



TENTH GRADE

Discipleship Essentials Pathway

Discipleship Essentials Pathways

NEW VISION

DISCIPLESHIP ESSENTIALS PATHWAY

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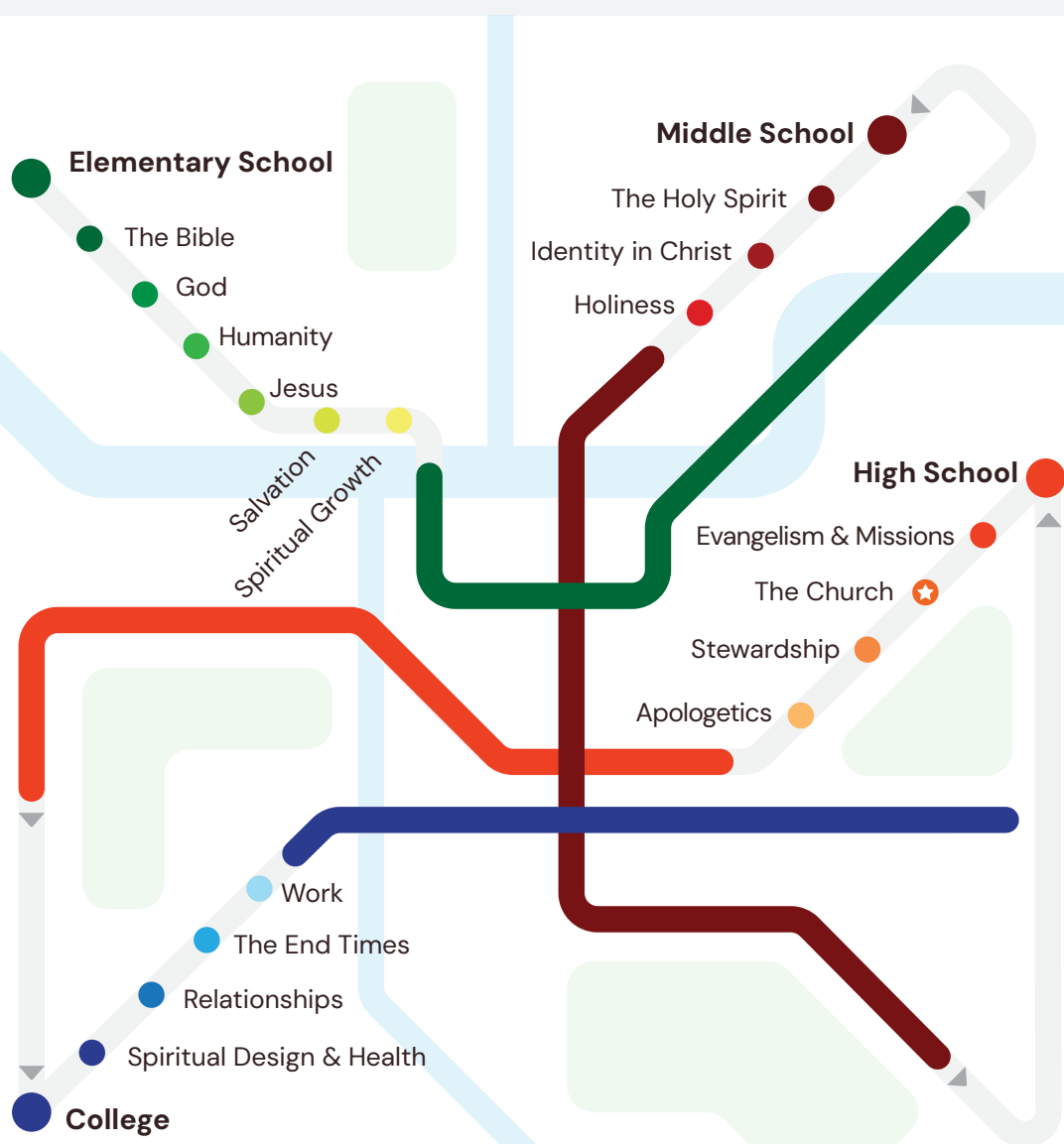
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Committed to One Another

System Map

LEGEND

- Elementary School
- Middle School
- High School
- College



Discipleship Essentials Pathway

Detailed Overview

Elementary Schoolers

- Kindergarten: The Bible
- First Grade: God
- Second Grade: Humanity
- Third Grade: Jesus
- Fourth Grade: Salvation
- Fifth Grade: Spiritual Growth

Middle Schoolers

- Sixth Grade: The Holy Spirit
- Seventh Grade: Identity in Christ
- Eighth Grade: Holiness

High Schoolers

- Ninth Grade: Evangelism and Missions
- Tenth Grade: The Church
- Eleventh Grade: Stewardship
- Twelfth Grade: Apologetics

College Students

- Freshman: Spiritual Design & Health
- Sophomore: Relationships
- Junior: The End Times
- Senior: Work

Introduction

Note: You may be a student going through this Pathway on your own. That is awesome! If you would like, continue through the Pathway on your own; but you may also consider doing so with a small group leader, friend, or mentor. This is also an opportunity to invite someone in your family to study with you. Feel free to reach out to the Student Ministry Team for help or guidance as you walk through your own discipleship journey.

To be a follower of Jesus means that we are to lead others to follow Jesus, too. Contrary to the spirit of the famous “The Buck Stops Here” placard on President Harry S. Truman’s desk, Jesus’ desk placard might have said something like “You’re One Link in a Long Chain.” You don’t have to disciple anyone alone; you’re an essential part of the process. To be a *disciple* of Jesus is to be a *discipler* of others, just as Jesus told us in what is known as the Great Commission:

Then Jesus came to them. He said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. So you must go and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And you can be sure that I am always with you, to the very end.”
– Matthew 28:18–20

Often, when we think of people discipling to fulfill the Great Commission, we think of men and women discipling other men and women at coffee shops, a collegiate minister discipling students at the student union, or perhaps a church staff discipling its members on the church campus. All of that is true, of course, but one of the most important places for discipleship is our homes. As a Christian, God has called you to disciple others; as a Christian parent, guardian, or mentor, He has called you to disciple children. This is the central point of what God told His people, the Israelites, through Moses: “The commandments I give you today must be in your hearts. Make sure

your children learn them. Talk about them when you are at home. Talk about them when you walk along the road. Speak about them when you go to bed. And speak about them when you get up” (Deuteronomy 6:6–7). This is your highest calling as a parent and family—and it’s what we want to help you with through the *Discipleship Essentials Pathway*.

How to Use the Discipleship Pathway

The *Discipleship Essentials Pathway* is built on a framework of seventeen modules to be used one per year. This book includes Module 11: The Church and is designed to be used with tenth graders. Modules 1–6 are to be used for kindergartners through fifth graders. Modules 7–9 are to be used with sixth through eighth graders. Modules 10–13 are to be used with ninth through twelfth graders. And finally, Modules 14–17 are to be used with college students. Throughout the seventeen modules, you will have the opportunity to engage with the core doctrines of the Christian faith and explore many practical aspects of following Jesus.

Each module contains twelve lessons, one for each month beginning in August and ending in July of the following year. Here’s how to use the *Pathway*:

The First Week of August

STEP ONE

Choose a day and time when it is easiest to block out about fifteen minutes for a family devotion each week. Many families find dinner time or bedtime as the ideal times for family devotions. Of course, if you already have a regular family devotion time, that would be the best time to choose.

STEP TWO

During your family devotion time in the first week of August, open the *Discipleship Essentials Pathway* book to August’s content.

STEP THREE

Begin by reading the catechism to your family. A catechism is a method of instruction based on a question-and-answer format that has been used throughout church history. The catechism provides the main idea your family will focus on for the month. You may notice definitions or further inspections provided. These are provided to help your student learn these important terms or dive deeper into the topic.

STEP FOUR

Next, read the Bible story to your family either from the *Pathway* book or from a Bible. The NLT is used in Modules 7 through 13.

STEP FIVE

Now, it is time to read the devotional to your family. Discuss the standing discussion questions.

STEP SIX

Next, find the memory verse and prayer prompt for week 1. These will provide your focus for the rest of the week. Begin by reading the memory verse a few times, inviting your tenth grader to say as much with you as possible. Then, close your devotional time in prayer, using the prompt as a guideline for what to pray about. Of course, you can pray about more than that, but be sure to at least pray about the topic provided.

That's it! You're done.

You will notice that each unit concludes with a next step, challenging thought, or reflection questions. If you choose, these are for you to use during the week and on the rest of the family devotion days of the month.

During the week, look for opportunities to discuss the main ideas of the catechism, Bible story, and devotional you covered. This is in the spirit of Deuteronomy 6:7, which calls us to talk about God throughout the day and as we go. The goal is to help your student keep God at the top of the mind and deep down in the heart. Also, continue working on memorizing the memory verse and praying for the topic of the prayer prompt.

The Second, Third, and Fourth Weeks of August

STEP ONE

During your family devotion time on the second, third, and fourth weeks of the month, go over the catechism again, perhaps inviting your student to memorize it too, along with the memory verses.

STEP TWO

You do not need to read the Bible story or devotion again, but of course, you can if you want.

STEP THREE

Spend more time working on the memory verse.

STEP FOUR

Close your time in prayer, once again using the prayer prompt as your baseline.

The First Week of September

Once the calendar flips to September, it's time to move on to the next unit, repeating the process. Then, once July arrives, it will be time to get Module 12 to begin using that next August.

A FEW FINAL TIPS

If you have multiple children going through different modules, that's awesome! As a family, go through the lesson with the youngest child in the first week, and move to the second youngest the next week, and so on. Review together as needed, and turn your prayer prompts into a prayer list!

If you miss a family devotion one week, that's okay! Give yourself grace and pick back up next week. Consistency over the long term is the key to family discipleship.

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As you and your family grow more comfortable using the *Discipleship Essentials Pathway*, try to encourage your child or student to ask questions. Dialogue is always better than monologue when it comes to discipleship.

If you are just starting your journey using the *Discipleship Essentials Pathway* with this Module, you might consider using what you have missed during Christmas break, Spring break, or the summer as a short-term intensive, covering one unit per day instead of per month, and forgoing memorizing the memory verses. Of course, there's also nothing at all wrong with starting right where you are and moving forward without ever looking back!

If you already have a family devotions plan, or if you find one along the way, feel free to couple it with the *Pathway*. Do both on the same day or perhaps choose a second day to stretch your discipleship efforts further throughout the week.

The *Discipleship Essentials Pathway* doesn't provide you with all the answers about our faith, but it should give you a solid framework from which you can explore additional questions as they come up.

The Gospel Message

In the beginning, God created the universe (Genesis 1:1). He formed light and darkness, land and sea, fish and birds, plants and animals. But on the final day of creation, He saved His best work for last: He made people. God created us in His image (Genesis 1:27) and designed us to love, trust, worship, and follow Him.

However, God didn't force us to love Him; He gave us a choice. We can choose to trust and obey Him, or we can go our own way. When we choose to go our own way instead of God's way, that's called sin, and sin breaks our relationship with God. The Bible tells us: "Everyone has sinned. No one measures up to God's glory" (Romans 3:23). The bad news is that our sin separates us from God, and we cannot fix this problem alone. We need help.

The good news is that God, in His great love, made a way for us to be forgiven through Jesus. God sent Jesus, His one and only Son, to live a perfect life and take the punishment for our sins by dying on the cross (John 3:6, 2 Corinthians 5:21). But He didn't stay dead. On the third day, He rose again, defeating sin and death so we could have new and eternal life in Him. Jesus did for us what we could never do for ourselves.

God now offers each of us the opportunity to be restored to a right relationship with Him. This requires us to turn away from sin and choose to put our faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord. The Bible tells us: "If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9). We trust Jesus as Savior, because His death in our place is the only way we can be forgiven for our sins. We trust and follow Jesus as Lord, meaning we use our lives for Him above all else. When we trust Jesus, we receive forgiveness and are saved from the power and punishment of our sins.

If you're ready to follow Jesus, here's what you need to do:

01

Admit that you are a sinner in need of forgiveness.

02

Believe that Jesus is God's Son, who died for your sins and rose again.

03

Confess Jesus as your Savior and Lord, choosing to follow Him daily.

The following is an example of what to pray if you are ready to put your faith and trust in Jesus as your Savior and Lord today. The words themselves aren't special. It's your heart behind them if you believe it.

Dear God,

I know that You created me in Your image to love, trust, and follow You. But I confess that I have sinned against You. I have chosen my own way instead of Yours, and my sins have separated me from You. And I know that I cannot fix this problem on my own.

Thank You for loving me so much that You sent Your Son Jesus to die on the cross for my sins. I believe that He paid my punishment, and I believe that He rose from the dead, defeating sin and death so that I could have new life in Him.

Today, I turn away from my sin and I surrender my life to You. I ask for Your forgiveness and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. Please change my heart, help me to follow You daily, and give me the strength to live for You.

Thank You for Your love and the gift of salvation.

In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

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If you just prayed that prayer for the first time, don't keep it to yourself, share it with someone! Tell a parent, guardian, pastor, or trusted Christian friend. They would love to celebrate with you, encourage you, and help you to take your next steps in following Jesus.

The Church:

God's People

What is the church?

The church is the community of faith consisting of believers in Jesus Christ. It includes all Christians, from the beginning of the church through today and continuing until He returns. The church is also known as the “body of Christ” with Jesus as its head, or leader.



Definition

Church: In the New Testament, the word that is often translated into English as “church” is *ekklesia*, which means “called-out ones.”

The church consists of all who have placed their faith in Jesus and have been called out from the world to live differently, for the great purpose of sharing the gospel with others.

Bible Story

¹⁷ Jesus replied, “You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being.

¹⁸ Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means ‘rock’), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it. ¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.”

— Matthew 16:17–19

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

When you eat M&Ms or Skittles, do you ever separate them by color and save your favorite ones for last? Or maybe you do something like that with trail mix or mixed vegetables, pulling your favorite out from the rest. If you have ever done this, or you've seen someone else do it, you understand the concept of the church.

In the New Testament, the word *church* is often used to translate a Greek word, *ekklesia*, which means “called-out ones.” The idea this word gives us is that God has called out followers of Jesus from the rest of humanity to give us a special purpose. God has designed the church to be His instrument to expand His kingdom on Earth by sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ and growing His church so that many more join the “called-out ones.” Ultimately, then, God doesn't call out followers of Jesus to remain separate from the world; His desire is that the rest of the world join them in being called out, too.

Since sin entered the world in the Garden of Eden, God has been calling out a people of His own. It began in the Old Testament when

God called Abraham and his wife Sarah. God promised Abraham that He would start a nation through him—a “called-out” people that God would use to make His glory known to the rest of the nations. This family became known as the Hebrews and then later the Israelites. God loved the Israelites, provided for them, and protected them. He called them to be holy as He is holy and to be a light to the world. But the Israelites made two huge mistakes.

First, they committed the sin of idolatry, worshiping false gods in addition to the one true God. They thought they could have it both ways. But God is a jealous God. So, He disciplined them through exile.

The Israelites learned their mistake of idolatry, but they then made a second mistake. After God brought them back to the land He had given their ancestors, they no longer worshiped idols, but instead they became prideful and believed that God only cared about them. They failed to be a light to the world. This rejection of God's commands was made most evident when they rejected Jesus as the Messiah. As a

result, God called another people to do what Israel had failed to do; He called out the church.

In Matthew 16, we see Jesus promise to build His church. This is important for a couple of reasons. First, Jesus talks about the church as if it is in the future, which means we can know that the church began after this. Indeed, we can pinpoint the start of the church even more narrowly than this: it began at Pentecost in Acts 2. The second important thing about this passage in Matthew 16 is what Jesus promised about the church; it will not be defeated. The church has existed for 2,000 years. It has

had some highs and some lows.

But Jesus' promise holds true; the church is unstoppable! From a small group of about seventy people in Judea, the church has grown to over millions and millions of people all around the world.

As a follower of Jesus, you are part of something special—a called-out group of people on an unstoppable mission, driven by the power of the Holy Spirit, pursuing God's glory by sharing the good news about Jesus. This mission will continue until the day Jesus returns for His church and makes all things right again.

WEEK ONE



Memory Verse

Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it. — Matthew 16:18

Prayer

Ask God to help you believe deep down in the unstoppable mission of the church, of which you are part.

WEEK TWO



Memory Verse

Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. So he is first in everything. — Colossians 1:18

Prayer

Ask God to give you the humility to follow Jesus wherever He leads.

WEEK THREE



Memory Verse

And the same is true for you. Since you are so eager to have the special abilities the Spirit gives, seek those that will strengthen the whole church. — 1 Corinthians 14:12

Prayer

Thank God for giving you spiritual gifts to use in the church.

WEEK FOUR



Memory Verse

Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other

parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. — Ephesians 4:15–16

Prayer

Ask God to shape you to be more like Jesus, especially in love, so that you can help others in the church grow likewise.



Reflection Questions

01 What can we as the church learn from Israel's two major mistakes in the Old Testament?

02 What do you think God wants us to understand about the church from the image of a human body with Jesus as the head?

03 How does it make you feel knowing that you have a special role to play in the life of the church?

The Local Church:

God's People on Mission Together

What is the local church?

The local church is a group of believers who gather regularly for worship, discipleship, and encouragement, as well as partake of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The local church seeks to fulfill the mission of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Bible Story

⁹ I, John, am your brother and your partner in suffering and in God's Kingdom and in the patient endurance to which Jesus calls us. I was exiled to the island of Patmos for preaching the word of God and for my testimony about Jesus. ¹⁰ It was the Lord's Day, and I was worshiping in the Spirit. Suddenly, I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet blast. ¹¹ It said, "Write in a book everything you see, and send it to the seven churches in the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea."

— Revelation 1:9–11

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

When you are starving, where do you most want to eat? Maybe it's getting a burger at McDonald's, Five Guys, or Whataburger. Or, perhaps it's getting chicken at KFC or Popeyes or a burrito at Moe's, Blue Coast, or Chipotle. Or maybe your speed is more of a sit-down restaurant like Mission BBQ, Chuy's, or Olive Garden.

Any of these would be a good choice, but have you noticed anything about all of them? They're all chains. All these places have hundreds, thousands, and even tens of thousands of locations across the United States and worldwide. But the amazing thing is that you will get mostly the same, exact food in any of them. That's one of the reasons we love chains!

That's sort of what the local church is like. Although there is one big church, often called the "universal church," it's not practical for all believers all around the world to meet together in one place. So instead, followers of Jesus meet together with other like-minded followers in smaller gatherings called local churches. This dates back to the New Testament, which is what we see in

Revelation 1. Notice that Jesus told John to send a different letter to seven different local churches (Jesus would dictate these seven letters to John in Revelation 2–3). This doesn't just prove that local churches existed way back then, but it also shows us that it was acceptable to Jesus. It's okay for us to have different local churches.

A few key things mark a local church. First, a local church must gather regularly for worship and discipleship. This happens most often on Sundays and Wednesdays, but can happen on other days of the week, too. Second, a local church practices the two ordinances Jesus gave us—baptism and the Lord's Supper. Not all local churches practice these in exactly the same way or as often, but for a local church to be a local church, it must practice them both. Third, a local church seeks to take the gospel into its community and worldwide. Finally, a local church should have qualified leaders, often called pastors or elders.

While local churches must have these four things in common, they can also differ. Not everything in the Bible is crystal clear, so there might be different churches near one another because they believe something a little different from each other. And that's okay, as long as they believe the core message of the gospel and do the things above. God has called one group of people to be the one body of Christ, but there is beautiful diversity within that body!

WEEK ONE



Memory Verse

So the churches were strengthened in their faith and grew larger every day. — Acts 16:5

Prayer

Thank God for the local church and how it helps you grow in your faith.

WEEK TWO



Memory Verse

I left you on the island of Crete so you could complete our work there and appoint elders in each town as I instructed you. — Titus 1:5

Prayer

Thank God for your church's leaders and ask God to give them strength and joy in their ministries.

WEEK THREE



Memory Verse

My ambition has always been to preach the Good News where the name of Christ has never been heard, rather than where a church has already been started by someone else. — Romans 15:20

Prayer

Ask God to help your church take the gospel to people near and far so they have the opportunity to trust in Jesus.

WEEK FOUR



Memory Verse

Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of my concern for all the churches. — 2 Corinthians 11:28

Prayer

Pray that local churches view one another with love and work together the best that they can to fulfill the mission Jesus has given.



Next Steps

Talk to your friends about the local churches they are part of.

Ask them about their church: What is worship and discipleship like? When do they meet? How and when do they partake in baptism and the Lord's Supper? What do they love most about it? If you find out a friend does not attend church, invite them to go with you!

Notes:

Small Group:

Life Together in Community

What is a small group, and why do I need to be in one?

A small group is a group of people who follow Jesus and gather regularly to discuss their relationships with Jesus and the implications that the gospel has on their lives. Followers of Jesus are encouraged to gather to worship, learn, and pray together.

Bible Story

⁴² All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

⁴³ A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. ⁴⁴ And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. ⁴⁵ They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. ⁴⁶ They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— ⁴⁷ all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

— Acts 2:42–47

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

In a group of six Christians, there are six different stories. There are six different upbringings. There are six different loves/hates, wants/needs, etc. Each friend is wonderfully and beautifully made (Psalm 139:14) just as they are. Each friend has their quirks and pressure points. These points alone may paint a picture of independence and isolation. But this group of six friends finds their differences can be bonded by one common factor: a saving faith and trust in Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

Now, this group isn't just a regular group of friends that hang out here and there. If they join a small group, they're committed to one another. They've accepted God's truth that they were created for community and friendship. They need people to listen to their stories. They need people to know what they like and dislike in the world. They need people to hear their needs and find a solution to meet those needs. They even need people to understand their quirks. They need each other to better reflect the character of Christ in their relationship to one another. We all need these things; we all

should be a part of a small group. We will not learn as deeply and grow as strongly without them.

The early church in Acts 2 sets a great example for our small groups today. They *devoted* themselves to teaching and fellowship, which means they were committed to learning more about God's Word and to each other's company. They acknowledged that they needed each other. They continued to meet with each other, share meals, and praise God. This is what a small group is like and should be.

WEEK ONE**Memory Verse**

So encourage each other
and build each other up, just
as you are already doing.
— 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Prayer

Ask God to make clear the people
you need to surround yourself with.

WEEK TWO**Memory Verse**

As iron sharpens iron, so a friend
sharpens a friend. — Proverbs 27:17

Prayer

Ask God to bring people into your
life who will sharpen you as you
sharpen them.

WEEK THREE**Memory Verse**

Come, let us tell of the Lord's
greatness; let us exalt his name
together. — Psalm 34:3

Prayer

Thank God for friends with whom
you worship.

WEEK FOUR**Memory Verse**

And every day, in the Temple
and from house to house, they
continued to teach and preach this
message: "Jesus is the Messiah."
— Acts 5:42

Prayer

Ask God to give you the desire
to continue meeting with
other believers.



Reflection Questions

- 01** Are you in a small group? If not, what step can you take toward joining one?

- 02** Would you say your primary group of friends believes in Jesus or not?

- 03** How can your family, leaders, and others encourage you to make Christian friends?

- 04** What hesitations do you have about continually meeting with a small group of believers?

Notes:

OCTOBER



The Church:

Christ's Beloved Bride

Why is the church called the "Bride of Christ?"

As Christians, we are collectively called the "Bride of Christ." Although this concept is mysterious, the Bible teaches that the Church is joined together with Jesus by His sacrifice for us. He has made us spotless and pure because we receive Jesus' righteousness at salvation.



Further Inspection

Several stories in the bible depict God's relationship to His people through the imagery of a marriage.

God as the Husband of Israel (Isaiah 54:5-8)

God's Old Testament covenant as a marriage (Jeremiah 31:31-32)

Hosea pursues his unfaithful wife as God pursues Israel despite their idolatry (the Book of Hosea)

Jesus as the bridegroom (Matthew 9:15, John 3:29)

The marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9)

As weird as it may sound, a great way to describe our connection to God is by using God's design for marriage. Our relationship with God is repaired through Jesus, and He also promises unconditional love, like a marriage. It is a promise not to be broken, and God will never break it. It is important to note that we should not see our relationship with God through the picture of human marriage, but rather, we should view human marriage through the perfect picture of God's promised love toward us.

Bible Story

²⁵ For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her ²⁶ to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. ²⁷ He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. ²⁸ In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. ²⁹ No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. ³⁰ And we are members of his body.

— Ephesians 5:25–30

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

Have you ever been to a wedding before? It is beautifully decorated, great food has been prepared, and a music playlist has been made – but what is the one thing people are most excited to see? The bride! Everyone cannot wait for the moment when the music begins to play, and the beautiful bride walks down the aisle. The bride has spent most of the day preparing to see her groom and is elegantly adorned in a stunning white dress. When she walks into the room, everyone's eyes are on her. The bride is excited to walk down the aisle to be united with the man she loves – it is truly a magical moment.

Just as an earthly bride prepares to meet her groom, we are called to prepare ourselves as the “Bride of Christ.” Jesus is the groom in this metaphor, and he is waiting for us at the end of the aisle. Ephesians 5 explains that Jesus gave his life up for us, the church, so we could be holy and blameless before God. So when we say “yes” to a relationship with Jesus, we have been made pure. This is not because of our works or doing, but because of the perfect sacrifice and love that Jesus has for

us! His sacrifice covers all the sins we will ever do, which then allows us to stand as a pure “Bride of Christ.” We are committed to Jesus and made clean because of his perfect sacrifice. We cannot achieve purity alone; Jesus achieved it for us, and we receive it when we say “Yes” to Him. Then, we strive to live pure lives because of the calling Jesus made possible for us.

Isaiah 1:18 says, “‘Come now, let’s settle this,’ says the Lord. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool.’” This is where we get the idea of white representing purity. This is why brides wear white on their wedding day—to say they are walking into marriage with a posture of purity.

Just as we are confident at a wedding that the groom loves the bride, we can be confident that Jesus loves us! Jesus is the reason we can walk in purity and faith! And because we love him, we should spend time daily preparing our hearts by reading God’s Word and praying. This keeps purity a priority

in our lives and helps us grow closer to the One who loves us perfectly.

While weddings are beautiful and moving, there is nothing more beautiful than the love Jesus showed us when he went to the cross on our behalf. Jesus loves you and will make your sins disappear, making you white as snow! He is committed to a relationship with you, so prioritize Him! Focus on your faith and commit your life to following Jesus. You will never regret it; there truly is no greater love than the love of Jesus.

WEEK ONE



Memory Verse

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. — 1 John 1:9

Prayer

Thank God for cleansing you from all sin through Jesus and making you pure in His eyes.

WEEK TWO



Memory Verse

For I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God himself. I promised you as a pure bride to one husband—Christ. —2 Corinthians 11:2

Prayer

Ask God to help you live in purity to be worthy of Jesus.

WEEK THREE



Memory Verse

So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. — Colossians 3:5

Prayer

Ask God to reveal the areas of your life where you need to pursue greater purity.

WEEK FOUR



Memory Verse

People may be pure in their own eyes, but the Lord examines their motives. — Proverbs 16:2

Prayer

Ask God to show you where you might have impurity in your mind and heart.



Reflection Questions

- 01** How would a perfect marriage partner treat their spouse?
Look at Ephesians 5, and list as many things as possible.

- 02** In what ways is God the perfect husband?

- 03** How does God's promise of unconditional love encourage you?

- 04** In what ways have you been a less-than-perfect spouse to God?

United in Christ

What unites the church?

Unity means to be joined as a whole without division. For the church, this means that believers exist together, bound by our love for Jesus, as we work together toward the same mission: the expansion of God's kingdom.

Bible Story

²⁶ For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.

— Galatians 3:26–28

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

When you listen to music, it's often difficult to fully grasp all the elements that come together to make a song sound like it does. From musical notes and instruments to vocals, post-production, and more, creating a good song is challenging! Each of these elements, whether on their own or used incorrectly, can sound strange, out of place, or even unpleasant. Yet in a gifted musician's hands, they blend into something truly beautiful.

The church resembles a song. Each follower of Jesus brings unique gifts, personalities, and roles. When we all collaborate under the authority and direction of Jesus, we create beautiful *music, reflecting* His matchless love to the world around us.

Being unified as a church doesn't mean we always agree with every other Christian; we simply focus on what unites us. Galatians 3 teaches us that our skin color, social standing, gender, or any other identifier pales in comparison to our new identity in Christ. Because of Jesus, we are much more alike than different! As followers of Jesus, our unifying

mission is to share the gospel and become more like Jesus.

What about the apparent disunity we observe among the various Christian denominations that exist? The keyword in the previous sentence is *Christian*. Christians believe that Jesus is God's only Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, crucified, died, and buried, and that on the third day He arose from the dead. Then, we place our trust in His life, death, and resurrection, the only way to be reconciled with God. If we share that common belief, we are united! While styles of worship and differing opinions on the interpretation of particular scriptures may gather us in smaller groups of believers, we need not limit Jesus' church in our hearts and minds. The body of Jesus is still one church. Therefore, we must remain unified, for followers of Jesus will be together eternally! When we focus on what unites us and allow the world to see Christian groups cooperating, we join together to make God's name famous. God, His goodness, and His glory are revealed through our unity.

WEEK ONE**Memory Verse**

Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude. — 1 Peter 3:8

Prayer

Ask God to help you see all followers of Jesus with humility, love, and grace.

WEEK TWO**Memory Verse**

The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. — 1 Corinthians 12:12

Prayer

Thank God for bringing such different people together as one body of Christ.

WEEK THREE**Memory Verse**

Dear brothers and sisters, I close my letter with these last words: Be joyful. Grow to maturity. Encourage each other. Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you. — 2 Corinthians 13:11

Prayer

Ask God for wisdom to resolve any disagreements you might experience with other believers.

WEEK FOUR**Memory Verse**

I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. — John 17:21

Prayer

Ask God to use the unity of the church to show the world the beauty and power of the gospel.



Next Steps

Seek opportunities to be unified with other followers of Jesus.

One of the best ways is to serve alongside others to reflect Jesus. At the same time, consider if you are currently not getting along with another believer. If so, pray about how you may have contributed to the ruptured relationship, and then move toward reconciliation and unity.

Notes:

DECEMBER



Denominations and Distinctions

What is a denomination?

A denomination is a distinct group of Christian churches unified by specific secondary doctrinal beliefs, practices, and structures. A denomination would differ from a different religion in that it believes in the core principles of the Christian faith.



Definition

Core principles: the first-tier or primary beliefs that identify a Christian.

These core principles would include believing that God is one in essence and three in person (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), that Jesus, the eternally-existent second Person of the Trinity, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, and is fully God, but became fully man to save a lost world. He was sinless but crucified, and three days later rose from the grave. He ascended into heaven and will one day return. A Christian must believe in these things, but can differ from other Christians in secondary beliefs. These secondary beliefs define a denomination.

Bible Story

¹⁰ I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose. ¹¹ For some members of Chloe's household have told me about your quarrels, my dear brothers and sisters. ¹² Some of you are saying, "I am a follower of Paul." Others are saying, "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Peter," or "I follow only Christ."

¹³ Has Christ been divided into factions? Was I, Paul, crucified for you? Were any of you baptized in the name of Paul? Of course not! ¹⁴ I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ for now no one can say they were baptized in my name. ¹⁶ (Oh yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas, but I don't remember baptizing anyone else.) ¹⁷ For Christ didn't send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News—and not with clever speech, for fear that the cross of Christ would lose its power.

— 1 Corinthians 1:10–17

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

Since the Protestant Reformation of the 1500s, Christians have branched off into various denominations based on different understandings of secondary doctrinal issues. While disagreeing on these issues does not bring doubt on whether one is a Christian, they are still important issues. For example, baptism is a common belief that separates denominations. They may disagree about when a person is to be baptized, how that baptism is to be done, and how baptism fits into a person's salvation. These are undoubtedly important issues, but denominations can disagree on these questions while still holding to the core of the gospel. Likewise, questions of the security of a believer (is a believer saved no matter what, or can that salvation be lost), the sovereignty of God, human responsibility, and freedom are also common prompts for the formation of denominations. In these matters, the various denominations all appeal to Scripture, but return with different conclusions. Because these matters are complex and the Bible (although perfectly true) is not as easily understood as we desire, various perspectives are held, and thus different denominations are formed.

Some people feel confused, disappointed, or even frustrated by the existence of denominations. Shouldn't all followers of Jesus unite no matter what? Yes and no. Yes, denominations should not fracture the unity of the church. Different denominations should love and respect one another and work together as best they can to accomplish the mission Jesus has given us. However, the differences in secondary doctrinal beliefs often make it quite difficult for various believers to worship together. For example, it's often challenging to compromise when and how to baptize a person. Thus, denominations can actually preserve unity when a group of followers of Jesus walks together in humility and grace.

For that reason, we need to concentrate on the beliefs that bind us together in the family of God and not allow denominational differences to overwhelm the essential truths we hold in common. We can join and celebrate the absolute truth that sin separates us from God, but Jesus is the only One who can deliver us from death. We major in the important things and don't get caught up in

the smaller, less important topics. Then, we pull together to focus on Christ. Jesus responded this way to His disciples when they were about to stop a believer from working for Jesus. A man was casting out demons in Jesus' name, but was not with His primary group of followers. Luke 9:49–50 says, "John said to Jesus, 'Master, we saw someone using your name to cast out demons, but we told him to stop because he isn't in our group.' But Jesus said, 'Don't stop him! Anyone who is not against you is for you.' " In other words, Jesus warns us to remember that our unity is much deeper and wider than it might seem.

However, one danger we must be aware of is when a group *identifies* as a Christian church but holds a non-biblical view of Jesus or what is required for salvation. These are not denominations but rather cults. Cults may appear Christian at first glance, but in reality, they diminish who Jesus is, demand obedience to non-biblical writings of their founder or key leader, and require certain works or behaviors to earn salvation. We should pray that those deceived by the teachings of a cult or other false teachings will have an authentic encounter with the true Jesus.

WEEK ONE

Memory Verse

For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all. — Ephesians 4:4–6

Prayer

Ask God to remind you that despite the differences between denominations, all those who hold to the core message of the gospel are part of Christ's one bride.

WEEK TWO

Memory Verse

Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit. — 1 Corinthians 12:13

Prayer

Thank God for the Holy Spirit's ministry in us and through us to hold the one universal church together.

WEEK THREE

Memory Verse

So it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. — Romans 12:5

Prayer

Ask God to guide the local churches in your area to act as one.

WEEK FOUR

Memory Verse

Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit

and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News. — Philippians 1:27

Prayer

Ask God for His help in remaining faithful in unity with all other followers of Jesus.



Next Steps

If you want to learn more about the denomination you are part of, that your friends are part of, or simply want to learn more about different denominations, conduct some research! Talk to your church leaders and other church leaders, or visit a website like the North American Mission Board's (namb.net/apologetics). It's good to know why you believe what you believe!

Notes:

The Church and Its Leaders

What authority do church leaders hold?

Jesus has given authority to church leaders to make key decisions concerning the doctrine and practice of a local church as they direct, teach, and equip followers of Jesus for spiritual growth and to serve the world around them. The church leaders are to exercise this authority with humility and through their own submission to Jesus, the head of the church.

Bible Story

¹ But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food.

² So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, “We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program. ³ And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility. ⁴ Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word.”

⁵ Everyone liked this idea, and they chose the following: Stephen (a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of Antioch (an earlier convert to the Jewish faith). ⁶ These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them.

⁷ So God's message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too.

— Acts 6:1–7

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

Think about how a coach leads their team. The coach sets the vision for the team, develops strategies, and prepares the players to work toward the team's goals. The players have different skills and roles, but they work together under the coach's guidance to succeed.

God has established leaders within His church to serve a similar purpose. These leaders are not perfect, more special, or better followers of Jesus than anyone else; they have simply been called to a role through which God wants to use them to guide and shepherd His people.

The authority God has given these leaders is not about controlling others or wielding power to make people do their bidding. Instead, it is a responsibility to be a humble servant-leader, to look at the example of Jesus, and to follow the instructions laid out in Scripture. Church leaders are called to care for their people and equip them to carry out the mission of the gospel.

No one likes to be told what to do, even within the church. The human heart is predisposed to rebel against

authority, and rebellion finds its root in the beginning of humanity in the Garden of Eden. However, as followers of Jesus, we are called to die to such rebellion and respect the leaders in our church. We follow their leadership and pray for them, recognizing the calling God has placed on their lives.

At the same time, church leaders are called to continually seek God's guidance, study Scripture, and serve the church with humility, grace, and love. The famous phrase "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely," attributed to a nineteenth-century British historian, emphasizes the need for a church to have a process of holding its leaders accountable. Even if that accountability system fails, remember this: A godly leader will never lead you to do anything contrary to Scripture.

When both roles work together, submitting to Jesus' ultimate authority, the church becomes something truly special, reflecting God's kingdom on earth. In this unity, leaders and church members begin to look more like Jesus.

WEEK ONE

Memory Verse

Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would

certainly not be for your benefit.
— Hebrews 13:17

Prayer

Ask God to give the leaders of your church love and wisdom to lead well.

WEEK TWO

Memory Verse

Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. Don't lord it over the people

assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example.
— 1 Peter 5:2–3

Prayer

Thank God for providing godly leaders who love Jesus and love the church.

WEEK THREE

Memory Verse

Elders who do their work well should be respected and paid well, especially those who work hard at both preaching and teaching.
— 1 Timothy 5:17

Prayer

Ask God to bless the teaching and preaching of the leaders in your church.

WEEK FOUR

Memory Verse

And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven. — Matthew 16:19

Prayer

Ask God to help you follow the godly leadership of the leaders in your church.



Next Steps

Set aside time to pray for the leaders of your church. Write down the names of those God places on your heart. Consider writing a note of encouragement to the leader(s) to let them know you are praying for them.

Notes:

FEBRUARY



Christian Community:

Experiencing Life in Christ

Why do I need a Christ-centered community?

The Christian life cannot be fully experienced in isolation. Christians need other Christ followers by their side to encourage them, hold them accountable, and push them towards Jesus.

Bible Story

²³ Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. ²⁴ Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. ²⁵ And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

— Hebrews 10:23–25

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

Imagine a log burning in a fireplace. On its own in the fireplace, it can burn brightly – but only for a short time. To revive the flame, you place another log next to it. When the logs are together, the flame burns brighter and stronger than before. The logs continue to improve as you add more logs to the fireplace, bringing heat and light into the room. Just as a solo log can't stay lit for long, we, as followers of Jesus, can't thrive in our faith without other believers by our side for long.

The church is not just a building we visit on Wednesdays or Sundays; the church is the body of Christ and calls believers to come together to grow in community and faith in the Lord. Hebrews 10:25 states, "And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near." We need the community that the church brings as a source of encouragement in our lives as followers of Jesus. As we navigate life, it is not always easy—some days are challenging. We need our church community to love and support us in the good, the bad, and the in-between. We need the church to remind us of the

truth of God's Word, even when it feels hard to believe it. In the church community, we can encourage each other, point each other to the truth, pray for each other, support each other, and follow Jesus together. What a beautiful thing!

When a log is removed from the flames, it extinguishes quickly. In the same way, when we aren't plugged into a church community, our light and enthusiasm in following Jesus can start to grow dim. You see, even Jesus surrounded himself with a community of believers – the twelve disciples. Jesus did this to model that we must remain in a community, specifically a church community. Jesus was honest with this community, shared when times were difficult, and loved these friends he walked with daily. We need the community of small groups and other church friends to help us be a light for Jesus! Matthew 5:14 states, "You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden." Our light shines even brighter when we don't do the Christian life alone. Just like the logs in the fire, they can help each other stay lit and bring light and warmth to the world.

This means we need to attend church regularly to be taught the Word of God and worship God with other believers. But we also need to plug into a group with people our age who are following Jesus. If you are already in a group, be vulnerable with your group! Let them into your life so they can help you walk with Jesus well. Whether we are 8 or 82, we need the community that our local church can bring!

WEEK ONE



Memory Verse

Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.
— Hebrews 10:24–25

Prayer

Ask God to help you remember the beauty and the importance of the church.

WEEK TWO



Memory Verse

Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.
— Galatians 6:2

Prayer

Thank God for giving you people in the church who love you, care for you, and support you.

WEEK THREE



Memory Verse

Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function. — Romans 12:4

Prayer

Ask God to help you find your role in the church and to do what only you can do through it.

WEEK FOUR



Memory Verse

"Beware that you don't look down on any of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels are always in the presence of my heavenly Father." — Matthew 18:10

Prayer

Ask God to remind you of your great worth in the church, despite your age.



Challenging Thought

As followers of Jesus, we need Christian community for encouragement and accountability. What does your community look like? Do the people you surround yourself with live how God desires you to live?

Notes:

Christ-Centered Friendship

Why is it important to have Christian friends?

While we should always have friends who are not Christians, Christ-centered friendships are essential to our lives. We need people in our lives who can encourage, challenge, and help us grow in our walk with Jesus. This is only possible with people who are *also* following Jesus. Christian friends should gather together often, which is called Christian fellowship.



Further Inspection

One thing you should have with your Christian friends is *fellowship*. Fellowship is the act of meeting and gathering together. It's what you usually do with friends, but it's important because it unifies us. Just as you become like who you spend time with, fellowshipping together is an important aspect of building a strong church community. When we gather, we create an environment that grows and nurtures connection and support. Sharing our joys and struggles not only deepens our relationships but also reflects the love that Jesus has for each of us. As we are honest with one another and live like Christ, we will strengthen our bond. Fellowship encourages us to look beyond our differences, embrace our common bond in Jesus, and walk alongside one another. In these moments, we are reminded that we can offer encouragement and strength to one another, which in turn helps us shine the light of Jesus in the world.

Bible Story

¹² This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. ¹³ There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. ¹⁶ You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

— John 15:12–17

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

One of the most famous sports teams of all time is the 1992 USA Olympic basketball team. When this team was announced with Hall-of-Fame greats like Michael Jordan, Charles Barkley, Larry Bird, and Magic Johnson on it, people believed this “Dream Team” would be unbeatable. But then something curious happened: the Olympic team lost to a team of college all-stars in a practice game. The 1992 “Dream Team” was full of individual superstars, but they had to learn that individuals don’t win basketball games; teams do. That’s why the 1992 Dream Team learned to spend time together, serve one another, and challenge one another. And the result was truly spectacular; the Dream Team won a gold medal and changed the course of Olympic basketball.

The church is similar; we cannot do life alone. The church is a community of believers who are to care for one another, support one another, and grow together in faith. This is what Jesus commanded His disciples in John 15. They were not only to be His friends but also to be friends with one another, loving Him and each other. And this is what we see

happen in the Book of Acts. There, we see a beautiful example of how believers came together to serve and love each other. They were not individuals, but a tethered unit. They shared meals, met each other’s needs, and devoted themselves to teaching and prayer. Their love and care for one another reflected Jesus’ love. Their unity was not just about social connection but a spiritual bond centered around Jesus Christ. We need the same. We must choose to surround ourselves with other believers who can build us up and allow us to do the same. Then, we do what friends do: spend time growing together. Simply, that’s what fellowship is: Hanging out in our Christ-centered friendships.

When we engage in *fellowship*, we experience God’s love in action. We find encouragement in times of struggle, accountability when we stray, and joy in shared victories. Proverbs 27:17 reminds us, “As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.” Just as great athletes push one another to be their best, we are called to challenge, uplift, and walk with each other in faith.

The truth is, we were never meant to walk this journey alone. God designed the church to be a place of love, service, and growth. With other believers by our side, we make each other better: at church, at home, at school, and in the world.

There are many things that connect us as people, such as a shared interest in sports or music, the school we attend, the neighborhood we live in, and so much more. But the truest and strongest bond—one that lasts for eternity and crosses all barriers—is our faith in Jesus.

WEEK ONE

Memory Verse

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.
— Acts 2:42

Prayer

Thank God for calling you to Himself and other followers of Jesus.

WEEK TWO

Memory Verse

When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours. — Romans 1:12

Prayer

Ask God to give you the strength to love others like Jesus loves you.

WEEK THREE

Memory Verse

How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony! — Psalm 133:1

Prayer

Ask God to help you foster harmony in the relationships you have.

WEEK FOUR

Memory Verse

Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.
— Ephesians 4:2

Prayer

Ask God to grow your patience with others as you show them love.



Next Steps

Are you embracing the fellowship God has placed around you?

Are you supporting and encouraging others in their faith? Take a step today—join a small group, serve someone in need, or simply reach out to encourage a fellow believer. Commit to growing together, serving one another, and striving toward a life that looks like Jesus.

Notes:

Caring for One Another

How do Christians care for one another as the church?

Christians care for one another by following Jesus' example of deep compassion. This care is shown through actions, not just words—through kindness, support, prayer, encouragement, and meeting each other's needs. Like Jesus, who showed His love through healing, teaching, and sacrifice, the church expresses love by serving one another and building each other up in faith.



Definition

Care: an intentional show of love through actions, words, and support to meet the needs of others.

Bible Story

³ All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. ⁴ He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.

— 2 Corinthians 1:3–4

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

A teenager loved his dog. If his dog wanted to go on a walk, the boy would take him. If his dog were hungry, he would measure out the serving and feed him. The boy would drive 20 minutes to the nearest park if his dog wanted to play. There was nothing this teenager wouldn't do for his dog. One day, he saw another dog on his way to school. This dog was visibly starving and cold. He felt terrible for the dog but continued to school, giving it no further thought. Why did the teenager decide not to take action? If it were his dog, he would've done anything, but it wasn't. Because he didn't see it as his responsibility, his ability to care was limited.

Is there a limitation on your care for people you do or do not know? Jesus' care for others has no limits. When Jesus sees the outcast, the sick, or the poor, His care is visibly seen. Jesus does not just speak of His love and care for others; He demonstrates how to care for others in need. You care for people in the Church and outside of the church by showing your care through your actions. As a follower of Jesus, you are called to reflect the same kind

of care Jesus exemplified. When people in the Church care for others like Jesus did, they are drawn to and grow in their relationship with Jesus.

Now, caring for others with the capacity that Jesus had is difficult. Caring requires you to show interest in someone's life and commit to action, no matter how difficult it may be. Sacrifice is always painful, but worth it. It takes courage and strength to love and care with deep compassion. Having the compassion of Jesus allows us to reach across borders, lines, and communities; it helps us learn to expand our care. Stepping into the lives of those who are hurting, providing for their needs, and showing them the love of Christ cannot happen if your care for others is limited.

If Jesus did not limit His care, why would the Church? The care Jesus shows is radical, as he cares for His enemies by pointing them to the truth in the Bible. The Church's care should not be limited to those who are easy to love or are convenient to care for. You are the Church; the hands and feet of Jesus. The Church has a high calling to care for

people in need, but she has a perfect picture of how to care for others: the life of Jesus. Jesus's compassion was unlimited; he cared for all and accepted the responsibility for dying for the world. What sacrifice can you make to care for others?

Step outside your comfort zone and care for people as Jesus did. Look around for those who are hurting, in need, or mourning, and meet them where they are. Allow yourself to experience Jesus' limitless compassion for others as you participate in being His hands and feet.

WEEK ONE



Memory Verse

Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. — Galatians 6:1

Prayer

Ask God to help you give you the ability to care for others who are struggling with sin.

WEEK TWO



Memory Verse

Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. — Ephesians 4:32

Prayer

Ask God to give you a heart of compassion like Jesus when you care for others.

WEEK THREE



Memory Verse

If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person? Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. — 1 John 3:17–18

Prayer

Ask God to help you care for others by how you feel and what you do.

WEEK FOUR



Memory Verse

Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbor as yourself." — James 2:8

Prayer

Thank God for giving us the Bible so we can see how we can genuinely care for others.



Next Steps

Who is someone in need whom you can care for right now? First, write their name below, and commit to praying for them this month. Ask God how you can care for them, and once you have an answer, write your plan out below.

Notes:

Accountable to One Another

What is accountability?

Accountability is accepting responsibility for another person's actions. As brothers and sisters in Christ, all Christians are responsible for helping keep each other obedient to Jesus. This means they are welcome to ask how someone's life is going, helping the believer stay on track in their battle against sin, temptation, and struggles. A believer finds others in the church with whom they can be honest. The other believers maintain their trust while encouraging them to remain obedient to Jesus.



Further Inspection

Accountability isn't always easy or fun, but it is necessary. In isolation, hiding, rationalizing, or even lying to ourselves about our sin is easy. Accountability means you open your life to someone else and allow them to look around. They check on you and help you own up to all parts of your life: the good and the bad. Accountability is not about shame; instead, it's about being free from and turning away from sin.

Bible Story

¹ Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. ² Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. ³ If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important.

⁴ Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else. ⁵ For we are each responsible for our own conduct.

⁶ Those who are taught the word of God should provide for their teachers, sharing all good things with them.

⁷ Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. ⁸ Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. ⁹ So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.

— Galatians 6:1–10

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?**03** Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?**Devotion**

“Don’t Do Life Alone” is more than just a slogan you might hear in church; it is a practice the Bible teaches. Community and accountability are part of God’s design for the world. In Genesis, God said it was not good for man to be alone. Certainly, that was because it was always in God’s design for man and woman to exist together. But also, God himself had never been alone. God the Father has been with Jesus the Son and God the Holy Spirit since eternity past. God knew that we work better when we have others around us.

One of the ways that other people help us is through accountability. In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon (the wisest man that ever lived) said, “Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble.” That is the spirit of accountability. We all will fall and have struggles with sin. We need people to keep us accountable. When we fall, they help us up. They check on us to make sure we haven’t fallen into sin and just laid there. As believers, we are not to fight against sin on our own.

When we do, we risk falling victim to shame, guilt, and embarrassment, which are all tools of the enemy. The devil wants to keep us in the dark. Accountability helps us get back into the light. When we show our sin to others and are honest about what we are going through, we rid sin of its isolating element. We remember that we aren't alone. We remember that God still loves us, as those people remind us. Then, we take our sins to others for help and encouragement in our time of need.

Not only do we need to find people we can be accountable to, but we also need to find others we can hold accountable. We need to help guard our brothers or sisters against temptation, too.. Now, don't just volunteer yourself for that role in someone's life! But if you have a friend who you know needs some help, make yourself available in case they reach out. Offer your time and care to check in on them should they need it. And if they refuse, pray for them on your own. Remember, the goal is not to get information about someone so you can share their business. The goal is for us all to stay away from sin because it is dangerous to our lives. Then we can continue to grow together as followers of Jesus.

WEEK ONE**Memory Verse**

Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. — Ecclesiastes 4:9–10

Prayer

Thank God for designing us to need one another's help.

WEEK TWO**Memory Verse**

So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. — Ephesians 4:25

Prayer

Ask God to give you the courage to be honest with those who help you be accountable.

WEEK THREE**Memory Verse**

So watch yourselves! "If another believer sins, rebuke that person; then if there is repentance, forgive." — Luke 17:3

Prayer

Ask God to help you listen and be receptive when someone seeks to hold you accountable for your sin.

WEEK FOUR**Memory Verse**

"And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own?" — Matthew 7:3

Prayer

Ask God to help you see your own struggles as you seek to help others with theirs.



Next Steps

Accountability partners or groups should be people of the same gender as you.

Who can you trust with your struggles? Find 2–3 people to whom you can confess your sin and ask for prayer. Make yourself available to them or other close friends to be their accountability partners, if they so desire.

Notes:

Committed to One Another

Why is it important for me to be involved in a local church as a Christian?

While attending church does not preserve our salvation or earn God's love and acceptance, being a part of a local church is critical for believers. Our commitment to one another shows the power and beauty of the gospel. The church is where we express our gifts, encourage one another, and serve one another as we seek to advance the gospel together.

Bible Story

¹² The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. ¹³ Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.

¹⁴ Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. ¹⁵ If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear says, "I am not part of the body because I am not an eye," would that make it any less a part of the body? ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?

¹⁸ But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. ¹⁹ How strange a body would be if it had only one part! ²⁰ Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. ²¹ The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you."

²² In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are

actually the most necessary.²³ And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen,²⁴ while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity.²⁵ This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other.²⁶ If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.

²⁷ All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.

— 1 Corinthians 12:12–27

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

Have you ever seen ants working together? When you see an ant on its own, it seems insignificant, but when you see a group of ants, you might notice the amazing work they can do. When an obstacle blocks their path, they work together to remove it. They protect each other from far larger creatures, help when another ant is in need, and help each other move in the right direction. When ants come together, they accomplish far more than they could ever do alone. Even God wants us to learn from ants! Proverbs 30:24–25 reads, “There are four things on earth that are small but unusually wise: ants—they aren’t strong, but they store up food all summer.”

In the same way, when Christians gather together as a church, we can accomplish great things for God’s glory. Just like an ant can technically live on its own, so can a Christian; but if the lowly ant has the wisdom to work with one another, shouldn’t we? We are the ones who suffer when we fail to be in church.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul used the image of a human body to describe the church. He wants us

to understand how each person in the church is uniquely gifted and important. He also wants us to consider whether any part of the body could survive if it were removed from the rest. The answer is an emphatic “No!” We are body parts that need the body, and the body needs us. That’s why being part of a church matters so much.

God has given us a wonderful gift in the church! The question shouldn’t be if we have to be part of the church, but why would we not want to be? When we come together with the church, we can worship, connect, serve, and go. The church is where we can worship Christ through singing and hearing a biblical message. The church is where we can connect to other believers who want to care for and pray with us. The church is where we can serve others and our community for God’s glory. And the church is where we can be equipped to go out into the world and share the gospel, as Jesus calls us to do. While no church is perfect, it is a place for us to unite to worship our perfect God and to bring Him fame and glory as we join together as His church.

WEEK ONE**Memory Verse**

All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it. — 1 Corinthians 12:27

Prayer

Thank God for making you part of His one body, the church.

WEEK TWO**Memory Verse**

And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God.
— 1 Peter 2:5

Prayer

Ask God to help you see the benefit of being part of a local church.

WEEK THREE**Memory Verse**

And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. — Hebrews 10:25

Prayer

Ask God to grow your love for the church and your desire to be a part of it.

WEEK FOUR**Memory Verse**

Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.
— Colossians 3:16

Prayer

Thank God for the joy of worshiping with others in the church.



Reflection Questions

- 01** What are some ways in which being part of a church has benefited you?

- 02** Ask an adult who experienced the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, what it was like when churches did not physically meet for several weeks?

- 03** How much do you desire to be part of a church? No matter where that is, what can you do to crank that desire up another notch or two?

Notes:

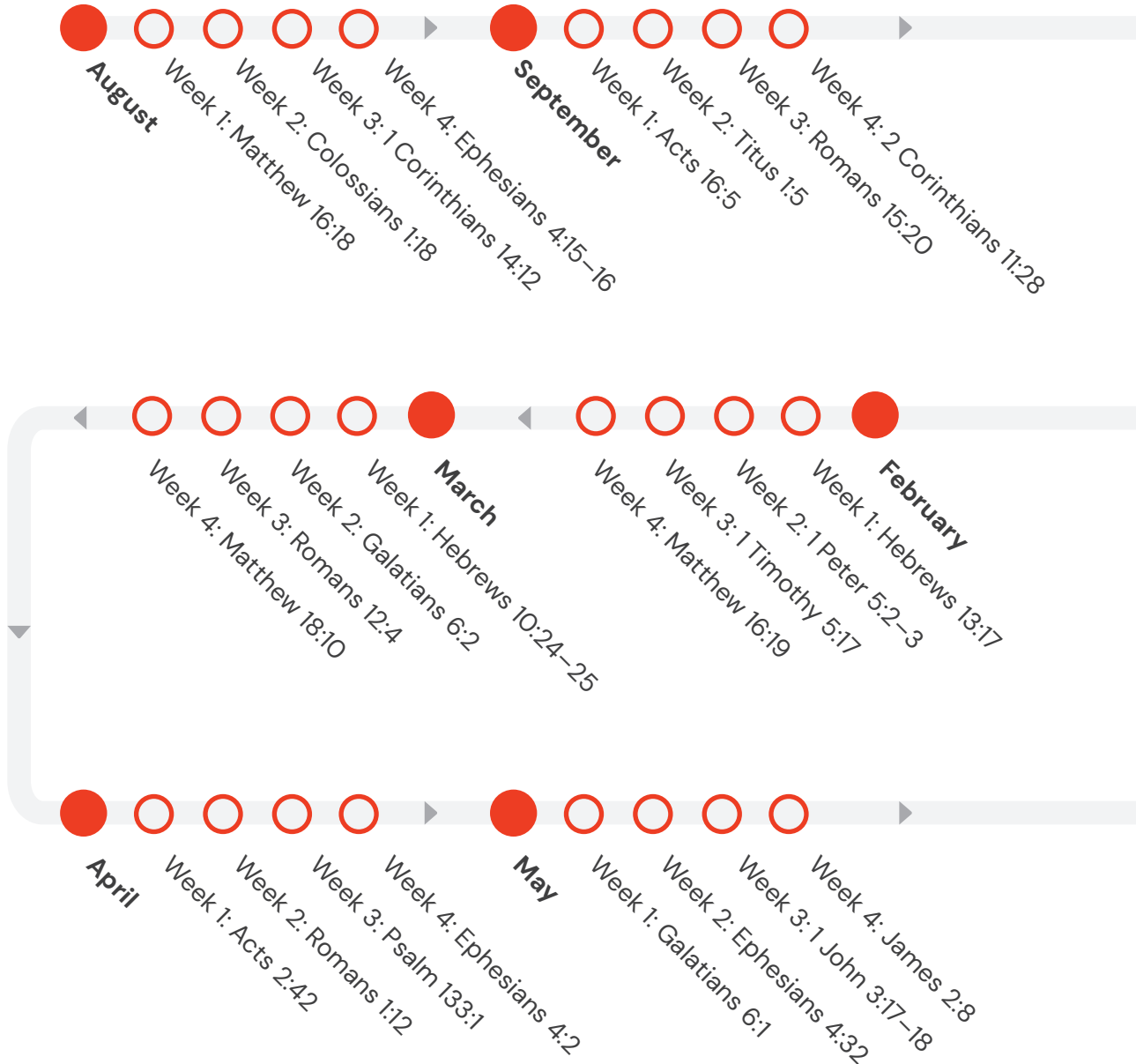
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Memory Verse Tracking Log



TENTH GRADE





NEW VISION