

SPIRITUAL FORMATION SERIES

Course: Christian Foundations

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Session One

Introduction

The person who has given their life – their ‘all’ – to God through Jesus will likely ask questions such as “What now?” or “What can I do to get closer to God?” They may also ask about activities we call Ordinances such as Baptism or Communion. These are all good questions we must answer as we guide the new or renewed believer to become a *follower*.

Being a follower of Christ implies *movement* from self-centeredness to seeking God and actionable love toward Him and our fellow humans. Action-oriented love is true worship and obedience that are parts of a covenant (two-way agreement) with God. The new believer must learn about this covenant to answer the question “Why?” and gain a sense of urgency about following Him. They’ll learn the covenant and their necessary response through the lenses of faith, love, and hope.

This lesson, along with observable and Godly modeling by mature followers, will train the new/renewed believer to follow God in His covenant by having confidence in what God has done, is doing, and will do (faith and hope). They’ll also learn that this new found faith and hope must compel them to produce the ‘fruit’ of Godly living by properly dealing with temptation (so they can avoid practicing sin), engaging in fellowship and prayer, and developing faith through Bible study.

The following course isn’t the end of their training but the beginning of a lifelong journey of learning and doing! Therefore, we’ll discuss ‘next steps’ and ‘reaching higher’ at the end of each course to connect each building block of spiritual formation to the next. Finally, principles taught in this course introduce, and are related to, similar spiritual disciplines found in training programs such as *First Steps*.

... equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. —Ephesians 14:12-13.

First Steps – Covenant With God

Theme: Covenant. From well before the time of Abraham, God has sought a close relationship with humans and desires to return all of His creation to the perfection it once enjoyed in the very beginning. The relationship He seeks is one of a covenant, that agreement and mutual arrangement by which God will save from coming judgment and be the God of those who accept His gracious offer; we accept His love and respond in kind by devoting to Him our lives and resources – all that we have and are.

Objectives of this Lesson:

- Explain the Covenant
- Define Faith, Love, & Hope
- Explore Salvation
- Cover the Ordinances of Baptism & Communion

What to Know First:

Our Separation (from God & Perfection)

Why is a covenant with God necessary? How did we get to our current state of imperfection and wickedness and death if everything started out in a perfect state? Humans disobeyed God's single commandment. Because God is fair and just and must keep His word, humans would from that point on experience death and hardship through separation from God and the Tree of Life. But, God has a plan to reclaim creation and return all to perfection. More on that later!

Read:

- Genesis 1:26-28 (Man made in the image of God; given dominion)
- Genesis 2:15-24 (Tree of the knowledge of good and evil; God made woman)
- Genesis 3:6, 11-13, 16-19, & 22-24 (Adam & Eve rebel; Exile from Eden)
- Romans 3:23 (All have sinned)
- Mark 7:21-23 (Evil comes from within and influences us)
- Ephesians 2:1-3 (Those without God are dead and headed for wrath)
- Romans 1:18 (Wrath for the ungodly)
- Romans 14:10 (All will stand judgment)
- 2Corinthians 5:10 (All our deeds, good or bad, will be judged)

God's Desire (Reconcile Creation)

Although humans separated from God by choice through the first man Adam, the Creator wants us back! Remember the plan mentioned above? Unless a perfect being willingly died in our place, God would have to allow humans to continue a path of death and destruction.

Thankfully, the One we call Jesus agreed to be that sacrifice to pay for our rebellion against God the Father, who then raised Him from the dead as a sign for all who would and will believe and follow Him. We must choose to believe and give our entire life to God in return if we wish to be part of the restoration of creation to perfection. But, what do we do while we wait for the new, perfect world to come?

Read:

- John 3:16 (God's Son given as a sacrifice)
- Romans 5:10-11 (Saved by Jesus who reconciles us to God)
- 2Corinthians 5:18-20 (God desires the reconciliation of creation)
- Colossians 1:21-23 (Reconciled IF we stand firm in faith and hope)
- Revelation 21:1, 5, & 7 (The faithful will inherit the new heaven/earth to come)

What we do in the Meantime (Perseverance)

We must stay in this covenant with God by keeping our word to give all we have and are to God and obey His commandment to love Him and humans. Doing this won't always be easy! Regardless, we learn God's ways and live by them. Our obedience proves our love for Him and others and is why we'll be rescued from punishment after judgment and helped by God's Spirit in the meantime. As we've already read, this salvation begins with entering covenant with God.

Read:

- Romans 2:7 (Eternal life for those who persevere in doing good)
- 1Timothy 4:16 (Perseverance ensures salvation)
- James 1:12 (Persevering brings approval and everlasting life)
- Revelation 14:12 (Persevere and keep God's commandments out of faith in Jesus)
- Matthew 24:13 (He ensures to the end *will be* saved)

Session Two

What to Know Now:

The Covenant

At the time of Abraham, an agreement – covenant – whereby the people of a land would swear loyalty to their king and serve only him was the common way of ensuring survivability. Because the people understood this close and mutually-beneficial relationship, God used it to establish a close connection and reconcile them to Himself.

The covenant involved terms like, “I will be your God if you will be my people ... Honor and obey and serve no other.” It also involved sacrifices to confirm the agreement and penalties for breaking it. He later renewed the covenant similarly with Moses and the people of Israel and, finally, with the world through Jesus, who became the once-for-all covenant sacrifice.

Read:

- Exodus 6:7 (God chooses Israel for Himself)
- Leviticus 26:12 & 14-17 (“I will be your God if you will be My people”)
- Deuteronomy 6:1-6 & 13-18 (The Shema – ‘Greatest Commandment’ by Jesus)
- Matthew 22:36-40 (Jesus: The Old Testament Shema as the Greatest Commandment)
- Matthew 26:28 (Jesus shed His blood for the covenant with God)

Question for the Learner: Would you say that marriage is a covenant (perhaps because of vows)? Why? Why not?

Question for the Learner: What do *you* imagine a covenant should contain?

Faith, Love, & Hope

Faith comes from God in a variety of ways and is a confidence in who He is, what He has done, and what He is doing. That confidence is also the foundation for faith in the future – what He *will* do. This faith (confidence, not wishful thinking!) in the future is called **hope**. What about love? It is the action we must do because of our faith. More on it shortly.

We obtain and develop faith (confidence) from the Spirit and exposure to the Scriptures, testimonies, etc. In other words, our faith is not meant to be blind but confidence based on what we see, hear, read, and experience. It also provides the basis for confidence in the future when Jesus will return, and our salvation will be complete.

Because of faith, we keep our covenant word to obey God’s commandments to honor Him and love our fellow humans through charitable actions. Let’s now address the topic of true, actionable love born of our faith.

Jesus said that we would obey His commandments if we love Him and the Father. Further, He said that the obedience related to love is how we prove we are His disciples. Jesus’

brother James states that belief without that obedience/love is useless to everyone including God. So, if you think that this love word is directly related to action, you're correct! The original wording translates to *charitable* action akin to doing the right thing despite how we feel. In other words, while human emotion may drive us to actionable love, the emotion alone isn't true love. You'll learn that what we do in love determines whether we are a follower of Jesus (not just a believer!) and is what Jesus will judge us about in the future.

Faith - Read:

- Romans 1:5 (Obedience from faith)
- Romans 10:17 (Faith comes from hearing)
- 1Corinthians 12:6-9 (Faith can also come by the Spirit)
- Hebrews 11:1 (Faith as the foundation of hope)

Hope – Read:

- Romans 5:2-4 (Tribulation brings perseverance, character, & hope)
- Romans 8:24-25 (We hope in salvation (implies action out of faith in Jesus' return))
- 1Thessalonians 5:8 (Our hope is salvation)
- Titus 2:13 (Our hope of salvation realized at Jesus' appearing)

Love - Read:

- Matthew 25:31-36 (Those who actionably love others inherit God's Kingdom)
- John 3:16 (God actionably gave to us)
- John 15:8-12 (We are to produce fruit (actionable love) to prove *our* love for God)
- James 2:14-17 (Faith alone without action is dead)

Question for the Learner: Why do you think having confidence in what God has done is important to believe in what He says about the future?

Question for the Learner: What are some examples of love-in-action?

Session Three

Salvation

You may have heard that Christians are 'saved' the moment we say we believe in Jesus. What does that mean? And do we enjoy the benefits of salvation just by saying we believe in God or Jesus?

First, the Bible teaches us that a person can be headed for salvation once they truly believe in God and that His Son, Jesus, died to satisfy our penalty for sin and was then raised by His Spirit. Belief must then lead to our obedience to God's commandments to honor Him and love humans through charitable actions as we discussed earlier.

Second, we also learn from the Bible that salvation brings with it eternal life with God and a pardon from the death sentence we earned by rebellion against God in the beginning through Adam. Salvation (rescue) from the consequences of that death sentence will come at the last time, but the *pardon* of that future death sentence comes now as a believer commits to the covenant and receives God's Spirit. The Church refers to this 'pardon' as *justification* by God, and the lifelong process of living and growing by the Spirit as *sanctification*. You'll see or hear these words again!

Finally, it's important to understand that everyone will face the judgment of God just before He re-creates everything to be perfect once again. He will reward true followers of God while those who have rejected Him will receive the punishment reserved for all disobedient spirits throughout created time.

Read:

- Matthew 24:13 (Those wishing salvation must endure to the end)
- Matthew 25:41-46 (The unfaithful destined for hell, the Righteous for eternal life)
- Acts 4:12 (No one authorized to save but Jesus) (**Note:** Name = authority)
- Romans 10:9-10 (Those saved devote themselves to God and act accordingly)
- 2Corinthians 5:10 (God will judge everyone)
- 1Thessalonians 5:9 (Christians are destined for salvation from God's wrath)
- 2Timothy 3:15 (Knowledge of God & wisdom lead to salvation through faith)
- Hebrews 5:8-9 (Eternal life for those who *obey* God)
- Hebrews 9:28 (Salvation from God's wrath when Jesus appears again)
- 1Peter 1:5 (Salvation from God's wrath in the last time)

Question for the Learner: What have you heard about God's coming judgment and reward or punishment if anything?

Question for the Learner: Have you ever asked yourself, or heard others ask, something like, "Why would a good God punish people?"

The Ordinances of Baptism & Communion

We should now understand that we will be saved from God's punishment to come and enjoy the benefit of His Spirit if we pledge ourselves, all we are and have, to Him in His covenant. Then, our belief must produce good works – what we call *fruit*. That is 'salvation' in a nutshell. But how do the practices of baptism and communion (what the church calls 'ordinances') relate to this salvation and God's covenant?

Baptism

Although religious organizations may differ in their approach to baptism (e.g., Catholics sprinkle; Protestants typically dunk), the ordinance of baptism is a public profession and confirmation of faith in Jesus and devotion to God. The public act signifies washing away of sin and rebirth in Jesus Christ beside providing accountability.

I mention *accountability* because just saying that we believe in Jesus in our mind is useless as we previously discussed. Also, since that individual is the only one aware of the belief, no one else will know of what should be a commitment and, therefore, walking away from a new-found faith becomes too easy. So, a public profession of faith and commitment, which has always been a part of the salvation process, was important in Israel and is critical today in our New Covenant with God through Jesus. But, you may be wondering, "Which is right: Dunk or sprinkle? And what about baptizing infants and children?" Good questions!

Without delving too deeply into religious practices and their origins, let's just say that most Protestants believe that a person must understand the covenant and their choice to follow before making a public proclamation of that faith and commitment through Baptism. Also, we 'dunk' to symbolize the death of the old self and birth of the new through Jesus (besides the washing away of sin!). You'll find that Crosswalk holds Baptisms regularly for anyone who meets the criteria just mentioned.

Covenant Golden Nugget: The Israelite men became circumcised as a personal sign or seal of the covenant in which Israel as a people participated. Baptism serves a similar purpose for New Covenant followers. Thankfully, God doesn't require physical circumcision today! But, we are to *circumcise our hearts*, which means that we are to devote our heart (mind/intent) to God in the covenant relationship.

Covenant Golden Nugget: Because baptism is meant to proclaim – seal – a commitment to God's covenant, the very early Church often withheld the ordinance for several months until the new convert received much training and mentoring. The delay and training ensured the new believer understood the covenant to which they were about to enter and confirm. The training and 'cost-counting' was especially important in those days because of intense persecution and execution of Christ followers.

Baptism – Read:

- Matthew 28:18-19 (We are to baptize others by Jesus’ authority given to us)
- Mark 16:16 (Salvation for those who believe [and act] and willfully become baptized; Remember the covenant and our devotion to God and public proclamation?)
- Acts 2:38 (Turn away from sin and proclaim the covenant by Jesus’ authority)
- Romans 2:28-29 (Devotion of our heart/mind as the sign of covenant agreement)
- Romans 6:3-4 (Buried and raised in Christ, walking in new life symbolized)
- Galatians 3:27 (Baptized *into* Christ to be *clothed* with Him)
- 1Peter 3:21 (Saved through the devotion to God confirmed through baptism)

Question for the Learner: Do you believe that a public expression of faith and commitment to God in His covenant is important? Why? Why not?

Communion

Like Baptism, the ordinance of Communion varies depending on the religious organization with which a person identifies. For instance, Catholics typically practice Communion in a solemn and mysterious air whereby symbolic bread and wine become a manifestation of Jesus after being ingested. The belief is called *trans-substantiation*. On the other hand, most Protestants believe Communion is an intimate sharing of symbolic bread and wine taken in remembrance of Jesus’ sacrifice and the covenant it made possible. Our church holds to the latter.

Crosswalk regularly conducts Communion to give Jesus’ followers an opportunity to share in remembering Jesus’ sacrifice and our covenant with God. The celebration is meant for anyone who has committed themselves to God out of belief in Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection and intends to remain in the covenant (has a right heart!). If that’s you, then please join us for this wonderful community-oriented event!

Communion – Read:

- Luke 22:14-20 (Jesus explains His sacrifice in Passover fulfillment)
- 1Corinthians 11:23 (Paul reiterates the sacrifice, covenant, and remembrance)

Question for the Learner: What have you heard about the practice of Communion? Do you believe it’s something in which all followers of Jesus should participate?

Session Four

Next Steps – An Introduction to Developing Spiritual Disciplines

Theme: Growth & Community. Entering into the covenant with God after pledging belief and total devotion is just the first step of a lifelong journey full of personal and spiritual growth. But we don't go the journey alone or produce fruit without others. Just as God is about community so should we be. In that environment, we pray for and encourage and train each other, hold others accountable for Godly behavior, and share spiritual gifts and God-given resources.

Objectives of this Lesson:

- Introduce the disciplines of dealing with temptation through self-control, prayer, and Bible study.
- Explain the importance of fellowship and overview the organization of the church.

Dealing with Temptation

Now that we've covered our covenant with God let's discuss spiritual disciplines that will enable us to persevere until the realization of our hope: Our gathering unto God and the new creation and eternal life to come. The Bible tells us that wisdom and knowledge of God and His ways give us the means with which to exercise self-control of our body for good works in Christ, obedience to God, and purity – all necessary to continue in the covenant with God. This continuance is *perseverance*.

Speaking of perseverance in pleasing God, let's talk briefly about dealing with temptation before it becomes rebellious behavior. You'll likely learn more about dealing with temptation – doing what you 'ought' not what you 'want' – during future one-on-one discipleship sessions, but let's introduce the topic and guide you for beginning to exercise self-control to keep from sinning against yourself, God, or others.

First, it's important to understand that temptation isn't the problem. Everyone struggles with temptations, but they don't become rebellious activities against us, God, or others until we decide to act on the temptation – intend to sin. We can remain pure and in God's covenant by recognizing through our learning and His Spirit what is sinful and then do whatever is necessary to keep the temptation from manifesting into immoral behavior.

Second, we should define sin and repentance to help you in your fight for purity and salvation. Sin is missing God's mark – His ways and commandments. A great remedy for addressing sin is to begin learning of them and never stop! But, sin happens because of human desire and many other influences. When it does, we repent by changing our behavior to match our change of heart. In other words, if we intend to please God and not sin, we make whatever changes are necessary not to practice that immoral behavior.

Finally, here are some simple tips for overcoming temptation and winning the mental battle against sin:

- The Spirit convicts (**John 16:7-8**) and transforms (**2Corinthians 3:18**)
- Walk by that Spirit (**Galatians 5:16-17**)
- Clothe ourselves with Jesus (**Romans 13:13-14**)
 - Regularly read Scripture for firm foundation
 - Meditate on what you learn
 - Apply what you learn in your life
- Avoid or remove triggers – things that can cause you to sin (i.e., **Matthew 5:29**)
- Pray (**Matthew 26:41**)!

Another helpful tool in your anti-sin arsenal can be an accountability partner – someone to whom you report your struggle and outcome regularly. Just make sure they're of the same sex and don't have a similar struggle or weakness!

Read:

- Matthew 5:29 (Remove sinful stumbling blocks)
- Matthew 26:41 (The flesh is weak)
- John 16:7-8 (The Holy Spirit teaches us of sin, righteousness, and judgment)
- Romans 13:13-14 (Put on Jesus (remember baptism?) and resist sinful urges)
- Galatians 5:16-17 (Walk by God's Spirit to resist sinful urges)
- 2Corinthians 3:18 (We are transformed into being Christ-like)
- 2Peter1:5-7 (Moral excellence to knowledge to self-control to perseverance & godliness)
- James 1:14-15 (Sin leads to at least spiritual death; Comes from giving into wrong lust)

Question for the Learner: Can you give specific examples of what God would view as sin?

Question for the Learner: What are a few things you can do to guard against practicing sin?

Prayer

The prayer is how we communicate our thanks, desires, needs, and requests for others to God the Father. We do this by the Holy Spirit and through our Christ who intercedes with God on our behalf. Toward that end, Jesus, who gave a model – a template – for prayer (what we call the *Lord's Prayer*) taught us *how* to pray. It shows that we are to **A**dore God, **C**onfess our sins, **T**hank God, and enter into **S**upplication for us and others (our requests). The A.C.T.S. example of the Lord's Prayer helps us understand what to pray, but *how* should we pray?

First, we must live right according to God's ways and in obedience for Him to 'hear' our prayers. Second, our motives – intent and the reason behind our requests – must be right and not

self-seeking. Third, we must trust and keep asking. Finally, we must be as specific as possible when we pray. The specificity proves the level of our involvement in the lives of others and the depth our desire for whatever we pray.

The discipline of regular and meaningful prayer may seem daunting, but setting aside time daily for prayer will help (think of it like going to the gym on a schedule to develop physical strength). Consider praying in conjunction with Bible study, committing 5-10 minutes a day at first and then increasing the time gradually to develop the lifetime habit that will change your life and that of others and allow you to interact with God.

Read:

- Matthew 6:9-13 (Jesus' model for prayer)
- Ephesians 3:20 (The Spirit enables to do way more than we ask or think)
- Philippians 4:6 (Don't be anxious; Ask God in prayer, supplication, & thanks-giving)
- 1John 5:14 (We need to ask for things that work with God's desire/will)
- Luke 18:1-7 (Keep asking)
- 1John 3:21-22 (God responds to the prayers of the obedient)
- John 15:7 (God responds to the prayers of the obedient ...)
- James 4:3 (Asking with wrong/selfish motives will yield nothing)
- Psalms 66:18 (Sin/wickedness will keep God from acknowledging or answering prayer)

Question for the Learner: What practical examples can you think of for each part of A.C.T.S?

Bible Study

The Bible is a beautiful cover-to-cover story of the nature of God from creation to eventual re-creation and His work to reconcile the former to Himself in the meantime. It contains historical information, wisdom, poetry, prophecies, the good news of God's Kingdom as taught by Jesus, apostolic letters full of advice for applying God's ways, and apocalyptic insights to the end of things. All categories of information lend themselves to supplying God's mark (standard) for judging sin, showing the way of righteousness and salvation, and providing confidence for now and in the future through historical and prophetic fulfillment. Providing a little guidance for approaching this wonderful work we call the Word of God will give you a head start in ensuring you take out of the Bible the speaker or writer's message, not put into it your meaning or engage in private, biased interpretation!

While you don't need to be a Bible scholar to engage in the basic reading of the text, you should remember a few basic tips.

- Think about the speaker and his/her audience. The background, upbringing, education, and experiences of the speaker or writer will affect how they deliver a

message or why solving a particular problem was important. For instance, the apostle Paul grew up an educated Jew and Pharisee, so problems caused by focusing on performing the Law for salvation were of particular interest to him. Likewise, the recipients of his letters were often being scolded for Hellenistic (Greek/Roman) immoralities or told how to solve specific, cultural challenges meant for them in their time and place. Of course, that doesn't mean we can't take the messages to heart *IF* they apply to us, but not all will.

- Think about the historical, geographical, or cultural context within which the author spoke or wrote the message. For instance, Israel lived under Assyrian, Babylonian, Greek, and Roman occupation; the foreign domination affected the culture and focus. Geographical features affected travel. And, a culture influenced communication. For instance, Jesus used farming terms when speaking to farmers and fishing terms and metaphors when speaking to fishermen.
- Think about the speaker's point. The original speaker or writer spoke or wrote to make a specific point – perhaps impart knowledge or solve a problem. Do your best to understand the point or problem/solution. Most importantly: **THERE'S ONLY ONE MEANING TO THE TEXT!** However, there can be many applications.
- Ask yourself how you can apply the writer's intended message and its meaning to you, your life, or your situation.

You may want to consider these possible approaches when wondering what to read or study:

- By book (e.g., the gospel of John, Genesis, etc.)
- By genre (wisdom, history, gospels, prophets, etc.)
- By topic (e.g., authority, love, obedience, faith, etc.)
- From beginning to end

Consider using a combination of approaches for concurrent short-medium-long term reading plans:

- **Short:** A single book or several verses that you should group together (avoid in nearly all cases the urge to take a single verse and make a Christian point on it alone!)
- **Medium:** Topical or by genre
- **Long:** Genre or from beginning to end

Session Five

Fellowship, Church Nature, & Organization

Fellowship with other followers of Jesus can be very important to our salvation and the Christian experience of others. The unity allows us to share spiritual gifts, train (disciple), be encouraged, pray for one another, and learn of needs we can pray for or meet with resources given by God in the same way He freely gives us spiritual gifts.

Fellowship - Read:

- Hebrews 10:24-25 (Don't forsake fellowship!)
- Ephesians 4:1-16 (We must fulfill our God-given role in establishing unity)

Question for the Learner: Have you thought of or heard from others that going to church or fellowshiping with other followers of Jesus is unnecessary for salvation? What do you think about the assumption?

What do we mean by 'Church Nature?' It is what the church as an assembly of Jesus' followers are to be and do – its *essence* – as a representative of God and His Kingdom on earth. Understand that Christianity isn't meant to be a spectator sport or thought of as checking off a 'religion' box. We are the hands and feet of God and, as such, we tell others the Gospel as we know it at the time of our telling (evangelism), care for His people (love by charity), and train others in the ways of the Kingdom (discipleship and mentoring). Let's look at each activity briefly.

Evangelism. The Bible states that we are to announce the good news of the Kingdom of God – tell the story of salvation. How? Tell what you know (even if it's just a little) about God as creator and savior. You have a unique story of where you were and of your life *now* as a follower of Jesus, so tell it! Trust is necessary for evangelism to be effective, and relationships help immensely.

Charity. In our New Covenant with God through Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection, we are to *love* God and others with all we are and have. *All* we have includes our resources such as time and money. And, we are to give freely as our heart leads us and with the right motives. For instance, the earliest followers of Jesus gave money to care for fellow Christians in Jerusalem. The action is true love Jesus commanded us to have for each other and will be the standard by which God will judge us (Matthew 25:31-36).

Read:

- Matthew 25:31-36 (Those who *do* love out of faith will inherit God's Kingdom)
- James 2:14-20 (Faith proved by charity; Faith without results is useless to God)

Question for the Learner: What are other examples of charitable love?

Training & Discipleship. As Christians, we are to learn, grow, apply what we learn in obedience, and then teach others who are newer or weaker in their faith – also in obedience. As you may conclude, we must engage in continuous Bible study to provide the knowledge and wisdom for training ourselves and others and guiding our disciple-making through teaching and modeling godly behavior.

Read:

- Matthew 28:19-20 (We are to reproduce godliness through discipleship/training)
- Ephesians 4:11-16 (We are to equip other Christians as able)
- 2Timothy 3:16-17 (Bible texts – the Old Testament in this case – are useful for correction, teaching, and equipping in righteousness)

Question for the Learner: Why do you believe Bible study is or isn't important to faith and salvation?

Finally, church organization represents our attempts to logically and strategically align resources to accomplish the hands-and-feet things above such as evangelism, discipleship, and charity.

First, the church establishes an overall mission or policy that represents its purpose and direction; a constitution or tenants of faith often serve this purpose.

Then, the church creates a physical structure or hierarchy to carry out its mission. That backbone consists of authorities such as the pastor or elders, helpers called deacons (although anyone qualified and mature in faith can help!), and other staff to carry church mechanics. One key point to remember is that the pastor and elders are responsible for its members and the operation of the church. Therefore, their positions command respect and mature and orderly conduct.

Finally, the mission leads to organizational structure and that structure carries out business-related functions and outreaches such as evangelism, missions support, praise music, spiritual formation training, discipleship, small group fellowship and healing, etc.

Read:

- 1Timothy 3:1-7 (Qualifications for Overseers – Bishops, Elders, & Pastors)
- Acts 6:2-4 (Deacons – helpers – in the making)
- 1Timothy 3:8-13 (Qualifications for Deacons)
- Philippians 1:1-2 (Example of addressing Deacons)

Question for the Learner: What could be some negative effects of not honoring church authority or structure?

Reaching Higher

We pray this course has provided a solid foundation for your lifelong relationship with God. Again, what you've learned is meant to inspire a passion for serving God and others in your new covenant with Him and provide basic guidance. But, don't stop here!

As you also learned, we must keep studying, growing, and applying what we learn while following Christ out of our love for Him and the Father. You'll need mentoring and discipleship in this process. Then, you'll train and reproduce godliness in others by mentoring them. Think of it as a never-ending process that will begin with your initial discipleship relationship.

Crosswalk church utilizes the First Steps one-on-one discipleship system. We encourage you to ask for a disciple-maker who will partner with you to continue your training (about ten weeks in this case) and prepare you to then disciple others. The First Steps process will train at a deeper level spiritual disciplines we introduced to you such as dealing with temptation, prayer, bible study, and fellowship. Then what?

Reaching higher yet, you'll want to spend the rest of your life in daily prayer and Bible study, accountability for and to others in fellowship and growth, disciple-making, and ongoing spiritual formation.

May God richly bless you in your spiritual walk!

Instructor Guidance

First and foremost, this course is meant to be a high-level introduction. So don't go deep 'into the weeds' theologically-speaking or allow the learner to derail the training. Encourage a separate one-on-one meeting if they'd like to ask more questions or have a deeper discussion than time allows.

Second, and related to the first point, keep to the outline and plan as much as possible! Each point and their order intentionally provides a strategic system to train the learner and provide a clear theological foundation.

Third, avoid the temptation to inject personal bias and private theology into the training plan. If you don't agree with any portion of the plan or theological points, privately note and bring them up to the Pastor or training staff. We understand that not everyone will agree with all theological points represented in this course; however, their formation and order have been part of a well-vetted and carefully thought out process. Disagreeing or correcting them overtly, especially when training, will do nothing but cause confusion, division, and potential disengagement from the church by the learner.

Finally, please come to the training sessions prepared by reading all text and verses in advance. Doing so will help ensure your and the learner's success.

Have fun and may God richly bless you for your spiritual maturity and contribution to His Kingdom!

Session One: 45 minutes

1. Open in **prayer**.
2. Read the **introduction**.
3. **Set expectations**. Attend every session if possible, as they build on one another to create a wonderful and complete "What now?" picture.
4. Go over the **theme** and **objectives**.
5. Read '**Our Separation**' and then the Bible references.
 - Discuss the concept of our fall from God's grace briefly and resulting physical and potential spiritual death.
6. Read '**God's Desire**' and then the Bible references.
 - Spend a moment exploring God's plan to reconcile, which means 'restore,' creation.
7. Read '**What we do in the Meantime**' and then the Bible references.
8. **Summarize**. Briefly, review our separation from God and the need for Jesus' sacrifice in God's desire to restore us. Ensure the learner understands that 'salvation,' which means 'rescue' (from God's wrath in this case), will be a future event that requires a two-way relationship (covenant) with God in the meantime. Thankfully, God's Spirit helps us in our covenant process leading to that future rescue and our eternal life.
9. Close in **prayer**.

10. Encourage the learner to become familiar with Session Two throughout the week, and pray for strength and guidance.

Session Two: 45 minutes

1. Open in **prayer**.
2. Read '**The Covenant**' and then the Bible references.
 - a. Stress the following about God's covenants with humanity:
 - i. The format followed (and still does) the two-way binding between Lord and servant Abram knew well in his time.
 - ii. God has done His part through Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection, but we must give ourselves to Him completely as 'Lord' if we wish to take advantage of His protection and salvation.
 - b. Pique the learner's interest and help with covenant understanding by pointing out that the two-way agreement provides the basis for human marriage as well, which is why God called Israel His wife, and we are His bride through Jesus.
 1. Discuss briefly why a one-sided marriage can be considered abusive or invalid.
3. Ask each of the Covenant **learner questions** and briefly discuss.
4. Read '**Faith, Love, & Hope**' and then the Bible references.
 - a. Help the learner understand the critical and foundational nature of faith, and that is **not** meant to be a blind belief with no substance! Why is faith critical to salvation? Because they wouldn't follow and obey a god they don't understand or in which they don't fully and fearfully believe.
 - b. Ensure the learner knows the **difference** between **faith** (confidence in what God has done and is doing) and **hope** (that same, firm confidence in what God *will* do at Christ's appearing and our salvation. Point out that while hope often seems to mean 'wishful thinking,' it's not what biblical writers had in mind.
 - c. Finally, drive home the point that although wishful thinking and our human emotions of 'love' may motivate us to good works, they aren't in themselves true love. The actionable *agape* love is our covenant response to God and humankind despite our feelings.
5. Ask each of the Faith, Love, & Hope **learner questions** and briefly discuss.
6. Close in **prayer**.
7. Encourage the learner to become familiar with Session Three throughout the week, and pray for strength and guidance.

Session Three: 45 minutes

1. Open in **prayer**.
2. Read '**Salvation**' and then the Bible references. Assist the learner in understanding several key points:

- a. Salvation from God’s wrath (hell/separation) will come in the future after judgment.
 - i. Be prepared to address confusion over the fact that we throw around terms like “get saved” ... Explain that we are indeed on a path toward salvation and we anticipate eventual salvation/rescue; however, getting there and arriving at Jesus’ appearing and the judgment of God is a process.
 - b. Judgment will bring reward for us: Eternal life and recompense for the good things we’ve done in our relationship with God.
 - c. Judgment will bring punishment (wrath) for those who have rejected God and His covenant.
 - d. The punishment of Hell isn’t the action of a mean God against humanity but the consequence of a poor choice made by humans out of their free will. In other words, God created Hell at the first spiritual rebellion as a destiny for all spiritual beings, including angels and humans, who choose it by not choosing Him.
 - i. In answering the question “Why would a good God punish people?”, help the learner understand that God doesn’t condemn people to Hell, they do it themselves through bad choices and practicing sin. So, the punishment exists – like prison today, in a sense – for those who choose to not follow God’s commandments to love Him and others in His covenant.
3. Ask each of the Salvation **learner questions** and briefly discuss.
 4. Read ‘**Baptism**’ and then the Bible references. Drive home the connection between a confirmation and proclamation of the learner’s decision to make God Lord in the covenant with Him. Help the learner also see how the sign of individual devotion to God by an Israelite male through physical circumcision is like our spiritual devotion as we ‘cut out’ and devote ourselves to Him.
 5. Ask each of the Baptism **learner questions** and briefly discuss.
 6. Read ‘**Communion**’ and then the Bible references. Encourage the learner to consider the event non-magical and a great way to remember the covenant that is core to our relationship with God and Jesus’ sacrifice that made the covenant possible.
 7. Ask each of the Communion **learner questions** and briefly discuss.
 8. Close in **prayer**.
 9. Encourage the learner to become familiar with Session Four throughout the week, and pray for strength and guidance.

Session Four: 45 minutes

1. Read the ‘**Next Steps**’ theme and objectives.
2. Read ‘**Dealing with Temptation**’ and then the Bible references. Ensure the learner understands several key concepts:
 - a. **Sin.** Actions or intentions in direct conflict with God’s ways. Bible study, discipleship, mentoring, God’s Spirit, and prayer are important to understanding those ways.

- b. **Avoiding the intent to sin out of temptation.** Temptations aren't the problem! Point out that perceived 'weakness' such as the visual nature of men and the struggles that result when we work at avoiding sensual sin are also not the problem (here's a good example of something good that can open the door to sin!). So, it's good that we struggle and not give in to what tempts us to sin against God or humans. What *is* the problem? Intention to sin or the actions themselves when we carry out our intentions.
 - c. **Accountability.** Being transparent and accountable to someone of the same sex who does not run the risk of sinning in the same way is extremely valuable! Encourage the learner to find such a person, confess their weakness and sin potential, and then regularly give the accountability partner updates along with specific details on actions taken to avoid sinning.
 - d. **Perseverance.** *Practicing* sin is contrary to God's covenant; the lack of self-control and perseverance in doing right will earn the practitioner God's wrath. Ensure the learner understands and internalizes the need to persevere in not giving into weakness but in doing good.
3. Ask each of the Dealing with Temptation **learner questions** and briefly discuss.
 4. Read '**Prayer**' and then the Bible references. Drive home these key points:
 - a. Prayer isn't a one-way laundry list of "I want" for God. It's a two-way communication with Him by the Spirit.
 - b. Ensure the learner understands that the Lord's Prayer isn't a prayer in itself, but a model – template – for praying very intentionally and relationally.
 - c. The A.C.T.S acronym and its usefulness in effective prayer.
 - d. Although God *can* hear us at any time, our intent and behavior can certainly prompt Him to ignore our prayers.
 5. Ask the Prayer **learner question** and briefly discuss.
 6. Read '**Bible Study**' and then the Bible references. Drive home these key points:
 7. Encourage the learner to establish a daily routine – perhaps at breakfast – of prayer and Bible study beginning with as little as 5 minutes at first to build the habit.
 8. Close in **prayer**.
 9. Encourage the learner to become familiar with Session Five throughout the week, and pray for strength and guidance.

Session Five: 45 minutes

1. Read the **Fellowship** portion '**Fellowship, Church Nature, & Organization**' and then the Bible references. Stress the need for fellowship for growth and the ability to share spiritual gifts and talents given freely by God. Staying away from God's people and keeping those gifts and talents to themselves would be akin to stealing since God gave them to be shared and used to accomplish His purposes.
2. Ask the Fellowship **learner question** and briefly discuss.
3. Read the **Church Nature** portion '**Fellowship, Church Nature, & Organization**' and then the Bible references. Ensure the learner understands, lovingly, that *doing* out of love

for God (even when we don't 'like' other humans!) through evangelism and charity isn't optional in our covenant. As explained in the Bible, the actions prove our love and will be the standard for our judgment by God. Finally, our ongoing training ensures our growth and gives the foundation for continued covenant obedience.

4. Ask the Church Nature **learner question** and briefly discuss.
5. Read the **Church Organization** portion '**Fellowship, Church Nature, & Organization**' and then the Bible references. Remind the learner that their relationship with God should not depend on human relationships and that although we often have relational conflicts with others, we still need to fellowship and participate in the church. Finally, stress the need for unity and respect for authoritative positions within the church structure.
6. Ask the Church Organization **learner question** and briefly discuss.
7. Read '**Reaching Higher**' and encourage the learner to establish a discipleship relationship with someone in the church who received training in the First Steps system. Put them in touch with the Pastor or other staff members if you're unsure of whom to contact.
8. Close in **prayer**.
9. Encourage the learner to take other Spiritual Formation courses offered by Crosswalk.

Scripture References

Our Separation

Then God said, “Let Us **make man in Our image**, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and **rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.**” — **Genesis 1:26-28.**

Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. The LORD God commanded the man, saying, “**From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat**, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.” Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said, “**This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.**” For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. — **Genesis 2:15-24.**

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, **she took from its fruit and ate**; and she **gave also to her husband** with her, and he ate. — **Genesis 3:6.**

And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman said, “**The serpent deceived me, and I ate.**” — **Genesis 3:11-13.**

To the woman He said, “I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And **he will rule over you.**” Then 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.** Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.” — **Genesis 3:16-19.**

Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”-- therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life. —**Genesis 3:22-24.**

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God —**Romans 3:23.**

“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.” —**Mark 7:21-23.**

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. —**Ephesians 2:1-3.**

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness ... —**Romans 1:18.**

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. —**Romans 14:10.**

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. —**2Corinthians 5:10.**

God’s Desire

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. —**John 3:16.**

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. —**Romans 5:10-11.**

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. —**2Corinthians 5:18-20**.

And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach-- if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister. —**Colossians 1:21-23**.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. ... And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." ... "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son." —**Revelation 21:1, 5, & 7**.

What we do in the meantime (perseverance)

to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life ... **Romans 2:7**.

Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you. —**1Timothy 4:16**.

Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. —**James 1:12**.

Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. —**Revelation 14:12**.

But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. —**Matthew 24:13**.

The Covenant

Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. —**Exodus 6:7**.

I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people. ... But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments, if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, and so break My covenant, I, in turn, will do this to you: I will appoint over you a sudden terror, consumption and

fever that will waste away the eyes and cause the soul to pine away; also, you will sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies will eat it up. I will set My face against you so that you will be struck down before your enemies; and those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee when no one is pursuing you. —**Leviticus 26:12 & 14-17.**

Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. ... You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name. You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, for the LORD your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth. You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah. You should diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and His testimonies and His statutes which He has commanded you. You shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore to give your fathers —**Deuteronomy 6:1-6 & 13-18.**

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And 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.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” —**Matthew 22:36-40.**

for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. —**Matthew 26:28.**

Faith, Love, & Hope

Faith - Read:

through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake —**Romans 1:5.**

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. —**Romans 10:17.**

There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit — **1 Corinthians 12:6-9**.

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. — **Hebrews 11:1**.

Hope – Read:

through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope — **Romans 5:2-4**.

For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. — **Romans 8:24-25**.

But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. — **1 Thessalonians 5:8**.

looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus — **Titus 2:13**.

Love - Read:

But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, “Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.” — **Matthew 25:31-36**.

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. — **John 3:16**.

My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your

joy may be made full. This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. —**John 15:8-12.**

What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. —**James 2:14-17.**

Salvation

But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. —**Matthew 24:13.**

Then He will also say to those on His left, "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me. ... These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." —**Matthew 25:41-46.**

"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." —**Acts 4:12.**

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; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. —**Romans 10:9-10.**

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. —**2Corinthians 5:10.**

For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ —**1Thessalonians 5:9.**

and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. —**2Timothy 3:15.**

Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation —**Hebrews 5:8-9.**

so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him —**Hebrews 9:28.**

who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. —**1Peter 1:5.**

Baptism

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” —**Matthew 28:18-19**.

"He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. —**Mark 16:16**.

Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. —**Acts 2:38**.

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God. —**Romans 2:28-29**.

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore 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. —**Romans 6:3-4**.

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. —**Galatians 3:27**.

Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you--not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience--through the resurrection of Jesus Christ —**1Peter 3:21**.

Communion

When the hour had come, He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him. And He said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, “Take this and share it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.” And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.” —**Luke 22:14-20**.

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes. —**1Corinthians 11:23**.

Dealing with Temptation

If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. —**Matthew 5:29.**

Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. —**Matthew 26:41.**

But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment —**John 16:7-8.**

Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. —**Romans 13:13-14.**

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. —**Galatians 5:16-17.**

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. —**2Corinthians 3:18.**

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. —**2Peter 1:5-7.**

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. —**James 1:14-15.**

Prayer

Pray, then, in this way: “Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.] —**Matthew 6:9-13.**

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us —**Ephesians 3:20.**

Be **anxious for nothing**, but in everything by **prayer and supplication** with **thanksgiving** let your requests be made known to God. —**Philippians 4:6**.

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we **ask anything according to His will**, He hears us. —**1John 5:14**.

Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and **not to lose heart**, saying, “In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, ‘Give me legal protection from my opponent.’ “For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, ‘Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.’” And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now, will not God bring about **justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night**, and will He delay long over them” —**Luke 18:1-7**.

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and **whatever we ask we receive from Him**, because **we keep His commandments** and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. —**1John 3:21-22**.

If you **abide in Me**, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. —**John 15:7**.

You ask and **do not receive**, because you **ask with wrong motives**, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. —**James 4:3**.

If I regard **wickedness** in my heart, The Lord **will not hear** —**Psalms 66:18**.

Fellowship, Church Nature, & Organization

Fellowship - Read:

and let us consider how to **stimulate one another** to love and good deeds, **not forsaking our own assembling together**, as is the habit of some, but **encouraging one another**; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. —**Hebrews 10:24-25**.

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is **one body and one Spirit**, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; **one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all** who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN." (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) And He gave some as

apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. —**Ephesians 4:1-16.**

Charity - Read:

But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me." —**Matthew 25:31-36.**

What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? —**James 2:14-20.**

Training & Discipleship - Read:

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

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the

truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. —**Ephesians 4:11-16.**

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. —**2Timothy 3:16-17.**

Church Organization

Qualifications for Overseers (Bishop / Elder / Pastor):

It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. —**1Timothy 3:1-7.**

Qualifications for Deacons

So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” —**Acts 6:2-4.**

Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. —**1Timothy 3:8-13.**

Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the **overseers** and **deacons**: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. —**Philippians 1:1-2.**