ii. Centuries of interaction
 - B. God revealing Himself through the Bible
 - C. What is God like?
 - i. God is love.
 - ii. God is just.
- III. What is wrong with the world? Goal. (The participant will consider the presence of evil in the world as a result of sin)
 - A. Is there an answer to the world's problems?
 - B. Why is there bad people?
- IV. Who am I? Goal. (The participant will recognize his or her sinfulness, why it is a problem and what God has to say about it)
 - A. I am good,...most of the time
 - i. Why my goodness can't outweigh my badness
 - B. Do I need God?
 - i. Who says what is good or bad?
 - ii. What happens to lawbreakers?
 - C. Why am I here for?
 - i. The true meaning of success
 - ii. God's will in your life

- V. Who is Jesus? Goal. (The participant will evaluate the reasons why Jesus is God and will understand the implications of His life for him or herself)
- A. What does it mean to be the Son of God?
 - i. The divinity of Jesus
 - a) Origin
 - b) Prophecy
 - c) Ministry
 - d) Death and Resurrection
 - B. Who do you say He is?
 - i. Impact of His life on His disciples
 - ii. Impact of His life on yours
- VI. Who killed Jesus? Goal. (The participant will make a decision for Christ by acknowledging his or her participation in Jesus' death, why it matters and the gift it represents)
- A. Nothing escapes God's will
 - B. Jesus' voluntary death
 - C. Your participation
 - D. How can I get back to God?
- VII. What has happened to me? Goal. (The participant will understand what defines a believer and what God's will is for him or her)
- A. What does it mean to be a follower of Christ?
 - i. The Holy Spirit and you
 - ii. The life of obedience
 - B. Sons by adoption
 - i. Your new standing before God
 - a) The old has passed away
 - b) What if I fail?
 - C. Welcome to the Family
 - i. Do I need to be baptized?
 - ii. What the church does for you
 - iii. What can I do for the church?
- VIII. Now what? Goal. (The participant will identify the promise and hope of Christ's return and what is expected of a member of the family of Christ)
- A. Baptism
 - B. My place in ministry
 - C. The return of Christ

INTRODUCTION FOR PARTICIPANTS

Journey to Jesus is the starting place in the *Journey of Grace* series of studies. It provides a general yet comprehensive view of who Jesus Christ is and what His life means to mankind. It is designed to be a discussion guide for those new to the Christian faith and to Living Hope, church of the Nazarene.

The purpose of the course is to provide a space for guided discussion that will allow participants to understand the implications of the gospel and to define his or her commitment to it. This is a workshop, not a series of lectures. The active participation of those attending is the key to success in all sessions. To prepare the sessions beforehand is a recommended practice that will give more time for active learning through discussion.

Your leader will guide you every session through a group discussion and your own analysis of what the Bible has to say about every topic. We trust this experience will show you the evidence and authority that Christianity enjoys as the only true faith.

Most surely, mankind has questioned his existence since the beginning of time. Answers to why am I here? Where do I come from? Where am I going?, and What is the difference between good and bad?, define what is called our *cosmology*. In trying to answer them, we inevitably come to question the existence and role of God in our lives. This question has found different answers through the ages. One alternative answer is to say, *there is no God*. This answer is what defines an atheist. For those who cannot hold this position, the answer can be varied. There are those who say, *there is no way for us to know if there is a God or not*. These are called agnostics. For those who acknowledge the existence of God, there are also different alternatives. There are those who believe *God created everything and set it in motion within rules but left it alone right after*. These are called Deists. In contrast, there are those who believe *God exists through and in everything, so He is one with the universe*. These are the Pantheists. There are those who believe *there are many gods*. These are the Polytheists. Finally, there are those who believe *there is only one God actively involved in His creation*. These are the Theists. Which of these best describe you? Which is right?

In opposition to the atheist and agnostic points of view, the universe and our own existence provide enough evidence of God and of His personality. One of the mistakes these two positions incur comes with the kind of tests they would like to run to prove His being. If our premise is: God created everything, should we find God in what He has created? To expect it to be so, would be comparable to try to find the architect of a building in it at all times, or as part of its walls. Consider a more scientific approach. Science deals with observation and drawing conclusions from it that may predict behaviour under similar circumstances. In the case of knowing a person, the observation needs to be done through his actions; what he has done, what he has written, the descriptions others make of him, etc. God is a person, and the universe is His work. What we learn from observing His work is that He is a God of intelligence and order. Nevertheless, God has manifested Himself to men out of His own will and the account of those manifestations have been recorded in written form. We do well to consider the authority of these written records. For example, you may not question the existence of George Washington, but nobody in this generation has seen him or spoken to him. Our knowledge of his existence comes from written records. Since many wrote about him, we believe he existed; plus, we can see evidence of what he did while alive. This is a historical test and this is the kind of test we need to apply to God's involvement with mankind. In contrast to George Washington, you may become a first hand witness of God's existence, as we will see later on in this course. The book we call the Bible, is a neat compilation of the documents that witness of God's existence and His interaction with an ethnic group He chose to reveal Himself to; the people of Israel.

Session 1

IS THIS IT?

Most probably you have asked yourself the purpose and meaning of life. Where do we come from, where are we going, why are we here and who says what is good or bad are fundamental questions. Even if we have not discussed them or thought about them, we all have our personal answers to those questions. Our answers define how we live; but what if the answer we have is wrong? Is there a way to know for sure what the true answer to these questions is? At Living Hope Church, we want to welcome you in your search for truth and help you discover the evidence God presents. This will be done through discussions with the other participants, so let us start by introducing ourselves.

- Take turns to introduce yourself to the group by sharing your name, where you live and what brought you to Living Hope Church.

DISCUSSION

Which of the following statements define your understanding best? Underline your answer.

- ➔ There is no God (Atheist)
- ➔ There is no way for us to know if there is a God or not (Agnostic)
- ➔ God created everything and set it in motion within rules but left it alone right after (Deist)
- ➔ God exists through and in everything, so He is one with the universe (Pantheist)
- ➔ There are many gods (Polytheist)
- ➔ There is only one God actively involved in His creation (Theist)

Share your answer with the group and why you believe it is right.

ANSWERS FROM THE BIBLE

Consider the universe and your own body. Could it be the result of chance? Science deals with observation. What do we learn from looking at creation? Should we expect to find God in the universe? Is there an experiment we could run to prove the existence of God? Discuss the following passages with your group.

Psalm 8:1;3, LORD, our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all
the earth,
You who have displayed Your
splendour above the heavens!
³When I consider Your heavens, the
work of Your fingers, The moon and
the stars, which You have set in
place;

Why has every generation that has ever existed
developed a belief in a god?

Psalm 139:13-14, ¹³For You
created my innermost parts;
You wove me in my mother's
womb. ¹⁴I will give thanks to You,
because I am awesomely and
wonderfully made;
Wonderful are Your works,
And my soul knows it very well.

We enjoy our smart phones. Are they the product of
intelligence? How can we tell? Would the same reasoning
apply to your body?

Psalm 19:1-2, ¹The heavens tell
of the glory of God;
And their expanse declares the
work of His hands.
²Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals
knowledge.

If everything is the product of a cause, where is the
beginning?

Isaiah 66:1-2, ¹This is what the
LORD says:

"Heaven is My throne and the
earth is the footstool for My feet.
Where then is a house you could
build for Me?
And where is a place that I may
rest? ²For My hand made all these
things, So all these things came
into being," declares the LORD. "But
I will look to this one, At one who
is humble and contrite in spirit,
and who trembles at My word.

If God created the universe and everything that is in it,
could He be physically part of it?

Do you believe George Washington existed? Why? Could we apply the same logic
to the existence of God?

CONCLUSION

- ✓ "Atheism turns out to be too simple. If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning..." —C.S. Lewis
- ✓ "My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust?" —C.S. Lewis
- ✓ "suppose you want to get to know a human person. If he is determined not to let you, you will not get to know him. You have to win his confidence. In this case the initiative is equally divided-it takes two to make a friendship. When you come to knowing God, the initiative lies on His side. If He does not show Himself, nothing you can do will enable you to find Him." —C.S. Lewis
- ✓ "Every historical statement in the world is believed on authority. None of us has seen the Norman Conquest or the defeat of the Armada. None of us could prove them by pure logic as you prove a thing in mathematics. We believe them simply because people who did see them have left writings that tell us about them." —C.S. Lewis

The Bible describes a God that is constantly interacting with His creation; specially with mankind. Adam is described as having been made out of dust, which contrasts with the rest of creation that was simply spoken into existence. This God spoke to Noah and commanded him to build an ark. Later on, God spoke to Abraham and made a covenant with him. However, it is hundreds of years later that God's interaction with man changes from being one on one, to being a collective experience. While skeptics could accuse one on one interactions with God as a product of their imagination, the collective experience of Israel with God and the testimonies left behind to attest to its veracity are overwhelming. Furthermore, God kept on delivering His message to these people through prophets that foretold events nobody could have foreseen and with such detail that any reader, even today, will find breathtaking. While the revelation of God to Abraham landed in a promise, the revelation to Moses landed in commands and the revelation to the prophets were a constant reminder of Israel's poor performance in keeping them. This speaks of a God that wants to bless His creation, but that demands a behaviour that will honour who He is.

If you consider the ten commands, you will notice that God is very interested in showing that the only cosmology that relates to the truth is that held by the Theists. There is only one God distinct from His creation who demands to be honoured, respected and obeyed. The way to do this is to keep Him holy, which means to believe and act knowing He is the only God, separate from but involved in His creation. Not picturing Him as anything He created. Bearing His name with respect. Devoting time to nourish our relationship to Him. Honouring those who He singled out to bring you into the world. Not murdering. Respecting the relationship between other men with their women. Respecting other people's property. Holding dear to the truth; and not longing to have what belongs to others. This list of commands prescribe a harmonious way of living. It spells out what it means to have a right relationship with God and with others, but it also shows God as holy, truthful, respectful, loving and just.

You have probably heard that God is love. This is not some catchy phrase invented by someone. It is the way God describes Himself in that He is patient, kind, humble, respectful, caring, forgiving, righteous, truthful, long suffering, hopeful and persistent. Nevertheless, He is also just. So those who will not abide by His rules face punishment and death; for in disobeying God's commands we actually turn our backs to love. Forsaking the love for God and the love for others deserves punishment. Consider that even human laws are designed to defend what we have already described as respectful human relationships. However, most human laws tend to keep away from the relationship between man and God. This doesn't mean we are off the hook on that respect. It means there is a higher court that will hold you accountable for that relationship on top of the other, and this is what the Bible describes as judgment. In contrast to human courts, where a lawyer's ability or hidden truth may let you go unpunished, God's judgment is fully just since He knows everything and has limitless power. It is indeed a frightening thing to be in the hands of Him who can kill body and soul.

Session 2

HAS GOD REVEALED HIMSELF?

One of the conclusions of our previous session is that God needs to reveal Himself in order for us to know Him. Through creation we can know of His existence and a little about His character, but it takes His direct revelation to know Him. Has He done that? Archaeological findings have confirmed over and over the trustworthiness of the Biblical account. The Bible includes the history of the Jewish people. It describes how and why they became a nation and how and why they have not disappeared as an ethnic group in spite of great adversity. Through their history, we have clear evidence of God, His character and purpose for humanity. Take turns to discuss about the Bible.

- Have you ever read the Bible?

DISCUSSION

Which of the following statements define your understanding best? Underline your answer.

- ➔ The Bible is a dangerous book, better not read it
- ➔ The Bible is a book filled with mythical stories
- ➔ The Bible teaches how to be good people
- ➔ The Bible is the word of God that reveals His plan of salvation for mankind

Share your answer with the group and why you believe it is right.

Exodus 19:9 says, ⁹Then the LORD said to Moses, “I will come to you in a thick cloud, Moses, so the people themselves can hear me when I speak with you. Then they will always trust you.”

God's revelation to Moses was a collective experience. Why is this important?

ANSWERS FROM THE BIBLE

What kind of God does the Bible describe? You can learn much about a community by knowing the kind of conduct they encourage or punish. The Bible describes humanity as a community with rules to follow. What do these rules say about God? Discuss the following passages with your group.

Hebrews 1:1, ¹God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

Does the God of the Bible want a relationship with mankind?

Exodus 20:4-5, ⁴“You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, [...]

Are the ten commands good advise for human relationships? Why?

Exodus 20:13-17, ¹³“You shall not murder. ¹⁴“You shall not commit adultery. ¹⁵“You shall not steal. ¹⁶“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. ¹⁷“You shall not covet your neighbour’s house; you shall not covet your neighbour’s wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbour.”

What do the ten commands reveal about God's character?

1 John 4:8, ⁸The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Why is God love and how is that different from saying love is god? How do parents show love to their children?

Psalms 9:16, ¹⁶The LORD has made Himself known; He has executed judgment. In the work of his own hands the wicked is snared.

Can someone be loving and just at the same time?

Isaiah 5:15-16, ¹⁵So the *common* man will be humbled and the man of *importance* abased, The eyes of the proud also will be abased. ¹⁶But the LORD of hosts will be exalted in judgment, And the holy God will show Himself holy in righteousness.

Why is judgment necessary?

How can we know the word of a prophet is from God?

CONCLUSION

- ✓ God is not part of creation but keeps it and is actively involved in it, specially with mankind. He has revealed Himself throughout history in His works and specifically to the people of Israel through His word.
- ✓ His word reveals what He expects of every human being and in doing so, reveals His own character. God is loving and wants us to love each other; God is just and wants us to be righteous.
- ✓ Being righteous and loving is not only about our relationships with each other, but specially about our relationship with Him. We can't be righteous and loving apart from God since God is righteous and loving.
- ✓ Disobeying God in any of His commands calls for His judgment upon you.

Over time, mankind has developed ideas about what it means to live well and how to achieve it. The United States' Declaration of Independence of 1776 recognizes that all men "are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."¹ Although this remark sounds great, it says nothing on how to achieve it. Capitalism, socialism and communism, for example, centre their focus on achieving this through the issue of property. Islam focuses on the coercive individual submission to a god as a means to collective happiness. The Greek thought matter was corrupt, so the best way to pursue happiness was to be spiritual, even to the point of death. The Christian point of view differs from all these ideas. As you may have guessed from God's commands, happiness comes as a by product of having the right relationship with God and others. For Christianity and Judaism, the starting point is to recognize that God created everything. Since God created everything, He likes matter and intended it to be a state of goodness for creation. God Himself called it good, and when the turn for man came, male and female, He said it was all very good. With this phrase, God recognizes things were created originally good, but it also speaks of their interaction. The way things related to each other was also *very good*. This brought harmony in creation and no doubt happiness. However, not long after, through the exercise of freedom, Adam and Eve decided to walk away from the will of God and that decision affected the whole creation in its nature and the interaction with each other. God had warned this first couple that they would die if they disobeyed and they did; not in body, but in spirit. The relationship between God and mankind was broken and this has been passed on through the generations up to this date and for the rest of the future of mankind. We are witnesses to this in that there is no one that seeks God from conception or birth. This means that regardless of what we do or haven't done in our lives, we have broken God's laws since the first four commands speak of a relationship with God that we just don't have in our nature. In other words, we are sinners by nature.

Therefore, Christianity explains the corruption in ourselves, in nature and in all human endeavours as a product of disobedience and a lack of a proper relationship to God. Sickness, natural disasters, corrupt governments and many other "bad things" are nothing but the groanings of a creation that suffers. Although human beings tend to apply degrees to qualify what is wrong, the God of the Bible has explained that any transgression deserves death. So, in God's economy there is no arguing how much good we have done in order to outweigh our bad. Any bad thing done, -or any good thing not done- will condemn us to death. This might sound unjust or extreme, but before you call it that, please consider where does your sense of justice comes from? We may not like it, but that shows once again our inclination to disobedience that started it all. In Christianity there is no good or bad people. We are all bad and we all need saving; even as new born babies.

¹ <https://thefounding.net/the-unalienable-right-to-pursue-happiness/>

Session 3

WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE WORLD?

Over time, mankind has developed ideas about what it means to live well and how to achieve it. The United States' Declaration of Independence of 1776 recognizes that all men "are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."²

Take turns to share your thoughts on the following questions.

- What is happiness for you?
- How can you achieve happiness?

DISCUSSION

Which of the following statements agree best with your understanding on how to achieve happiness.

- ➔ According to Aristotle, happiness consists in achieving, through the **course of a whole lifetime**, all the goods – health, wealth, knowledge, friends, etc. – that lead to the perfection of human nature and to the enrichment of human life.
- ➔ Buddhism pursues happiness by **using knowledge and practice to achieve mental equanimity**. In Buddhism, equanimity, or peace of mind, is achieved by detaching oneself from the cycle of craving
- ➔ Marx's theory of happiness advocated attaining true happiness through hard work and sweat.
- ➔ "There is only one happiness in this life, to love and be loved." –George Sand
- ➔ "To be good is to be happy." –Nicholas Rowe

Share your answer with the group and why you believe it is right.

² <https://thefounding.net/the-unalienable-right-to-pursue-happiness/>

ANSWERS FROM THE BIBLE

Should happiness be our goal? The Bible shows happiness is a by product of having the right relationship with God and others. Discuss the following passages with your group.

Genesis 1:31, ³¹God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Why is it important to know God regarded what He created as very good?

Genesis 3:17, ¹⁷Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life.

What is the difference between good and bad?

Romans 3:23, ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

What is the difference between good and bad?

Romans 3:10-11, ¹⁰as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; ¹¹THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

Can we be good without God?

Isaiah 64:6, ⁶For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

What is the role of disobedience in our relationship with God?

Matthew 5:48, ⁴⁸Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

How good should we be to be in the right with God?

CONCLUSION

- ✓ To be good means to be in tune with our Creator. This was broken by the first couple that was created; Adam and Eve. Since then, all human beings have inherited a broken relationship with God, so we cannot be good regardless of what we do or don't do.
- ✓ Good or bad is defined by God. Whatever is in tune with His will is good. Whatever is contrary to His will is bad.
- ✓ Disobedience, or running contrary to God's will, is the source of evil.
- ✓ God demands perfect obedience.

In session three we realized that the definition of good or bad necessarily speaks of the condition of our relationship with God. In other words, we can call something good only when it is in the right relationship with God; or better said, when it is according to God's will. It is a common practice to see clearly when someone else has done wrong but we tend to justify whatever we do. Jesus Christ Himself referred to this practice with strong words in Matthew 7:5; *You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye!*

Would these strong words apply specifically to you? In order to consider this possibility, let us go back to the commands of God. Please remember that in order to say you have complied with God's will, there can be no moment past, present or future when you have done wrong or haven't done what was required of you. This might sound extreme but consider the following image. If you were hanging from a cliff holding on only to a chain, how many links need to break for you to fall? According to God's word, one transgression is enough to make the link break, and only one transgression will make you fall. With this image in mind, try examining yourself against God's standard.

Have you always sought God at all times? Have you ever had an interest greater than your relationship with God? Have you always honoured your mother and father? Have you ever been mad at someone for a selfish reason? Have you ever looked at a woman or man with lust in your mind? Have you ever stolen something, including time? Have you ever told a lie? Have you ever desired to have what others have? In total honesty, there is no human being that has ever been able to pass this examination without a flaw; ever. God has defined through His word that only those who are able to keep His law without fail all the time can be called good. He has also defined that the punishment due to anyone who doesn't meet this expectation is death. Christianity then demonstrates beyond doubt the need we all have of a Saviour that will take us out of this helpless situation. The one who created the world defines what is good and what is not. We are all in the wrong before Him. In all justice we all deserve to die. No amount of good deeds can outweigh our wrongs for the same reason you would not argue with a police officer that stops you because you have run a red light, by saying, *but look at how many red lights I have respected during my whole time as a driver!* The situation is helpless unless the officer shows you mercy. Will God do this for you? We will discuss this further on. For now, consider that success in life is not a big bank account. It is not even a loving family or many friends. Success in life is to accomplish the goal you have been created for, and that means having the right relationship with your Creator. The way to have that right relationship is to be in God's will, or said in other words, to fully comply with His commands. This seems impossible unless we get help. Indeed it is impossible if we try to do it on our own but to God, nothing is impossible. How can He help you?

Session 4

WHO AM I?

In the previous session we discussed that we can call something good only if it is in line with the will of God. Noticing what is wrong around us is somehow easy. We clearly see some flaws in society or the government, but what about ourselves? Could it be that we are not as good as we thought after all?

Take turns to share your thoughts on the following questions.

- What is wrong with our society today?
- Have you ever broken a law?

DISCUSSION

Which of the following statements apply to you either in full or partially.

- ➔ I have been angry with someone but they were right.
- ➔ I have called people names like; fool, stupid or worse.
- ➔ I have seen a man or a woman with lust intent.
- ➔ I have lied, or promised I would do something and finally didn't.
- ➔ I have stolen something. This includes time. (i.e. leaving early, arriving late or not showing up at all.)

Share your answer with the group.

Do the group's answers surprise you?

ANSWERS FROM THE BIBLE

Has God explained the way He wants us to behave? How many good deeds are needed to outweigh our wrongs? What happens if we don't meet His expectations? Discuss the following passages with your group.

<p>Matthew 22:36-39, ³⁶“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷And He said to him, “‘You SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ ³⁸This is the great and foremost commandment. ³⁹The second is like it, ‘You SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF.’</p>	<p>God commands love, what does it mean and why is it important?</p>
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<p>1 John 1:10, ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.</p>	<p>Are you guilty of sin? If you were to die today and face God's judgment, how would you do?</p>
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<p>1 John 2:16, ¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.</p>	<p>How would you define sin?</p>
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<p>1 John 1:6, ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;</p>	<p>How can you tell someone is sinning?</p>
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<p>Romans 2:5-6, ⁵But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS:</p>	<p>Should a just judge consider the previous good deeds done by a murderer in the trial for it?</p>
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<p>Romans 2:8-9, ⁸but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. ⁹<i>There will be</i> tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek,</p>	<p>How does the Bible describe the punishment due to sinners?</p>
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Romans 12:2, ²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

What is the will of God for you?

1 Thessalonians 4:3, ³For this is the will of God, your sanctification;

What is the will of God for you?

CONCLUSION

- ✓ Since the will of God includes the right relationship with Him and among each other, at all times, nobody has kept His will.
- ✓ The punishment we deserve is death and God's wrath.
- ✓ I _(your name) have broken God's law and deserve punishment for it.
- ✓ There is no amount of good deeds I can do to outweigh my sins.
- ✓ I need God's mercy to solve my sin problem.

Some people argue that Jesus Christ did not say He was God. This is either just a comment they have heard from someone else, or the product of careless reading of the Bible. In the New Testament, John 10:32-33 Jesus Christ says, ³² *Jesus replied to them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?"* ³³ *The Jews answered Him, "We are not stoning You for a good work, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God."* Actions speak louder than words and during His life in ministry, Jesus Christ demonstrated beyond doubt to be God. However, the final proof really came after His death. We will go through this during this session.

If you were confronted with the question, When was Jesus born? You may think about Christmas but the actual answer might take you in a different direction. In John 8:57-58, the Jewish spiritual leaders of the time are confronting Jesus. They said, ⁵⁷ *So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and You have seen Abraham?"* ⁵⁸ *Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."* To anyone familiar with the Old Testament writings, specially Exodus, the reference Jesus Christ makes of Himself as "I am" would make a connection with the conversation with God that Moses had at the burning bush. In Exodus 3:14, God reveals His name to Moses and calls Himself the "I am". The revealed answer in the Bible regarding the time of Jesus birth is actually two answers. Jesus as the Son of God was never born. He has always been because He is fully God. On the other hand, there was a time, in the city of Bethlehem, where a Jewish young woman called Mary gave birth to a baby boy that fulfilled many prophecies just by being born. The miraculous pregnancy was of the Holy Spirit and the name of the child is Jesus. These events took place roughly 2,000 years ago.

Jesus Christ fulfilled many prophecies. As we have seen, His miraculous conception by a virgin birth is one, but also where He was born, where His mother and step father would take Him after His birth, the city where He would live; and most shockingly, the way He would die. As in any good story, the best comes last and after Jesus Christ's death, the biggest and most impressive of all prophecies was fulfilled: the resurrection. During His life of ministry on earth He taught explaining what is the Kingdom of God and how to be counted in. He chose out of all who heard Him, 12 men. These are called disciples, and shared with Jesus for about 3 years. They were of different backgrounds, some of them married, some with lucrative jobs, but they all left everything behind without hesitation to follow Him. During their walk together, Jesus healed paralytics, brought dead people back to life, cured lepers, restored hearing to the deaf and sight to the blind, fed thousands out of a boy's lunch and as John 21:25 says, ²⁵ *But there are also many other things which Jesus did, which, if they were written in detail, I expect that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.* The resurrection of Jesus after 3 days of His death was the event that sealed His ministry and propelled the disciples to spread the good news of His coming through the world even to the point of death, for all except one were martyred in terrible pain. As we have discussed, you share humanity's mayor problem; you are a sinner in need of a Saviour. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus qualifies Him as the Saviour that can solve the problem.

Session 5

WHO IS JESUS?

Our previous session concluded with acknowledging all human beings that have been born and all those who will ever be, have a problem called sin. This problem brings us to our death both physical and spiritual since we are told in the Bible there will be a judgment at the last day. We also concluded there is nothing anyone can do to be saved so we all rely in God's mercy. Jesus claimed to be that Saviour; He actually claimed to be God Himself. How can this be?

Take turns to share your thoughts on the following statements.

- Jesus must be God because He claimed to be God.
- Jesus must be God because others claimed He was God.
- Jesus must be God because of what He did.

DISCUSSION

Which of the following statements agree best with your understanding about Jesus.

- ➔ I don't know if Jesus ever existed.
- ➔ Jesus was a moral teacher and nothing more.
- ➔ Jesus must have been a man blessed by God to do miracles.
- ➔ Jesus must have been God in the spirit with the appearance of a man.
- ➔ Jesus is God and man in every way.

Share your answer with the group and why you believe it is right.

ANSWERS FROM THE BIBLE

What is the evidence to claim Jesus is God? Why would God come in the form of a man? Discuss the following passages with your group.

Isaiah 7:14, ¹⁴Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. (*God with us*)

This announcement was made nearly 650 years before it happened. Why is it important?

Isaiah 9:6, ⁶For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

How does this verse add to the previous?

Luke 1:26-27;31, ²⁶Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.

Can you see prophecy fulfilled in this passage?

Micah 5:2, ²"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity."

This prophecy was made nearly 400 years before it happened. What is the significance of the last sentence?

Luke 2:4-6, ⁴Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, ⁵in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. ⁶While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth.

Can you see prophecy fulfilled in this passage?

John 8:57-58, ⁵⁷So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" ⁵⁸Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

What does this passage say about Jesus?

John 12:45-47, ⁴⁵He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me. ⁴⁶I have come *as* Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness. ⁴⁷If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.

Why does it matter to know God came and lived among us?

John 20:1, ¹Now on the first *day* of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone *already* taken away from the tomb.

How did Jesus demonstrate He is God?

John 20:19-20, ¹⁹So when it was evening on that day, the first *day* of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and *said* to them, "Peace *be* with you." ²⁰And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

How did Jesus demonstrate He is God?

Does knowing that God came demand anything from you?

CONCLUSION

- ✓ The life and death of Jesus are unique because they fulfilled many prophecies.
- ✓ Jesus' life and death are proof of His deity and His humanity.
- ✓ Jesus' life and teachings show the will of God for us in our relationship with Him and with others.

The death of Jesus Christ is probably the most examined event in history and at the same time, one that has overwhelming evidence supporting it. Not only the gospel accounts, but also extra biblical sources attest to His death. What we find in the biblical narrative is that God the Father sent God the Son to die for humanity. Let us focus on the fact that the Father sent the Son to die. This seems so contrary to what any human father, even the worst one, would do. In most cases we would expect the father protecting his son from death to the extent of his power or capacity. If God is the being with absolute power, why did the Father not protect the Son? John 3:16 gives us a clear answer, *¹⁶For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.*

We have mentioned that all humanity has a problem. We have a death sentence because we have transgressed the will of God. Without God's mercy we would all face eternal death; while we all go through the death of our bodies, the death of our spirits is what is on the line. Total death is what we deserve and there is nothing that we have or are that could pay the debt for our transgressions. We rely completely in God's mercy to survive. However, since God is the embodiment of justice, we can't be let go without punishment. The problem is that any sort of punishment would be overwhelmingly great since our transgression is such that a Holy God cannot overlook or diminish it. Instead, God planned a way that keeps His justice blameless while His manifestation of Love toward His creation is exalted. Think of it as a debt you have that needs payment. The Son is overwhelmingly rich and so He bails you out. Your debt is cancelled and you can go free with a clean record. This is what happened when Jesus Christ died on the cross. He bailed out every human being that had lived before the event took place, and for every one that would live after. While the debt stands paid, in order to apply to you, you need to claim it for your case. This is done by doing what Romans 10:9 describes so clearly, *⁹that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.* Jesus Christ was arrested by the Jewish authorities of the day and sentenced to death by the Roman authorities in place. He was sent by His Father to die. He gave His life willingly and He came out of His own accord, but it was your transgression the reason behind it. Your transgression, and mine and the transgression of a fallen humanity since the first man was created to the one that will ever live. We are the cause of His death through our sins. Our sins and our sinful condition are what keeps us away from God. In order to go back to God, we need to claim for ourselves the sacrifice God the Son did on our behalf. To do this is to save our lives for eternity. It means to become a member of His family and thus enjoy all the promises and rewards He has in store for His children. Since we are responsible for the death of Jesus, to deny it or disdain it keeps our death sentence on us. To embrace it and commit to His lordship brings eternal salvation with immediate benefits to our lives. Will you accept His sacrifice? Will you allow His death to restore the relationship between God and yourself? If so, ask your leader to guide you in prayer or in your own words ask God to forgive you of your sins, claim forgiveness in the name of Jesus Christ and commit your life to humble obedience to Him.

Session 6

WHO KILLED JESUS?

When we read the biblical account, we find that Jesus was arrested by the Jewish authorities and tried under Jewish law. After found blameless, He was declared guilty of blasphemy and then taken before the Roman authorities to be sentenced to death. There He was also found blameless but nevertheless sentenced to death by crucifixion.

Take turns to share your thoughts on the following questions.

- Since God is all powerful and Jesus is God, why did He die?
- Jesus achieved many things through His short life, did He achieve anything through His death?

DISCUSSION

Which of the following statements agree best with your understanding of Jesus' death.

- ➔ The death of Jesus was a defeat to His movement.
- ➔ Jesus only appeared to be dead.
- ➔ Jesus gave Himself up but wasn't planning on dying.
- ➔ Jesus died willingly.

Share your answer with the group and why you believe it is right.

ANSWERS FROM THE BIBLE

Jesus died in order to save humanity. Why is His death the way to salvation? Could there be another way? Discuss the following passages with your group.

John 3:16, ¹⁶“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Why did Jesus come to live among us?

Hebrews 9:22, ²²And according to the Law, *one may almost say*, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Why did Jesus die?

John 10:18, ¹⁸No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.”

Who authorized His death?

Romans 5:6,8, ⁶For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Did you have any part in Jesus' death?

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

How does Jesus' death help you?

Romans 10:13, ¹³for “WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.”

What do you need to do to get that help?

CONCLUSION

- ✓ Jesus came to live among us and die for us out of His love. Romans 5:8 says, *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*
- ✓ Jesus came to save you from your eternal death. Romans 10:9 says, *that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;* If you have not yet made a commitment to follow Him and receive the gift of salvation, ask your leader to guide you to confess your sin, express your repentance and surrender to God's leadership in your life.
- ✓ Your salvation gives you eternal life. Just as Jesus resurrected, you will resurrect to an everlasting life. Revelation 21:3-4 says, *...God Himself will be among them, ⁴and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."*

If in the previous session you prayed to God to forgive you of your sins, claimed the death of Christ on the cross as the payment for your transgressions and committed your life to obedience in humility, you are now what people call a believer. You are now a Christian. The Bible describes what you have done as a birth. The picture is accurate in many ways. You are now part of the family of God and you bear the name of our Father. Since your debt has been paid, you have a new beginning; your past no longer defines you. You have a life of growth before you. In particular, you have special access to God that only family members have; and this is probably the most significant change, so let us examine it thoroughly.

When you wholeheartedly accept Christ as Lord and Saviour, the change in you is severe and profound. The Bible describes it this way in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, ¹⁹*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?* ²⁰*For you have been bought for a price: therefore glorify God in your body.* The first thing to notice in this passage is that the Word of God describes you are a *temple of the Holy Spirit* and that He is in you. The connection you now have with God is so profound and so mysterious that it is described as God Himself living in you. You may remember from our last session that the death of Christ was payment of a debt you had with God because of your sins. This is why this passage says you are not your own. Christians have no longer a debt of sin, but a debt of love. You owe your life to Him who died for you. Since your life is eternal, your debt of love is eternal as well. The implications of this is a life of obedience. You are to *glorify God in your body*. This means you cannot do things that dishonour God and you want to do things that honour Him. In doing this, you are loving God back. This is called holiness and every day is an opportunity to practice it. However, what happens if we fail? We need to acknowledge that our failures have consequences, but we are certain that confession and repentance is what puts us back in the right path before a loving and forgiving Father. We don't need to shy away from His presence. The Bible puts it this way in 1 John 1:9, ⁹*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* As you can see, truthful repentance will always keep your record before God clean. Just remember that repentance means turning away from those things, thoughts and habits that don't honour God. You have been adopted by God as a son and you are expected to behave as part of the family. This family is the group of believers; past, present and future, that have or will have this connection with God. This group is what is called *the Church*. There is a special celebration to properly welcome you to the family and it is called baptism. It was commanded by Jesus Christ Himself and it is your first act of obedience. Talk to your leader or pastor about this and look forward to it in excitement. Through it, you are letting the congregation know you have made a commitment with Christ and they will extend their commitment to you as they take care of you, specially in regards to your spiritual growth. They will guide you in how to learn from the Bible and in particular, how to live this new life before you; the Christian life. You will find that this new life is about service, so dive into it diligently and ask your leader or the pastor about opportunities to serve. You will experience how fulfilling it is!

Session 7

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO ME?

If in the previous session you prayed to God to forgive you of your sins, claimed the death of Christ on the cross as the payment for your transgressions and committed your life to obedience in humility, you are now what people call a believer. You are now a Christian.

Take turns to share your thoughts on the following questions.

- What comes to your mind when you think of a fresh start, a new beginning?
- What area of your life needs a fresh start the most?

DISCUSSION

Consider the following statements of people that found a new beginning in Christ.

- ➔ "The real story of Lewis's conversion, then, is not about dramatic changes in a man's career but about dramatic changes in the man." —*David Downing on C.S. Lewis*
- ➔ "I was always angry with God. I couldn't understand how a God could make me without my legs. [...]Years later when I was out in Colorado springs training, I felt God truly work in my heart. I was raised the right way, but I still had to come to Christ on my own." —*Jessica Long (Paralympic gold medallist)*
- ➔ Through prayer and Scripture, I began to let God in. I started to open my heart and accepted Jesus. I cannot say that my life has totally changed, but I now have a focus. A guiding light. An inner peace. I know that I cannot do this life on my own.—*Andrew (Unfolding faith, episode 3)*

How would you describe your turn to Christ?

ANSWERS FROM THE BIBLE

When you wholeheartedly accept Christ as Lord and Saviour, the change in you is severe and profound. What happened? How are you to respond? Discuss the following passages with your group.

Ezekiel 36:27, ²⁷I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

What does it mean to have a restored relationship with God?

2 Timothy 1:14, ¹⁴Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.

Where is the Holy Spirit to be found?

Romans 8:9, ⁹However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

Where is the Holy Spirit to be found?

Romans 8:15, ¹⁵For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

What does it mean to be adopted into God's family?

1 Corinthians 6:19-20, ¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

What does it mean to live a life of obedience?

1 John 2:25, ²⁵This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life. ²⁹If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.

What does it mean to practice righteousness?

Matthew 28:19-20, ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

What is your next step?

CONCLUSION

- ✓ Repentance of your sins and submitting to Christ as Lord restores your relationship with God and grants you eternal life.
- ✓ God the Holy Spirit now lives in you to teach you and guard your ways; it is your debt of love to pay attention to His lead.
- ✓ To love God is to obey Him; to love others is to share Christ. Go and share what God has done for you!
- ✓ Your first step of obedience in your new life is to be baptized before a congregation of Christians that will look after you.

We have discussed so far that the most important manifestation of our love for Christ is obedience and this brings us to the first act of obedience in our walk with Christ. Baptism is the outward manifestation of our commitment to follow Christ. When the new believer shows commitment by being immersed in water and out of it, we remember Christ's death and resurrection. When this is done before a congregation, it also has the impact of making those witnesses and the new believer accountable to each other. It is as if a pact of caring for each other had been signed by water and love. Scripture shows in several places that baptism is not an option but the first duty we are to perform as followers of Christ. So, a new believer in Christ should be seeking to get baptized as soon as possible once Christ has been confessed as Lord and Saviour. Baptism includes the opportunity to share what God has done in your life. This is called your testimony. The Lord Jesus said in Mark 5:19, ¹⁹[...]“*Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you.*” A Christian has a duty to perform; we are instructed to glorify God by sharing the good news and the most natural way to do it is by sharing what God has done in your life. Preparing to do this fluently is always a good idea and the place to start is prayer. Ask the Lord to give you, through His Holy Spirit, the words you need to use and to bring back to your mind what you need to share and how to phrase it. Your baptism is your first opportunity to do it and your first audience is your church. You will find tips on how to prepare your testimony in appendix 1. Enjoy this opportunity since you are before people that love you and want to be blessed by knowing how God worked in your life!

We also mentioned that love is demonstrated in action. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 22:39, ³⁹[...]“*You SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF.*” The way love is demonstrated is by serving. Discovering where to serve is also something you need to seek in prayer. Nevertheless, your pastor and the leaders of the church can actively help you by showing you the current options available. This doesn't mean they are the only way to serve. Keep in mind at all times that you belong to a world wide family and that loving your neighbour is not only done with believers but specially with those that haven't met Christ. You will find that sharing the gospel is the greatest act of love you can engage in and the most gratifying. In doing so, we are working as commanded by our Lord. We don't do it as a chore but in hope. The Christian life is filled with hope because our master has promised eternal life to those who love Him. If you have confessed Christ, you are already enjoying that life but better things are yet to come. Lord Jesus said in John 14:3, ³*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will take you to Myself, so that where I am, there you also will be.* In many other portions of Scripture we learn about His coming back in order for us to be reunited forever. The kind of life we will live is wonderfully described in Revelation 21:3-4, ³[...]“*Behold, the tabernacle of God is among the people, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.*” Honour God by sharing the love that has changed your life forever!

Session 8

NOW WHAT?

We have discussed so far that the most important manifestation of our love for Christ is obedience and this love is necessarily demonstrated in action. Your baptism is your first act of obedience and serving others in the name of Christ should now be your priority.

Take turns to share your thoughts on the following questions.

- What do you like doing the most?
- Is there something else you think you are specially talented to do?

DISCUSSION

Consider the following definitions and think how they apply to you.

- ➔ Joy is a feeling of great pleasure.
- ➔ Peace is freedom from anxiety or distress.
- ➔ Patience is the capacity to accept or tolerate trouble, or suffering without getting upset.
- ➔ Kindness is the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate.
- ➔ Faithfulness is the quality of remaining loyal.
- ➔ Self-Control is the ability to control one's emotions and desires or the expression of them in one's behaviour, especially in difficult situations.

Share with the group if anything has changed for you after confessing Christ.

ANSWERS FROM THE BIBLE

What is baptism? Why do we serve others in the name of Christ? Discuss the following passages with your group.

Mark 1:4-5, ⁴John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

Why is baptism a public event?

Matthew 3:11, ¹¹“As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Why is baptism important?

Romans 6:3-4, ³Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

What does getting baptized with water stand for?

Matthew 28:19-20, ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Is baptism optional?

Matthew 20:26-28, ²⁶It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, ²⁷and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; ²⁸just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Why is serving others important?

1 Corinthians 12:4-7, ⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. ⁶There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*. ⁷But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

How can you serve?

1 Corinthians 12:18-20,26, ¹⁸But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. ¹⁹If they were all one member, where would the body be? ²⁰But now there are many members, but one body. ²⁶And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

What are the implications of not serving?

Are baptism and acts of service a way to share your faith?

Why is sharing your faith important?

CONCLUSION

- ✓ Baptism is your first act of obedience and a manifestation of your love for Christ.
- ✓ Baptism is an opportunity to share your faith with those you know.
- ✓ Serving others, at church or elsewhere, in the name of Christ is the best way to grow in your relationship with God.
- ✓ You have been given special gifts that will help others grow.

“YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF.”

Congratulations! You have finished the course but this is just the first step in an exciting Journey of Grace. Although we have prepared other courses that will help you in your walk with Jesus, your personal commitment to grow in your relationship with God is far more important. This is what you will need to commit yourself to do.

Action Plan

➔ Read your Bible.

- If you don't have a Bible ask your leader for one. It is a gift from your family at Living Hope Church of the Nazarene.
- Follow a Bible reading plan. You can access many electronic options at <https://faithlife.com> or <https://www.biblegateway.com/reading-plans/> or ask for a hard copy of a Bible reading journal to your leader.

➔ Pray.

- There are no rules to prayer, it is your personal time with God and He wants to hear you! The Bible commands us to do it continually, so get at it!

➔ Come to worship.

- Our service is held Sundays at 10:30 a.m. We will be happy to see you!

➔ Get baptized.

- Discuss with your leader how to prepare for baptism. The closest date available to do it is: _____.

➔ Share your faith.

- Tell others what Christ has done for you.

➔ Serve.

- Ask your leader or the pastor about ministry options and how to get involved.

APPENDIX 1

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR TESTIMONY

Luke 8:39 says, ³⁹*“Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you.”* So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him. What God has done in your life is nothing short of a miracle. During the course, we described it as a new birth. Your life has indeed been transformed and sharing what God has done in your life is a powerful tool to share your faith. When you share it with believers, you show how God is still actively expanding His Kingdom. When you share it with non-believers, you are opening the door to conversations that could lead to someone turning to Christ. Probably the best part of it is that you are sharing something that happened to you, so you don't need to be a Bible expert to do it. These steps might help you to be prepared when the time comes.

1. Pray. John 14:26 says, ²⁶*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.* Ask God to give you wisdom as you write.
2. Describe. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, ¹⁷*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*
 - a) What was your life like before becoming a believer?
 - b) How did you hear about Christ and how did you come to believe in Him as Saviour and Lord? (Who, where and what influenced your decision?)
 - c) What has changed? (Habits broken or taken, feelings lost or gained)
3. Use the Bible. Isaiah 55:11 says, ¹¹*So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.* Is there a verse that shows the power of the change you have gone through? Share your favourite Bible verse.
4. Read it over and make changes if needed.

Important tips as you write your testimony

- Remember at all times that this is your story and has a simple message behind it: God saves. Just as in the Bible, your story is meant to glorify Him, not yourself.
- Remember you want to share God's love. Keep the message simple and short.
- Choose your words. You may have already picked up words Christians use but are not part of every day language. Avoid them as much as possible. Terms like *born again, saved, blessed*, etc. Are words that have little meaning in today's world.
- This is about God and you. Avoid talking about churches, denominations, or even other beliefs; specially in a derogatory way.
- This is life at its best but not perfection. Following Christ is the best thing that can happen to anyone but it doesn't mean life's problems are over. John 16:33 says, *³³These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."*
- Remember you are sharing, not preaching. You know that you have been saved of a terrible destiny but that is the outcome of a love you found. What you want people to do is to find that love for themselves. You can't share this love through fear, argumentation or pressure.
- Pray often for those who hear your story.

APPENDIX 2
LIST OF MINISTRIES AT LIVING HOPE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE
(LAST UPDATE: SEPTEMBER, 2025)

- *Greeting.* Our team of greeters welcome our visitors, hand out bulletins and are prepared to direct people to places or people within the church staff or other ministries. They are readily available for prayer.
- *Prayer.* Meetings over Whatsapp please contact the pastoral staff for more information.
- *Small groups.* Want to host a small group but don't want to lead the study? Want to lead a study but don't want to host? Want to do both? Please contact the pastoral staff for more information on resources and methodology.
- *Men's and women's groups.* Meetings every 3rd Saturday of the month for devotionals, activities and fellowship. Please contact the pastoral staff for more information.
- *Sunday school.* Hosting from grade 1 to 12. Meeting every Sunday during service.
- *Food bank & Compassionate fund.* Be the hands of Christ sharing His provision with a caring hand. Ideas on new ways to do it are always welcome.
- *Building and Maintenance.* Our building is always in need of care, please consider being a helping hand.

APPENDIX 3

THE *Journey of Grace* SERIES

All courses are work shops where participants actively discuss their points of view under the guidance of a facilitator.

- *Journey to Jesus.* Is an eight session study that explores what a world view is, the implications of the gospel and why a commitment to Christ changes lives.
- *Journey to the Christian Faith.* The second step in the Journey of Grace series of studies. We discuss the character of God, the problem of sin, who is the Church and how to live a Christian life that will enable us to enjoy our eternal future.
- *Christianity 101.* Is an eight session study that explores the basics of Christianity; God in three persons, Sin and salvation, the church, the Bible, prayer and the promised future.
- *The fruit of the Spirit.* Is a seven session study that touches on how to live a life empowered by the Holy Spirit to grow in love, joy, peace, patience and goodness, kindness and gentleness, faithfulness and self-control.