



DISCOVER THE **KINGDOM**



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RESOURCE MATERIALS

Class Manual *reading packet in the back, brief articles for each week*

Audio files www.whchurch.org/ministries/discover-the-kingdom

Password: dkingdom

Questions *index cards – Q/A time at the start / end of each class*

Reading Packet



DISCOVER THE KINGDOM

**THE BASIC THEOLOGY AND WORLDVIEW
OF WOODLAND HILLS CHURCH**

OVERVIEW

Nothing has more control over us than the story we think we are living in . . . Story is the most powerfully decisive, organizing and shaping force in a person's life . . . When the story is lost or its plot lines mangled, the key facts normally associated with the Christian story—creation, sin, cross, resurrection, grace, forgiveness, heaven and hell — lose their proper meaning . . . Many Christians have been imagining the wrong story concerning God and His people...that story very rarely produces actual followers of Jesus.”

The Power of Story, Todd Hunter

COURSE OVERVIEW

What is Discover the Kingdom for?

Discover the Kingdom is Woodland Hills' basic Theology and Christian Worldview course. It is the way we tell our story of faith and what we feel the Christian life is all about. The course is also the answer to a prophetic challenge the WHC leadership feels God is giving to the church. We feel God's call is to wake up to our culturally-compromised Christianity and a challenge to a radical recommitment to biblical Christianity. Discover the Kingdom is also a doorway to deeper involvement in the church beyond attending weekend services. The class is part of our pathway to becoming equipped for ministry leadership, becoming a covenant partner and learning about and considering participation in Sojourners Community (our missional discipleship community).

Topics to be covered: In the 13 weeks we will:

- Take an honest look at how culture has shaped American Christian values and lifestyles in ways contrary to the biblical story
- See the covenant love of God and the Kingdom of God as the keys to understanding the Bible
- Lay out our understanding of the nature of God as agape love in community, and our call to image this agape community on Earth
- Redefine basic concepts such as: covenant, Kingdom of God, Gospel, sin, spiritual warfare, the cross, salvation, and Holy Spirit—doing so from a Covenant and Kingdom worldview
- Clarify the definition of what it means to be a Christian and the purpose of the Church
- Define discipleship as the call to all Christians to re-prioritize our lives around spiritual maturity in Christ-likeness and a missional lifestyle of self-sacrificially serving the world around us

RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER READING

The following is a list of resources for those interested in further reading

Week 1

	Author	Brief Description
Christianity Beyond Belief	Todd Hunter	The gospel as something we live, not just hear
The Drama of Scripture	Bartholomew/Goheen	The Bible as one big “Story”
The Universe Next Door	James Sire	The importance of a Christian worldview
God’s Value System	Darren Twa	The “Kingdom” as a “value system” we live out
Taking Back Your Faith	David Platt	How American values have seeped into church

Week 2

The Power of the Blood Covenant	Malcom Smith	What “covenant” is all about
From Eternity to Here	Frank Viola	Summarizing the “big story” of the Bible
Epic: The Sacred Romance	John Eldredge	Summarizing the “big story” of the Bible
The Four Loves	C. S. Lewis	God’s agape love vs. human forms of love

Week 3

Abba’s Child	B. Manning	The centrality of God’s fatherly love
The Shack	William Young	A fictional depiction of the love of the trinity
Unbounded Love	Clark Pinnock	A theology of love as central to God’s essence
The God Who Loves You	Peter Kreeft	A theology of love as central to God’s essence
Angry Conversations with God	Susan Isaacs	A journey of discovering God’s radical love

Week 4

Jesus and Community	G. Lohfink	Agape “community” as the goal of “church”
The Community Life of God	Milt Rodriguez	God’s nature is “community” and so is ours
The Good and Beautiful Community	James B. Smith	The Church’s call to be agape community
The Rise of Christianity	Rodney Stark	The early Church was a radical agape community
Trinity in Human Community	Peter Holmes	The Church “images” the community God is

Week 5

Spiritual Warfare for Every Christian	Dean Sherman	Basic intro to principles of spiritual warfare
The Invisible War	Chip Ingram	Basic intro to spiritual warfare
Sit, Walk, Stand	Watchman Nee	Spiritual warfare as the whole of Christian life
The Screw Tape Letters	C.S. Lewis	A fictional depiction of Satan’s warfare strategies
Destined for the Throne	Paul Billheimer	Christianity is training for reigning with God
How God Became King	N.T. Wright	The “Kingdom” as the central plot to the Bible
The Powers That Be	Walter Wink	The world-systems level of spiritual warfare

Week 6

Not the Way It's Supposed to Be	C. Plantinga	A theology of sin as falling short of "shalom"
Cross and Covenant	R. L. Shelton	Why Jesus died from a "covenant" viewpoint

Week 7

The Nature of Atonement: Four Views	Bielby / Eddy, Eds	Other views of what Jesus' death did for us
A Community Called Atonement	Scot McKnight	Atonement as something the church lives out

Week 8

A Generous Orthodoxy	Brian McClaren	Salvation is more than forgiveness of sins
The Divine Conspiracy	Dallas Willard	Salvation is a life of radical discipleship

Week 9

Forgotten God	Francis Chan	How the Church ignores the Holy Spirit
Life in the Spirit	A.W. Tozer	Christianity as life empowered by the Spirit
Surprised by the Power of the Spirit	Jack Deere	The importance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit
Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God	Gordon Fee	Paul's theology of Holy Spirit's role in Church

Week 10

The Great Omission	Dallas Willard	The centrality of spiritual formation in Jesus
Transforming Conversion	Gordon Smith	Conversion means becoming like Jesus

Week 11

Church 3.0	Neil Cole	Getting back to "organic" forms of church
The Church Comes Home	R. and J. Banks	Biblical and practical teaching on house church
So You Don't want to go to	Jacobsen/Coleman	More relational forms of "church" Church Anymore?

Week 12

Renovation of the Heart	Dallas Willard	How we grow and mature to be like Jesus
Soul Shaping	D. Rumford	Introduction to spiritual disciplines
Finding Our Way Again	Brian McLaren	Introduction to spiritual disciplines
Invitation to a Journey	M. R. Mulholland	Pursuing intentional spiritual maturity

The background features a landscape with mountains under a light sky. A large, semi-transparent white arrow points from the top-left towards the right. Overlaid on the right side is a grid of semi-transparent geometric shapes, including a large 'V' at the top, a square with a horizontal bar, and a zigzag shape at the bottom. The text is centered in the lower half of the image.

**GETTING
THE STORY
STRAIGHT**

Worldviews lead to values which
lead to lifestyle and behavior.

OVERVIEW

The overall set of beliefs we have about the world and what life is all about is called our worldview. The overall story of the Bible is essentially God’s worldview. This week we will look at what our beliefs are today and how those beliefs have developed in our lives over the years. Our individual worldviews shape our lives in every way, so being able to identify whether or not God’s story and our own are aligned must be the starting point for our discovery of the Kingdom. We will learn how Church history has impacted God’s story and think about how the Church today is doing in their job to become Kingdom people on Earth.

What is a Worldview?

- The guiding story that makes sense of our world
- Shapes our life story
- Humans are wired for worldviews
- The question “why” is rooted in the child’s desire to form a worldview

NOTES

GETTING THE STORY STRAIGHT

God's Story in Our Lives

I. Moving from Mere Believer's to Real Disciples

- Jesus emphasized the importance of getting God's story straight!
 - Jesus – the teacher of Kingdom parables:
 - His stories always challenge
 - His stories always flip our thinking
 - His stories are always expanding the Kingdom of God as we are currently perceive it
 - Jesus sums up the whole Old Testament law (613 commandments) in one statement:
 - “Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind and strength . . . and love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:37, 39)
 - Jesus centers God's whole story—our story—on LOVE!
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II. Reading the Bible with a Narrative Theology

- The Bible is primarily one long story about God and his love for humanity and all creation
 - The purpose of re-telling the biblical story together is not merely for information but for transformation
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III. Keeping God's Story and Kingdom Holy

- We are called to keep God's Story and Kingdom distinct and set apart from all other false stories and kingdoms offered by the world
 - Jesus calls us to be salt and light in the world (Matthew 5:13-15)
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IV. Learning from History

The history of God's people has often been one of exchanging God's true story for a false story . . . one that is more familiar, safe, convenient, and self-centered.

Old Testament examples of exchanging God's story for another

- The Garden of Eden
 - Satan's story instead of God's (Genesis 3)
 - Israel and the Golden Calf
 - Egyptian culture instead of Jewish Covenant (Exodus 32)
 - The Tragic Story of Micah
 - Canaanite gods over Israel's God (Judges 17)
 - The Rejection and Crucifixion of Jesus the Messiah by God's own People
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GETTING THE STORY STRAIGHT

Post Biblical examples of exchanging God's story for another

- Constantinian Revolution
 - Mixing the cross and sword; killing in the name of Jesus
 - Medieval Church's Quest for Power
 - Wars, crusades, and inquisitions
 - The Conquest of America in the Name of Jesus
 - Hitler's Nazi-Christian Germany
 - The American Church Today
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The question is this: What is the Story We Live or Die By?

To most believers, their faith is a 'bonus' or an add-on dimension of their life rather than the priority around which everything in their life revolves . . . more often than not, our goal is to feel happy, comfortable, and secure."

Growing True Disciples By George Barna

TAKE HOME

- Personally and prayerfully review notes and consider watching the class video online
- Consider finding one or two learning partners and meet weekly outside of class over coffee or by phone
- Read Matthew 5-7 (Sermon on the Mount) in one sitting
- Read Articles
 - “The American Dream and Radical Christianity” by David Platt
 - “A Prophetic Word to the American Church” by John Mulinde
- Scripture Meditation and Reflection Questions
 - Matthew 5:1-16; Judges 17
 - What values and lifestyle do each of the passages reveal or imply?
 - What “story” do they reveal? (Assumptions about God, religion, our purpose on Earth, etc.)
 - What would you suggest is behind each of these passages?

A story told often enough, and confirmed often enough in daily life, ceases to be a tale and is accepted as reality itself. And when that happens, people accept the story even if it is destroying their lives.”

The Powers That Be By Walter Wink

The background is a muted, sepia-toned landscape featuring rolling hills and mountains under a hazy sky. A large, semi-transparent number '2' is positioned on the right side of the image, partially overlapping the landscape. The text is centered in the lower half of the image.

LOVE AND WAR

**THE BIBLE'S GRAND STORY
OF COVENANT LOVE AND**

Covenant is a certain kind of commitment. It is the deepest, strongest relational bond that exists; a full and unwavering commitment of one's total self to agape love for another.

OVERVIEW

The Bible contains two pervasive and reoccurring themes throughout its pages—Covenant relationship and Kingdom responsibility, or “Love and War.” God loves us with a certain kind of love—agape love. We will learn about agape and how it is distinct from other “human” kinds of love we may have experienced. Agape-based covenant-love is God’s central message to His people throughout history, but as Kingdom people we must also be conscious of the spiritual warfare happening all around us. By looking in Scripture, we will identify the roles God plays in our lives (and throughout history), as well as the roles He has given to us as His people.

What is the big picture of the Bible?

- Certain questions can be answered to identify God’s story in the Bible:
 - What are the central passages seen throughout the Bible?
 - What are the reoccurring and continuous themes in the Bible?
 - What do the beginning and the end of the story tell us about the Biblical narrative?

NOTES

LOVE AND WAR

Love as the Central Theme to God's Story

I. Realizing that the God who is Love Created the World for the Purpose of Love!

“Hear O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.”

(Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

“Jesus said, ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.’” (Matthew 22:37)

“A second is equally important: Love your neighbor as yourself. The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:38-40)

“For God loved the world so much that he gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

“God has shown His love for us in that while we were still sinning against Him, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)

“For the one who does not love does not know God. For God is love . . . This is love: Not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to take away our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought to love each other . . . God is love. And the one who lives in love lives in God, and God lives in him.” (1 John 4:8-16)

“Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—but the greatest of these is love.” (1 Corinthians 13:13)

II. Defining the Agape-Love of God

Worldly Love

Self-Centered
Motivated to fulfill one's self
Focused on feelings and emotions
Promotes one's own self at cost to another
Contract mind-set

Agape Love

“Us” centered
Motivated by the good of the relationship
Focused on Truth, principles, and promises
Promotes self-sacrifice for the other
Covenant mind-set

III. The Central Theme of Love

- God's love for His people expressed through biblical images
 - A father and his children/Family (Romans 8:14-17)
 - Jesus and his body (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)
 - A shepherd and his sheep (John 10:1-16)
 - A mother hen and her chicks (Matthew 23:37)
 - A groom and his bride (Ephesians 5:21-33)
 - A protective king and his people (1 Timothy 6:15-16)
 - God created humanity for covenant relationship
 - Covenant relationship: a clearly-defined, committed, agape-love relationship (Genesis 2)
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LOVE AND WAR

IV. God as the Groom and the People as His Bride

An understanding of the ancient Jewish marriage ritual is needed to capture what it means for us to be the bride of Christ

- Ancient Jewish Marriage Ritual
 - Proposal by groom
 - Acceptance by bride
 - Betrothal ceremony – a binding covenant
 - Betrothal gift – valuable gift that demonstrates commitment of groom to bride
 - The betrothal year – living faithfully, apart from each other and preparing to be married
 - Groom builds their future home
 - Bride (and her community) sews a wedding dress
 - Final wedding ceremony
 - Face-to-face intimacy (entering into a one-flesh relationship)
- God’s heart for His bride under the old covenant

“For your husband is your Creator . . . and with everlasting covenant-love I will have compassion on you.” (Isaiah 54:5, 8)

“As a groom rejoices over his bride, so God will rejoice over you!” (Isaiah 62:5)

“‘This is the covenant that I will make with them in those days,’ declares the Lord. ‘I will put my law within them, and on their heart I will write it. And I will be their God, and they will be my people.’” (Jeremiah 31:33) (This passage parallels ancient Jewish wedding language)

“‘And it will come about in that day,’ declares the Lord, ‘that you will call me Husband. . . In that day I will make a covenant with you . . . And I will betroth you to me forever. Yes, I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice; in covenant-love and in compassion. And I will betroth you to me in faithfulness.’” (Hosea 3:16-20)

- God establishes the new covenant with His bride
 - Jesus revealed himself as the divine groom (John 3:28-30; Mark 2:18-20; Ephesians 5:25-26)
 - Jesus has invited all humanity to become part of his betrothed bride (Mark 1:15; 1 Corinthians 11:2)
 - Jesus has given the Holy Spirit to his bride as a betrothal gift (Acts 2:38)
 - Jesus has gone to prepare an eternal home for his bride, indicating that we are living in the betrothal time (John 14:1-3)
 - Jesus will return for his bride and the final wedding ceremony, and we will be with him forever (Revelations 21:2-4)
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LOVE AND WAR

V. The Central Theme of Spiritual Warfare

God as our King

- An ancient king's primary duties
 - Maintain justice (proper relationships) among his people
 - Protect his people from their enemies
 - All of God's commands are given as a protective king
 - The commandments are our King's logical and loving limits
 - Following the commandments is our choice
 - Love requires freedom and choices
 - The dark-side of the story
 - Satan's rebellion and the kingdom of darkness
 - Humanity's rebellion and the turn to idolatry
 - God's people are called to engage in spiritual warfare
 - The primary battlefield is in our own minds
 - Every enemy lie is a variation on this basic lie: "You can't trust God; you need something else."
 - We are instructed not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed through the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2)
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Love and War is the Story of the Ages!

The Kingdom of God is a certain kind of community under the rule of a covenant agape King. A community that carries out and manifests the King's good and perfect will here on earth as it is in heaven.

TAKE-HOME

- Personally and prayerfully review notes and consider watching the class video online
 - Read 1 John in one sitting
 - Read Articles
 - “The Epic Tale of Love and War” by John Eldredge
 - “The Hidden Romance of the Bible” by Frank Viola
 - Scripture Reading
 - 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Romans 13:8-10
 - Scripture Meditation and Reflection Questions
 - Think about your relational interactions in the past day, week or month and then complete the following activity:
 - Think of the words that describe how you related to others (attitudes, actions, and motives) and write them in a list.
 - Compare this list to the qualities of 1 Corinthians 13 and imagine going back into the relational situations and displaying these agape qualities instead. What would look different?
 - Prayerfully ask God to help you grow into the qualities of agape love.
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The most amazing news to be announced to the human race is that God, in His unconditional love for us, has called us to participate in the most intimate relationship and unbreakable bond known among humans or capable of being expressed in any language. He has called us to covenant relationship with Himself, to come into the circle of friendship in which God and humanity are bound together in an intimate love union.”

The Power of the Blood Covenant By Malcolm Smith



**THE GOD
WHO IS LOVE**
OR WHERE THE STORY ALL BEGINS

An idol is any untrue thing about God that tries to rob from your relationship with God.

OVERVIEW

We all have created our own inner pictures of God. In our lives, through both internal and external messages, we project on God attributes and characteristics that are not true of Him. When we do this our image of God becomes distorted and can have an extremely detrimental effect on our relationship with Him and with others. This week we seek to identify misconceptions commonly held about God and replace them with the truth—a true and accurate image of the God who is agape-love!

What do you feel when you hear, see, or think about the word 'God'?

Distorted images of God have existed since the Garden of Eden

- Examples of Ancient Israel's distorted images of God
 - The golden calf –The Egyptian image of God
 - The silver idol—The Canaanite image of God
 - Baal—The Moabite image of Lord
 - Moloch—The Ammonite image of King
- Examples of the present day church's distorted images of God
- (Research taken from “America's Four Gods” by Paul Froese and Christopher Bader)
 - Judgmental—The angry king and judge
 - Critical—The critical, legalistic father
 - Benevolent—The nice old guy in the sky
 - Distant—The distant, disinterested dad; or the mysterious spiritual force

NOTES

THE GOD WHO IS LOVE

I. The Attributes of God

A crucial distinction must be understood about God's attributes and essence. Attributes tell us WHAT God is in His eternal being. But essence tells us WHO God is – His very character!

- Eternal—Has no beginning and no end
 - Omnipotent—All powerful
 - Omniscient—All knowing
 - Omnipresent—Everywhere present
 - Holy—Pure and set apart
 - Sovereign—King of the Universe
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II. The Essence of God

- God is agape-love!
- Agape is the Greek word translated love in 1 John
- A person who does not love does not know God, because God is love (1 John 4:8)
- The apostle Paul describes agape in these ways (1 Corinthians 13)
 - Agape is not jealous, boastful, proud, or rude
 - It does not demand its own way
 - It is not irritable
 - It keeps no record of being wronged
 - It does not rejoice about injustice, but rather rejoices at the truth
 - It never gives up on others
 - It never loses faith in others
 - It always hopes the best for others
 - It endures anything for the sake of others
 - Agape never fails

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."

A. W. Tozer

III. The Agape Relationship of the Trinity

- The Triune God
 - Three unique persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
 - Forms one single Being—one God
 - Has an eternal, agape relationship
 - Jesus revealed the Trinity as a loving community during His ministry
 - Jesus prays to the Father that his followers would be one, just as the Father and Son are one (John 17:22-23)
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If our image of God does not include a loving community, our picture is not of God.

THE GOD WHO IS LOVE

IV. The Scandalous Love of God for His People

- God's relentless love
 - In the Garden of Eden, after Adam and Eve had eaten of the fruit, God goes looking for them. God continued to search and relentlessly pursue them even after they had sinned. (Genesis 3:8-10)
- God's unconditional covenant love
 - During the covenant ceremony between Abram and God, God causes a deep sleep to fall over Abram. The story is a display of God's willingness to take on the burden of such a covenant for Abraham, by walking the ceremonial 'walk of death' alone. (Genesis 15:8-18)
- God's merciful and forgiving love
 - On the top of Mount Sinai, God enters into covenant with Moses. Coming down out of heaven to pass by Moses, so to reveal His glory, God proclaims "I am a God of compassion and mercy. I am slow to anger and am filled with covenant-love and faithfulness. I lavish unfailing love upon a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin." (Exodus 34:6-7)
- God's burning love
 - God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29)
 - Love is the very flame of the Lord. A fire that no amount of water could ever quench! (Song of Solomon 8:6-7)
 - God desires that we are passionate for Him! To turn from sin and turn to Him. He promises to refine us – as a refiner's fire burns away impurities to make pure gold – through His love, guidance, and correction (Revelation 3:18-19)
- God's groom-like, passionate love
 - God tells Israel a day will come that they will no longer call Him Master, but instead call Him Husband (Hosea 2:16)
- God's self-sacrificial love
 - God showed His great love for us through Jesus' death on the cross, a sacrifice given while we were still sinning against him. (Romans 5:8)
 - Jesus tells us that if we've seen Him, we've seen the Father (John 14:9)
 - Dying on the cross, Jesus is praying for the forgiveness of those around Him (Luke 23:24)

Does your image of King reflect one who displays power-over or power-under?

- Our image of God determines how we live and relate to everything—God, self, others, and the world
- It is common to have more than one image of God, both good and bad
 - Trials and difficult times tend to bring out our worst pictures of God
- An idol is any untrue thing about God that tries to rob from your relationship with God
 - Idols are false god, which means having a false idea about God is having a false god
 - Idolatry is bad for us and destructive to us
 - The truth about God is good for us and beneficial to us

Our image of God will drive every single area of our life and declare how we show up in the world.”

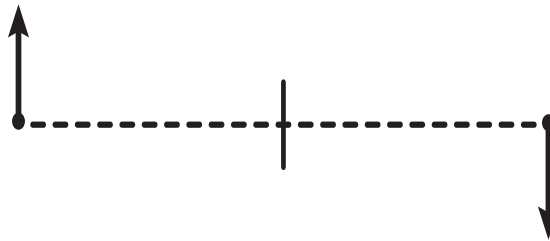
Graham Cooke

THE GOD WHO IS LOVE

EXERCISE: On the two diagrams below, mark an "X" along each line closer to the set of words which best reflects your gut-feeling about what God is really like, especially in times of struggle.

I FEEL STRONGLY THAT GOD IS:

*Scary, Angry, Threatening, Unsafe,
Judgmental, Punishing*

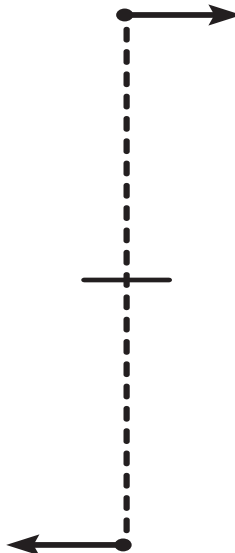


I FEEL STRONGLY THAT GOD IS:

*Near, Available, Aware, Responsive,
Engaged, There for me*

I FEEL STRONGLY THAT GOD IS:

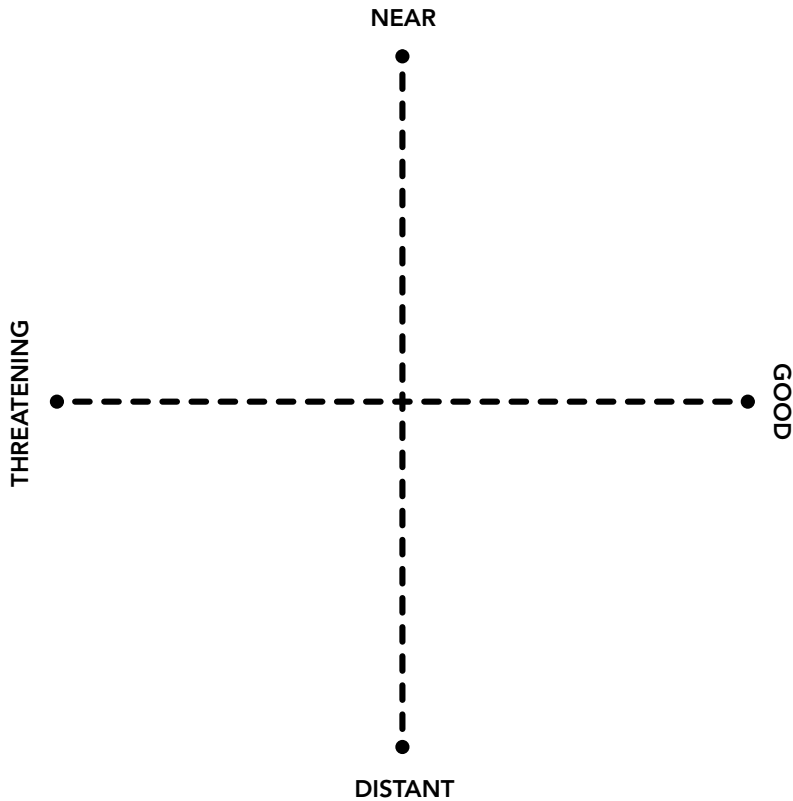
*Near, Available, Aware, Responsive,
Engaged, There for me*



I FEEL STRONGLY THAT GOD IS:

*Distant, Unavailable, Unaware, Unmoving,
Uninvolved, Busy/Distracted*

DISCOVERING YOUR PICTURE(S) OF GOD: *Using the graphs on the left page, plot a combined graph of your God-picture.*



The quadrant your “X” is placed indicates an image of God that is:

- 1) Authoritative, 2) Covenantal, 3) Critical, 4) Distant

Table Discussion

1. Share what you discovered
2. Plot your quadrants on sheet (X)
3. Why do you think your picture of God developed like this?
4. How might you “re-draw” your picture?

TAKE-HOME

- Personally and prayerfully review notes and consider watching the class video online
- Read Matthew 5-7 in one sitting
- Read Articles
 - “The Father Heart of God” by John Dawson
 - “The God Who IS Community” by Milt Rodriguez
- Scripture Meditation and Reflection Questions
 - 1 John 4:7-21
 - Do you know and trust that God IS love?
 - What aspects of your God-picture are not loving?
 - Is the love God has for you the kind of love that comes out in your character toward others?
 - If no, why not?

The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him.”

A. W. Tozer



IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE

REFLECTING GOD'S IMAGE

In creation, we see God doing what He always does. He takes that which is chaotic, dark and void and turns it into a creation with purpose, promise and life

OVERVIEW

God is love – and the only way he can be, rather than simply give love, is for God to be multiple persons in agape community (Trinity). We are created to be his image on Earth, so we must also then become an agape-community. This week we discover agape community is what God intends for His people. From the creation story, throughout the gospels and up until today, God's hope for humanity is that we would reflect in our lives together as a community the agape love of God in four-directions: toward God, others, ourselves and creation.

What is God's purpose for creation?

- The God who IS love created the world because of His love for the purpose of love
- In the beginning the earth was formless, void, and darkness covered the deep (Genesis 1)
 - Before creation, there were no places, no things and no light
- God spoke into creation
 - Forms and places—Days 1-3
 - Light
 - Sky and Seas
 - Dry Land and Vegetation
 - Filling in these places—Days 4-6
 - Sun, Moon, and Stars
 - Fish and Birds
 - Land Animals and Humans

Created to be God's image

- Humanity was created in the likeness of the Triune God (Genesis 1:26-27)
- Humans were created to rule, steward and guard the earth (Genesis 1:28; 2:15)
- Being the image of God within our agape relationships is our very first job description in life
- Jesus is the true and perfect image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4, Colossians 1:15)
- Adam and Eve were created so that they could image God together in covenant relationship
 - To fully image the Triune God, community is required

The Four Directions of Agape-Love

I. Loving God

- Jesus' radical love for God is seen three ways:
 - Complete dependence
 - Absolute trust
 - Radical obedience
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II. Loving Others (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37)

- All humans are made in the image of God. The way we treat others is how we are treating God!
 - It isn't possible to love God but hate people around us (1 John 4:20)
 - Jesus' radical agape for all people:
 - Marginalized people (Women and gentiles)
 - Socially unclean people (Sick and demonized)
 - Sinful people (Tax collectors and prostitutes)
 - Enemies (Roman soldiers and Jesus' accusers)
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Humility is the willingness to be known for who I truly am.

III. Loving Self (Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 22:39)

- We are made in the image of God. The way we treat ourselves is how we are treating God
 - Jesus exemplified a healthy self-identity and self-acceptance, rooted in His Father's love
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IV. Loving Creation (Genesis 1 and 2)

- The Adam (human) relationship with the adama (earth)
 - Called to be God's loving and faithful vice-regents over the Earth and its creatures
 - Faithfully steward and guard (Genesis 2:15)
 - Jesus' ultimate mission is to reconcile ALL CREATION to the Father (Romans 8:19-22, Isaiah 11)
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We are called to become a counter-cultural Kingdom community that together images Jesus, who is the perfect image of God!

(Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 4:23-24)

“Father, I pray that they may all be one, even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. Father, may my followers be one, just as We are one. I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity. So that the world may know that You sent Me, and love them, even as You have loved Me.” John 17:21-23

IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE – REFLECTING GOD'S IMAGE

TAKE-HOME

- Personally and prayerfully review notes and consider watching the class video online
- Read 1 John in one sitting
- Read Articles
 - “The Image is the Purpose” by Milt Rodriguez
 - “When the Church was a Family” by Joseph Hellerman
- Scripture Meditation and Reflection Questions
 - Genesis 1:26-31; 2:1-25
 - Reflect on what it means that we are created in God’s image, given that God Himself is a community of three persons united in one, relating in agape love.
 - How does this understanding change the way you have normally understood Genesis 1-2?
 - How does it change the way you think about our calling as Church?

NOTES

The background of the image is a sepia-toned photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground, there are rolling sand dunes. In the middle ground, a range of mountains is visible. The sky is a pale, hazy color. Overlaid on the right side of the image is a large, semi-transparent circular graphic. This graphic contains several faint, stylized geometric shapes: a downward-pointing chevron at the top, a horizontal bar below it, a series of vertical bars of varying heights in the center, and a jagged, zig-zagging shape at the bottom. The overall aesthetic is minimalist and evocative of a conflict zone.

THE WAR ON LOVE I

KINGDOMS IN CONFLICT

God is all-powerful and all-loving, yet there is evil in the world ... the only explanation for this is that there must be an enemy of God waging war on everything God loves.

OVERVIEW

Having discovered agape community as central to God’s story, we will now learn about the spiritual war we are facing. This week we discuss the two kingdoms in conflict—the Kingdom of God (self-sacrifice for others) and the kingdom of darkness (self-promotion at the expense of others). By understanding how Satan wages war, and learning from the example of Jesus in conquering these powers, Kingdom people can be better prepared for the battle.

What went wrong?

- The Problem of Evil (Theodicy)
 - God is love, so why is there evil in the world?
 - Theodicy is seeking to understand the issue that God is love and created things good; yet, there is still evil in the world
 - Theologians seek to resolve this by stating either:
 - God is not good
 - God is not powerful enough to overcome the evil
 - We believe there is another piece to the story—an enemy is involved
- Born into a War-Zone
 - God told humans to guard (shamar) the garden, but who or what are we guarding it from?
 - Matt. 13:24-40 states “an enemy has done this”
 - Evil is not “out there” or “in them”, but in all of us
 - In this age, God deals with evil by defeating its grip on us, freeing us from its power (but not necessarily from its impact) by giving us His authority over evil spirits

The line between good and evil runs right through the heart of every human”

A. Solzhenitsyn

THE WAR ON LOVE I – KINGDOMS IN CONFLICT

Kingdoms in Conflict

I. Biblical Warfare Themes

Old Testament

- God and His angels are described in military terms in the Old Testament
 - Hosts of Heaven is a term used to describe an army (1 Kings 22:19)
 - God is described as the Lord of hosts, which means the army's commander (Samuel 17:45)
- Invisible angel-armies are influencing worldly affairs without our knowing (1 Kings 6:15-17; Daniel 10)
- Old Testament messianic prophecies are about a coming king who will finally defeat his enemies and establish a just, glorious and everlasting Kingdom (Daniel 7:9-14; Psalms 2)

New Testament

- Jesus begins His ministry by announcing that a new Kingdom has arrived (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15)
- Jesus' life and ministry are counter-attacks on Satan and the kingdom of darkness
 - Jesus' temptation (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13)
 - Jesus casts out demons (Matthew 12:28)
 - 1/3 of Jesus' ministry was casting out demons
 - Disarmed the evil rulers on the cross (Colossians 2:15)
- Paul frames life as a spiritual battle with enemy powers
 - He describes these enemies as principalities, powers, rulers and authorities (Ephesians 6:12-13)
- The Church is portrayed as an army at war
 - We are told the gates of hell will not prevail over the Church (Matthew 16:18)
 - The goal in the life of a disciple is winning our battle, or being victorious, over enemy powers
 - The disciple's battle against Satan has already been won (1 John 2:12-14)
 - We are told that there will be those who come out victorious (Revelation 2-3)

II. Is the Devil Real?

- Six out of ten American Christians believe that Satan is just a symbol for evil and not a real being (Barna Poll, Oct. 2009)
- There is logical reason to believe Satan is real:
 - The Bible assumes he is real and personal
 - Jesus and Paul acted and taught as if he was real
 - Belief in God involves belief in invisible, personal spirit-beings. These beliefs should extend to both good and evil spirit-beings
 - The experience of non-Christians and Christians alike, throughout history and all over the world, testifies to the reality of demonic spirits

**BALANCED SPIRITUAL
WARFARE WORLDVIEW:**

<p><i>UNDER</i> Awareness Attribution (Skepticism)</p>	<p><i>"BALANCE of POWERS"</i> GOD ANGELIC / DEMONIC HUMAN NATURAL (Things that influence life and world)</p>	<p><i>OVER</i> Awareness Attribution (Superstition)</p>
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THE WAR ON LOVE I – KINGDOMS IN CONFLICT

III. The Battle for Rulership Over Earth

The Kingdom story involves God's eternal purpose to have a bride representing His wise and loving rulership over the Earth

- Understanding God as a King with a Kingdom: The ancient purpose of kings were to ensure the well-being of their subjects by establishing a realm or domain where the people's needs were met in three key areas:
 - Provisions and protection—food, shelter, clothing and safety from enemies
 - Possessions—the promise of increased wealth and prosperity
 - Place/position/purpose—a role to fulfill
 - God is our covenant-King who has promised to provide for His people
 - We are to trust His love and obey His rule—This is the Kingdom of God!
 - God's faithful covenant-commitment to fulfill these three things for His people is captured in the Hebrew word hesed, which means unfailing, loving-kindness
 - The fulfillment of these three things for every person on Earth is known as shalom in the Old Testament, which means peace; a thriving well-being
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IV. The Lord of the Scepter

- God gave His covenant-people authority and dominion to rule for Him over Earth
 - Humans were told to fill, subdue and rule over the Earth (Genesis 1:28)
- God created Lucifer
 - Lucifer means shining one
 - Lucifer became Satan, which means adversary
 - Created to be the chief guardian cherub over creation, in service of God's purposes through humanity (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:12-19)
 - Lucifer and 1/3 of the angels fell, or rebelled, against God because of their pride. They set themselves against God, seeking a kingdom for themselves
 - Satan deceives and tempts humans to distrust and then disobey God's rule
 - Once we believe Satan's lies, he lures us into being our own god and king (Genesis 3:5)

- Humanity forfeited their right to rule over earth to Satan (Genesis 3:1-7)
 - Humans become slaves to the one they obey (Romans 6:16)
 - Satan says that all the kingdoms of the world have been given to him and Jesus doesn't dispute the claim (Luke 4:5-6)
 - Satan is now the prince or ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)
 - The whole world is under his power (1 John 5:19)
 - Satan's kingdom of darkness is an organized hierarchy of fallen angelic powers that work within a network of world systems (Ephesians 6:12)
 - Satan wages war on the human race, the church body, and the individual disciples of Jesus (John 10:10; Revelation 12:17, 1 Peter 5:8)
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V. How Satan Wages War

- The tactics used in the Garden of Eden help teach us how to be wise to the Devil's schemes
 - He uses good things of the world to deceive us
 - He lies to us about provisions, possessions and our purpose (a serpent and the trees)
 - This deception causes us to distrust God as our good King and as the true source of these things
 - He then plays upon our flesh
 - Our flesh is our thoughts, emotions and desires (fruit to make one wise)
 - He tempts or lures us into seeking our own fulfillment of these things in damaging ways rather than looking to God our King to fulfill our needs
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THE WAR ON LOVE I – KINGDOMS IN CONFLICT

VI. Being Wise to the Devil's Schemes

Instead of being wisely aware and vigilant regarding how the enemy wages war, Adam and Eve naively opened up to the devil's influence by entertaining his ideas and suggestions, and falling for his three basic temptation tactics.

- Three basic temptation tactics understood from the garden attack
 - Good for food
 - Appeals to our desire for provision
 - Delight to the eyes
 - Appeals to our desire for possessions
 - Desirable to make one wise
 - Appeals to our desire for position
- These three basic temptations seen in the New Testament
 - As disciples of Christ, we are told not to love the things of the world, because they do not come from the Father, but come from the world (1 John 2:15-16)
 - The temptations of Jesus reflect the same (Matthew 4 and Luke 4)

Deception about ...

Good for food	Provision
Delight to the eyes	Possessions
Desirable to make one wise	Position/Purpose

1 John 2:15-16

Lust of the flesh
Lust of the eyes
Pride of life

Temptation of Jesus

Stones into bread
Kingdoms of the world
Pinnacle of the temple

- The devil will attack us through:
 - Circumstances and situations on the global, societal and personal level
 - Our own self-talk and thought-patterns
 - Our emotional reactions to life circumstances through our thoughts and beliefs
 - The actions, attitudes and words of others
 - Cultural, ethnic, class, family, gender norms, values and assumptions
 - Our own deep desires for survival, safety, connection, purpose, pleasure, status, worth, value, fairness and justice
 - World-systems which shape our beliefs about all these things, and which offer us false means of fulfillment for each of them apart from God

VII. The King Returns!

- Jesus began His ministry with the announcement that the Kingdom of God is at hand (Matthew 4:17)
 - God had given dominion of the Earth to humans, but we handed it over to Satan
 - God could not simply reverse free-will and take back dominion from Satan because of His just nature
 - Dominion of the Earth could only be taken back by a human, by one of the rightful recipients to earthly dominion
 - Satan had to be defeated by a sinless human. A human who was perfectly obedient to God's rule and perfectly disobedient to Satan
 - Jesus' temptation in the wilderness was a battle between the God-Man and Satan
 - (Matthew 4 and Luke 4)
 - Through His full obedience to God and complete resistance of Satan, Jesus won back rule over the Earth
- When Jesus declares the Kingdom of God is at hand, He is proclaiming that the true and rightful King has returned to His place as ruler of Earth!

For God to weed out all the evil in the world right now, it would mean to weed out all humans.

THE WAR ON LOVE I – KINGDOMS IN CONFLICT

How do we wage war in our lives today?

- Enter into covenant with Jesus to receive the Holy Spirit’s power and the authority of Christ (Romans 8:16-17; Ephesians 2:4-6; 1 John 4:4)
 - Know the good and trustworthy character of the King, and devote yourself to trust Him alone for “life” (provision/protection, possessions, position/purpose)
 - (Ephesians 3:14-19; 1 Peter 2:23, 4:19)
 - Learn the will and commands of the King and live in submission to them (James 4:7)
 - Grow in the agape character of Jesus—the fruit of the Spirit—in order to overcome evil with good (Galatians 5:16-26; Romans 12:21)
 - Discern and recognize the schemes of the enemy and learn to take thoughts and emotions captive to Christ and resist the lure of the things of the world
 - (2 Corinthians 2:11, 10:3-5; 1 John 2:15-17, 5:4-5)
 - Seek and walk in the gifts of the Holy Spirit to combat the enemy’s attacks on others
 - (1 Corinthians 12, 14:1)
 - Walk in unity with others by not giving the devil a foothold and dividing us relationally, but walking in right-relatedness, love, forgiveness and reconciliation (Ephesians 4:6-27)
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The Covenant and Kingdom story is a love story about being bonded into relationship with God, so we—as His Kingdom people—can represent and rule for Him in this world.

TAKE-HOME

- Personally and prayerfully review notes and consider watching the class video online
- Read Matthew 5-7 in one sitting
- Read Articles
 - “Love Not the World” by Paul Billheimer
 - “Destined for the Throne” by Watchman Nee
- Scripture Reading
 - Revelation 3:14-22
 - Luke 4:1-13
- Scripture Meditation and Reflection
 - The Revelation passage is a warning to a church which had compromised itself with the idolatry of its culture, while the Luke passage is about Jesus’ successful recognition and resistance to the devils temptation.
 - How have you individually or together as the American church failed to recognize the enemy’s temptations?
 - How we can overcome in our day as Jesus did in Luke?

NOTES

The background is a landscape with mountains under a hazy sky. A large, semi-transparent circle is centered over the scene. On the right side, there are faint, stylized geometric shapes that resemble a city skyline or architectural elements. The text is centered within the circle.

THE WAR ON LOVE II

"SIN"

Sin is always wrapped up in lies
that challenge our trust in God

OVERVIEW

When we sin, we are missing the mark for God's complete and fulfilled plan for our lives as individuals and as an agape-community. Understanding sin through this lens gives Kingdom people a vision for their lives that transforms rather than condemns. This week we discuss original sin, Old Testament laws and the freedom Jesus came to give to all humanity. We examine how the first humans broke covenant with God, and the hope of reconciliation for all creation we will someday know!

What does it mean to be in covenant with God?

- In the Garden of Eden we find the story about what it means to be in covenant with God
- The Covenant Mission is our job description
 - We are to image God
 - We are to guard the garden
- The Covenant Representative was Adam's role
 - One individual person represents an entire covenant community
 - Creates corporate solidarity
- The Covenant Sign and Terms: The Two Trees in the Garden
 - The Tree of Life represents trusting God
 - Trusting God's love, provision and protection
 - Trusting God's wise and loving relationship, principles and boundaries, and choosing to obey them
 - The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil
 - Represents the power of a king to decide what is right or wrong within their kingdom
 - God had to give us the choice to be our kings; otherwise, it would not have been a truly loving covenant

THE WAR ON LOVE II: SIN

Sin

I. Defining Sin

- In our culture today, sin is often ignored or dismissed
 - Sin, if taught at all, is often trivialized or moralized
 - 87% of Americans believe in the concept of sin, but their answer as to what it is varies greatly (Grey Matter Research Poll, March 2008)
- Sin is defined as ‘missing the mark’

The word sin is rooted in the ancient game of archery; sin was any shot that missed the bull's-eye

 - God's bull's-eye for humanity is: Living in agape-love relationships with God, others, self and creation
 - This can be equated with our covenant calling to image God
 - God's definition of missing the mark or sin is: anything that damages relationships with God, others, self or creation
 - Anything that breaks covenant relationships

Love is the only law once you get to the Kingdom of God.

II. Making Sense of God's Commandments and Old Testament Law

- God's law represents the terms of our covenant relationship
- God's purpose for the law (commandments) is always to clarify and nurture love relationships
- There are two ways of thinking about law: as rules or as love

The Law as Rules

- Letter of the law is upheld
- Focuses on external rules or behaviors
- Feeds self-righteousness and judgmentalism
- Leads to legalism or rejection of all law

The Law as Love

- Spirit of the law leads
 - Focuses on internal character and the heart
 - Feeds humility, community and mutual accountability
 - Leads to agape-love relationships
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III. Recognizing the Reality of the Demonic Forces

- The war began when Satan rebelled
 - Satan's rebellion and the war against the kingdom of darkness are mentioned by John in the book of Revelation (Revelation 12:7-9)
- Satan's primary weapons are lies and accusations (Genesis 3:1-6)
 - Lies about God ("Did God really say ...?")
 - Lies about ourselves ("You surely shall not die")
 - Lies about the creation ("If you eat the fruit ...")
- The primary battlefield for the war is our minds (1 Corinthians 10:3-5; Romans 12:2)

THE WAR ON LOVE II: SIN

IV. Understanding the Effects of Original Sin

- Humanity's fall into rebellion led to broken relationships, bondage and death (Genesis 3:7-24)
 - Broken relationship with ourselves (Genesis 3:7)
 - Broken relationship with God (Genesis 3:8-10)
 - Broken relationship with one another (Genesis 3:12, 16)
 - Broken relationship with creation (Genesis 3:17-19)
 - Bondage to the kingdom of darkness (Luke 4:5-8, 1 John 5:19, 1 Corinthians 4:4)
 - Bondage to the power of sin (Genesis 4:7, Romans 7:14-24)
 - Broken covenant relationship leads to death (Genesis 2:16-17)
 - Death—separation from all that is good (Genesis 3:22-24)
 - Adam, as our covenant representative, has led us all into death and separation from God (Romans 5:12)
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Choosing Sin is Equal to Spiritual Suicide!

TAKE-HOME

- Personally and prayerfully review notes and consider watching the class video online
- Read 1 John in one sitting
- Read Articles
 - “Sin: NOT the Way It’s Supposed to Be” by Cornelius Plantinga Jr.
 - “The Gospel is Relational” by Darren Twa
- Scripture Meditation and Reflection Questions
 - Genesis 3
 - If sin is not broken rules but broken relationships, how does that change how you read and understand Genesis 3?
 - How did the serpent begin to put a wedge in the relationship between Eve and God?
 - How did the fall change the various relationships (God-humans, human-human and human-creation)?
 - Think of various sins and reflect on how they also impact such relationships.

Covenant relationship is all about love and broken relationship is all about death!



THE CROSS, THE COVENANT & THE KINGDOM

**HOW JESUS' LIFE, DEATH
AND RESURRECTION SAVES US**

The three problems that underlie every other problem, as God's story tells us are: the Adam problem, the broken covenant problem, and the kingdom of darkness problem. Jesus is the solution to all three!hat challenge our trust in God

OVERVIEW

Jesus' life, death and resurrection is the gospel message, and this week we uncover just how good that news really is for us as Kingdom people. This teaching focuses on the purpose for Jesus coming to Earth and the magnificent message it contains for His disciples. Using our understanding of covenant relationship and the Christus Victor theory of atonement as our guides, we begin to appreciate just how sweet our Savior truly is!

What are the basic problems for humanity that Jesus solves?

- The Adam problem
 - Humanity has failed to be faithful covenant partners with God
- The broken covenant problem
 - Humanity is separated and alienated from God and each other
- The kingdom of darkness problem
 - Humanity is in bondage to the power of Satan and his kingdom

THE CROSS, THE COVENANT, AND THE KINGDOM

Jesus is the Solution to All Humanity's Problems

Jesus enters at the center of the story and changes everything! The Apostle Paul tells us that all of God's promises to us are made whole and complete in Jesus. (2 Corinthians 1:19-20)

I. Jesus' death on the cross

- Many common questions are asked about the saving power of Christ's death on the cross:
 - How can someone's death 2000 years ago affect me?
 - Why did it have to be such a violent death, and why on a cross?
 - Why did the Father need Jesus to die in order to forgive us?
 - Why couldn't God just forgive us for free?
 - The Penal Substitution Theory is one common theory about Jesus' death
 - Penal Substitution Theory states:
 - God is primarily seen as an offended judge
 - Humans are primarily seen as guilty lawbreakers
 - Jesus steps in-between as an innocent victim
 - God's true nature as judge
 - Angry at Satan and sin on behalf of His bride
 - In Christ, God steps in as our advocate (defense attorney)
 - Challenges and rebukes Satan (the prosecuting attorney/adversary)
 - Satan is the one who accuses and judges us and then lies to us and says this is what God is like (Revelation 12:10)
 - The New Testament tells us Satan has blinded humans from seeing the true image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4)
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Since the very moment Adam broke covenant with God, God has been working towards reconciliation.

II. Jesus solves humanity's problems

- The Adam problem is solved in Jesus' life
 - Before Jesus died for our sins, He first lived for our sins
 - Jesus fully and perfectly obeyed God's will, fulfilling the covenant and law
 - Jesus offers this life to us and invites us into it with Him
- The broken covenant problem is solved in Jesus' death
 - Jesus died our covenant-breaking death for us
 - Death was the consequence of broken covenant
 - Jesus steps between humanity and death NOT humanity and God
- The kingdom of darkness problem is solved in Jesus' resurrection
 - Jesus conquers Satan, sin and death
 - He invites us to step into His eternal life

III. Jesus Declares the Kingdom of God is Here!

- The kingdom of darkness was conquered by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus in this way:
 - Humans rebelled against God, and in doing so they gave Satan their authority to rule Earth, thus becoming his slaves
 - God promised to send the Messiah who would bring a new Kingdom
 - The Jews assumed this would be in the form of a political empire
 - Jesus enters the world as a man and lives in full obedience to God, which gives Him total authority over Satan
 - Jesus invites others to join His Kingdom and exercise His authority
 - Jesus and His disciples confronted the five strategies of the kingdom of darkness during His ministry
 - Sin (obedience and forgiveness)
 - Sickness (healings)
 - Demons (deliverance)
 - Darkness (speaking truth and embraces outsiders)
 - Death (resurrection)
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THE CROSS, THE COVENANT, AND THE KINGDOM

IV. A Covenantal Christus Victor View of the Atonement

- The “Atonement” refers to the fact that Jesus’ life, death and resurrection have now made it possible for human beings to be restored back to a covenant relationship with God
- The Christus Victor view of the atonement was the primary view held by the Church for the first 1000 years after Jesus’ death
- A Covenantal Christus Victor view of the atonement states:
 - Jesus repaired the broken covenant between God and humanity (1 Timothy 2:5; Galatians 3:20)
 - Jesus restored the Kingdom of God on Earth (Matthew 16:19; Luke 17:20-21)
 - Jesus destroyed the works of Satan (1 John 3:8)
 - Jesus triumphed over the powers and authorities of darkness (Colossians 2:15)

TAKE-HOME

- Personally and prayerfully review notes and consider watching the class video online
- Read Matthew 5-7
- Read Articles
 - “A Covenantal View of Atonement” by Caleb Heppner
 - “Four Spiritual Truths of a Peace-Making God” by J. Nelson Kraybill
- Scripture Meditation and Reflection Questions
 - Colossians 2:11-3:17
 - What things does this passage tell us that result from Christ’s saving work on our behalf?
 - What are some of the problems that Jesus saves us from and some of the benefits of salvation?
 - From this, can you create your own definition of what salvation means to you?

Forced love is not love; it is coercion



SALVATION IN THREE TENSES

**WHAT DOES "GETTING SAVED"
MEAN, AND HOW DO WE DO IT?**

God doesn't want to just save us from hell. God wants to save us from the kind of life that eventuates in hell. He wants brand new people! He wants a new Kingdom!

OVERVIEW

Salvation is not simply an event or a thing that happened to us at a specific moment in our lives. Salvation is a process. For every Christian, salvation is a process that began at some point in the past, is happening right now in this present moment, and will continue on into the future. The Gospel calls all people to enter into this process and actively seek to grow in a saving relationship with God day by day. This week we will learn about how the New Testament describes salvation and how we are to begin this journey of discipleship.

Is salvation simply getting saved from hell and the consequences of sin?

- There are many common questions that come along with the topic of getting saved
 - How do you get saved?
 - Can you lose your salvation?
 - How do you know for certain you are saved?
- There are many common misconceptions to the meaning of salvation
 - Salvation by grace...through performing certain rituals (infant baptism, the sinner's prayer, etc...)
 - Salvation by grace...through having the "right" beliefs
- Understanding what God's story tells us about salvation is all important
 - God's hope goes far beyond just saving us from hell
 - The angel tells Mary that Jesus will save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21)
 - Jesus came to rescue us from our broken covenant relationships: with God, others, self and creation

SALVATION IN THREE TENSES

The Past, Present and Future of the Salvation Process

I. Seeing Salvation as a Process Involving All Three Tenses

- Past Tense: Kingdom people **HAVE** been saved. (Ephesians 2:5)
 - Forgiveness! We have received forgiveness for all our covenant-breaking sins (Ephesians 1:7)
 - Liberation! We have been set free from the powers of the kingdom of darkness (Colossians 1:1)
 - New Life in Christ! We have been connected to the New Adam (Jesus) and are now part of the body and bride of Jesus (1 Corinthians 12:12-14)
 - Future Tense: Kingdom people **WILL** be saved (Matthew 24:13)
 - Resurrection! We will receive new bodies that shall live in a new world forever (1 Corinthians 15)
 - Glorification! We are in the process of being shaped into the complete image of Jesus (Romans 8:30)
 - Marriage Celebration! We will live as the bride of Jesus forever (Revelation 19)
 - Present Tense: Kingdom people are **BEING** saved (1 Corinthians 1:18)
 - Reconciliation! We are being set free from our self-centeredness to experience healed and loving relationships
 - Transformation! We are being changed here and now into the image of Jesus and his God-centered agape kind of life
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Having a willingness to trust is part of the very definition of covenant.

II. Entering into the Kingdom of God under the New Covenant

When we undergo our salvation process we need to remember Jesus came as a Groom offering a marriage proposal to humanity (John 3:29, 1 Corinthians 11:2)

- Faith
 - Covenant faith means trusting God's character, promises and faithfulness towards us
 - God's promises for his people within the New Covenant
 - His unending agape-love for us (Romans 8:38-39)
 - His constant presence and power in our lives (John 14:16)
 - His Holy Spirit within us (John 14:16-18; 16:7-15)
 - A day when all the evil powers will be defeated, and we shall live with God in eternity in a new world (1 Corinthians 15:22-28; 1 Thessalonians)
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- Repentance
 - The Greek word for repentance is metanoia and it means a 180-degree change of mind
 - Repentance is a life-changing decision to cooperate with God as he empowers us to turn...
 - From a self-centered life in the kingdom of darkness
 - To a Jesus-centered life in the Kingdom of God
 - Repentance is committing to an agape lifestyle of pursuing healed and reconciled relationships (1 John 4:19-21; Matthew 5:23-24)
 - Repentance including confessing our brokenness and sins to each other and helping each other become free from those sins (James 5:16, 19-20)
 - Repentance including forgiveness that is offered freely and asking for it quickly (Matthew 6:12; 14-15)
 - Repentance including restitution by doing what we can to repair the harmful effects of our sins that have affected other people's lives (Luke 19:8)
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SALVATION IN THREE TENSES

- Baptism
 - Baptism is our initiation ceremony into the New Covenant
 - It celebrates our betrothal to Jesus (Acts 2:38)
 - It symbolizes our death to our old-Adam life and the birth into our New Adam life (Romans 6:3-4)
 - Baptizo in the Greek means to immerse under water
 - In the New Testament church, baptism was the way in which a new Christian entered into relationship with Jesus, whereas the present-day church often replaces it with an altar call or the sinner's prayer.

Forgiveness comes to us from God, in order that it would flow through us out to others

III. Sharing the Gospel in a Covenant Way

There are many ways to share the gospel in our lives and to the people we meet, but as Kingdom citizens we must always be seeking ways to share the whole gospel truth and not only parts of it.

- Sharing a gospel of salvation as merely a ticket to heaven:
 - “The doctrine of justification by faith has in our times fallen into evil company and has been interpreted by many in such a manner as actually to bar men from the knowledge of God. The whole transaction of religious conversion has been made mechanical and spiritless. Christ may be “received” without creating any special love for Him in the soul of the receiver. The man is “saved,” but he is not hungry or thirsty after God.” A. W. Tozer
- Sharing the FULL gospel
 - “Our way of sharing the Gospel rarely produces actual followers of Jesus. At best it produces ‘forgiven people’. . . [Forgiveness] gets us into a new life story, not merely into heaven when we die. The new life story God is writing for us is this: he intends to have a people on earth who happily, easily and routinely embody, announce, and demonstrate the rule and reign of His Kingdom.” Todd Hunter

- A Covenant and Kingdom model of sharing the full gospel
(Taken from “Four Spiritual Truths of a Peacemaking God” by Nelson Kraybill)
 - A God of love made you and me in His image as a good part of creation. God wants us to live at peace with our Maker, our world and one another.
 - Sin destroys harmony in creation when we try to run our own lives apart from God. Suffering, greed, violence and broken relationships result.
 - Jesus died on the cross because he confronted the powers of sin that fracture our world. Jesus healed the sick, forgave enemies and lived in the joy of the Kingdom of God.
 - You can have a new beginning by the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. God forgives when we confess our sin, and the Spirit of God enables us to follow Jesus in all of life.
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A prayer for saying “YES!” to Jesus as our King and Groom!

God, I have sinned by turning away from you and trying to run my own life. Separated from your love, I am shaped by the powers of greed, lust and violence that bring chaos to the world. Forgive my sin and let me start anew. Thank you for your Son Jesus, who defeated Satan and brought the Kingdom of God to reality. Give me power to live like Jesus—knowing you Father intimately and finding my identity and purpose in you, loving the enemy, sharing possessions, serving others, caring for creation and speaking the Good News of your salvation. I commit myself to the church as the body of Christ. I give allegiance to Jesus and his way of forgiveness above every other loyalty. Amen

SALVATION IN THREE TENSES

NOTES

TAKE-HOME

- Personally and prayerfully review notes and consider watching the class video online
- Read 1 John in one sitting
- Read Articles
 - “Missing the Point: What is Salvation?” by Brian McClaren
 - “A Generous Orthodoxy; Jesus: Savior of What?” by Brian McClaren
- Scripture Reading
 - Isaiah 60
- Scripture Meditation and Reflection Questions
 - This is the chapter of scripture that Jesus read when he first began His ministry, saying “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” What does this passage tell you about the following:
 - What Jesus came to Earth to do?
 - What salvation means?
 - What our calling as Christ’s representatives is to be?

If people thought about “getting in Christ” as we think about “getting in a marriage,” the question of whether one is “really” saved or not would cease to exist.

The background is a landscape with mountains under a hazy sky. A large, semi-transparent circle is centered over the scene. On the right side, there are several overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes, including a large 'V' and some rectangular blocks, creating a layered, abstract effect.

NEW LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

**THE HOLY SPIRIT,
THE NEW COVENANT, AND
THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

God doesn't want to just save us from hell.
God wants to save us from the kind of life
that eventuates in hell. He wants brand
new people! He wants a new Kingdom!

OVERVIEW

The Holy Spirit is our betrothal gift from Jesus. He is our helper, guide and comforter. He is personal and relational, and He lives inside us. The Holy Spirit is holy and unique and so are the gifts that He distributes to disciples within the Church. Despite all of this, some within the Church have ignored or shied away from the Holy Spirit. This week we'll learn just how critical the presence of the Holy Spirit is for the Kingdom of God to manifest on Earth. Looking to Jesus as our example, we'll discover how to live with the Holy Spirit as the empowering presence of God in our lives

Why has the topic of the Holy Spirit caused so much conflict in the Church?

- The major historical church conflicts regarding the Holy Spirit
 - 4th Century
 - Pneumatomachian Controversy
 - Debate over the divinity of the Holy Spirit
- 11th Century
 - Filioque Controversy
 - Debate over the Spirit's relation to the Father and the Son
 - Split the church into East and West
- 20th Century
 - Charismatic Gifts Controversy
 - Debate over whether all the spiritual gifts seen in the New Testament are still present in the Church today

NEW LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit

I. Getting to Know the Holy Spirit

- The Holy Spirit is a person, not an impersonal force or thing. He interacts with us in a personal and relational way
 - Speaks (Acts 28:25)
 - Teaches (John 14:26)
 - Comforts (Acts 9:31)
 - Prays on our behalf (Romans 8:26)
 - Can be sinned against (Matthew 12:31-32)
 - We can grieve the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 63:10; Ephesians 4:30)
 - Holy Spirit is the personal and absolutely unique Spirit of God
 - Holy means set apart (unique, special)
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II. Recognizing Two Kingdoms and Two Spirits

Unclean Spirits Kingdom of Darkness	The Holy Spirit Kingdom of God
Sin	Agape-love
Disease	Wholeness
Bondage to Demon	Liberation
Darkness	Light
Deception	Truth
Destruction	Resurrection
Death	Life

III. The Old Testament Promise of the Holy Spirit

These Old Testament promises have been fulfilled! God's promises concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit have been fulfilled in the life of Jesus and in the daily lives of His disciples

“Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I will put My Spirit within Him I will appoint him as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations, to open blind eyes and to liberate prisoners from darkness.”

Isaiah 42:1, 6-7)

“And I will pour out My Spirit on all humankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.” (Joel 2:28-29)

“...I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will remove the heart of stone from you and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you . . .”

(Ezekiel 36:26-27)

The question we should be asking shouldn't be whether or not God is pouring out his Spirit, but rather, are we allowing God's Spirit to work within us?

NEW LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

IV. Following Jesus' Example of Living Life in the Spirit

- Jesus was both fully God and fully human
 - Jesus emptied himself and laid aside the use of His divine attributes in order to live a fully human life (Philippians 2:6-7; 1 Corinthians 8:9)
- Jesus lived his entire human life radically dependent upon the Holy Spirit
 - Conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35)
 - Anointed by and baptized in the Spirit (Luke 3:22; 4:18-21)
 - Led and empowered by the Spirit for spiritual battle (Matthew 4:1; 12:28)
 - Lived and walked with power in the Spirit (Luke 4:1, 14; 10:21)
 - His death was powerful through the Spirit (Hebrews 9:14)
 - Jesus was raised from the dead by the Spirit (Romans 8:11)
- We can truly live in the same way as Jesus, because we have the same Holy Spirit living IN us!
 - The Apostle Paul actually instructs disciples to imitate him, as he imitates Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1)
 - Jesus said that with the Holy Spirit our works would be greater than His (John 14:12)

The Holy Spirit is our power source! He is the One who makes this whole beautiful story possible.

V. Living out Life in the New Covenant with the Holy Spirit

- The Holy Spirit is our BETROTHAL GIFT from Jesus (Acts 2:38)
 - We are one spirit with Jesus our Groom (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:17)
- The Holy Spirit brings our spirits BACK TO LIFE by reconnecting us to God's presence (John 3:3-8; Titus 3:5)
 - We are the living Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19)
- The Holy Spirit UNIFIES us as the single body of Jesus (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)
 - There are many followers of Christ, but together we form one unified body (1 Corinthians 12:12)
- The Holy Spirit GIVES GIFTS to each one of us, in order to minister to others (1 Corinthians 12:8-10; Romans 12:6-8, Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:11)
 - All the New Testament gifts are available to the body today (1 Corinthians 13:8-10)
 - Every follower of Jesus is given one or more spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7)
 - Every gift is necessary for the body of Christ to function properly (1 Corinthians 14:26)
 - No single gift is intended for every member of the body (1 Corinthians 12:29-30)
 - The gifts are never to be used as spiritual criteria (1 Corinthians 13:1)
- The Holy Spirit EMPOWERS us:
 - To be progressively transformed into the image of Jesus
 - (Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 2:12-13)
 - To live together as a God-centered, agape-oriented and counter-cultural community
 - (Acts 1:8)
 - To bear the fruit of the Spirit within our communal relationships
 - Bearing fruit of agape-love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:16-25)

NEW LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Is the Holy Spirit the forgotten God of the Church? What about in your own life?

The Holy Spirit was central to the Church of Acts and throughout the New Testament, as well as very real and active in the first three centuries of Christianity. The Holy Spirit seems to be misunderstood and under-emphasized today among most Christians.

In his book, *The Rise of Christianity*, Rodney Stark explored the amazing growth of Christianity in the first few centuries. He concluded that a major factor in the explosive growth of the early Church was the remarkable self-sacrificial, agape-love demonstrated by the early followers of Jesus toward each other and to the unbelieving world around them. This is a love only possible by the power and the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

What has happened?

If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference."

A.W. Tozer

TAKE-HOME

- Personally and prayerfully review notes and consider watching the class video online
- Read Mathew 5-7
- Read Articles
 - “The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit” Handout
 - “How to be Filled with the Holy Spirit” by A.W. Tozer
 - “Forgotten God” excerpt by Francis Chan
 - “The Gifts of the Holy Spirit in History” by Sam Storms
- Scripture Reading
 - John 16:5-15
- Scripture Meditation and Reflection Questions
 - In John 16, Jesus promises to send the Spirit because He is leaving.
 - What kinds of things will the Spirit be helping us with that apparently we cannot do without Him?

- Scripture Reading
 - Galatians 5:16-26
- Scripture Meditation and Reflection Questions
 - In the letter to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul instructs the church to walk by the Spirit. He describes what life looks like with the Spirit’s, or without the Spirit’s, power.
 - What does it mean to walk by the Spirit?
 - How can we grow in our ability to do this?



BELIEVERS OR BONDSLAVES

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

By Medieval times, most church leaders were content if the people learned the Lord's Prayer and the Creed."

Alan Kreider

OVERVIEW

It is common to hear Christians speak about Jesus being their savior, and then to get into debates about whether faith alone is enough to be saved—meaning going to heaven when they die. Yet, just as salvation is more than forgiveness from sin, Jesus is more than simply savior, and therefore Christian involves more than believing something. The various roles and titles of Jesus are clear throughout the New Testament. When a person chooses to become a disciple of Christ, they are saying yes to a life of full devotion to their new Master, Teacher and King! This week we learn the difference between being a mere believer and becoming a bond slave of Christ.

What is a Christian?

- Non-Christians, ages 16-29, were asked this question: What is your current perception of Christianity? (Barna Group, 2012)
 - Anti-homosexual (91%)
 - Judgmental (87%)
 - Hypocritical (85%)
- The use of the word ‘Christian’ in the Bible
 - The word Christian is only used three times in the New Testament (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16)
 - The only time it is used by a believer in reference to another believer is in 1 Peter
- Breaking down the definition of Christian
 - The suffix ‘-ian’ (used in such titles as electrician, politician, musician) ...
 - Usually indicates a compartment or limited area of one’s life
 - References what a person does, not who a person is

Becoming a Disciple of Christ

I. The Early Church

After Jesus' death, this new community of people needed to find ways to define and describe who and what they were. No one word could express all that was true of them, so they used a number of familiar words from their culture to weave together a vision of their identity and calling. The following are those terms found in the New Testament and the number of times they are used:

- The Church (Used 103 times)
 - Greek—ekklesia, which means a called out assembly
 - A people called out from normal life for the purpose of service, action or urgent need
 - Also used to call soldiers to assemble for war
 - Always plural
- The Brethren (Used 64 times)
 - Greek—adelphoi/adelphos, which means brothers, but implies family
 - Family was the highest bond of loyalty and commitment
 - Always plural
- The Saints (Used 59 times)
 - Greek—hagios/hagios, which means one who is different, unique and set apart
 - An imitation of Jesus—who was different in a loving way
 - Set apart means consecrated or devoted to a special purpose and being fully given to that alone
 - Always plural
- Bond-Servant/Slave (Used 31 times)
 - Greek—doulos, which means slave
 - One owned by another and who lives exclusively to do the will of their master
 - Paul, James, Peter and Jude used this word to refer to themselves in their letters
- Disciples (Used 25 times)
 - Greek—mathetes, which means learner or student
 - Discipleship in the first century was a full-time, life-long apprenticeship
 - Disciples would live with and model the teachings of their master
- Believers (Used 11 times)
 - Greek—pisteuousin/pisteus, which means to think something is true or to be persuaded

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- These terms can teach us what the meaning of the word Christian truly is
 - A Community called out from normal life-interests and pursuits
 - Members of a new family, with a new primary loyalty-bond that transcends all categories
 - Totally consecrated and set apart for a high purpose
 - Noticeably different in the world in a positive way
 - Servants to God's plans and purposes; having given up freedom and autonomy
 - Full-time and life-long learners, becoming like the Master
 - To be a Christian is to have an identity that **permeates and guides ALL of life**
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BELIEVERS OR BOND SLAVES

Becoming a Disciple of Christ

II. The Lordship Debate

The Lordship debate within Christianity is the question of whether or not a person can accept Jesus as their Savior and receive forgiveness of sins, but not surrender to Him as Lord and fully live out His will.

- Can we be a believer, but not a bond slave?
 - In the early church, people who denied one of the natures of Christ (His humanity or divinity) were considered heretics, yet today some feel they can choose to relate to Jesus as Savior but not have to also choose to live under His Lordship
 - “The ideal that we can accept Christ as our Savior but not our LORD is a modern heresy” A.W. Tozer
 - Jesus has been given a number of roles as the Son of God and each of these must be a part of our overall relationship with Him. For the disciple, Jesus is their ...
 - Lord
 - King
 - Judge
 - Master
 - Teacher
 - Savior
 - Redeemer
 - Messiah

- What does the Bible say?

The Savior Passages

(Salvation as Belief Alone)

“He who has believed and been baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16)

“Your faith has saved you” (Luke 7:50)

“Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Acts 2:21)

“We are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 15:11)

“Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart . . . you will be saved” (Romans 10:9)

The Lordship Passages

(Salvation as Belief plus Obedience, Submission and Fruit)

“The one who **endures to the end** will be saved” (Matthew 10:22)

“You cannot be my disciple unless you **hate your father and mother and brothers . . .**” (Luke 14:26)

“He who does not **take up his own cross** and follow after me cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27)

“If you **continue in my word** you are truly my disciples” (John 8:31)

“**Bear much fruit** and so prove to be my disciples” (John 15:8)

Jesus made a distinction between those who only followed Him and those who were His disciples. The disciples were really committed to Jesus. They were not merely following Him for what He could do for them; they wanted to serve and be with him. They did not just add Jesus to their lives, their lives revolved around Him!”

Reuven Ross

BELIEVERS OR BOND SLAVES

Becoming a Disciple of Christ

- A closer look at the Savior passages
 - Mark 16:16—The Greek pistis is translated “believed,” but pistis is defined as a trusting-obedience. It is not only a mental agreement.
 - Acts 2:21—To “call on” someone is to become this person’s namesake and claim a resemblance to that person. The word Lord means owner or the one who has control. To call on the Lord means to give control completely over to Him
 - Acts 15:11—The definition of grace means favor PLUS empowerment to act or do or obey
 - Romans 10:9—To confess means to declare oneself guilty and be willing to face the consequences – for the early church admitting to being a Christian cost many their lives. To confess Jesus is Lord means they are confessing Jesus is their owner and master.
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Jesus is a package-deal! Scripture gives us **NO REASON** to believe that we can choose just one part of His identity, or emphasize one specific role He has given, and simply neglect to accept the others.

So, can we “get into heaven” without obeying or growing as disciples of Jesus?

Well, this is a lot like asking ...

Can we be married without being faithful and committed?

The purpose of marriage is faithful commitment

Can we become a parent and not raise our children?

The purpose of being a parent is child-rearing

Can we enroll in college and never go to class or study?

The purpose of college is to learn and to become equipped

Can we be a human and not grow or mature fully?

The purpose of birth is growth and maturity

We become a child of the Father by birth. We are called to look like the Father through growth.

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BELIEVERS OR BOND SLAVES

NOTES

TAKE-HOME

- Personally and prayerfully review notes and consider watching the class video online
- Read 1 John in one sitting
- Read Articles
 - “What is a Disciple?” by Reuven Ross
 - “Discipleship: For Super-Christians Only?” by Dallas Willard
 - “Followers not Admirers” by Soren Kierkegaard
- Scripture Reading
 - Matthew 7:13-27; Luke 14:25-35
- Scripture Meditation and Reflection Questions
 - These passages are Jesus’ teaching on what it means to be His disciple
 - Write your own definition of what a disciple is and what they are called to do.
 - How does this definition compare to what being a Christian has meant for you in your life so far?



WHAT IS CHURCH?

The human race in the course of time has taken the liberty of softening and softening Christianity until at last we have contrived to make it exactly the opposite of what it is in the New Testament. Christianity emasculated and domesticated, no longer a threat to the world!"

Soren Kierkegaard

OVERVIEW

Over the last 2000 years, the Church has been moving further and further away from her God-given mission and purpose. Our job as the Church today is to recognize and recover the basic biblical functions; we are called to engage and discover the forms of doing church that best help us fulfill our purpose. This week we will see that cultivating spiritual maturity for the purpose of carrying on Jesus' mission is what church is all about!

Is the Church doing its job?

- A significant number of church goers...
 - Don't know the basic teachings and principles of the Bible
 - Don't know how to hear God or discern His voice and leading
 - Don't have an active personal spiritual life or regular spiritual practices
 - Don't know how to discern spiritual warfare issues and effectively battle against the enemy
 - Don't know how to minister to or help others when in need
- The forms and functions of the Church
 - In architecture and design, form follows function. Knowing what something is for is essential in figuring out its design. The purpose of the Church should determine the way we "do" church, but instead how we do church is often either:
 - Form follows tradition
 - Form follows fashion



rganized religion has allowed church members to remain religious illiterates."

Time Magazine

WHAT IS "CHURCH"?

- Four "Religious Specials" (Forms of church not found in the New Testament)
 - Special building—Place
 - Special Event—Program
 - Special Day—Time
 - Special Person—Expert
 - Four "Consumer Vendors" (Functions of church not found in the New Testament)
 - Shopping Mall—A vendor of religious goods and services
 - There to meet felt needs and personal desires
 - Theater / Auditorium—A vendor of religious entertainment and enjoyment
 - There to captivate attention, be amusing or diverting. A place where worship is passive and entertainment is sought
 - Favorite Restaurant—A vendor of spiritual food
 - There to feed people. A place we go to avoid the work of shopping, cooking and clean-up
 - Social Club—A vendor of connection and community
 - There to meet and connect people with others just like themselves
 - Christendom
 - When the culture shapes the Church more than the Church shapes the culture
 - When the culture gives a special place to the Church, which unwittingly promotes and sanctions the culture's overall agenda, and the Church considers it a victory
 - When the Church accommodates and serves as "chaplain" to the culture or state's goals and agendas
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When Christianity was born, it was the only religion on the planet that had no sacred objects, no sacred person, and no sacred spaces."

Pagan Christianity By Frank Viola

What is the Church for?

I. Four New Testament Functions of the Church

- The Church as a Bride
 - Purpose: A fully devoted, fruit-bearing partner – to enlarge God’s family: witness
 - Christ’s sacrifice on the cross is comparable to the love found in marriage (Ephesians 5:25-27)
 - God will prepare the Church as an adorned bride for Christ (Revelation 21:2)
 - We are to please the Lord in all we do and bear fruit for His sake (Colossians 1:9-10)
- The Church as a Family
 - Purpose: A growth-nurturing community – to raise family members to spiritual maturity: discipleship
 - A household of the living God who supports the truth (1 Timothy 3:15)
 - We are to appeal to one another as fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers (1 Timothy 5:1-2)
 - We are children of God (Galatians 4:19)
- The Church as a Body
 - Purpose: A vehicle for action, movement and impact in the world – to impact the world for good: mission
 - The Church is the body of Christ (Colossians 1:24)
 - We are each individual members of Christ’s body (1 Corinthians 12:27)
 - When we come together, Jesus is present (Matthew 18:20)
- The Church as a Temple
 - Purpose: A tangible, welcoming place to experience God – to experience presence and express devotion to God’s will: worship
 - Being fit together to grow into the temple and dwelling of God (Ephesians 2:20-22)
 - Being built together by God to be His temple (1 Peter 2:5)

WHAT IS "CHURCH"?

II. The Purpose of the Church: Maturity and Mission

- Maturity
 - Fulfilling the bride and family functions of church
 - Nurture growth and bear fruit
 - Become poor in spirit, gentle, hungering for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart and peacemakers (Matthew 5:3-9)
 - Grow into a holy temple, being built together by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:21-22)
 - Be blameless and innocent (Philippians 2:15)
 - Teach and admonish and present everyone complete (Colossians 1:28)
 - Mission
 - Fulfilling the body and temple functions of Church
 - Serve the world and manifest the presence of Jesus
 - Be the salt and light of the Earth (Matthew 5:13-16)
 - Do good works, as we were created to do (Ephesians 2:10)
 - Appear as light in a world full of darkness (Philippians 2:15)
 - Giving to those in need (Matthew 14:16)
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The church is the only organization that exists
for the benefit of its non-members"

Graham Cooke

III. The True Form and Function of the Church

- The church is a community of called out people whose purpose is to be:
 - Devoted to Christ (Bride)
 - Growing in Christ together (Family)
 - Living and acting together as Christ (Body)
 - For the benefit of the world (Temple)
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IV. What does spiritual maturity look like? (What does it consist of specifically?)

- Core Christian “Competencies”:
 - Bear fruit – character maturity (Matthew 7:16)
 - Relational maturity (Galatians 5)
 - Obey teachings and commands (Matthew 28)
 - Be a light, salt to outsiders (Matthew 5)
 - Minister to each other (Ephesians 4, Colossians 1)
 - Warfare, discerning the enemy’s schemes(2 Corinthians 2:11)
 - Know God’s voice/Intimacy (John 10:27)

Do the forms of church seen today fulfill the functions it is called to fulfill?

Jesus’ final instructions, known as the great commission, should be the mission statement of the Church community. (Matthew 28)

- Preach and teach a Gospel that calls ALL people to become disciples—not just converts, believers or church attendees
 - Teach and train these disciples to obey ALL that Jesus taught and commanded
 - Organize everything we do around this mission and message
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WHAT IS "CHURCH"?

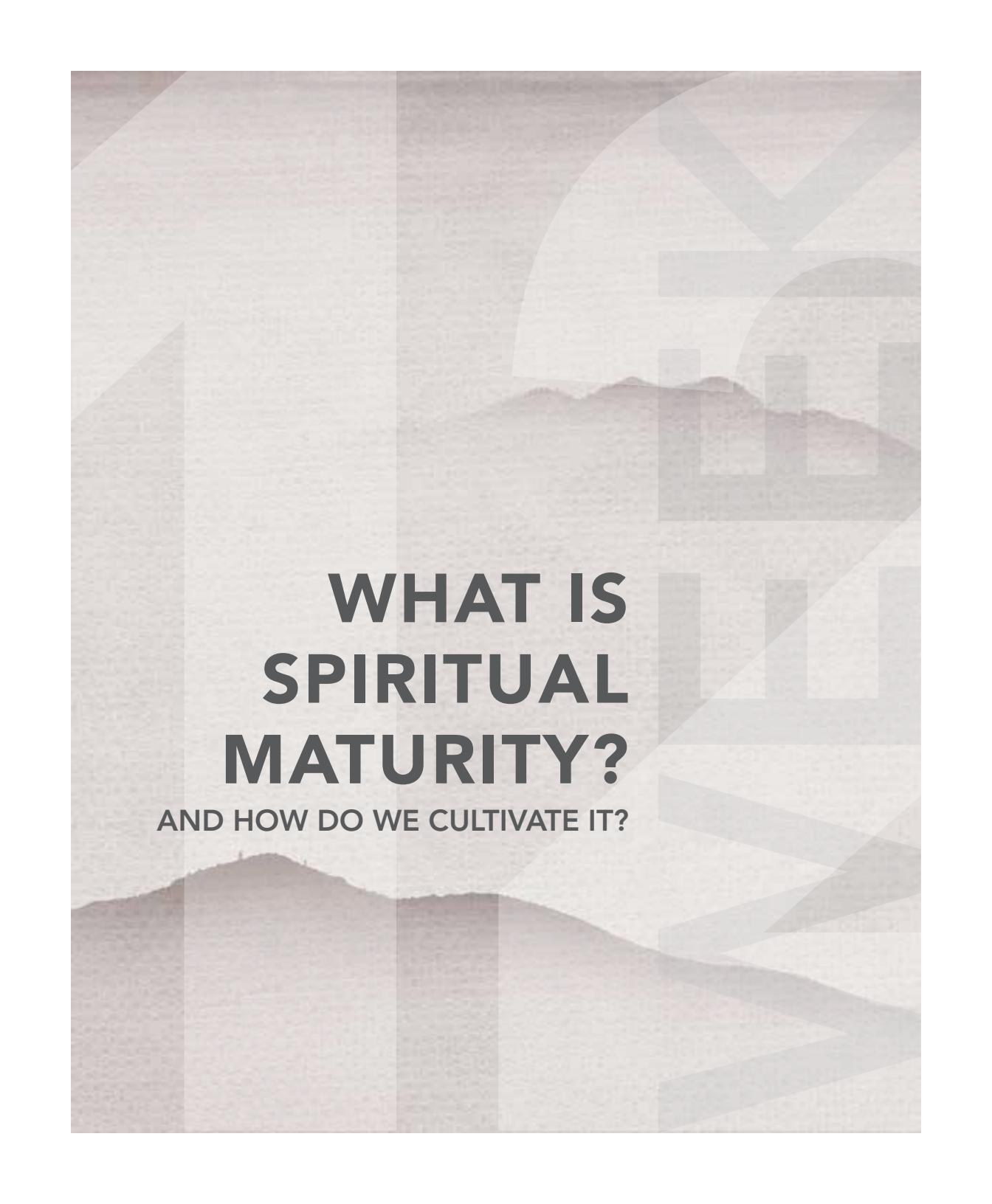
NOTES

TAKE-HOME

- Personally and prayerfully review notes and consider watching the class video online
- Read 1 John in one sitting
- Read Articles
 - “The Anatomy of the Church” by Frank Viola
 - “The Most Powerful Force on Earth!” by Ray Stedman
 - “It’s Not the Church’s Job!” by James Emery White
- Scripture Reading
 - Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 2:12-16
- Scripture Meditation and Reflection Questions
 - Philippians 2:15 could be a mission statement for the Church: “You are to live clean, innocent lives as children of God in a dark world . . . let your lives shine brightly before them.”
 - Using the Scripture as your guide, what would say are suppose to be the hallmarks of Christian community? List as many as you can.

The church is . . . “A community of persons who grow in love for Christ and for one another; who are maturing together in faith, hope, and love; who are engaged together in mission in the world as a community that serves as a sign pointing to Christ’s reign, seeking to make a difference for good through word and deed; and who are inviting others who need to be challenged with the call of Christ to join them and participate in this vision and work.”

Gordon Smith, “Transforming Conversion”



WHAT IS SPIRITUAL MATURITY?

AND HOW DO WE CULTIVATE IT?

The central problem facing the contemporary church in the Western world and worldwide, is the problem of how to routinely lead its members through a path of spiritual, moral, and personal transformation "

Dallas Willard

OVERVIEW

Jesus taught throughout His ministry the importance of bearing fruit, or reaching spiritual maturity and the New Testament reveals the Church's responsibility to nurture that growth. When the Church is functioning properly, it should be actively helping its people to cultivate this transformation in each other. We will be looking at the basic qualities of mature disciples as well as the kinds of things needed to cultivate these in our lives together.

Spiritual Maturity (transformation or bearing fruit) was expected by Jesus

- “Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matthew 3:8)
- “You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?” (Matthew 7:16)
- “And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.” (Matthew 13:23)
- “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it.” (Matthew 21:43)
- “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.” (John 15:2)
- “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples . . . I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain.” (John 15:8,16)

What does it mean to bear fruit?

- The concept of bearing fruit expresses the idea of growing in maturity
 - Maturity is the condition of reaching full development
 - Jesus teaches that we are to be perfect, as our Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48)
 - Perfect in the Greek is teleios; meaning to lack nothing necessary to completeness; consummate human integrity and virtue, become full grown as an adult
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WHAT IS SPIRITUAL MATURITY

Growing in Spiritual Maturity

I. Competencies of Christian Spirituality

- Knowledge of Truth
 - Understanding of and trust/belief in the Word
 - Connection with God
 - Regular and intimate two-way interaction with God
 - Identity in Christ
 - Being securely grounded in Christ and His love for me
 - Loving character
 - Qualities of love expressed in relationships and circumstances
 - Service from gifting
 - Knowing and moving in personal and spiritual gifts
 - Yielding to the Holy Spirit
 - Discerning and responding to the Holy Spirit
 - Spiritual warfare
 - Discerning and resisting spiritual temptation and deception
 - Body ministry
 - Skillful and wise “one-anothering” to nurture the growth of others
 - Kingdom witness
 - Sharing and showing Christ through evangelism and mercy
 - Loving relationships
 - Interactions with family, friends and co-workers are characterized by humility, receptivity, unity, submission and accountability
 - Displaying Kingdom emotions of the heart
 - Joy, peace and hope are a growing personal reality
 - Walking in Truth
 - Lifestyle reflects the teachings and values of scripture
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II. How do we Grow?

- Maturity is not:
 - Automatic
 - Does not happen by itself without my participation and pursuit
 - Instant
 - Does not happen overnight or in one chunk
- Maturity is:
 - Intentional
 - Involves wisely planned, regularly practiced action
 - Process
 - Gradual; in steps and stages, over time
- Maturity must be pursued:
 - Pursuing involves wanting it and working at it over time
 - “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.” (2 Peter 1:5-7)
- Pursuing means to earnestly strive after
 - “Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:12)
- Pursuing means to run swiftly in order to catch
 - “Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about Christ, let us press on to maturity.” (Hebrews 6:1)
- Pursuing means to carry some burden or to move by force

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL MATURITY

III. Intentional Growth

Spiritual maturity requires intentionality. It is a process that takes time. It involves wise planning, practice, community and pursuit. To be intentional about growth a certain understanding is needed:

- Purpose
 - Knowing the vision or goal
 - Principles
 - Naming the specific areas of growth being sought
 - Prioritizing
 - Rearranging life—time and resources—to allow growth to happen
 - Planning
 - Identifying practices that train and strengthen us and setting goals to evaluate growth
 - Practices
 - Wisely chosen activities that develop and change us
 - Partners
 - Surrounding ourselves with other people who have a shared vision
 - Allowing partners to motivate, encourage and challenge
 - Power
 - Giving access to the Holy Spirit and using His power to help us grow
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We started teaching on the necessity of Christ being formed in our people, and we realized that some in our congregation never signed up for that. We discovered that people weren't necessarily coming to church to be formed in the image of Christ"

Renovation of the Church By Carlson and Leuken

IV. Essential Elements for Growth

Growing spiritually requires certain conditions and elements; much like the needs of an infant after being born or a child growing into an adult.

- Inspiration
 - Vision, motivation, affirmation and encouragement
- Information
 - Principles, knowledge, data, explanation and illustration
- Cultivation
 - Nurture, example, coaching, integration, heart-change and acceptance
- Revelation
 - Challenge, conviction, insight, clarity, accountability and discipline
- Application
 - Action, goals, plans, strategies, practice and “go out and do”

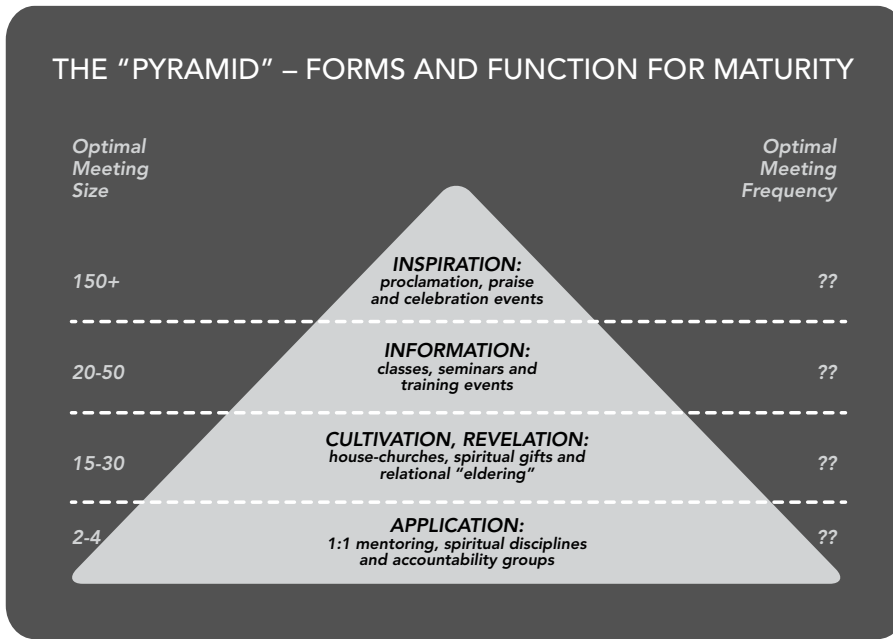
V. Essential Influences for Growth

Every member of the body has been given gifts by the Holy Spirit. One set of these gifts can be described by the discipleship matrix below. These specific gifts or roles are given for the purpose of building up the body to the fullness of Christ in complete maturity. (Ephesians 4:11-13)

- Teacher
- Apostle
- Pastor
- Evangelist
- Prophet



WHAT IS SPIRITUAL MATURITY



More effective in
"rallying for a
vision", and creating
a "movement"



More effective for
growth, active
participation, and
accountability.

A generation of Christians reared among push buttons and automatic machines is impatient of slower and less direct methods of reaching their goals. We have been trying to apply machine-age methods to our relations with God. We read our chapter, have our short devotions, and rush away, hoping to make up for our deep inward bankruptcy by attending another gospel meeting or listening to another thrilling story"

A. W. Tozer

Spiritual growth and true discipleship leads to a life filled with fruit!

Picture a life in which ...

(Excerpt from Soul Shaping by Douglas Rumford)

Joy carries you through the day,
and laughter comes as naturally as breathing.
You are not lured by that which would destroy you,
but are drawn to that which builds you up;
You can trust yourself—
having control over your thought and words,
over your responses and reactions;
You live above the distractions and deceptions of the world,
being a non-anxious, very real presence to others around you;
You have no need to hide;
You can look others in the eye,
valuing them for themselves alone, not for what they would give you;
You find courage to face every conflict honorably,
and strength to fulfill every responsibility faithfully;
You endure suffering with courage,
able to live with the questions.
You can admit when you are wrong;
You can say, “I’m sorry,” and begin again;
and are gentle with yourself,
renouncing the chains of shame, and self-condemnation.
You are connected to God who created you as you,
and are becoming all that God created you to be.
You are at peace in all circumstances,
celebrating God’s faithful provision in times of abundance,
trusting in quiet contentment in times of want.
You are free to serve others willingly,
without thought or need for thanks.
You have the freedom to live for an audience of One.

Picture such a life—

For it is meant to be yours.

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL MATURITY

NOTES

TAKE-HOME

- Personally and prayerfully review notes and consider watching the class video online
- Read Matthew 5-7 in one sitting
- Read Articles
 - “Looking Like Jesus” by Dallas Willard
 - “A Theology of Spiritual Growth” by Richard Foster
 - “The Upside Down Church of the Early Christians” by Robert Banks
- Scripture Reading
 - 2 Peter 1:1-11; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27
- Scripture Meditation and Reflection Questions
 - Paul likens spiritual growth to athletic training, using the metaphors of running and boxing
 - According to Peter, what is God’s part and what is our part in spiritual growth?
 - What things must we do in order to grow?
 - What things must athletes do in order for their bodies to become stronger?
 - Why do athletes do all these things?
 - What are the implications for growth in the spiritual life?



MISSIONAL DISCIPLESHIP COMMUNITY

**STRUCTURING AN INTENTIONAL
COMMUNITY FOR MATURITY
AND MISSION**

There is absolutely nothing wrong with the church which discipleship and intelligent intention toward Christ-likeness cannot more than fix"

Dallas Willard

OVERVIEW

Discovering the Kingdom is essential for our growth into the complete body and bride of Christ. This discovery of the God's 'Love and War' story found in the Bible and grasping the beauty of living a 'Kingdom and Covenant' life is only the first step. This week we look at the practical steps each person can take to move into this life more fully, and lay out how the church is seeking to grow in this direction as well.

A generation of Christians reared among push buttons and automatic machines is impatient of slower and less direct methods of reaching their goals. We have been trying to apply machine-age methods to our relations with God. We read our chapter, have our short devotions, and rush away, hoping to make up for our deep inward bankruptcy by attending another gospel meeting or listening to another thrilling story"

A. W. Tozer

“And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.”

Mark 4:18-20

MISSIONAL DISCIPLESHIP COMMUNITY

Lowering the Bar on Discipleship:

- Jewish men memorized the entire Torah
- Jesus took 3 ½ years to rigorously train 12 people in a full-time apprenticeship
- The early church had a catechesis process that lasted from 2-3 years for training converts
- By the 5th century, church leaders were content if their people just memorized the Lord's
- Prayer and the Apostles Creed!

Missional Discipleship Community

- Our vision is to combine the best of both worlds
 - Meeting people where they are at with a culturally familiar church-form where a
 - powerful Kingdom vision can be proclaimed, and
 - Inviting and calling people further and deeper into living out the Kingdom vision in the context of a community of discipleship and mission

"The Forgotten Ways" – Alan Hirsch

- He researched Christian movements which resulted in transformation for their people and had a lasting impact on the society around them:
- All were discipleship movements and all were missional:
 - Discipleship: rearranging life to grow in Jesus' character
 - Missional: rearranging life to advance Jesus' purposes
 - Community: rearranging life for intentional relationships with a Kingdom purpose
- Church structured for maximized maturity (not for minimal inconvenience or minimal involvement)

What is the next step?

- Exploring Missional Discipleship Community (EMDC)
 - 13 Week Class
 - Delving deeper into the
 - Vision for discipleship in community
 - Theology of growth and formation
 - Call to be missional
 - Our plan to make it happen

Dream Church

I. Waking up to story of Love and War

The story of love and war gives a different, distinct life story to call our own. We have and must continue to tear down old values and misconceptions, in order to build up the new. Equipped with a new worldview, the goal will now be to consistently live a Covenant and Kingdom life.

- The calling to live a Covenant and Kingdom life
 - The Covenant Relationship—To be the object of God’s agape love, and to live as His adopted children and betrothed bride. Living to find our identity, belonging and security in God alone (To eat from the Tree of Life)
 - The Kingdom Responsibility—To live as a chosen people, a royal priesthood and holy nation; to be salt and light in a dark and hurting world; to find our purpose for all of life in God alone (To NOT eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil; to not be our own rulers, to reject a self-centered lifestyle)

MISSIONAL DISCIPLESHIP COMMUNITY

- Summing up the stories in the story
 - The story of God's covenant love—creating us to partner with Him and image agape love on Earth
 - The story of Abraham—called out to leave his home, family and culture, for the purpose of fathering a whole new culture on Earth
 - The story of Moses, the Exodus and Sinai—A people in bondage to a worldly kingdom called out to form a new Kingdom on Earth
 - The story of the conquest of Canaan—called out from mixing with the cultures and ways of the people around them
 - The story of the Judges—falling back into the ways of the culture around them
 - The story of the Kings forsaking the Law—falling away from their calling to be different and dedicated to God
 - The story and the challenge of the Prophets—calling the people back to full dedication to live out God's ways
 - The teachings and example of Jesus—delivering His people from bondage to sin, Satan and the world, and to give us freedom to live a life set-apart for Him alone
 - The teachings and practice of the early Church—to be citizens of the Kingdom and resident aliens here on Earth

II. Building the dream church

Waking up to Love and War, Covenant and Kingdom, and all the stories in the story we find a calling to build a dream church. A church focused on maturity and mission.

- What will it take to make this dream come true?
 - A required intentional re-arranging of life around whatever is necessary to grow and serve
 - The early church had a process of conversion—catechesis. This process was a “re-socialization into an alternative community” (Origins of Christian Morality by Walter Meeks)
 - Recognition that the church is living in the betrothal year, awaiting Christ’s return as our Groom!

“I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by its cunning, so you will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”
(2 Corinthians 11:2-3)

“Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. To her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure — for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.”
(Revelation 19:7-8)

The greatest issue facing the world today, with all its heart-breaking needs, is whether those who are identified as ‘Christians’ will become disciples . . . Will they break out of the churches to be His Church . . . His mighty force for good on earth?”

Dallas Willard The Great Omission

