

SHARE

FORMATION COURSE
OF
AGAPE STUDENTI

**SING TO THE LORD, PRAISE HIS NAME;
PROCLAIM HIS SALVATION DAY AFTER DAY.
PSALM 96:2.**

SHARE



IN THIS COURSE...

How did you decide to follow Jesus? Someone in your life probably shared the good news with you so that you could respond in faith and trust Jesus! Some people are especially gifted at this, but did you know that Jesus wants all of his followers to share the gospel and invite others to respond? Jesus' final instructions to his disciples in Matthew 28 are to "make disciples of all nations." This was the last thing Jesus said to his disciples, so it's pretty clear that this is a big deal!

It's sometimes scary and awkward to talk about Jesus with people who don't know him, and it's easy to doubt that we have what it takes. But God has given us the power to overcome these fears through His Holy Spirit, who strengthens and guides us as we talk about God with others! In this course, we will learn that everyone around us is either on a journey to God or away from Him, and we will equip ourselves to talk about Jesus with others through friendship. God will work in and through you in profound ways as you partner with Him in the power of the Holy Spirit to make Him known!

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CoJourners

Start the Journey

This study is the first of a 5-part series focussed on equipping you as a believer to be an effective witness in the midst of our 21st century culture. CoJourners teaches believers to conversationally enter the spiritual journey of others, helping them come to Christ. Let's get started!

Discuss together: What have you seen in the lives of others that demonstrate that everyone is on a spiritual journey? What evidence was present in your life before you accepted Christ?

Every person is on a spiritual journey. We can't help it, God created us as spiritual beings. Granted, some are moving toward God and others are moving away from Him. Some are in pursuit of other so-called "gods", who are no God at all. Still others are stuck in a spiritual quagmire and aren't currently moving at all. There are those who are spiritually open, while others are closed. Some are spiritually involved, some are not. But in each case, they are on a spiritual journey. And this is where it gets exciting. Because people are on a spiritual journey and because God is already at work in each person's life (whether they realize it or not), we get the privilege of entering into these journeys and becoming a part of what God is doing. You can be a CoJourner, entering into the journey of others and helping them come to Jesus.

What does the Bible say?

Read together an example from the Bible where Jesus and his disciples come alongside a woman on her spiritual journey.

Read John 4:8, 27, 31-33, 35: Spend some time meditating on the passage in question, helping yourself with the questions that follow.

⁸ For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. ²⁷ Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" ³¹ Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." ³² But he said to them, "I

have food to eat that you do not know about.”³³ So the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought him something to eat?”³⁵ Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.

Samaritans were despised by the Jews for a lot of cultural and historical baggage. In fact, when traveling between Galilee and Judea, many Jews would cross the Jordan twice rather than pass through Samaria, so it’s not surprising that the disciples run into town and don’t think much about the woman in front of them. After all, what business did they have talking about spirituality with a Samaritan? But Jesus had a different perspective. Spend some time making observations about the passage with the discussion questions below.

[4:8] The disciples are sent into town to get lunch. What might they have been thinking? Feeling? What would they have thought about the people of Sychar?
[4:27] Why were the disciples surprised at Jesus’ conversation with the woman?

[4:31] After the woman left, the disciples turn their attention to lunch. But Jesus is fully conscious of something the disciples were completely unaware of– they were in the midst of a spiritual harvest. Already the Samaritan village is on its way to meet Jesus [4:30], with many believing in him because of the woman’s testimony [4:39]

Why did the disciples miss the reality that the Samaritans were spiritually open to Jesus?

Why are we so unaware of the spiritual journeys of those around us? Why do we miss so many spiritual opportunities?

Obstacles to Sharing our Faith:

Discuss together: What keeps you from sharing your faith?

There are many obstacles that stand the way of sharing our faith. Five of these common obstacles are:

- Desire– we don’t really want to
- Fear– we are afraid of being rejected or turning someone off

- Know-how- we are not sure what to do
- Busyness- we are busy doing other things, many times good things
- Relational disconnectedness- We don't have the connections to individuals with whom we could share

Discuss together: Do you share any of these common obstacles?

If so, how do you think you could overcome them? Remember that we have an incredible Helper in our weakness: the Holy Spirit! Spend some time praying for one another and ask God to help you overcome these obstacles.

The CoJourners Paradigm

Ok, so you want to help others in their spiritual journey towards Christ. But how? The illustration below outlines the four primary roles you can play as a CoJourneyer. In the coming weeks we will explore each of these roles more fully and look at examples in the Bible as well as in our lives. This time, read through the different roles and make some observations together by answering the questions that correspond to each role.

The Explorer: The first role is that of the Explorer. In the ordinary world, what does an Explorer do?

The same is true in the spiritual arena, except we enter into people's lives, not undiscovered land. Spiritually, we want to help others discover their location on their journey, to understand where they've been, where they're at, and where they're headed in order to help point them towards Christ.

The Guide: We know that we want to help others come to Christ, that is the role of the Guide! What does a guide do?

A guide is someone who joins with you on a journey, helping show you the way. But a good guide will explain things as you go, helping you understand as they lead you on. That is the essence of being a witness- showing the way to Jesus, helping someone understand how they may come to Him.

The Builder: When a person is on a journey and comes to an obstacle, say a river, what do they need to continue on?

There are all kinds of obstacles that keep people from coming to Jesus—intellectual issues, emotional baggage, competing desires, etc. A Builder helps to build bridges over these obstacles, helping to deal with the issue through gentle persuasion and a lot of prayer.

The Mentor: When a person comes to Christ, their spiritual journey is not over—rather it is just beginning. What might a person need in his or her life to help them walk with Jesus for a lifetime? Among other things they need help and encouragement to continue to follow Christ. That is the role of a Mentor. The Mentor encourages the new believer in their spiritual journey both by helping them become grounded in their faith and helping them to become connected to the Body of Christ and Christian community.

Let's get practical: who is around you?

On a separate piece of paper draw a visual representation of your life, your relational network of friends and acquaintances. Who are the groups of people to whom you relate to regularly? (Your family, neighbors, classmates, co-workers, social activities, doctors, hairdressers, etc).

Discuss together: Where do you see evidence that those around you are on a spiritual journey?

Spend some time praying together for those around you to come to know Christ.

What is one things you've learned that you want to remember?

CoJourners 2

Explorer

Last time we learned that everyone around us is on a spiritual journey. We discovered that we can be a CoJourner, entering into the journeys of others and helping them come to Jesus. We also learned that we can play 4 roles in the lives of those around us: the Explorer, the Guide, the Bridge Builder, and the Mentor. This week we will look at the role of the Explorer more closely. We will learn how to discover where someone has been and where they currently are on their journey. Before beginning with the CoJourner model, let's first look together at two examples from Jesus' ministry.

What does the Bible say?

Let's explore the stories of two different people with whom Jesus interacted:

Read the story of Nicodemus (John 3:1-21) and answer the following questions:

- If all you knew was that Nicodemus was a Jewish teacher of the Law, what would you assume about him spiritually? Why?
- What was actually true of Nicodemus spiritually?
- What did he not understand about Jesus?

Read the story about the woman at the well (John 4:1-26) and answer the following questions:

- If all you knew was that the woman was a Samaritan, ostracized from the Jewish community for immorality, what would you assume about her spiritually? Why?
- What was actually true of the woman at the well spiritually?

Discuss together: In your life, who are the most intimidating people with which to enter into a spiritual conversation? Why?

Have you ever tried to figure out where a family member or friend is spiritually? If not, what holds you back in asking about their spiritual journey?

The Key Principle: Explorers don't assume, they enter and discover.

Our lives are filled with people who are unknown to us- we have no idea where they are spiritually. We often make assumptions but might be surprised to discover who is truly spiritually open. Sometimes those who we assume are the farthest away, are the most open.

As we explore further we discover that people can be all over the map spiritually:

- **Christians**- some who are connected to a community of believers and some who are not.
- **Seekers**- those who are searching for God on their spiritual journey
- **Open people**- those who are not actively seeking God but are generally open to talking about spiritual things if approached appropriately in a safe environment
- **Indifferent people**- those who don't have spiritual things even on their radar screen. They aren't thinking much about spiritual things because they seem irrelevant to their everyday lives.
- **Resistant people**- those who don't accept the gospel because it conflicts from their worldview and beliefs.
- **Hostile people**- those whose hostility flow out of strong beliefs that conflict with the gospel, but at times it could be from an emotional issue or bad experiences from their past

All of them need others to enter into their journeys to help them along, to help discover where they are.

Discuss together:

Before you became a Christian, did you identify with one or more of these groups of people? Who has helped you explore what you believed about God and how did they enter into your journey?

How do we explore?

There are no magical questions that always work. But there are good questions. Here are a few. Try, "how are you?" I'm serious, it is a good question. Ask people how they are, only mean it. It's common in our culture to ask the question. It's just rare to find anyone really wants to know the answer. "Fine" (or some other one word answer) generally is the expected response. But if you mean it, and explore a bit, you will find many (perhaps the majority) will genuinely appreciate someone who cares enough to find out. The conversations that follow often reveal windows of the soul.

But the question that I've found really begins to open doors of discovery is, "I'm curious. Do you have any religious or church background?"

People will tell you as much or as little as they are comfortable telling and through it you will begin to discover a lot about the spiritual journey they've been on. Honestly, I have found that if people feel safe relationally, most will respond openly.

Getting Practical

What are three simple questions that you could use as an Explorer?

Prayerfully identify one or two people in your relational network that you made the last time and ask them a question about their spiritual background or beliefs.

What is one thing you've learned that you want to remember?

CoJourners

The Guide

Last time we learned that everyone around us is on a spiritual journey and discovered how we can enter into the lives of those around us as an Explorer. This time we will look at the role of the Guide, leading those around us to Jesus. Before beginning with the CoJourney model, let's first look together at an examples from Jesus' ministry.

What does the Bible say?

Compare and contrast three guides: Andrew, the first follower of Jesus to be identified by name in Scripture, Philip, a disciple of Jesus with a deep understanding of the Old Testament prophecy and the coming of the Messiah, and the woman from Samaria who we studied during the introduction study of CoJourners. Read each passage and answer the following questions:

Andrew (John 1:40–42)

Philip (John 1:45–46)

The woman from Samaria (John 4:28–29)

- What do they have in common?
- What was different?
- What did each say?
- What did each do?

The Key Principle: Guides lead people to Jesus.

Power of Permission

Sometimes when someone is trying to guide someone to Christ they want to tell them everything that they know, giving them a 5 course meal, when they're only ready for an aperitivo. The key of being a savvy guide is whetting someone's appetite to want to know more about the gospel and your spiritual

experience. More often, the path through the barrier of general spiritual conversation to the gospel is found in asking permission.

**Can I show you something that has really helped me?
Can I explain what has really made sense to me about this?**

Discuss together: What does asking permission do?

Sometime

In on-going relationships where you will have opportunity to talk in the future, the key word in seeking permission is “SOMETIME”.

“SOMETIME, can I show you something about this that has really helped me? It’s a short outline that gives the essence of what the Bible says about this.” This takes the pressure of the moment. Most often, people will respond in the affirmative. Then all that is needed is to make an appointment or plan an engagement (over coffee, etc.) When you get together to talk, the purpose is clear and atmosphere open.

The Primary Tools

There are three primary tools that a Guide will use to help another come to Christ.

1. Christian Community – Gospel Environments

By simply inviting others to a gathering of believers (whether that is a formal meeting, like a Bible study or weekly gathering, or an informal gathering, like a party or get-together), the not-yet-believing are exposed to the embodied love and truth of the gospel. Many people become involved with believers, experiencing the gospel community before they place their personal trust in Christ. It is an ideal environment to journey toward Christ.

2. Life Stories – Gospel Illustrations

Your experience with Christ can be a powerful communication of Gospel truth.

3. Presentations – Gospel Explanations

Simple clear presentations of the Gospel, like Would You Like To Know God Personally?, can be powerful tools to help a person understand the gospel or cross the threshold the decision of faith.

Discuss together: Which one of these tools comes most naturally to you? Which one seems the most difficult? What steps would you want to take to grow in this area?

Let's get practical

Take some time to get better acquainted with the booklet “Conoscere Dio Personalmente”. Practice sharing it with your coach and ask for feedback.

This week prepare a two-sentence statement of your experience with Jesus. Prayerfully identify 1–2 people in your relational network that you made last time and ask them about their spiritual background and beliefs. Then briefly share your encounter with Christ and what He is doing in your life now. If God opens the conversation, take a step of faith to share the gospel.

What is one thing you've learned that you want to remember from this study?

CoJourners

Bridge Builder

Last time we learned what it looks like to be a guide. As a review, what's the purpose of a Guide?

This week we will be looking at the role of the Bridge Builder. When we are sharing with someone and discover they are stuck because of some kind of issue, we don't give up and check out of their spiritual journey. Rather we seek to deal with the issue, that is, we provide a bridge over that issue so they can continue to move toward Christ.

Discuss together: In Italy, what do you think are some of the obstacles or issues for others to understand the gospel or want to have relationship with God? A functioning bridge starts at the point in which you find the interested person and ends with Jesus. It connects these two points in an effective way. If you are building a street and you encounter an obstacle you can remove it or build a bridge over it. Two tools that the Builder can use with both of these actions are prayer and the Word of God.

What does the Bible say?

Read the following passage: Acts 17:16–34

¹⁶ Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this babbler wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? ²⁰ For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean." ²¹ Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

²² So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this

inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. ²⁶ And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷ that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ²⁸ for "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring." ²⁹ Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. ³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

³² Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." ³³ So Paul went out from their midst. ³⁴ But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

How did Paul begin to address these people? [22–23]

How did Paul end his address to these people? [31]

How did Paul connect their religious and cultural beliefs to show them who the true and living God was? [24–30]

What were the different responses of the people to what Paul said? [32–34]

The Key Principle

An effective bridge begins where the person is, ends with Jesus, and connects the two effectively.

If you are building a road and you come to an obstacle, you either remove it or build a bridge over it. Some tools that a bridge builder can use to do either one of these are Prayer and God's Word.

1. Prayer

Prayer is essential because no matter what the issue looks like on the surface, it is ultimately a spiritual obstacle, used by the enemy to blind the eyes and keep in bondage [2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:1-3; 2.]

Discuss Together: Share an example of someone coming to Christ after a time of being prayed for by someone. (It could be your story. If this person is a new believer, have the leader share their story.)

2. God's Word

In gentle persuasion, we also use God's Word to build a bridge. The picture is not of victory (winning a debate or argument), but of influence (urging a change.) It is attractive (sweet) not offensive. People on spiritual journeys need gentle persuasion. They need us to come beside them, understanding where they are, helping them over the issue or obstacle.

The most powerful bridge building includes:

- The **Bible:** Share a verse and explain its implications to the issue.
- Your **Experience:** What has helped you related to this issue.
- **Questions:** Can you help them think differently about the issue?
- **Stories:** Is there a story they could relate with or an illustration they could understand?

Discuss Together: Before you became a Christian, what were some of the obstacles that kept you from believing in Christ? Who entered into your life to help you with these obstacles?

Let's get practical

Looking at the people on your Relational Network Map, what do you think are some of their obstacles to the gospel? How can you help build a bridge to Christ?

What is one thing you've learned that you want to remember from this study?

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The Mentor

As we enter into the spiritual journeys of others we have the privilege of influencing those who have come to Christ. When a person puts their trust in Christ as Savior, their journey isn't over. In many ways it has just begun. But on this side of eternity, the journey isn't easy. In fact, it can at times be down-right hard and dangerous.

Discuss together: What are the needs of a new believer?

What does the Bible say?

In the book of 1 Thessalonians, there are at least five different ways that Paul sought to establish the new believers in their faith. Let's look at them together:

1. Prayed for them consistently. (1 Thess 3:10, 11–13).
2. He spent time with them, encouraging them on. (1 Thess 2:6–12).
3. He wrote to them. (1 & 2 Thessalonians were follow-up letters from Paul).
4. He encouraged their relationships in community with each other. (1 Thess 4:9–10; 5:11–15)
5. He sent another believer to build into them when he couldn't be there himself. 1 Thess 3:1, 2)

Discuss together: If you've had a mentor, how have they helped to establish you in the faith?

As a mentor yourself, how would you like to help establish new believers in their faith?

Like Paul, we seek to provide an environment of growth for the new believer, where he or she can experience the work of God in the context of community.

The Key Principle

The growth environment is one characterized by grace (or love) and truth (especially God's word) with time to grow.

Relationships with other believers are essential to spiritual growth

Along with the relationship with the Lord, there are three other relational contexts or priority relationships in which the believer experiences love and grace. They are:

1. **A relationship with a more mature believer who can encourage and guide.**
2. **A relationship with a small group of believing friends with whom they can do life.**
3. **A relationship with a larger believing community that provides a fuller experience of God's grace and truth.**

A believer with all three is in an ideal growth environment. Two out of the three should sustain healthy growth over time [no matter which two it is.] Only one relational connection is normally not enough to sustain growth for long. Lacking all three is a dangerous situation, spiritually depriving the new believer of essential relational connections.

The Key Principle

Help the new believer make at least one other relational connection beyond your influence.

As a mentor, we want to encourage new believers to get involved in each of the three types of relationships above, but it's essential that we ourselves are pursuing the same thing.

Discuss: Evaluate your own life. Describe what each of these three areas look like for you..

The truth of God's word is essential to spiritual growth

An easy paradigm to use to communicate each truth is:

Start with our struggles

Explore a key scripture providing God's solution to the problem

- Assurance (1 John 5:11-13)
- Forgiveness (1 John 1:5-2:2)
- Spirit Empowering (1 Corinthians 2:9-3:3)
- Spirit Led (Galatians 5:16-26)
- Growth (Acts 2:24-2)

Take steps of practical application

Discuss Together: Think of something you struggle with in your life. Let's look at the Word to see what God says about this area.

Let's pray that God will use us as mentors in others' lives. Pray.

What is one thing you've learned that you want to remember from this study?

STUDY I - WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Andrea recently became a follower of Christ, but lately he's been having a hard time in his relationship with God. He feels grateful that God has forgiven his sins and wants to keep growing spiritually, but he feels like he's hit a wall. Does he have what it takes to be the kind, loving, unselfish person he knows God wants him to be? He's not so sure. Have you ever felt like Andrea does?

INTRO

Who is the Holy Spirit? Is he a *who*? Is he a *ghost*? When Jesus left the earth, he said that he had to leave so that the Holy Spirit could come (John 16:7). Why is this Holy Spirit so important? The Bible says the Holy Spirit is the power source to our spiritual life. It's like the electricity to a light bulb. Without electricity, the light bulb is still a light bulb, but it is powerless and useless. In the same way, without the Holy Spirit guiding their lives, Christians will have no power to live the kind of life God calls them to live. They will feel defeated and always kind of stuck. In this series we will learn who the Holy Spirit is and how He helps us live the Christian life. Let's first take a look at what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit.

WHAT DOES GOD SAY?

The Holy Spirit is a person, specifically the third person of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is not a vague, ethereal shadow, nor an impersonal force. He is a person equal in every way with the Father and the Son. All the divine attributes ascribed to the Father and the Son are equally ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

Read John 14:15-17 & 25-26. Why did the Holy Spirit come?

Read John 16:7-11. What did Jesus say about the Holy Spirit?

Let's discover who the Holy Spirit is in more detail. For each category below read the verses and write down what they say about the Holy Spirit.

1. Nature:
 - a. John 16:13
 - b. Romans 8:2

2. Function:
 - a. I Corinthians 3:16
 - b. Acts 1:8

3. Actions:
 - a. Romans 8:26
 - b. II Thessalonians 2:13

4. Attributes:
 - a. Genesis 1:1-2
 - b. Psalm 139:7
 - c. I Corinthians 2:10-11

HOW DO WE APPLY THIS TO OUR LIVES?

1. How would you describe the Holy Spirit to a Christian friend? To a non-Christian?
2. After doing today's study, what has changed in how you think about the Holy Spirit?

PRAYER

Spend a moment in prayer thanking God for some way He is working in your life and ask Him to help you apply one thing you have learned from the study this week.

The Holy Spirit was first introduced to us in Genesis and guides and accomplishes the work of God throughout the scriptures, ultimately being sent to fill and empower Christians after Pentecost. In the next study we will look at how the Holy Spirit helps Christians live their lives for God.

STUDY 2 - WHAT DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT DO?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Sara comes from a Christian family and has believed in Jesus for as long as she can remember. She loves God and participates in every activity of her local church. She listens to every sermon and studies her Bible on her own, but lately she has been feeling discouraged and guilty because she can't seem to live the "perfect" life that is expected of her. She tries hard to stop sinning and feels shame when she messes up. In what ways can you relate to Sara? If Sara came to you for advice, what would you tell her?

INTRO

In the last study we learned who the Holy Spirit is and why He came. But what does the Holy Spirit do for Christians today? The Bible teaches us how to live lives pleasing to God, but if we try to do so in our own strength we inevitably feel frustrated and guilty for not measuring up to God's standards. God knows this and gave us the Holy Spirit to help us. The Holy Spirit is the power source for the Christian. The moment you receive Christ, you are regenerated, indwelt, sealed, baptized, and filled with the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5, 1 Cor. 3:16, Eph. 1:13-14, 1 Cor. 12:13, Eph. 5:18). As a result, you have the potential to live a life of victory over sin and be a testimony of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Let's take a look at what the Bible says about how the Holy Spirit enables the Christian to live for Him.

WHAT DOES GOD SAY?

Read Romans 8:1-16. List out all of the things the Holy Spirit does for the believer.

Read Galatians 3:1-9. How are our own fleshly or human efforts viewed in this passage?

Read Galatians 5:16-26. Make two columns. On the right side, write out each fruit of the Spirit. On the left side, write the opposite of each fruit. When we are living by our own strength, we will see many of these negative fruits in our lives. When you notice one of these negative fruits showing up in your life, repent of it - confess it to God, ask for His forgiveness, trust that He forgives you and invite the Holy Spirit to fill you and produce the opposite, positive fruit.

HOW DO WE APPLY THIS TO OUR LIVES?

1. How would you explain the difference between the law of the flesh and the law of the Spirit in Romans 8 to a friend?
2. In what ways do you live according to the law of the flesh? How can you walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh?
3. Which fruits of the Holy Spirit are evident in your life? Which fruits are not as evident in your life and how could you grow in them?

PRAYER

Spend a moment in prayer thanking God for some way He is working in your life and ask Him to help you apply one thing you have learned from the study this week.

When we put our trust in Jesus, God gives us the Holy Spirit to help us live for Him. In the next study we will look at how we can daily be filled with the Holy Spirit.

STUDY 3 - HOW TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Federico has been a Christian only for a short amount of time. He used to be really excited about his faith, but lately he doesn't feel much anymore. When he sins he feels so guilty that he doesn't pray for days. And when he finally does he feels distant from God. He's starting to question his faith. Have you ever felt this way? What would you say to Federico to encourage him?

INTRO

Christ's first disciples and followers were ordinary people – they were fishermen and tradesmen. They didn't have large amounts of wealth or status. Then, at Pentecost in Acts 2, something extraordinary happened – they were filled with the Holy Spirit and life was never the same. God used these men to start the early church and change the world, but they could only do it with power from the Holy Spirit.

The moment you put your trust in Christ as Lord you receive the Holy Spirit forever. The same Holy Spirit the disciples received with His life-changing power resides in you. You are dramatically changed; you are a new creation. But you may not always live like that. Tragically, many Christians go through life without ever experiencing the satisfied and fruitful life that Christ promised to all who trust Him. Maybe this describes you.

WHAT DOES GOD SAY?

A key part to a relationship with God is repentance. In the Gospels Jesus challenged people to turn from their sin and follow Him. The act of turning from our sin toward God is called repentance and can be understood through the simple analogy of breathing. We confess our sins to God (exhale), thank Him for his forgiveness, and invite God to fill us with the Holy Spirit (inhale) in order to have His power to turn from our sin.

Read Ephesians 5:15-18. Why do you think Paul relates drunkenness and being filled with the Spirit? The Ephesians to whom Paul was writing already received the Holy Spirit when they became Christians. Paul is not suggesting that they need to receive it again, but rather he commands them to be filled with the Spirit continually instead of being filled with other sinful things. This action of being filled continually by the Spirit is called spiritual breathing.

Spiritual breathing can be done in four steps:

1. EXHALE

Confess your sin the moment you become aware of it and thank Him for His forgiveness (1 John 1:9, Hebrews 10:1-25). This is like breathing out the bad air that could poison you. You can pray something like this: "God, I _____. That was sin. I'm sorry. Thank you for forgiving me."

2. INHALE

Next, ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit according to His command in Ephesians 5:18. You always have the Spirit within you but God wants to fill you with His power everyday. It's just too hard to live for God on your own strength. We all need the Holy Spirit's power to do it. You can pray something like this - "Please give me your power to not sin in that way again. Fill me with your Spirit and help me know that I am forgiven."

3. TRUST

Trust that God has forgiven your sins and is filling you with His Holy Spirit. We are filled with the Spirit by faith, enabling us to experience intimacy with God and enjoy all He has for us. "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him" (1 John 5:14-15).

4. REPEAT

We sin multiple times a day. Practice Spiritual Breathing whenever you recognize that you've sinned.

HOW DO WE APPLY THIS TO OUR LIVES?

1. What do you think would change in your life if you practiced Spiritual Breathing regularly?
2. What is true of you when you are filled with the Holy Spirit?
3. Take time now to do this exercise silently. How do you feel after?

It's important to remember that it is not our feelings but God's Word that is our authority. The Christian lives by faith and trust in God even when his or her feelings don't reflect that. If we are flying in a plane, we need to place our faith in the trustworthiness of the plane and pilot. Our feelings of confidence or fear don't affect the ability of the plane to transport us, but they do affect how much we enjoy the flight. In the same way, we don't depend on feelings or emotions to tell us if we're filled with the Spirit; we place our faith or trust in the trustworthiness of God and the promises of His Word. Whether or not we feel anything, we can be confident that God has forgiven us and is filling us with His Spirit if we ask Him.

PRAYER

Spend a moment in prayer thanking God for some way He is working in your life and ask Him to help you apply one thing you have learned from the study this week.

The Holy Spirit fills us to live radical, powerful lives for God. In the next study we will look at how God uses Spirit-filled people to advance His kingdom on earth.

STUDY 4 - TELLING OTHERS ABOUT JESUS THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Giulia and Francesca are classmates and regularly see each other around the city. During a break at their faculty by the coffee machine, Giulia mentioned that she is a Christian. Francesca laughed instinctively but quickly apologized. Since then Giulia has been afraid to talk about her faith with her classmates. Have you ever had an experience like Giulia's? What advice would you give her?

INTRO

All around you are friends and classmates struggling through life to find happiness and purpose. What would it be like if your friends, classmates, professors, and family members all knew Jesus? In Matthew 4:19 Jesus said to His disciples, "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men." One of the primary purposes for which you are filled with the Holy Spirit is to be a witness for Christ through the holy life that you live and the empowered words you speak. God wants to use you to share His life-changing message of salvation with those around you, and He promises to help you through the power of his Holy Spirit.

Consider carefully the last words Jesus told His disciples on the Mount of Olives moments before He ascended into heaven. Jesus had commissioned His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel and to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:16-19). But He had told them not to leave Jerusalem until they were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).

Jesus was suggesting to his disciples that although they had been with him for three years or more, it was not enough that they had heard him teach the multitudes and had seen him heal the sick and even raise the dead. They needed to be empowered with the Holy Spirit in order to be effective and fruitful as his witnesses throughout the world.

WHAT DOES GOD SAY?

Read John 15: 26-27.

- How does this passage describe the Holy Spirit?
- Who will "testify" and what does that mean?

Jesus told his disciples in Acts 1:8 "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." The rest of the book of Acts tells the story of the Holy Spirit empowering the disciples to tell the good news of Jesus and starting the early Church.

Read Acts 4: 1-22

- What can we learn about the Holy Spirit from this story?
- How do the Holy Spirit and Peter testify about Jesus?
- Peter was sharing the message about Jesus in a way that personally related to the leaders of Jerusalem. How would you share about Jesus in a way that personally relates to a classmate or friend?

Sometimes our faith can get us in difficult situations. We may not always know exactly what to say to our friends or professors. Often our fears prevent us from saying anything at all. When you feel afraid, practice Spiritual Breathing - confess your fear to God and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter said "As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." The Holy Spirit will help you share with others about what you have seen, heard, and experienced with God.

HOW DO WE APPLY THIS TO OUR LIVES?

- What reason do we have to share the message of Jesus with others?
- What have you "seen and heard" about Jesus that you would want to share with others?
- How do you think differently about the Holy Spirit after these studies? What would you want to communicate to a friend about the Holy Spirit?

PRAYER

Spend a moment in prayer thanking God for some way He is working in your life and ask Him to help you apply one thing you have learned from the study this week.

Jesus said in Luke 10:2 that "the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few." God has given the Holy Spirit to empower us to be witnesses for Christ and join in His mission as laborers for the harvest. God has strategically placed you in your family, faculty, and friend groups to be a testimony for Him. Write out the names of 5 friends below and ask God to give you opportunities this week to talk about your faith with them. Expect God to be at work in their lives and search for how He is answering your prayers.

THE ENGAGEMENT MODEL

Jesus commands us to go and make disciples with the promise that he will be with us. However, we live in a post-modern culture that is becoming increasingly skeptical of religion. This model outlines a pattern of 5 stages a person typically goes through on their way to faith in Jesus. God invites us to participate in this process with our friends and he promises to produce growth.

The 5 Stages

1. From skepticism to trusting a Christian

Trust-building as the foundation of being a spiritual friend.

A person's spiritual journey often begins with a relationship with a Christian. Trust-building requires them to trust not only you, but you as a Christian. Building trust requires you to develop a genuine connection based on common ground and listening. If a person doesn't know you are a Christian by the end of a conversation then you haven't established their trust in you as a Christian.

How do you build Trust?

- Get to know people for who they really are
- Listen and ask good questions - be a learner
- Establish shared common ground
- Be honest about the challenges of life
- Share about the role faith plays in your life

You will recognize that a person is beginning to trust you as a Christian when:

- They ask you deeper questions
- There is laughter in the conversation

Trust can be broken when we become defensive, argumentative, make snap judgments of them or begin to lecture.

2. From indifference to curiosity about Jesus, God, or Christianity

Asking good questions that help nudge people toward curiosity

Once someone trusts you as a Christian they will develop a curiosity about your faith. We can encourage this through asking good questions and sharing about God's place in our lives.

How do you build Curiosity?

- Live out our faith in a real way through vulnerability and transparency
- Ask a lot of questions but don't necessarily answer all of their questions
- Openly share about what God has done in your life
- Invite them into Christian community

You will recognize that a person is beginning to become curious when:

- They ask you questions about faith, for example: What works for you? How you find purpose? What do you seek in life?

- They develop a genuine interest in your story

Curiosity can be stopped if we only give out all the answers, live out their expectations of Christian stereotypes, or fail to engage with the big questions of the day. If you only ask questions but fail to provide your perspective you can turn the conversation into an interview instead of a two-way conversation.

3. From curiosity to opening up to change

Helping friends identify areas in their life where they want change.

It can be difficult to be honest about our struggles in life but everyone has them. As we are open about our struggles we encourage our friends to be open about theirs. This requires us to be vulnerable and challenge our friends to be honest about their lives.

How do you build Openness to change?

- Through gentleness and love
- Discover what they currently are pursuing for happiness and satisfaction
- Helping them identify what their worldview lacks to provide satisfaction
- Identifying what their “false hopes” are - things that they look to for satisfaction but ultimately leave them empty

You will recognize that a person is beginning to become open to change when:

- They ask you for advice
- They expose their brokenness to you
- They desire to learn from your life experiences
- They desire help

Openness can be stopped when we have a sense of superiority on our part or when we give answers that only point to actions and not our hearts. Be careful to not expect people to change their lives for Jesus before this point. Prematurely expecting them to change their worldview will lead to frustration for both of you.

4. From openness to seeking God

Helping people begin to intentionally seek Jesus.

After a person realizes that their secular pursuits cannot fully satisfy them they are in a position to seek ultimate satisfaction in God. When a person begins to seek earnestly after God we want to encourage them and provide resources to help.

How do you help someone seek God?

- Pray for and with your friend
- Provide answers and resources (sermons, books, Bible studies) that specifically address their false hopes
- Invite them to join a discussion group
- Challenge them to ask God to reveal himself in their life

You will recognize that a person is beginning to seek God when:

- They want to know more about God
- They are willing to study the Bible or join a group
- They want to continue meeting to “figure this out”

Often we can be one of the determining factors that stop someone from seeking God when we fail to follow up with our friend. It takes time and effort to be available to help our friends. A friend that is seeking God may need you at strange hours or have difficult questions. Take the time to be a support to your friend at this stage.

5. From seeking to following Jesus

Inviting friends and opening the door for them to follow Jesus.

The biggest barrier for many people in becoming followers of Jesus is that they are never invited to do so and don't know how to start a relationship with God. We have the honor to help our friends make the decision to follow Jesus.

How do you help someone make a decision to follow Jesus?

- Explain the Gospel message in a clear, easy to understand format
- Invite them to make a decision
- Explain the role of faith in the decision - they don't need to have everything figured out in their life
- Share how you made a decision to follow Jesus
- Ask them what is holding them back from following Jesus

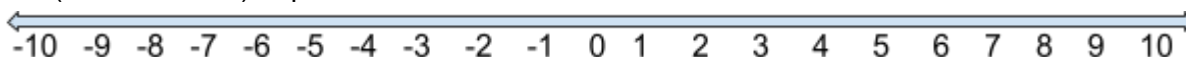
You will recognize that a person is ready to be invited to start following Jesus when:

- They read the Bible or pray on their own initiative
- They are are "counting the cost" of what will change in their life
- They talk about God as a person and not a concept

A person may not make a decision to follow Jesus if they are never asked if they want to or if they are asked too often. We want to follow the Holy Spirit and look for openings to invite them to follow Jesus without being pushy. Avoid pressuring your friend to make a decision and look to see how God is working in their life.

The Spiritual Scale

Everyone around us is on a spiritual journey. A useful method to evaluate someone's spiritual journey is to determine where they are on a scale from -10 (hostile against God or spiritual things) to +10 (new Christian). A person that is indifferent would be at 0.



Often when we want to talk with others about our faith we can get overwhelmed thinking we need to perfectly share the entire message of Jesus every time. Instead, think of how you can help someone increase positively on the scale by one or two numbers. For example, perhaps your friend is an atheist and is sure God doesn't exist. They may be at -7 on the scale. After a conversation together they agree that God *could* exist. You have helped them move up the scale to a -6 and closer to Jesus.

A spiritual journey is made up of lots of small steps or sometimes big leaps. Every interaction is an opportunity for a person to take one step closer to Jesus.

Important to remember:

- This is not always a linear process. Sometimes we meet people who are already curious but have never known or trusted a Christian.
- The Gospel can be a vital component of any of these stages
- Prayer and reliance on the Holy Spirit are important factors in all of these steps
- You could cover multiple thresholds in one meeting
- We don't always get to walk through all 5 thresholds with a person, but we always have an important role to play in helping them engage with the message of Jesus at different points in their spiritual journey



Biblical Basis for Evangelism

It is important not only that you know how to share your faith, but also that you know what the Bible says about evangelism and our part in it.

Answer the following questions before beginning the Bible Project:

1. What is your philosophy of evangelism?

2. Why is evangelism important?

Bible Project

Illustrate the following from scripture (Find 2-3 Bible passages to back up each of your points):

- What did Jesus teach about evangelism? What were His methods of evangelism?
(See these verses if you need some direction: Matt 9: 35-38, Matt 28:18-20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:45-48, John 20:21, Acts 1:8, Matt 17:20-23)
- What did the apostle Paul teach about evangelism? What methods did he use?
(See Romans 10:14-15, Acts 13:4, 13:14, 14:1 if you need some direction)
- What did the apostle Peter teach about evangelism? What methods did he use?
(See these verses if you need some direction: 1 Peter 2:11-12, 3:15-16, Acts 3:1, 5:12, 10:23-4)
- What did Jesus say to his disciples regarding evangelism when He sent them out?
(Matt 10:5-42 and any other verses you can find!)

The Gospels give us several examples of how Jesus related his message to individuals. In John 3 he has a personal interview with Nicodemus. In John 4 he has an extended conversation with the woman at the well. In Mark 10:17ff he talks with the rich young ruler and in Luke 19 he spends time over a meal with Zaccheus. In John 9 Jesus makes a special effort to speak a second time with the man born blind. Even on the cross in his own hour of supreme need Jesus had a personal word for the one seeking salvation (Luke 23:39ff).

In addition to these examples, the Gospels are full of short conversations between Jesus and those he ministered to, which indicates how extensive his personal ministry was. In the history of the early church we read how the disciples carried on this style of evangelism as well.

Peter and John reach out to a lame man (Acts 3:1ff). Philip is led to leave the multitudes to share the Good News to one man on a lonely desert road (Acts 8:26ff) and Paul is personally addressed by Christ himself (Acts 9).

Michael Green comments about the early Christians, *"They went everywhere spreading the good news which had brought joy, release and a new life to themselves. This must often have been not formal preaching, but the informal chattering to friends and chance acquaintances.... They went everywhere gossiping the gospel; they did it naturally, enthusiastically, and with the conviction of those who are not paid to say that sort of thing. Consequently they were taken seriously, and the movement spread..."* (Evangelism in the Early Church, p.173)

Next Read and answer the questions for each scripture reference:

Required: Mark 10:17-23, Matt 9:9-13, John 4:7-42

Optional (if you have time you can look up some of these): Luke 19:1-10, Luke 9:37-45, John 3:1-21

- Was this a planned or spontaneous conversation?
- Was this conversation to an individual or to a group?
- How did the "evangelist" initiate a conversation/teaching?
- How did the evangelist react to question/needs of the other person?
- What can we discover about the content of the message from the recorded dialogue?
- What differences in evangelistic approach do you see in these several instances?

After you have finished the Bible Project, answer the following:

1. Did your views on evangelism change? If so, how?

2. Why is evangelism important to you now?

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20 NIV



Communicating My Story

"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

But do this with gentleness and respect."

1 Peter 3:15

Your personal story is powerful. In a culture which often debates absolute truth, your experience with Jesus is undeniable. Those around you considering Christ want to see a real you, meeting a real Jesus, in real life. Take a look at Paul's testimony as it's recorded in the book of Acts and start to write down your own faith story. Try telling your story like Paul using the "Life Before", "The How" and the "Life After" Model. After you've finished share your 3-5 minute story with your coach for some feedback.

Paul's Life-Change Story: Acts 21:4-22:21

Life Before (Acts 22:1-5)

Paul describes what he thought and did before he became a believer.

Goal: to give specific, yet appropriate, examples of what your life was like (attitudes, needs, problems) before Christ.

Here is your opportunity to really paint a picture of what your life was like before Christ. How did you feel? What did you experience? What were your relationships like? Don't feel like you need to go into every aspect of your life, but pick one aspect that really summed-up your experience as a non-believer. Avoid Church-bashing or speaking unnecessarily disrespectful about others. Don't exaggerate, but be honest!

The "How" (Acts 22:6-11)

Paul explained how he became a believer.

Goal: to allow the listener to walk away with a clear understanding of how you became a Christian and how he too can trust Christ as the payment for his sins.

Ok, here's the good stuff. Now descriptively tell the story how you first came to know about Christ and how to have a personal relationship with God. Be careful not to use cliches and church language. Many non-believers might not understand terms such as "saved", "grace", "the gospel", etc. In fact, living in a strongly religious culture you may be using the same words that have completely different meanings! (For example: you may say you heard "the gospel" and the person across from you is thinking you heard about the first 4 books of the New Testament! Try saying "the message of Jesus" instead. Make sense?) Also, here's your opportunity to share the central gospel message in a few simple

phrases. Make sure the person with whom you're sharing could walk away knowing how they too could come to know Christ.

Life After (Acts 22:12-21)

Paul explained how becoming a believer changed his life.

Goal: to explain specific ways Christ has changed your life, to show that having Christ in your life really makes a difference.

Here's where you can share how Christ transformed your life. Try to avoid using general statements such as "I have so much peace now." Be specific. It is the Holy Spirit's responsibility to draw someone to Christ, but you want to communicate your story in such a way to show the listener that your life is different and more meaningful with Christ. Also, don't make it sound like everything's completely perfect now. (Because we all know it's not). Share how Christ meets you in your continual brokenness and how your life looks different with Him in it.

How to Prepare and Communicate Your Testimony

Primary Objective: to better relate the testimony to where the non-believer is.

As you begin your testimony consider:

- The level of understanding of spiritual words and concepts by your audience.
- The period of time right before your life really began to change.

Before I Accepted Christ (or gave Him complete control)

- What was my life like? How can I communicate this in a way that will relate to the non-Christian?
- What did my life revolve around the most? What did I get my security or happiness from? The non-Christian is relying on something external to give him happiness.
- How did those areas begin to let me down?

How I Received Christ (or gave Him complete control)

- When was the first time I heard the gospel? Or when was I exposed to the truth about Jesus?
- What were my initial responses?
- When did my attitude begin to turn around? Why?
- What were the final struggles that went through my mind just before I accepted Christ?
- Why did I go ahead and accept Christ?

After I Accepted Christ (or gave Him complete control)

- Specific changes and illustrations about the changes Christ has made:
- Why am I motivated differently now?

Helpful Hints:

- Write the way you speak; make the testimony yours.
- Practice this over and over until it becomes natural.
- Try to keep it within three minutes.

Getting Feedback

Share your story with your coach. Ask them to give you constructive feedback in the following areas:

1. TIME:

- Was it three to five minutes?

2. GOSPEL CONTENT:

- Was the gospel clearly communicated within the testimony? If not, what could be improved?

3. APPROPRIATE WORDS:

- What words were used that a non-Christian audience might not understand?
What words would someone who does not know English well not understand?

4. THEME:

- Were illustrations, themes or stories relevant and meaningful to the story being told?

5. OTHER:

- Are there other suggestions that could help the testimony be clearer or more polished?
- Was it appropriate for a non-Christian audience?
- Was it appropriate for a student in this culture?

6. PRESENTATION:

- Comment on body language, tone of voice, etc., that helped or distracted from the presentation.



Active Listening & Asking Good Questions

Our role, as His ambassadors, is to find out where God is already at work in someone's life. This involves discovering where their life story begins and, with the Holy Spirit's guidance, integrate the message of God's love and wonderful plan. Most of us know how to meet others and build friendships. We may know how to explain the Gospel message. However, it is art to actively listen and transition to this message of hope (in a natural way.)

As you ask questions – listen -- think -- “What is God doing in their life to draw them to Him?” Fight the urge to move to quickly! Make sure the Holy Spirit is leading you. Actively listen and ask further questions that allow them to open up their lives more. Then, as the Holy Spirit leads and gives insight where He seems to be working in their lives, move into sharing a part of your story that would connect in sharing His Story; it is source of hope for them.

It is time to practice some of the questions found in CoJourners Explorer and the art of asking and listening. There are two options: Windows of the Soul or the Power Tools. Read through both and select one that would most help you to learn how to actively listen and ask good questions.

1. Windows of the Soul

Is there a window in the room? Stand on the other side of the room and describe what you can see through it. Now move closer to the window. What do you see?

There is a principle at work – the closer you get the more you see. The same principle works within everyday conversations. Casual comments can often be windows to a person's soul. These are conversational clues. On the surface they appear to be casual comments, but if you investigate with questions, you discover there is much more to be seen.

Discuss

- Name examples of common conversational clues you might hear.
- Can you think of a recent example?
- What questions might you ask to explore a conversational clue?
- Read: Colossians 4:5. How could exploratory questions help you obey this instruction?

Action Plan

Pray that God will make you alert to comments that could be windows to the soul. Be prepared to ask probing questions to see what is behind the comment. Keep a journal or list of the conversations that result to share in your next meeting.

Summary

Investigate revealing comments to get below the surface.

2. Power Tools

Listening can reveal many insights into a person's spiritual journey. But through questions, you can discover so much more. Questions can guide conversations to deeper levels and into desired topics. Most conversations remain at a surface level. Questions have the power to take a conversation below the surface.

Discuss

- What questions do you like to use to discover where a person is spiritually?
- How do you think most people would respond to each of the following questions?
- What was your religious background as a child?
- What words would you use to describe your life spiritually?
- Do you have a spiritual belief of any kind?
- What don't you believe?
- Have you ever experienced God? If so, how?
- Has anything dramatic happened that has convinced you that God is real?
- Is there a heaven and a hell?
- If you were to die tonight, how sure are you that you would have eternal life? Why?
- What barriers keep you from trusting God?
- Brainstorm more good questions.

Action Plan

Choose a question to ask a number of acquaintances this week. Conversationally explore their answers with other questions. Journal your conversations to share and discuss at your next small group meeting.

Summary

Questions are the power tool to explore others' lives.



KNOWING GOD PERSONALLY

EACH ONE OF US HAS A STORY. A UNIQUE STORY. YET, BENEATH THE DIFFERENCES, IT SEEMS AS THOUGH THERE ARE SOME UNIVERSAL THEMES. POINTS OF INTERSECTION, LIKE THE WAY WE CONSTANTLY SEARCH FOR SOMETHING BEYOND OUR PRESENT EXPERIENCE.

COULD IT BE THAT OUR DESIRES IMPLY THAT THERE IS MORE THAN OUR CURRENT EXPERIENCE?
COULD IT BE THAT THESE DESIRES SHOW US THAT WE WERE CREATED TO KNOW GOD?

The following points explain how you can enter into a personal relationship with God >>

1

GOD LOVES YOU AND CREATED YOU TO KNOW HIM PERSONALLY. HE OFFERS A WONDERFUL PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE.

GOD'S LOVE

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

GOD'S PLAN

"And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." John 17:3

GOD'S LOVE

What prevents us from knowing God personally? >>

2

PEOPLE ARE SINFUL AND SEPARATED FROM GOD, SO WE CANNOT KNOW HIM PERSONALLY OR EXPERIENCE HIS LOVE AND PLAN.

OUR CONDITION

PEOPLE ARE SINFUL

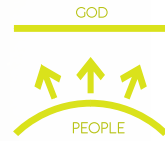
"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

WHAT IS SIN?

People were created to live in a relationship with God but because of our own stubborn self-will, we chose to go our own independent way and our relationship with God was broken. This self-will and the choice to satisfy our own desires, independent of God, is evidence of what the Bible calls sin. We show this attitude by being selfish, openly disobeying God, or by simply ignoring him.

PEOPLE ARE SEPARATED

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



This diagram illustrates that God is holy and perfect and we are sinful. There is a great gap between us.

The arrows illustrate that we continually try to reach God and establish a personal relationship with Him through our own efforts, such as a good life, philosophy, or religion, but we inevitably fail.

The third point explains the only way to bridge this gap >>

3

JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY PROVISION FOR OUR SIN. THROUGH HIM ALONE WE CAN KNOW GOD PERSONALLY AND EXPERIENCE GOD'S LOVE AND PLAN.

GOD'S RESPONSE

HE DIED IN OUR PLACE

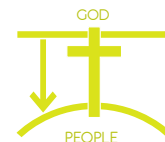
"...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD

"...Christ died for our sins...he was buried, he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures...he appeared to Peter, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred..." 1 Corinthians 15:3-6

HE IS THE ONLY WAY TO GOD

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" John 14:6



This diagram illustrates that God has bridged the gap that separates us from him, by sending his son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place to pay the penalty for our sins.

In ways our own efforts fail to achieve, Jesus Christ provides the way for us to be forgiven and reconciled to God.

It is not enough just to know these truths >>

4

WE MUST INDIVIDUALLY RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOUR AND LORD; THEN WE CAN KNOW GOD PERSONALLY AND EXPERIENCE HIS LOVE AND PLAN.

OUR RESPONSE

WE MUST RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST

"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12

WE RECEIVE JESUS THROUGH FAITH

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." Ephesians 2:8-9

Our own works or our own attempts at living a good life cannot lead us into a relationship with God. Rather, we experience the abundant life and relationship with him when we receive Jesus Christ by putting our trust in him.

WE RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST BY PERSONAL INVITATION

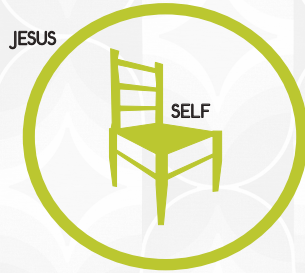
"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me." Revelation 3:20

Receiving Jesus Christ involves turning to God from self (repentance) and trusting Jesus Christ to come into our lives to forgive us of our sins and to make us what he wants us to be. Just to agree intellectually that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that he died on the cross for our sins is not enough. Nor is it enough to have an emotional experience. We receive Jesus Christ by faith, as an act of the will.

The following two circles represent two different kinds of lives >>

A LIFE WITHOUT JESUS CHRIST

Self is in the center; Jesus Christ is outside. There is an endless cycle of chasing after satisfaction and solutions independent of God, only to find our efforts fail.



A LIFE ENTRUSTED TO JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ is in the center, and self yields to him. People like this have entrusted their lives to Jesus Christ. They have been forgiven and experience a fulfilling, satisfying and loving relationship with God.



WHICH CIRCLE BEST DESCRIBES YOUR LIFE?

WHICH CIRCLE WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE REPRESENT YOUR LIFE?

TWO KINDS OF LIVES

The following explains how you can receive Jesus Christ >>

YOU CAN RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST RIGHT NOW BY FAITH THROUGH PRAYER

God knows your heart and is not as concerned with your words as he is with the attitude of your heart. The following is a suggested prayer: (Prayer is simply talking to God)

Lord Jesus,
I want to know you personally.
I'm sorry for going my own way and trying to find my own path.
Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins.
I open the door of my life and ask you to be my Saviour and Lord.
Thank you for forgiving me of my sins and giving me eternal life.
Take control of my life.
Make me the kind of person you want me to be.

DOES THIS PRAYER EXPRESS THE DESIRE OF YOUR HEART?

IF IT DOES, PRAY THIS PRAYER RIGHT NOW, AND JESUS CHRIST WILL COME INTO YOUR LIFE, AS HE PROMISED.

PRAYER

How can you be sure Jesus Christ is in your life? >>

DID YOU RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST INTO YOUR LIFE?

According to His promise in Revelation 3:20, where is Jesus Christ right now in relation to you? Jesus Christ said that he would come into your life and be your Saviour and friend. Would he mislead you? On what authority do you know that God has answered your prayer? (The trustworthiness of God himself and his Word.)

THE BIBLE PROMISES ETERNAL LIFE TO ALL WHO RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST

"And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life." 1 John 5:11-13

THANK GOD OFTEN THAT JESUS CHRIST IS IN YOUR LIFE, AND THAT HE WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU (HEBREWS 13:5). YOU CAN KNOW ON THE BASIS OF HIS PROMISE THAT JESUS CHRIST LIVES IN YOU AND THAT YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE FROM THE VERY MOMENT YOU INVITE HIM IN.

An important reminder...

DO NOT DEPEND ON HOW YOU FEEL

We rely on God and his promises in the Bible, not our feelings. Feelings are valid and important, but they do not determine what is true. A follower of Jesus lives by trusting in the reliability of God himself and the Bible.

Flying in a jet can illustrate the relationship between fact (God and his word), faith (our trust in God and his word), and feelings (a result of our faith and obedience) (John 14:21). To fly, we must place our faith in the trustworthiness of the jet and pilot who flies it.

Our feelings of confidence or fear do not affect the ability of the jet to transport us, though they do affect how much we enjoy the trip. In the same way, we as Christians do not depend on feelings or emotions, but we rely on God and what he has said in his word (the Bible).

ASSURANCE

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU PUT YOUR TRUST IN JESUS CHRIST?

IF YOU HAVE INVITED JESUS CHRIST INTO YOUR LIFE BY FAITH, AS AN ACT OF YOUR WILL, MANY THINGS HAVE HAPPENED INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

Jesus Christ came into your life (Revelation 3:20 and Colossians 1:27)

All your sins have been forgiven (Colossians 1:13-14)

You became a child of God (John 1:12)

You received eternal life (John 5:24) and new power to enable you to live a new, transformed life. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

You began the great adventure for which God created you. (John 10:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Several logs burn brightly together, but put one aside and its fire goes out. In the same way, God doesn't intend you to live the Christian life in isolation. When you invite Jesus Christ into your life you become a part of God's family. This community, the church, is at the heart of God's eternal plan. Find a church where Jesus is worshipped and where the Bible is taught.

HOW TO GROW AS A FOLLOWER OF JESUS

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST GROWS AS WE TRUST HIM WITH EVERY DETAIL OF OUR LIVES. THIS TRUST IS DEVELOPED THROUGH:

- G Going to God in prayer daily. (John 15:7)
- R Reading the Bible daily. (Psalms 1:1-3) Begin with the gospel of John.
- O Obeying God moment by moment. (John 14:21)
- W Walking in the power of the Holy Spirit. (Colossians 2:6; Ephesians 3:14-21, 5:18) Remember your walk with Jesus Christ depends on what you allow him to do in and through you.
- T Telling others about Jesus Christ by our life and words. (Matt 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Ephesians 4:1)
- H Having fellowship (community) with other Christians. (Hebrews 10:25; Acts 2:42-47)

RELATIONSHIP



DID YOU ASK JESUS TO TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE?
VISIT P2C.COM/NEXTSTEPS TO DEVELOP THIS NEW RELATIONSHIP

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT KNOWING GOD?
VISIT P2C.COM/KNOWINGGOD TO EXPLORE & ASK QUESTIONS

WE WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS & QUESTIONS AT ANY POINT ALONG THE WAY
QUESTIONS@P2C.COM

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THE HEART AND CHALLENGE OF AGAPE

WE ARE A MOVEMENT

Faith that inspires, hope that acts. Share the love, the truth, and the forgiveness of God in the name of Jesus.

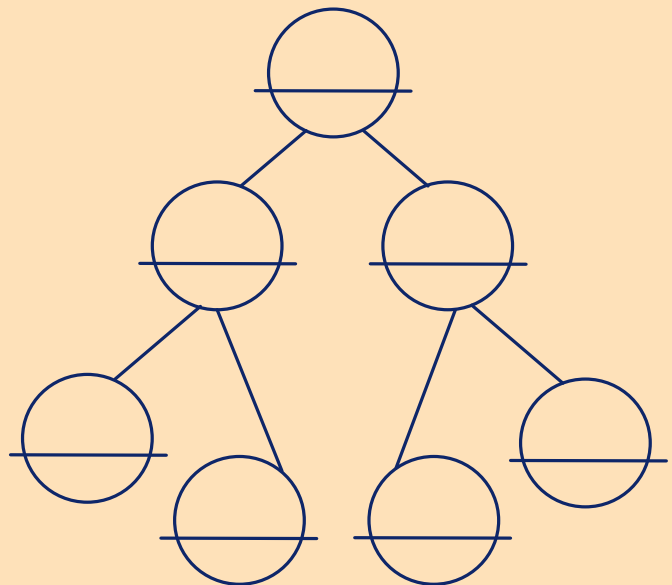
Matthew 28: 18-20

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

**WIN.
BUILD.
SEND.**

2 Timothy 2:2

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.



GET INVOLVED

WE ARE A MOVEMENT: Faith that inspires, hope that acts. Share the love, the truth, and the forgiveness of God in the name of Jesus

A Guide has:

A heart for God: They follow God in their daily lives, spend time listening to His voice in prayer and in His word, and they attend a local church.

A heart for growth: They seek every opportunity to God more deeply, to serve Him faithfully with new steps of faith.

A heart for evangelism: They spend their time sharing the Gospel and encouraging others to be disciples of Jesus. They encourage others to share the life of Jesus with others, too.

"A guide is someone that you would follow where you wouldn't want to go alone."

MY COMMITMENT:

PRAY - I will pray for you while you trust God to work in you at your university

GROW - I will walk together with you to help you grow in your relationship with God

COACHING - I will accompany you in this journey to help you overcome your obstacles

EQUIP - I will help equip you with resources to communicate the Gospel clearly

CONNECT - I will give you the opportunity to meet other university students that follow God to reach their friends with the Gospel

YOUR COMMITMENT:

PRAY - I will pray that God brings people to have a relationship with Him at my university

GROW - I will meet regularly with my coach to be trained and encouraged

COACHING - I will spend time weekly sharing Jesus with those I don't yet know

EQUIP - I will walk together with other students in their spiritual journeys

CONNECT - I will take advantage of the various opportunities to go to conferences or retreats with other students of Agape