



# Follow Jesus

BOOK 1

Council Road Baptist Church

# Follow Jesus - Book 1

This book belongs to:

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Date I started:

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Date I finished:

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A prayer for my time using this book:

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*“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’”*

**Genesis 1:26a**

*“Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”*

**1 Peter 2:10**

In 2023, Council Road celebrated 40 years at the corner of 30th and Council. There have been lots of moments worthy of celebrating. The ground-breaking of the first building, the hiring of all of our pastors, Big Weekends, VBS, the opening of the Cube. All these moments are impactful in Council Road’s history. Even if the amazing events and moments were removed, you would still be able to remember Council Road. It would not change who we are, and what is essential to this body of believers.

Council Road is defined by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the most essential aspect of who we are as a gathered, committed group of Christians. It is the reason we call ourselves Christians. The Gospel makes us who we are. This year, we are committed to make the Gospel the central theme in our lives. We will also work through 24

essential doctrines, disciplines and virtues that flow from the truth of the Gospel. We know that the Gospel and these 24 essentials will maintain Council Road biblical fidelity long into the future and push back darkness in our neighborhoods and cities.

Throughout our study, we will cover four major topics. Book one will give light to the Gospel, and how it is the lens in which we read the Bible, see the world and see ourselves. We will see how the grand narrative of Scripture, and the heart of discipleship are rooted in Christ’s sacrificial life and death. Book two will cover Eight Essential Doctrines. Our goal is to be planted deep in the truth of God’s word so that when we see or hear something contrary to the truth, we can not only name it but also give a better, biblical answer. Book three will cover the Eight Essential Disciplines that we see in Scripture. After this book, we hope that the disciplines of God don’t seem like a burden to carry but rather a delight in which to indulge. Book four Covers the Eight Essential Virtues we hold fast to as a church. These virtues are the fruits of the Spirit. As we study, we will grow in our love for God and for one another at Council Road.

We are a people of God, created in the image of God, to reflect his glory to the world. We hope that you find these studies as deeply impactful as we did in preparing them. Thank you, members of Council Road, for your faithfulness in the past, present and future. Thank you for pushing your pastors and staff toward the Gospel every time we are together. We look forward to this journey alongside you!

*– The staff at Council Road Baptist Church*

## How to Use This Book

One of the primary goals of these studies to help us all see the need for community. To use these books for all they are worth, find a group, get plugged in and walk through them together. We recommend considering these ideas below as you begin your study.

- Find some time to read each weekday. Whether it is morning, evening or over your lunch break, the effort will be worth it!
- Read with someone. This doesn't mean together out loud. Instead, have a person or group of people to communicate with regularly about this book.
- Read the passages first. While it might be tempting to read the devotional before the passage, we strongly advise starting each study with the intake of God's word before the words of very fallible pastors.
- Write anywhere and everywhere. These books are yours, and we want you to use them!



Week 1

# The Seed: The Gospel

DAY 1

# The First Seed

Genesis 1-2

What is the most important thing about you? Have you been asked that before? Maybe you have never considered it. Take a few moments and reflect in your heart on what makes you unique. What gives you value and purpose? What is the most important thing about you? Today we will look at the first two chapters of the Bible that lay the groundwork for our value. The value is this: All people were created in the image of God and were created to display his glory to the entire world.

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## Questions for Reflection

1.) What sticks out to you about the nature of God in the creation account?

2.) What does it mean to bear God's image? How does God command Adam to do so?

3.) Does image-bearing happen today? How might Matthew 28:16-20 reflect this?

4.) What does it mean for men and women to be one flesh?

5.) Chapter 2 ends with the man and woman experiencing no shame. Why is this significant? What does shame do to our relationships with each other? And God?

6.) In what ways do you see the gospel in this passage?

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The peace and harmony in the first two chapters of the Bible should give us a hope for heaven. Tomorrow we will see what happens when sin enters the world. The Bible is an unfolding story of God getting us back to the garden again. He will surely do it. For extra encouragement read Revelation 22:1-7.

DAY 2

## The New Seed

Genesis 3

Today we will read the saddest and paradoxically, the most hopeful book in the entire Bible. Sin enters the world through Adam and Eve's disobedience, but first the Gospel and God's plan to redeem the world through a new and perfect man becomes clear. I would encourage you to read slowly, to enter into Adam and Eve's shoes and to find solace in the beautiful promise of redemption found in 3:15.

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### Questions for Reflection

1.) What tactics does Satan use to tempt Eve? Is it similar in your own life? How can we fight against this?

2.) Eve commits a sin of commission (acting on the desire), and Adam commits a sin of omission (doing nothing to stop what is happening). How might these play out in our lives?

3.) Is God to just kick them out of the garden? Why or why not?

4.) Genesis 3:15 is called the protoevangelium (First Gospel). How do the promise of the head of the serpent being crushed, and the offspring of Eve triumphing give us hope?

5.) Even after sin, how does God care for his people?

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Spoiler Alert! Jesus is the long-awaited seed of Eve that will crush the serpent's head. However, he doesn't do that in an earthly battle, but instead by giving up his life for those who would trust in him. This theme will run throughout the whole Bible. God's people will always be looking for the seed of the woman to crush Satan and take us back to the garden. He is here now and calls us to put our full trust in him. Take five minutes as you close and surrender control to the Lord and ask that you would place more and more trust in him.

## DAY 3

# The Promises of the Seed (Part 1)

Noahic Covenant – Genesis 6:18-22; 8:20-17

Abrahamic Covenant – Genesis 12:1-9; 15:1-21

The Bible is full of covenants. Covenants help demonstrate the faithfulness of God in the middle of human sin. So while we try to understand how we fit into the narrative of Scripture, it is important to also see God's continued faithfulness to his people. Covenants help us get a large view of what God has been doing over time, and how he will remain faithful to us. Genesis 1 gives the structure for each covenant we see in the Scripture. In fact, many people believe that Genesis 1:26-31 is the first covenant.

As we look at three different covenants, the goal is to see how God has been faithful to his people despite their disobedience. He wants to use them and pledges himself to them. Covenants have three key features, the promise of land, seed (or offspring) and dominion or authority. As you read, look for these key features and also look for how each of these covenants foreshadow the good news of Christ's sacrifice for us.

The covenants occur in several places in the Old Testament and are traditionally named after the person with whom God makes the covenant. Knowing these will be helpful as we walk through the biblical passages. Adamic/Adam (Genesis 1-2), Noahic/Noah (Genesis 6-9), Abrahamic (Genesis 12-15), Mosaic/Moses (Exodus 19-23), Davidic/

David (2 Samuel 7) and finally the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31). Although these are the passages in which you find the covenantal language, it is all throughout Scripture, and knowing these will give the Bible a clarity as we read.

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### Questions for Reflection

- 1.) What are the features of promise we see in today's covenant? (Land, Seed and Dominion)
- 2.) Are there any things that sound similar in each covenant? What are they? Does anything remind you of passages we have studied before?
- 3.) How do these covenants help you see God's faithfulness in the middle of human sin?



4.) What do the passages today teach you about God's plan for redemption of sinful people?

DAY 4

## The Promises of the Seed (Part 2)

Mosaic Covenant – Exodus 19:1-7; Exodus 34  
Davidic Covenant – 2 Samuel 7:1-29

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God makes promises, and he keeps them. He has been doing this since Genesis 1. For more details on covenants, check out this article: [www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-biblical-covenants](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-biblical-covenants).

**Bonus Reading:** Review Genesis 1 to see the Adamic Covenant and read Genesis 17 for more details on the Abrahamic covenant.

As we continue to walk through the covenants God makes with his people, it might be important to understand what exactly God means when he establishes a covenant with his people. A covenant is not a contract. Although they share many similarities, they are different in purpose and function. A contract enters two parties into a predetermined agreement. We all have a contract with our cell phone provider. You give me service, and I pay you for that service. If either of us break that contract, then the other party is free to do whatever they wish. It is terminated.

The covenants we have been studying differ. God is the initiator of these covenants, and it is similar to a contract where both parties agree to certain guidelines or obediences to maintain the covenant. The difference, however, is that God is the sustainer of the covenant. In all circumstances, man falls short on his end of the covenant, but God does not. God is continually faithful to his end of the covenant and has a plan, through his son's obedience, to even uphold our end of the covenant as well.

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## Questions for Reflection

- 1.) What are the features of promise we see in today's covenant? (Land, Seed and Dominion)
- 2.) Are there any things that sound similar in each covenant? What are they? Does anything remind you of passages we have studied before?
- 3.) How does the Mosaic Covenant call us to God's grace and faith-filled obedience?
- 4.) How does 2 Samuel 7 give hope to God's people? How might it give hope to us?

5.) What gospel pictures do we see in today's covenants?

6.) Why might these covenants help us see Jesus as our prophet (or new and better Moses) and King (or new and better David)?

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It might be easy to forget where we started this week. We started in the garden with God and his people in a perfect relationship. Can you still see God's plan of redemption through the seed of Eve? The new and better Adam coming to save us all, he is here, we can know and trust him today.

DAY 5

## The New Covenant

Jeremiah 31:31-37 | Optional: Deuteronomy 30

Before we get started in the book of Jeremiah, it will be helpful for us to understand the context of the covenant we will read today. Jeremiah is a prophet and has been called to communicate to God's people that there will be coming judgment from God for their disobedience to the covenants and their worship of idols. This judgment is revealed to be the nation of Babylon who will take them into exile.

Jeremiah also communicates that God will make a way for all his people to be reconciled back to God. In the passage you just read (or are about to read), he says that God will put the law in the hearts and minds of his people. This is a reference to Deuteronomy 30 which would be helpful to read. Instead of the law of God on tablets, he will place it in their hearts. God also promises a forgiveness of sins for a nation stuck in habitual sin. The distinguishing mark of the people in this covenant is that God calls them his people, and they know God.

This is the same Covenant that Jesus mentions at the Lord's Supper (Luke 20:22). Jesus is the one who is able to forgive sins because he stood on our side of the covenant. His obedience has freed us, and we can now know and delight in God because he has satisfied the judgment of God. "And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3).

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### Questions for Reflection

- 1.) Does the rest of the Bible reflect Jeremiah 31? If so, how? Can you think of any examples?
- 2.) What impact does the forgiveness in this passage have on you? How does that help us obey?
- 3.) When God forgives, he says he will no longer remember our sin (v.34). Is that easy or hard to believe? How can you rest today in his forgiveness?
- 4.) What delight comes from simply knowing God and being part of his people?
- 5.) How does Jesus fulfill this passage? Why does it matter that this passage and the new testament connect?



Reflect on this week. Maybe you need to review certain passages. As you read, consider the mercy and grace of God to be faithful to his people over time. Consider simply thanking Christ for establishing this covenant through his blood. Consider the people in Jeremiah and see the wonderful saving action that God takes on behalf of sinful man.

*“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”*

**Titus 3:3-7**

DAY 6

## Growth Day

### Bible Verse

*“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”*

**Jeremiah 31:33**

### Family Devotional

**Recite the Memory Verse as a family.**

A covenant is a strong promise made between two people that has a strong meaning. The Bible is full of covenants and they help show us the faithfulness of God, even when people aren't faithful to Him. This helps to prove how much God loves us.

#### **Parents Ask Kids:**

What does it mean to keep a promise, no matter what happens?

#### **Kids Ask Parents:**

Can you name three covenants made by God and what they mean?

## Student Growth Questions

### **Confront Your Sin:**

Jesus's desire is for us to “*abide*” in Him (John 15:4). To fully abide in Christ, we must confront the sin in our life, confess it, and turn from it (repent). Spend some time asking God and yourself, “Is there any unconfessed sin in my life?” Talk to your Heavenly Father and ask Him for forgiveness.

### **Confront Your Disciplines:**

Reflect on this past week. How have you practiced the disciplines of your faith? Ask God which of the following disciplines He would have you practice more intentionally over the next week: Worship, Bible Study, Community, Witnessing, Serving, Praying, Giving, Fasting.

### **Confront Your Doctrine:**

Doctrine is a big word that simply means “What you believe.” In what ways has this week's reading about God's faithfulness through covenants shaped your Doctrine of God? How has it shaped the doctrine of Jesus? How has it shaped the doctrine of who you are?

## Adult Growth Questions

Before you begin working through these questions, spend a few minutes praying together. We suggest that you pray using the PRAY acronym below.

### **Praise:**

How does the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31) help us currently give worship to the Lord? How do you demonstrate worship in your daily life?

### **Repentance:**

How do the covenants we have studied this week reveal our need for confession and dependence on the Lord?

### **Ask:**

Was there anything this week that the Lord challenged you to ask/pray for? If so, what is it?

### **Yield:**

How does our desire to control God's plan for us impact our lives? How does the Bible give us a lens to see our need for His control?

What have you been most challenged by this week? How can you respond in obedience to this conviction?

# Group Liturgy

## Opening Scripture

*“I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:*

*‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’  
‘O death, where is your victory?  
O death, where is your sting?’*

*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”*

**1 Corinthians 15:50-58**

## Prayer

Lord give us a clear picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ today. Reveal our sin and help us turn and trust you more. Note for Group leaders: Consider praying for things in the church, community, and in your group as well during this time.

## Group Confession

*“Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered.  
Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no  
iniquity,  
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.  
For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.  
For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;  
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah  
I acknowledged my sin to you,  
and I did not cover my iniquity;  
I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’  
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.”*

## Reader:

Today we come as your people ready to confess our sin to you. We confess today for the moments this week when we chose our own way instead of your righteous and good desires for us. We confess today for the moments where gossip and slander seemed easier than grace and mercy. The moments when the illusion of control seemed easier than trust in you. We confess that we are a people who often wander from your truth and from your desires for us.

If our life was left in our hands Lord we would make a mess of it and miss the beauty in all the wonderful things you do. We confess that we cannot make it on our own and we need you. Help us Lord.

## Group Assurance

### Reader:

God's people let's be reminded of this truth for all those who put their trust in the Lord.

*"Many are the sorrows of the wicked,  
but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in  
the Lord.*

*Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous,  
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!"*

### Reader:

Thank you God that your steady love sustains us and surrounds us. We praise you that we can be glad because of the sacrifice of your son that has gifted us relationship with you for eternity.

## Teaching Passages

### Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ephesians 2:1-10

The covenant Jesus brings is good news for all.

## Optional Group Questions

- What are the covenants we read about this week? How do they relate to the seed and genesis 3:15? What do they reveal to us about God's plan to redeem the brokenness of the world?
- In this week's reading we tracked the seed of Eve all the way to Jesus. Why is it important that Jesus be the seed of Eve?
- Read Jeremiah 31:31-34 together as a group. What are your initial thoughts? What is this passage about?
- Now read Ephesians 2:1-10. Are there similarities? Differences?
- What do these passages reveal about man? God? Christ?
- Ephesians 2:9-10 ends with a charge. What is that charge?
- Why would Paul put the call to good works after the initial explanation of the gospel?

## Closing Prayer/Benediction

*May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,  
guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

**Philippians 4:7**

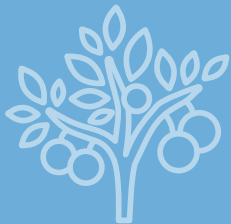
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### Teaching Notes

*Confession and Assurance is not something that we normally do at CRBC so I want help us see that confession of sin is something that is done not to shame us, but to elevate the grace and mercy of our savior. This might be helpful to share with your group before you lead them in a confession and assurance.*

# Sermon Notes





Week 2

# The Soil: Community

DAY 1

# The Soil of Community: The Church

Matthew 13:1-23

Let's talk about the "soil," and what it means in the context of the Church corporately as well as individually. Last week, we discussed the "seed" in relation to the Gospel, and we want to carry that agricultural metaphor forward in this week's study of the soil. For a seed to germinate and have the ability to grow and flourish, it must be placed in the right environment, or the right soil, for that to occur. We are going to look at a passage that many of us know as "The Parable of the Sower," but let's look at it as a parable about the soil. We see the seed being sown and landing in four different environments of which only one seed was in an environment where it could flourish and "bear fruit." This passage can be seen from the personal perspective of the human heart and its response to the Gospel, but I want us to explore it from an environmental perspective. A healthy "soil" is necessary for spiritual growth.

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## Questions for Reflection

1.) Read Matthew 13:1-23. What are the different soils you see represented?

2.) What are the environmental differences in the path, the rocky ground, the thorn-filled ground and the good soil?

3.) Read Acts 2:42-47. What are the different attributes you notice in this fellowship of believers (what are the things that make this good soil?)

4.) What are the thoughts that come to mind when you hear the phrase "living in biblical community"?

5.) What are some of the benefits we see by living inside a community of believers: "the good soil" vs. living our lives outside a community of believers?

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A seed that isn't in the soil will never germinate and develop into a fruitful plant. It just remains a seed. God created us to live in community with each other because it is not good for us to be alone (see Genesis 2:18). Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop in their book, *The Compelling Community*, use a phrase, "Supernatural Community is God's Plan for the Church." He states that the supernatural depth and breadth of community make the glory of an

invisible God to be visible. When we live our lives together in the context of biblical community, we make each other better. In community, we find ourselves in an environment where we can be challenged to grow deeper. We live life together, and in doing so, we learn from each other all in the context of God's word. Reflect on the quote from Larry Crabb in his book titled *Becoming a True Spiritual Community: A profound Vision of What the Church Can Be*: A central task of community is to create a place that is safe enough for the wall to be torn down, safe enough for each of us to own and reveal our brokenness. Only then can the power of connecting do its job. Only then can community be used of God to restore our souls. Are you living in that type of community? If not, why not start today?

DAY 2

## The Church as a Body

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

The Church is a body, and it's important to be a healthy body so we can be an effective body. Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church is filled with both correction and encouragement. The church of Corinth was attempting to grow and expand in a Greco-Roman culture influenced by god/goddess worship. It was also a major port city which meant there was a diversity in culture where everyone and every culture was struggling to have its own identity, its own individualism and its own place. The goddess of Corinth was Aphrodite, the Greek goddess associated with lust, pleasure, passion and sexual immorality. Paul's letter speaks to the church, "the body," about the division and cultural compromise they were experiencing in the church, and how they can only be, to use our terms, good soil for growth if they remained unified in Christ. The church in Corinth was struggling with unity in a culture of individualism. As you read about the different struggles that the church in Corinth was dealing with, think about our culture and the struggles that the church must learn to navigate all while remaining unified as one body of believers if we are to be good soil.

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## Questions for Reflection

- 1.) Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26. What are your immediate thoughts about how the body should function? What is the overarching theme you hear within this passage?
- 2.) Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-14. What is Paul appealing for in verse 10? In what ways do you see a desire for individualism being played out in verses 12-14?

3.) Read 1 Corinthians 3:16-17. In verse 16, the phrase, “Do you not know that” (“you all” or as Okies are familiar with “y’all”) is the better translation. We often read that passage only from a singular understanding. How is the understanding of this verse different when we see “you” in a plural perspective as the body of Christ?

4.) Reflect on a time when you had an injury or an illness and part of your body wasn’t functioning as it should. How did that make your whole body feel and function?

5.) Read verse 13. Since we are all in one Spirit and baptized into one body, how should this be reflected in how we see ethnicity and social class in the church?

6.) Read verse 20. What is the key takeaway in this verse?

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In the church, there must be unity in the midst of diversity. Paul’s letter to the church in Corinth is as relevant today as for the church then. We live in a society that is self-centered, ethnically divided, economically divided, politically divided and many times denominationally divided. The church must be a place where division is not allowed to exist. Division is the enemy of unity and oneness. Paul says in verses 25-26 that there may be no division in the body, so that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Reflect for a moment and ask yourself the following questions: What role do I play in the body? Have I created any division due to my attitude or actions? Do I need to forgive someone or ask someone to forgive me? Now you (y’all) are the body of Christ and individually members of it (1 Corinthians 12:27). Living as a family is tough, and I believe this is why Paul gave us 1 Corinthians 13, “The Love Chapter,” to remind us it is only possible when we love each other.

DAY 3

# The Church United

## Romans 12

As we continue our study on The Soil of Community, Romans 12 is a great place to get insight that living as a community within the church has always been a challenge. We need to have historical context to really appreciate what Paul is writing to the church in Rome, and the struggles they are having. Paul probably wrote Romans around A.D. 57 while in Corinth. Prior to this, the Roman historian, Suetonius, recorded that the Roman emperor, Claudius, expelled the Jews from Rome in A.D. 49 due to the strife caused by the Jewish Christians. Because of the Jewish Christians being kicked out of Rome, the Gentile Christians would have assumed the leadership roles of the churches in Rome. In A.D. 54, Claudius was murdered by poisoning. After his death, you see the Jewish Christians start to move back into Rome. The tension occurs within the church when law-observing Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians who lived free of the restrictions in the Mosaic law are combined. Imagine what it was like to have this blended family of believers, and this is the church family to whom Paul writes his letter.

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### Questions for Reflection

1.) Read Romans 12 with the above context in mind. What verses is Paul referencing regarding the tension within the church in Rome?

2.) In what verses of Romans 12 is Paul speaking to the individual? In what verses is he speaking to the church as a whole?

3.) In 12:9-21, Paul begins by saying, “Let your love be genuine,” and “Love one another with brotherly affection.” He then gives several examples of what that action looks like. Write down the list of things Paul says “to do or be.” Review that list and be honest on how you are doing in some of those areas.

4.) Read verse 14. Why is this verse so hard to live out? How can verses 19-21 help us live out verse 14?

5.) Read verse 1. What is your spiritual act of worship? How does that impact how you can live in a “blended family” within the church and maybe in your life?

6.) Read verse 2. What allows us to not conform but be transformed? How do we renew our minds?

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We are not so different from the church that Paul is writing to in Rome. We are a blended family. We come from different backgrounds politically, socially, and we have a style of preferred worship or preaching styles, or maybe even a preferred dressing style. If we are not careful, we will allow those things to divide us, and when the church is divided, it is not good soil for growth to occur. When we see the importance of being a living sacrifice and to not conform, but be transformed, by the renewal of the mind, we can live as a blended family. When we are truly transformed, we learn to love in a genuine way, and in doing that, we love each other. That love is lived out in our patience, our hospitality, our harmony, our humility and yes, how we treat those with whom we don't agree. When we understand the gift of grace in our lives and allow the reality that we were deserving of death, in fact were already dead in our sin, but God extended His favor to us, that is what allows us to overlook the things that do not carry eternal significance and to live in unity as a blended family. May we be good soil where each of us can flourish and be fruitful.

DAY 4

## What Believers Do Together

Colossians 3:1-17

Have you ever had the experience of being in a crowd but felt isolated or alone? The Church must always be a place, to borrow a phrase from Willow Creek Community Church, where nobody stands alone. As we continue to explore the “soil of community,” the Church, we should keep in mind that for a “seed” to develop, grow and produce fruit, it must be planted in good soil. Without the soil, a seed just remains a seed. We must also be reminded that the soil of community is the environment God has designed for us to learn both orthodoxy (“correct opinion” or as we would say, doctrine) and orthopraxy (“correct practice” or doing the right things as it relates to living out our faith). Let’s take a look at how we are to interact with each from Paul’s letter to the church in Colossae. Take a moment before you begin, be still and calm your heart and mind. Pray and ask God to clear your mind and allow you to focus on today’s passage. Ask Him to reveal truth to you and to allow you to be changed to look more like Jesus today than you did yesterday.

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### Questions for Reflection

1.) Read Colossians 3:1-17. What are the key words, thoughts or phrases that jump out at you? How do those impact you personally? How do they impact the church corporately?

2) Verses 3:1-4 tell us to seek the things that are above and to set your minds on things that are above. What are the things above we are to seek and set our minds on? When we do that what is the result?

3) Look for the phrases “one another” and “each other.” What is the thought or message surrounding each of those phrases? If we lived out those words, how would it impact the church as a whole?

4) Look at the phrase “put on” or “clothe yourself.” What are the things we are to “put on”? What happens when we put these things on?

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When we seek and set our minds on things above, we are reminded that our lives are hidden in Christ, and we have the security of knowing our future. When we put to death all the things that are not of God and put on things such as compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, and most of all love, something incredible happens. We begin to function as one body, and when we function as one body, the natural result is that the word will be used to teach and encourage one another. When we come together, we will worship by singing of psalms,

hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in our hearts. That is the type of community that people will flourish in. This happens, Paul says, when whatever we do, in word or deed, we do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Our understanding of Jesus and what he has done in us, for us and through us, informs the community that we create. May our community be one that reflects His glory.

DAY 5

# The Need to Meet Together

Hebrews 10:19-25

The past four days, we have been exploring in Scripture the concept of the “soil,” and how it represents the Church and the community that is found within the church. We have looked at the Church as a community of good soil where we can flourish. We have seen how the Church is a body, and each one of us plays a vital part (role) in that body. We have seen how Scripture instructs the Church to be united in everything it does, and that it is done together, encouraging each other along the way. Let’s take a final look at the soil of community found within the Church. There are certain things we are encouraged to do together as a community. Today’s passage begins with the phrase “Therefore,” and we must ask ourselves why it is there. Read the passage from the perspective of knowing Christ’s sacrifice was once and for all people. This should give us both confidence and hope as we journey together as a community of faith. Take a moment and pause, quiet your heart and mind, and pray and ask God to show you something in your study time.



## Questions for Reflection

1.) Read Hebrews 10:19-25. In verses 22-24, what are the things we are encouraged to do?

2.) What is the “how to” of each of these things we are encouraged to do?

3.) Why are we able to draw near, hold fast and stir up one another?

.4) Verses 24-25 state we are to stir up one another to love and good works. It also says we not to neglect meeting together. Why is meeting together such a critical part of what we see in verses 24-25?

5.) What is “the Day” referenced in verse 25?



As Christ followers, we have this incredible hope found in Christ and his sacrificial work on the cross, his blood shed once and for all. He became our High Priest, offering the sacrifice that takes away sin, and then he sat down at the right hand of God to symbolize the work was complete. Therefore, we have an assurance as individuals and as a community to have this incredible relationship with the living God through His son Jesus. This passage says we are to draw near, hold fast and consider how to stir up



one another to love and good works. This happens best when we are TOGETHER! We live in a world that is based on a philosophy of secular humanism—a philosophy based on human reason, ethics and naturalism, all the while rejecting religion and/or God as a basis of morality and decision making. We need each other, and we need to be “with” each other to encourage one another as we see the Day drawing near. Community is where we learn, experience, encourage and give examples to our children on how believers are to live with each other. A place where no one stands alone, a place where we can love and be loved, serve and be served and to know and be known, the good soil of community where we can grow and be fruitful.

DAY 6

## Growth Day

### Bible Verse

*“Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.”*

**Romans 12:10**

### Family Devotional

**Recite the Memory Verse as a family.**

We all have a part to play within the church body. It is important that we work with each other and help each other grow with Christ. This is what it means to be in community with one another.

### Parents Ask Kids:

How can you help your friends grow closer to God?

### Kids Ask Parents:

What role do you have in the church body, and how do you do it?

## Student Growth Questions

### **Confront Your Sin:**

Jesus' desire is for us to “*abide*” in Him (John 15:4). To fully abide in Christ, we must confront the sin in our lives, confess it and turn from it (repent). This week, we learned about the importance of unity in our community. Forgiveness is an essential ingredient to unity. Spend some time asking the Lord if there is anyone within your community to whom you need to extend forgiveness. Is there anyone from whom you need to ask forgiveness?

### **Confront Your Disciplines:**

Reflect on this past week. How have you practiced the disciplines of your faith? Ask God how you have been doing in the discipline of community? Reflect on the health of the people with whom you surround yourself.

### **Confront Your Doctrine:**

Doctrine is a big word that simply means “what you believe.” In what ways has this week’s reading about the need for a healthy community shaped your view of the church as a whole? How has it shaped your view of the Trinity? How has it shaped your view of our student ministry?

## Adult Growth Questions

Before you begin working through these questions, spend a few minutes praying together. We suggest that you pray using the PRAY acronym below.

### **Praise:**

Do you have deep community? In what ways has the Lord blessed you?

### **Repentance:**

Are there areas in which you hide from community? If so, why and when?

### **Ask:**

How can you grow in vulnerability in community and with the Lord? Why is vulnerability hard? How is it helpful?

### **Yield:**

What ways can you let the Holy Spirit deepen your commitment to community?

What have you been most challenged by this week? How can you respond in obedience to this conviction?

WEEK 2

## Group Liturgy

### Opening Scripture

*“For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations...”*

**Deuteronomy 7:6-9**

### Prayer

Help us slow down in this moment. We want to meet with you and be changed by you. Holy Spirit, help us see your glory today. Help us see the gift of the church and the community of believers we get to spend time with today. Thank you for this gift. Amen.

### Group Confession

As the church and Bride of Christ, we confess our sin. Without you, we would be lost and hopeless. We confess that it can be easier to serve ourselves instead of our brothers and sisters in our community. We often choose selfishness of unity with each other and with you. It can become easy for us to take for granted the gift of the believers you have placed in our lives. Lord, we desire unity with each other and with you, but we cannot do it by our own strength. We need you.

### Group Assurance

Brothers and sisters, let's be reminded of this promise from Scripture:

*“...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”*

**Romans 5:8-11**

Praise the Lord that he took on God's wrath for our sins so that we can have unity with God. Church, we stand righteous and forgiven before God because of Christ's work of reconciliation. Let us not live in our sin but instead in the new life we have in Christ!

## Teaching Passages

### 1 Peter 2:1-12

A Community through Christ

## Optional Group Questions

- This week's reading was about the church and the community of God. How does the Bible portray the church? What about culture? Why is there a disconnect?
- What does it mean to be a people? How does it connect to the Old Testament? Why would Peter use the same language here?
- What does it mean for us to be living stones? What is our purpose?
- What is the cornerstone? What does this say about our reliance on Christ?
- How does this play out more tangible in the life of the church?

## Closing Prayer/Benediction

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 15:5-6).

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## Teaching Notes

*It might be helpful to read 1 Peter 1 as it is the ground work for chapter 2 and gives Old Testament context into what is being said in chapter 2.*

# Sermon Notes



Week 3

# The Root: What We Believe

DAY 1

# What is Truth? Where Do We Get It?

Proverbs 1

Our society rejects the idea of absolute truth. We have replaced this with a philosophy that each person can embrace his or her own version of reality as it leads them to personal happiness and fulfillment as long as it does not actively or intentionally cause harm to others. This worldview is pride disguised as humility. It appears to be humble to admit our understanding of truth could be in error, and so why would we force our faulty conception of reality onto others. There is, after all, something honest and right about acknowledging our own blind spots and conceding a limit to our knowledge of truth. However, it rejects a starting point of truth that all of us must reckon with in order to live a meaningful life. Understanding what truth is, and where it originates is key to recovering a vision for the good life.

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## Questions for Reflection

1.) What are some ways our world rejects objective truth today?

2.) Why is rejecting truth dangerous?

3.) What are some alternatives to biblical truth that people embrace?

4.) How does Scripture speak about truth?

5.) How can people of truth bring light to a dark world?

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Jesus affirms that truth comes from God himself. When he prays for us—future believers—in John 17, he prays, “Sanctify them in your truth, your word is truth.” Jesus would claim in his earthly ministry, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Jesus is the embodiment of truth. In everything he did, he lived in accordance with reality. When Satan tempted him in the desert at the beginning of his ministry, he responded by quoting truth to lies. We have been given a great gift in that God revealed himself to us through Jesus, and we have the sword of truth, the Bible, to help guide us in our understanding. As we explore the message of the Gospel, it all begins with a commitment to the truths of who God is, who we are, who Jesus is and how we are to respond to this understanding.

DAY 2

# Who is God?

Psalm 19

”What comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you.” — A.W. Tozer

Who is God? This is the fundamental question the entire Bible is answering. Scripture shows that God reveals himself to us through his works and through his words. We see both of these clearly in Psalm 19. This Psalm begins by saying, “The heavens declare the glory of God.” We know that there is a God by looking at creation. His natural order reveals there is a right and wrong way to live so that we are “without excuse” (Romans 1) in our lives. God is a holy, just God who is all powerful to create everything and all wise to do it right. Thinking about God and who he is becomes unavoidable, and so we will consider this fundamental question: Who is God?

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### Questions for Reflection

1.) What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think about who God is?

2.) What attributes of God are easy to identify with?

3.) Which attributes are most difficult?

4.) What would you consider to be God’s most important attribute?

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Sometimes the stigma of a word can unnecessarily paralyze us. You have just considered the question, “Who is God?” The Greek word for God is “Theos.” When we study something, it is referred to as an ology (such as biology being the study of life.) Theology is nothing more than the study of Theos—God himself! In the same way no person, religious or not, can avoid considering the question of who God is, no one can avoid being a theologian. YOU are a theologian. And that is a gift from God! We pray these studies might help you become a better one. Not for the sake of knowledge to become inflated, but because, as Jen Wilkin quipped, “The heart cannot love what the mind does not know.”

DAY 3

# Who Are We?

Genesis 1 & 3

We were created in the image of God. This is a rich doctrine (or teaching). On a basic level, as a mirror displays our image when we look at it, you and I were made to reflect our Creator. We were made to look like him in the way we live. Pagan worship in ancient times often included small idol statues that pagans would display. These idols are intended to be a representation of the false deity they represent. These idols were treated with value because they bore the image of the pagan god.

Yahweh did not create an icon for himself. He actually calls it a sin to create an image of him! Rather, humankind was made to be his icon here on Earth. And as we were created in the image of God, we have value, dignity and worth because of our creator.

Unfortunately, we were made to reflect him, and instead, we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Because Adam and Eve fell from grace, we now have a broken relationship with God and each other.

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## Questions for Reflection

1.) Why is it significant that humans alone were created in God's image?

2.) In what ways does our being made in the image of God give us dignity, value and worth?

3.) How has sin affected our relationships with others in this world?

4.) How has sin affected our relationship with God?

5.) What does the Bible say the result of sin is for us? See Romans 6:23

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We are all guilty of sin. None of us can live a single day of our life without committing a sin. Either a sin of commission whereby we do those things that the Bible tells us not to do, or by omission, whereby we fail to do something we should have done. Sin is not just committed by our actions, but any time we fail to be perfect in our thoughts and attitudes, we sin as well. Truly, on our own, we are lost in our sin.

The Scripture is clear. The consequence of sin is death. Death came into the world with sin. Now, all people will



one day die. Not only human bodies, but the very Earth we are living in is decaying and dying as a result of the sin of humankind. Our most righteous deeds are like filthy rags before God. On our own we are separated from God and without hope in this world. But the story for us does not end there. For we will remind each other next week of the God-Man, Jesus Christ, who is fully man to identify with us in our weakness and fully God to be able to sacrifice himself to appease the wrath of God due to frail humans like you and me.

DAY 4

## Who is Christ?

John 1

This week, we have reminded ourselves that there is fixed truth in the universe, a natural order given by God. That the moral law of God reveals that we all have sinned and been separated from God. But Jesus was different. And everyone could see it.

Who do YOU say that I am? This is the pointed question Jesus asked Peter when they were at Caesarea Philippi. While rumors swirled about Jesus being John the Baptist, Elijah or another prophet, Jesus asked Peter this question. In Greek, the word you is emphatic as if to say, “Who do you—and you ALONE—say that I am?”

This same question is asked of all of us. It is the most important question in our lives. It answers the question of who God is because Jesus claimed that he is God. Peter answered the question, “You are the Christ, the son of the Living God.”

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### Questions for Reflection

1.) Why is the question significant of who we say Jesus is?

2.) Why is saying Jesus is a prophet not sufficient?

3.) How does Jesus' sacrifice on the cross change our relationship with God and with others?

4.) Who is someone in your life you can share this good news with today?

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How you answer the question of who Jesus is will determine the course of your life. Take time today to not only consider functionally what the right answer to the question is, but also if your actions reflect your stated beliefs. After all, demons believe that Jesus is the Christ, but not in a way that leads them to saving faith. We will get to our response to this question tomorrow, but consider today who YOU say Jesus is.

Jesus would not only live the sinless life we could never live, but he would also die a death on a cross in our place for our sin. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross is significant because it offers a bridge across the divide that exists between us and God. But Jesus is clear—he is the ONLY way to the Father. How we respond to the truth of who Jesus is makes all the difference.

DAY 5

## What is Our Response?

Romans 10:9-10

True belief manifests itself in how we respond. Believing Jesus is God who died for our sins and resurrected therefore defeating Satan, sin and death becomes evident by the way we live. If the doctors said you were miraculously cured of a terminally ill disease, but you remained in the hospital hooked up to an IV, we would question whether or not you truly believed the good news that had been delivered to you. So it is with the Christian life. Belief in the good news of Jesus becomes obvious by the way we respond.

How are we to respond to the Gospel? By faith! What does this kind of faith look like in real life? While we often think in categories of what to do, the doing is the outflow of a change that comes in our hearts. Often, people pray to put words according to what is happening in us, but there is no magic in the sinner's prayer. Rather, the verse we just read in Romans 10 is meant to be a contrast in how Christians profess allegiance, not to Caesar or to any authority of this world, but rather to Jesus as Lord. Our response is to recognize Jesus for the King that he is—not only in the universe, but also in our lives.

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DAY 6

# Growth Day

## Bible Verse

*“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,”*  
**Ephesians 2:8**

## Family Devotional

**Recite the Memory Verse as a family.**

What makes a gift more precious is the reaction of the person receiving it. A birthday present is great, but a smiling birthday boy/girl receiving the present is greater. The gift of God is salvation, which means we can't save ourselves. All we can do is receive it from God.

### Parents Ask Kids:

Can you save yourself or work hard to get to heaven?

### Kids Ask Parents:

Can you tell me your testimony and the moment you decided to surrender and believe in Christ as Lord and Savior?

## Student Growth Questions

### Confront Your Sin:

Jesus' desire is for us to “*abide*” in him (John 15:4). To fully abide in Christ, we must confront the sin in our lives, confess it and turn from it (repent). Spend some time reading Galatians 5:19-21. Use this list to reflect on any unconfessed sin over the past week. Talk to your Heavenly Father and ask him for forgiveness.

### Confront Your Disciplines:

Reflect on this past week. How have you practiced the disciplines of your faith? Ask God which of the following disciplines he would have you practice more intentionally over the next week in order to walk with the Spirit: Worship, Bible Study, Community, Witnessing, Serving, Praying, Giving, Fasting.

### Confront Your Doctrine:

Doctrine is a big word that simply means “what you believe.” In what ways has this week's reading about the need to walk in the Spirit shaped your view of the Holy Spirit? How has this week's reading informed you about yourself? How has this week's reading shaped your understanding of sin?

## Adult Growth Questions

Before you begin working through these questions, spend a few minutes praying together. We suggest that you pray using the PRAY acronym below.

### **Praise:**

How can what we study and meditate on in Scripture affect our worship?

### **Repentance:**

What are lies that affect what you believe about Scripture, and how you see the world? How does truth combat lies? Can you think of any scriptural examples of this?

### **Ask:**

What areas of belief do you want to grow? Take some time and ask the Lord to help.

### **Yield:**

What lies/misbeliefs about the Bible, God or yourself do you need to lay at the feet of Jesus?

What have you been most challenged by this week? How can you respond in obedience to this conviction?

WEEK 3

## Group Liturgy

### Opening Scripture

*I call with all my heart; answer me, Lord,  
and I will obey your decrees.*

*I call out to you; save me  
and I will keep your statutes.*

*I rise before dawn and cry for help;  
I have put my hope in your word.*

*My eyes stay open through the watches of the night,  
that I may meditate on your promises.*

*Hear my voice in accordance with your love;  
preserve my life, Lord, according to your laws.*

*Those who devise wicked schemes are near,  
but they are far from your law.*

*Yet you are near, Lord,  
and all your commands are true.*

*Long ago I learned from your statutes  
that you established them to last forever.*

**Psalm 119:145-152**

### Prayer

Today as we come to your word, would you establish those truths in our minds. You answer when we call. You save us. We can put our hope in your word, meditate on it and cling to it because your commands are true. Our lives reflect that your commands are true, and you are a faithful God. Help us see your faithfulness and live it out today.

## Group Confession

As we open your word to see the truth in it, we confess that we often run from your truth. We see the goodness of the Gospel and think that our desires and our purposes can supersede the fulfillment and joy found in you. Lord, when we want to be our own god or make ourselves more valuable, remind us of our dependence on you. We confess our sin of self-dependence to you and ask that you would remind us time and time again that we need your sustaining grace.

## Group Assurance

Brothers and sisters in Christ let us all be assured by the truth of good news of Jesus Christ today.

*“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”*

**Titus 3:3-7**

## Teaching Passages

**1 Corinthians 15:1-11**

## Optional Group Questions

- What are some of the essential beliefs of the Christian faith? Why would you categorize them as essential?
- What is the Gospel? How does this passage explain it or clarify it? How would you explain it to someone who may not know it?
- Why is it important to keep God, and not man, at the center of the Gospel?
- What encouragement about the historicity of the resurrection can you take from this passage?
- Why would the Gospel be so central to Council Road? To the global church?

## Closing Prayer/Benediction

*“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.”*

**Numbers 6:24-26**

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## Teaching Notes

*It is important to remember that we will be covering the essential doctrines of our church in a few months. This is an introduction. Think high level. Consider teaching more to the reason for doctrine than the individual doctrines themselves.*

# Sermon Notes



Week 4

# The Vine and Fruit: How We Live In This Identity



DAY 1

## The Vine (Part 1)

John 15 (Part 1)

In this passage we see a vital part of Christianity, which is who we are and who God is. This passage tells us that we are branches, and Jesus is the vine that gives us life. This means, apart from Jesus, we are unable to produce a God-honoring life. The next time you go outside and see a branch lying on the ground, disconnected from the tree, remember that this is a picture of us when we live a life disconnected from God. We die spiritually. We are disconnected from the source of spiritual life. But when you see a branch connected to its source, remember that this can be us when we are connected properly to the Lord.

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### Questions for Reflection

- 1.) What does this passage say about us?
- 2.) What does this passage say about God?

3) What does staying connected to God look like for us today?

4.) Can you think of a time when God helped you accomplish something?

5.) What is one thing from this passage that speaks to you most and why?

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If someone told you he wanted to have a wonderful marriage but disconnected from his spouse by renting a one bedroom apartment just for himself, would you think the actions matched the words? Would you think the marriage would produce good fruit? Of course not. And yes, I know a guy who did this while married to his wife. God is faithful to help us accomplish all He has put in front of us. God is able to help us produce spiritual fruit. God is willing to help us grow in our faith. God can and will do all these things. Our job is to faithfully remain connected to Him. Stay connected.

DAY 2

# The Vine (Part 2)

## John 15 (Part 2)

I can't think of a greater example of being a hero than someone dying for someone else. Whether that be someone in the military dying for our freedom, or someone dying to protect his or her family. This shows immense love in action. In the Scripture passage, we see Jesus saying that a beautiful example of amazing love is someone laying down his life for his friend. And then Jesus said right after this that we are His friends if we follow His commands. This seems to communicate that not only did Jesus love us enough to die for us, but also we should love Him enough to die to our selfish needs and to follow His commands. This is not easy to do! But as we learned yesterday, staying connected to God can help us produce this type of fruit, and God does it through us (Philippians 4:13).

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### Questions for Reflection

1.) What does this passage teach you about God?

2.) What does this passage teach you about yourself?

3.) Is there someone you think you would die for? If so, why?

4.) What does love mean to you? Does your meaning of love match the Bible's meaning of love?

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Let's keep in mind that Jesus is speaking to His disciples, and He still feels the need to repeatedly remind them to remain in Him. This should encourage us, as the people of God, to remain in Jesus. It's so easy for us to "do, do, do" or "try, try, try," instead of simply remaining in Christ and watching Him produce the fruit we need. I have found a simple truth in my own life: The less time I spend in prayer and solitude with God in His word, the more worried and stressed I feel. But the more I spend in prayer and solitude in God's word, the more peace and spiritual production I accomplish. Father, help us remain in you.

DAY 3

## The Vine (Part 3)

John 15:18-27

There is a version of Christianity that teaches if we are sweet, nice Christians, the world will have no problem with us. Well, that completely contradicts this passage. Jesus said the world hated Him, and the world will also hate His followers. This means, even if we are sweet, nice Christians, the world will still hate us when they find out what we truly believe. This brings me to an important point. If our beliefs and practices as Christians do not contradict the world we live in, is it safe to say we are not really Christians? I think it is. And if we are Christians, maybe we are in a very infant state that desperately needs nourishment in order to grow. I pray that God's word and prayer help us continue to push forward in our growth as Christians. Not relying on ourselves to produce this growth, but relying on God to produce this growth through us.

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### Questions for Reflection

1.) When Jesus said the world will hate us, what does He mean?

2.) How did the world hate Jesus?

3.) What does this passage teach us about Christianity?

4.) What is one thing that resonates with you in this reading?

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When we read through the book of Acts, which is the very beginning of Christianity, we read about great hatred and persecution toward God's people. Through all the hatred and persecution, Christianity continued to grow and flourish. This reminds me of Jesus' words about building His church and how the gates of hell will not be able to stop it (Matthew 16:18). Therefore, though persecution and hatred toward us is a bit scary at times, let's remember that it cannot stop God's plan. Let's also remember that we are on the right side of the fight, and we will win in the end. Lastly, let's remember that God changed a man in Acts 9 from someone who greatly hated and persecuted Christians to someone who was hated and persecuted as a Christian himself. Nothing is impossible with God. Stay connected.

DAY 4

# Fruit of the Spirit (Part 1)

Galatians 5:22-23

The first word in verse 22 is the word “but.” This word is a conjunction, which connects us to something previously written. Before Paul wrote about the fruits of the Spirit, he wrote about the fruit of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). After Paul writes about the fruits of the flesh, he then says in verse 21, “I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Wow. Do we take this warning seriously? Let’s not brush this off so easily. If our lives are characterized by Paul’s list of sinful things in verses 19-21, we should be trembling and broken over our sin (2 Corinthians 7:10), not casually dismissing it (James 4:9). Before we dive into the fruit of the Spirit, let’s meditate on the “but.” Read the previous verses and see what God may be speaking to us.

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## Questions for Reflection

1.) Verse 19 says the fruit of the flesh is “obvious.” What are some obvious things you see in the world and in your life that are against the nature of God?

2.) Paul writes in verse 21 that he is warning us. What does the word warning communicate?

3.) What do these verses teach us about God?

4.) Spend some time confessing your sins to God and thanking Him for forgiveness through Jesus.

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I hope these Scriptures and devotion help prepare you for why the fruit of the Spirit is so important. A key word that Paul uses for people producing fruit of the flesh is “live” in verse 21. Paul writes, “Those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.” This word “live” is sometimes translated as “practice.” And the reason “live” or “practice” is used is because this seems to be the idea of the original Greek word. It doesn’t describe someone stumbling over his or her sin and confessing the sin. Rather, it seems to describe someone living a particular lifestyle where the sin is embraced instead of confessed. May God help us continue to confess our sins, remain connected to Him and to allow His power to produce the changes we need.

DAY 5

# Fruit of the Spirit (Part 2)

Galatians 5:22-23

The last sentence of verse 23 says, “Against such things there is no law.” Christians living under the new covenant have a different way of living their lives. We allow the Holy Spirit to produce fruit in us that reflects the heart of God. We have a different way of fulfilling God’s commands, which is allowing the Spirit to produce fruit in and through us (Romans 8:4). This is not in any way teaching that the law of Moses or Moses’ writings are not important. It’s teaching that Jesus fulfilled Moses’ writings (John 5:46, Matt 5:17), sent His Spirit to live in us (John 16:7) and that His Spirit now produces fruit in and through us for the glory of God. This fruit is not ours. Instead, it is the fruit of the Spirit. This is why the beginning of verse 22 says, “The fruit of the Spirit is....” As we learned earlier about staying connected, we must remember that we cannot produce this fruit without God’s help. As we read about the Fruit of the Spirit and whatever is lacking in our lives, let’s thank God for Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, and let’s also prayerfully consider how well we are connected to our Source.

## Questions for Reflection

1.) Which of the fruits of the Spirit is most reflected in your life, and which is least reflected?

2.) What does this passage tell you about God?

3.) Why do you believe producing this fruit is important for Christians?

4.) As you reflect on the life of Jesus in the four Gospels, write down some instances that you recall where Jesus produced this fruit.

How we live matters. God has given us the Holy Spirit that helps us produce fruit. Right after Paul writes about the fruit of the Spirit, he closes the section with this:

*“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”*

**Galatians 5:24-26**

Paul first reminds us in verse 24 that we have died to our old way of living. He then encourages us to keep in step with the Spirit, which shows that God wants a daily intimate connection with us, and not a weekly or casual thing. And by doing this, it will help us avoid Paul’s closing words about not becoming conceited and not envying or provoking others. A psychiatrist at our church once told me that we cannot be both thankful and ungrateful at the same time. Our brains can only focus on one thing at a time. If we are busy doing God’s business, we leave little to no room for the devil’s business. Stay connected.

DAY 6

# Growth Day

## Bible Verse

*“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.”*

**John 15:4**

## Family Devotional

**Recite the Memory Verse as a family.**

Just as a branch needs to be connected to a tree to produce fruit, apart from Jesus, we are unable to produce a God-honoring life. We need to stay connected to Jesus in all we do.

### Parents Ask Kids:

How can you remember to think about Jesus while at school?

### Kids Ask Parents:

What are some ways you will help me stay connected and grow with Jesus?d to surrender and believe in Christ as Lord and Savior?

## Student Growth Questions

### Confront Your Sin:

Jesus’ desire is for us to “*abide*” in him (John 15:4). To fully abide in Christ, we must confront the sin in our lives, confess it and turn from it (repent). Spend some time asking God and yourself, “Is there any unconfessed is in my life?” Talk to your Heavenly Father and ask him for forgiveness.

### Confront Your Disciplines:

Reflect on this past week. How have you practiced the disciplines of your faith? Ask God which of the following disciplines He would have you practice more intentionally over the next week: Worship, Bible Study, Community, Witnessing, Serving, Praying, Giving, Fasting.

### Confront Your Doctrine:

Doctrine is a big word that simply means “what you believe.” In what ways has this week’s reading about the need to walk in the Spirit shaped your view of the Holy Spirit? How has this week’s reading informed you about yourself? How has this week’s reading shaped your understanding of sin?

## Adult Growth Questions

Before you begin working through these questions, spend a few minutes praying together. We suggest that you pray using the PRAY acronym below.

### **Praise:**

Share your testimony, your story of coming to faith with someone. Take a moment to thank the Lord that he has given you his identity.

### **Repentance:**

Spiritual life is dependent on the vine. What are ways you can disconnect from the vine? What dangers does it reveal when you do? How can you take practical steps to remain in him this week?

### **Ask:**

What ways is the Lord trying to shape you into his image? Ask him for help and for a community of accountability.

### **Yield:**

What is the problem in trying to earn fruit yourself? How can yielding to God produce more fruit in our lives?

What have you been most challenged by this week? How can you respond in obedience to this conviction?

WEEK 4

## Group Liturgy

### Opening Scripture

*“In that day the Lord with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.*

*In that day,  
‘A pleasant vineyard, sing of it!  
I, the Lord, am its keeper;  
every moment I water it.  
Lest anyone punish it,  
I keep it night and day;  
I have no wrath.  
Would that I had thorns and briers to battle!  
I would march against them,  
I would burn them up together.  
Or let them lay hold of my protection,  
let them make peace with me,  
let them make peace with me”*  
**Isaiah 27:1-6**

### Prayer

Lord, our desire is to be with you and to remain in you. As we spend time reading and studying your word, give us eyes to see that you call us to abide and remain in you. Help the words we read from your Scriptures transform us more into your image, for our good and your glory.

## Group Confession

God, it is you who plants us in good soil. You cause the rain of Godly growth to fall on us. You turn the seed of the Gospel into a plant with strong roots by a stream of your grace. Lord, we have seen the truth, but there are moments, days, weeks and months where your truth seems less attractive than our own hearts and desires.

We confess, Lord, that remaining in the vine is something that we cannot do alone. We need you. We need you in our moments of avoidance, of running and of hiding. Give us, oh Lord, the desire to remain in you and to be sustained by you.

## Group Assurance

Christians, read this assurance from the source of truth, God's holy word.

*“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

**2 Corinthians 12:9-10**

## Teaching Passages

**John 15**

## Optional Group Questions

- This week we have been emerged in John 15. What has been most impactful to you?
- What does it mean to abide in Christ? What does that look like practically?
- How does the lifestyle of abiding in Christ relate to the fruit of the spirit?
- Which comes first? Obedience or faith? Why does it matter?
- What are common pitfalls in your abiding and remaining in Christ? How can your group encourage you to lean into Christ?

## Closing Prayer/Benediction

*“The Lord will keep you from all evil;  
he will keep your life.*

*The Lord will keep  
your going out and your coming in  
from this time forth and forevermore.”*

**Psalm 121:7-8**



# Sermon Notes





COUNCIL ROAD  
baptist church