



WEEK 1

1ST SEMESTER · FOUNDATION & IDENTITY

The Great Story of God

A Guide for Followers of Jesus

SPIRITUAL THEME

The Gospel – the Good News

PERSONAL THEME

Reordering my life – Jesus as Lord

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PART 1

The Story's Beginning: A Good World and a Broken Promise

This part sets the foundation for the whole story of the Bible. It establishes who God is, the goodness of His original plan, and the nature of the problem—sin—that makes the rest of the story necessary.

1

LESSON

The God Who Made Everything

MAIN IDEA

To introduce God as the all-powerful, one and only, personal Creator who brought the universe into being by His unique power. This lesson will contrast the biblical account with polytheistic myths and establish God's absolute sovereignty.

The First Words of the Bible (Genesis 1:1)

Our journey begins with the simplest, yet most profound, sentence ever written: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” In these few words, we find the foundation for everything we believe. To truly understand what is being said, let's look at two important Hebrew words used in this first verse: *Elohim* (for God) and *bara* (for created).

- ***Elohim* (אֱלֹהִים):** This is the first word the Bible uses for God. What's interesting is that in Hebrew grammar, this word is a plural form. This does not mean there are many gods, however. When the Bible talks about the one true God, the verbs used with *Elohim* are singular (for one person). So why a plural form? Many scholars believe this is a “plural of majesty.” It is a way of saying that God is so great, so powerful, and so full of life that a singular word is not enough to describe Him. It points to the fullness of His attributes and His supreme authority over everything. For us as Christians, this plural form also gives us a first hint of the Trinity—the one God who exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This name *Elohim* emphasizes God's role as the mighty Creator and righteous Judge of the universe.
- ***Bara* (בָּרָא):** This Hebrew word for “create” or “to bring into existence” is special. Throughout the Bible, God is the only one who ever does the action of *bara*. Humans can “make” (*asah*) or “form” (*yatsar*), but only God can *bara*. This word carries the idea of bringing something completely new and fresh into being, often out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). It highlights God's unique, unmatched power as the Creator. It is important to note that *bara* does not always mean creation from nothing—for example, it is used in Genesis 1:27 for the creation of man,

who according to Genesis 2:7 was formed (*yatsar*) from the dust of the ground. Its main meaning, however, is a divine, transformative act of creation that only God can perform.

These first words of the Bible were a revolutionary statement in the ancient world. The nations around Israel believed in many gods, who were often in conflict with one another. Their creation myths were stories of violence, chaos, and struggle. The gods often created the world as a byproduct of a war or on a whim. Genesis 1 presents a radically different view. Here, there is a single, sovereign God, *Elohim*, who creates with purpose, order, and infinite power. He does not have to fight; He simply speaks, and worlds come into being. The use of the exclusive verb *bara* directly counters the idea that creation is an accident or that any other being shares God's creative power. So, the main purpose of Genesis 1 is not to be a science textbook, but to be a powerful theological statement. It answers the question, "Who is the God we worship?" before it answers, "How did the world begin?" It establishes the character of God as the foundation for everything that follows.

| The Goodness of Creation

A repeating theme in Genesis 1 is God's statement after each stage of creation: "And God saw that it was good". This is not just a casual comment; it is a deep revelation about the character of God and the nature of what He has made. It tells us that God is a God of order, beauty, harmony, and goodness, not of chaos or evil. The world He created was not a flawed experiment; it was a perfect, well-functioning home designed specifically for humanity to thrive in. Everything worked in perfect harmony, just as God intended.

| The Spirit of God

Finally, from the very beginning, we see the presence of the Holy Spirit. Genesis 1:2 tells us that "the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters". This picture of "hovering" or "brooding" gives a sense of caring, life-giving energy. The Spirit was actively involved in creation, bringing order to chaos and life to emptiness. This is our first introduction to the third person of the Trinity, and it shows us that the Holy Spirit has played a vital role in God's plan from the very start, a role we will explore more in Lesson 10.

| The Creation of Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:7-25)

The story of creation becomes very personal when God creates the first humans. The Bible tells us that "the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground" (Genesis 2:7). This shows us that our physical bodies have a humble origin, made from common dust, not from something special like gold. But what makes humanity unique is what God did next. He "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being". This was not just normal breathing. The Hebrew word for this breath, *neshamah*, refers to God's own life-giving breath that comes directly from Him. Some interpreters connect this breath with God's Spirit (*ruach*; compare Job 33:4, where both words stand side by side), though the word *ruach* itself is not used in Genesis 2:7. What the text clearly says is that man received not just physical life, but a life that came directly from

God and makes him different from the animals. When God's breath entered Adam, he became a "living soul" or *nephesh chayyah*. While animals are also called *nephesh chayyah*, man is unique because his life came directly from the breath of God, giving him a personal soul and the ability to have a relationship with his Creator. After creating Adam, God said it was "not good that the man should be alone" and made a "helper comparable to him" (Genesis 2:18). God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep, took one of his ribs, and from it, He built the first woman, Eve. When Adam saw her, he recognized that she was like him—"bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh"—a perfect partner, unlike any of the animals.

2

LESSON

The Day Everything Changed

MAIN IDEA

To explain the nature of sin not as a simple mistake, but as a fundamental break of trust in God, leading to spiritual death, shame, and separation. This lesson introduces the core human problem that Jesus came to solve.

The Temptation and the Lie (Genesis 3:1-5)

In the middle of the perfect garden God made, a new voice appears: the serpent. The serpent, representing evil, begins its temptation not with a direct command, but with a subtle question that doubts God's goodness: "Did God really say...?" It twists God's word and questions His intentions.

Then comes the direct lie: "You will not surely die." The serpent directly contradicts God and offers an alternative promise: "you will be like God, knowing good and evil". This was the ultimate temptation: the invitation to be autonomous, to live independently from God and decide for oneself what is right and wrong. It was an offer to define one's own reality, rather than live in the reality God had created.

The Nature of Sin

To understand the story of the Bible, we must understand what sin really is. Sin is not just breaking a rule; at its core, it is a broken relationship. It is the failure to trust God and the attempt to live an independent life that ignores His authority and law. It is a rejection of our status as creatures and a refusal to be dependent on our Creator.

Theologians sometimes distinguish between *sin* (singular) and *sins* (plural). *Sin* is the state of broken trust and rebellion against God. *Sins* are the actions (lying, stealing, hatred, etc.) that grow out of that state of sin. The root of the problem is not just bad behavior; it is a rebellious heart.

The Hebrew word for "know" in the phrase "knowing good and evil" is *yada*. This word means more than just intellectual knowledge. It implies an intimate, experiential knowledge and the ability to distinguish or decide. The serpent's promise was not just to know *that* something was

good or evil, but to have the *power to decide* what is good and evil—a role that belongs to God alone. By eating the fruit, Adam and Eve were not trying to become more educated; they were trying to become their own gods, seizing the moral authority that belonged to their Creator. This reveals the heart of sin: it is a declaration of independence from God. This deep understanding of sin is critical, because it explains why “good works” can never fix the problem. The problem isn’t bad behavior; it’s a rebellious heart that has seized God’s authority. Only a radical change of heart and a restoration of relationship can fix it.

The Immediate Consequences (Genesis 3:7-10)

The results of their choice were immediate and devastating.

- **Opened Eyes and Nakedness:** The Bible says, “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked”. Their eyes were opened not to divine wisdom, but to their own shame and guilt. Their “nakedness” was more than just physical; it was a spiritual vulnerability, a loss of innocence, and a feeling of being exposed before a holy God.
- **Hiding and Fear:** For the first time, they were afraid of God. Instead of enjoying His presence, they hid from Him. The relationship of joyful fellowship was replaced by fear and separation.
- **Blame:** When God confronted them, Adam blamed Eve (“The woman you put here with me...”), and Eve blamed the serpent. Sin broke not only their relationship with God but also their relationship with each other. Harmony was replaced by conflict and blame.

The Human Response: Covering Sin with Works

In their shame, they “sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings”. This is the first example in the Bible of “works righteousness.” It is humanity’s attempt to cover its own sin and shame through its own efforts. But fig leaves are a weak, temporary covering. They cannot heal the inner reality of guilt and separation. This act sets up a key contrast throughout the Bible: the contrast between man’s attempt to save himself (through works, religion, rituals) and God’s gracious provision of a true covering, which is ultimately found in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

3

LESSON

God’s Rescue Plan Begins

MAIN IDEA

To show that God’s response to sin was not abandonment, but the immediate launch of a loving and sovereign plan of redemption, beginning with a promise and unfolding through covenants.

The First Gospel (Protoevangelium - Genesis 3:15)

In the very moment that God speaks the judgment for sin, He also gives the first promise of hope. Speaking to the serpent, God says, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between

your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel”.

This verse is often called the *protoevangelium*, which means “first gospel” or “first good news.” It is the first announcement of God’s plan of redemption in the Bible. Let’s break it down:

- **Enmity:** There will be an ongoing conflict between evil (the “seed” of the serpent) and humanity (the “seed” of the woman).
- **The Seed of the Woman:** Notice the unusual phrase. Family lines were typically traced through the man. “Seed of the woman” points to a unique, future descendant.
- **The Decisive Blow:** The seed of the woman will deliver a crushing, fatal blow to the serpent’s head (“bruise” or “crush”).
- **The Non-Fatal Blow:** In return, the serpent will only injure the seed’s heel (“bruise”)—a painful, but not deadly, wound.

From the very beginning, God promised a Savior, a Rescuer, who would come from humanity and would ultimately defeat evil. The entire story of the Old Testament is the unfolding of this promise.

The Covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12, 15, 17)

Centuries later, God’s plan becomes more specific. God calls a man named Abram (later Abraham) out of his homeland and makes a covenant with him. A covenant is a solemn, binding promise. This covenant with Abraham is a key moment in salvation history.

- **The Promises:** God makes three great promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3:
 1. **Land:** God will give him and his descendants a land.
 2. **Nation:** God will make him into a great nation.
 3. **Blessing:** God will bless Abraham, and through him and his “seed,” all the families of the earth will be blessed.
- **Fulfillment in Christ:** These promises have an immediate fulfillment in the people of Israel, but their ultimate fulfillment is found in Jesus Christ. The New Testament makes it clear that the one, true “seed” of Abraham through whom all nations are blessed is Jesus (Galatians 3:16). The blessing is the salvation offered through Him.
- **Faith, Not Works:** How was Abraham made right with God? Not by his good deeds or his obedience. Genesis 15:6 says, “Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.” From the beginning, God establishes the principle of justification by faith. Salvation is a gift received by believing God’s promises, not by human effort.

The covenants in the Bible are not separate, unrelated deals. They are progressive stages of a single, unified plan of redemption that climaxes in Christ. The promise in Genesis 3:15 is very general: a “seed” of the woman will come. The covenant with Abraham narrows that promise: the

“seed” will come from Abraham’s family. Later, the covenant with David (Lesson 4) will narrow it even further: the “seed” will be a king from the line of David. This shows a key principle of the Bible: progressive revelation. God does not reveal His plan all at once, but unfolds it over time. This helps us see the Old Testament not as a collection of disconnected stories, but as a single, continuous story pointing to Jesus and showing God’s faithful, sovereign control over history to fulfill His promises.

PART 2

The Savior Arrives: The Life of Jesus

This part moves from the promises of the Old Testament to their fulfillment in the person, teachings, and life of Jesus Christ.

4

LESSON

Preparing for the King

Understanding Sin and Our Need for a Savior

Let's begin by defining sin. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for sin is *chata*, which literally means "to miss the mark," like an archer missing the target. The Greek word in the New Testament, *hamartia*, means the same thing. In other words, sin is falling short of God's perfect standard; it is any act of going against God and His ways.

By definition, then, sin separates us from God. Scripture says, "*your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God*" (Isaiah 59:2), and "*the wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). Since God is the creator and giver of life, to be cut off from Him means spiritual death. Our sin creates a barrier that we cannot remove on our own. This separation shows our desperate need for a Savior—someone who can bridge the gap between a holy God and sinful humanity.

Moses and Aaron: God's Deliverance and the Law

To understand God's plan, we look back to Moses and Aaron. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt, oppressed under Pharaoh. God heard their cries and called Moses to lead them to freedom. When God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, Moses felt inadequate and slow of speech. So God appointed his brother

Aaron to be Moses' spokesman. As God said, "*I know he (Aaron) can speak well... You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth... he shall be your mouth*" (Exodus 4:14-16). Together, they confronted Pharaoh, and through many signs and plagues, God delivered Israel from bondage. This exodus from Egypt is the great Old Testament picture of salvation.

After crossing the Red Sea, Israel came to Mount Sinai, where God made a covenant with them and gave the Law through Moses. The Law, including the **Ten Commandments**, revealed God's holy character and righteous requirements.

- **1. "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me.**

Only one God in the driver's seat. No other gods—not money, not pride, not spirits—are allowed to take the wheel.

- **2. "You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.**
- **3. "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.**
- **4. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.**
- **5. "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.**
- **6. "You shall not murder.**
- **7. "You shall not commit adultery.**
- **8. "You shall not steal.**
- **9. "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.**
- **10. "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."*

The Law's purpose was not just to provide rules, but to reveal God's holiness and expose our sin. The New Testament explains that *"through the law comes knowledge of sin"* (Romans 3:20). The Law acts like a mirror, showing us how far we fall short. It could point out the problem (sin), but it could not fix it. Instead, the Law was meant to be a guardian to lead us to Christ (Galatians 3:24) by making it clear that we need God's mercy.

The High Priest: Sacrifice and Atonement in the Old Covenant

Under the Law, God provided a way for sins to be temporarily covered through a sacrificial system, with the

High Priest at its center. This office began with Aaron and his descendants. The high priest's role was to represent the people before God.

His most sacred duty occurred once a year on the

Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). On that day, only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies, the most sacred inner room where God's presence dwelled symbolically. There, he would offer a blood sacrifice to atone for the sins of the people. Crucially, he first had to offer a sacrifice for his own sins, because he too was a sinner (Leviticus 16:6; Hebrews 7:27).

This ritual had to be repeated every year, which showed it was never a final solution. The blood of bulls and goats could not truly take away sins (Hebrews 10:4). The entire system was a foreshadowing—a signpost pointing to the need for a perfect High Priest and a perfect, once-for-all sacrifice.

King David: Shepherd, King, and God's Covenant Promise

After Israel settled in the Promised Land, God raised up David as Israel's greatest king. Despite his flaws, David was called "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22).

The most critical part of David's story is the

Davidic Covenant. God made a remarkable promise to David through the prophet Nathan, saying:

"When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you... and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever... And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever." (2 Samuel 7:12-13, 16)

While this partly referred to David's son, Solomon, the language of an eternal throne and kingdom clearly pointed beyond any human king. God was promising that the ultimate King—the Messiah—would come from David's lineage. This covenant became the foundation of Israel's hope for a coming Savior-King, the "son of David".

Messianic Prophecies: The Coming Savior-King Foretold

Throughout the Old Testament, prophets gave glimpses of the coming Messiah. Here are five key prophecies:

1. Jeremiah 23:5-6 – The Righteous Branch – Prophecy: *"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal*

wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land... And this is the name by which he will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

- Interpretation: A future King from David's line will bring true justice and salvation, embodying God's own righteousness for His people.
2. Isaiah 9:6-7 – The Divine Child and Prince of Peace – Prophecy: *"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David..."*
- Interpretation: This prophecy describes a ruler on David's throne who is both human (a child born) and divine, bearing titles like "Mighty God." He will bring an eternal reign of peace and justice.
3. Isaiah 53 – The Suffering Servant – Prophecy: *"But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray... and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."*
- Interpretation: This describes a Messiah who would suffer and die not for his own sins, but as a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of others. His suffering brings peace and healing between God and humanity.
4. Psalm 2 – God's Anointed Son and King – Prophecy: *"The LORD said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage..."*
- Interpretation: The Messiah is presented as God's own Son and anointed King. He is promised ultimate victory and global reign over all nations.
5. Daniel 7:13-14 – The Son of Man – Prophecy: *"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man... And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion..."*
- Interpretation: This vision shows a figure with divine authority (coming on the clouds) who is given a universal and eternal kingdom by God the Father.

Messianic Miracles in the Ministry of Jesus

The prophets of the Old Testament said that when the Messiah came, He would do certain things: open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, make the lame walk, and bring good news to the poor (Isaiah 35:5-6; Isaiah 61:1). When Jesus performed these signs, He was not simply showing compassion or power — He was **publicly fulfilling messianic prophecy** and showing the people who He was.

The key text is Jesus' own answer to John the Baptist. When John sent messengers to ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?", Jesus did not simply say "yes." He pointed to His works: "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk,

lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them” (Matthew 11:2–6). In other words: look at what the prophets promised, and look at what I am doing. The people understood this too. After one healing they asked, “*Can this be the Son of David?*” (Matthew 12:23), and others said, “*When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?*” (John 7:31).

Below are the key miracles that the prophets said the Messiah would do:

1. Healing the Blind — Especially the Blind from Birth

- **Prophetic Foundation:** Isaiah 35:5 — “*Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped.*” Isaiah 42:6–7 — The Servant of the Lord will “*open the eyes that are blind.*”
- **Fulfillment in Jesus:** John 9:1–7 — Jesus heals a man blind from birth. The healed man himself says: “*Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind*” (John 9:32). Matthew 20:29–34 (par. Mark 10:46–52, where one of the two blind men near Jericho is named Bartimaeus).
- **Messianic Significance:** Healing a man born blind was more than repairing something broken — it meant giving sight that had never existed. This showed creative power, and it was exactly what the prophets said the Messiah would do. In John 9 the healed man draws the conclusion himself (John 9:32–33), and the religious leaders have no answer.

2. Healing the Deaf and Mute — Including a Mute Man Under Demonic Power

- **Prophetic Foundation:** Isaiah 35:5–6 — “*...the ears of the deaf will be unstopped; then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will shout for joy.*”
- **Fulfillment in Jesus:** Mark 7:31–37 — Jesus heals a man who was deaf and could hardly speak. Matthew 12:22–23 — Jesus heals a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and the people ask, “*Can this be the Son of David?*” — directly connecting His act to His Messianic identity.
- **Messianic Significance:** The crowd’s own reaction tells us what this miracle meant to them: they immediately connected it with the promised Son of David (Matthew 12:23). Jesus did not need any method or formula; He cast out demons by His own word and authority, and He explained the meaning Himself: “*If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you*” (Matthew 12:28).

Teacher’s Note: Students may ask about deliverance ministry. Jesus and the apostles cast out demons by a simple command in the authority of Jesus (Mark 1:25–27; Acts 16:18). Only once did Jesus ask for a demon’s name (Mark 5:9), and He did not need the name to cast the demons out. The Bible never commands us to find out a demon’s name or to hold long conversations with evil

spirits. Our confidence is in the authority of Jesus, not in a technique, and our greatest joy is that our names are written in heaven (Luke 10:17–20).

3. Cleansing Lepers

- **Prophetic Foundation:** Leprosy was seen as a direct judgment from God (Numbers 12; 2 Kings 5), and only God could truly heal it. When the king of Syria sent Naaman to be healed, the king of Israel cried out: *“Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy?”* (2 Kings 5:7). Jesus Himself lists the cleansing of lepers among the works that show He is the promised one (Matthew 11:5).
- **Fulfillment in Jesus:** Luke 17:11–19 — Jesus cleanses ten lepers at once. Matthew 8:1–4 — He heals a leper and tells him to show himself to the priest, as prescribed in the Law (Leviticus 14).
- **Messianic Significance:** A leper was cut off from his family, his community, and the worship of God — he lived like a dead man among the living. Later Jewish teachers even compared a leper to a dead person. A healed leper had to be examined by a priest, so the priests themselves became witnesses that something had happened which only God could do.

4. Raising the Dead

- **Prophetic Foundation:** Isaiah 26:19 — *“Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise.”* Ezekiel 37 — The vision of the dry bones points to God’s restoration of His people. Hosea 6:2 hints at restoration on the “third day.”
- **Fulfillment in Jesus:** Mark 5:21–43 — Jairus’ daughter. Luke 7:11–17 — The widow’s son at Nain. John 11:1–44 — Lazarus, after four days in the tomb.
- **Messianic Significance:** Jesus names the raising of the dead among His messianic works (Matthew 11:5). In the Old Testament only Elijah and Elisha had raised the dead, and only by praying to God; Jesus does it by His own word. Some Jewish writings from after the time of the New Testament say that the soul stays near the body for three days. If this idea was already known in Jesus’ day, raising Lazarus on the fourth day (John 11:39) would have removed every doubt. But the Gospel itself gives us the meaning: *“I am the resurrection and the life”* (John 11:25).

5. Feeding the Multitudes

- **Prophetic Foundation:** Deuteronomy 18:15 — A prophet like Moses would come. Psalm 132:15 — God will abundantly bless His people with food. The people expected that the coming one would bring back the “bread from heaven” (manna), as their question in John 6:30–31 shows.
- **Fulfillment in Jesus:** Matthew 14:13–21 — Feeding 5,000. Matthew 15:32–39 — Feeding 4,000.
- **Messianic Significance:** This echoed Moses and the manna, linking Jesus directly to the promise of a new and greater Moses. The people saw it: *“This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”* (John 6:14). Jesus then explained that He Himself is the true bread from heaven (John 6:32–35).

6. Authority Over Nature

- **Prophetic Foundation:** Psalm 89:9 — “You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them.”
- **Fulfillment in Jesus:** Mark 4:35–41 — Calming the storm. Matthew 14:22–33 — Walking on water.
- **Messianic Significance:** Mastery over creation belongs to God alone. In showing this power, Jesus displayed the authority that Scripture attributes to the Lord Himself, and the disciples responded with worship: “Truly you are the Son of God” (Matthew 14:33).

Why These Miracles Mattered

For the Jewish people of Jesus’ day, these acts weren’t just impressive — they were **identity markers**. They aligned precisely with what the prophets had said the Messiah would do, and Jesus Himself pointed to them as His answer to the question, “Are you the one who is to come?” (Matthew 11:2–6). Each miracle was a public declaration: *The King has arrived*.

5

LESSON

How to Live in the King’s World

MAIN IDEA

To explore the Sermon on the Mount as Jesus’s description of the character and ethics of life in the kingdom of God. It is not a new law to earn salvation, but a portrait of a heart transformed by God’s grace.

Context: A New Moses on a New Mountain

Matthew records that Jesus gave this famous sermon on a mountain (Matthew 5:1). This is not a random detail. Matthew is intentionally presenting Jesus as a new and greater Moses, giving the new law to the new covenant people, just as Moses received the old law on Mount Sinai. This is the constitution for the Kingdom of God.

The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12)

The sermon begins with the Beatitudes. Jesus describes the people who are “blessed,” or truly happy. Surprisingly, they are not the rich, powerful, or successful. They are the “poor in spirit,” the “mourners,” the “meek,” and those who “hunger and thirst for righteousness.” They are blessed not because of their circumstances, but because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them. Jesus turns the world’s values upside down and shows what really matters in God’s kingdom.

Fulfilling the Law (Matthew 5:17-20)

Jesus says He did not come to abolish the Old Testament Law, but to “fulfill” it. He fulfills it by revealing its deepest purpose and meaning. The “higher righteousness” He requires from His followers is not a stricter rule-keeping. It is not about being outwardly more righteous than the Pharisees, who were experts at rule-keeping. It is about a righteousness that comes from the heart.

The Antitheses (Matthew 5:21-48)

Jesus demonstrates this in a series of teachings known as the “antitheses.” He takes a command from the Old Testament (“You have heard that it was said...”) and shows its true, deeper meaning (“But I say to you...”).

- The command “You shall not murder” goes beyond the physical act to include anger in the heart.
- The command “You shall not commit adultery” goes beyond the physical act to include lust in the heart.

Jesus shows that God cares about our inner motives, desires, and attitudes, not just our outward behavior. True righteousness is a matter of the heart.

Grace, Not Works-Righteousness

The standard Jesus sets is incredibly high: “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). This standard is not meant to crush or discourage us. It is meant to show us our own moral inability and our deep need for a Savior. No one can meet this standard on their own. This is why the Sermon on the Mount drives us to the grace of God. It describes the life that flows from a heart that has already been changed by God, not the life we must live to earn God’s favor.

The Kingdom of God has an “already and not yet” dimension. Jesus announced that the Kingdom of God “has come near” (Matthew 4:17). It has *already* broken into the world in His person and work. The ethics of the Sermon on the Mount describe life as it *should* be and *will* be in the Kingdom. It is the standard of heaven. But we are still living in a fallen world and are *not yet* perfect. We live “between the times”. This tension is healthy. It keeps us from becoming self-satisfied and drives us to depend daily on God’s grace and the Holy Spirit’s power to live as He has called us to live.

6

LESSON

Stories that Explain the Kingdom

MAIN IDEA

Jesus used simple, relatable stories, called parables, to reveal deep truths about the kingdom of God to those with “ears to hear,” while hiding them from those with hardened hearts.

The Purpose of Parables (Matthew 13:10-17)

The disciples asked Jesus why He spoke in parables. Jesus explained that parables had a dual purpose. For His disciples, who had opened their hearts, they were meant to reveal the “secrets of the kingdom of heaven.” For the crowd, who largely rejected Him, they were meant to conceal the truth. The parables acted as a judgment on the hard-hearted, confirming them in their unbelief by fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah that they would be “ever hearing but never understanding”.

Key Themes in the Kingdom Parables

Jesus used images from everyday life—farming, fishing, baking, trading—to teach deep truths about His kingdom.

- **The Value of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:44-46):** The parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price teach that the kingdom of God is of such supreme value that it is worth giving up everything else to possess it. A person who sees the true worth of the kingdom joyfully gives up all he has to obtain it.
- **The Growth of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:31-33):** The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven show that the kingdom of God starts from very small, seemingly insignificant beginnings, but will grow to have a massive, pervasive influence in the world. Just as a tiny mustard seed grows into a large shrub, or a little leaven works through a whole batch of dough, so God’s kingdom will grow and change the world.
- **Responses to the Kingdom (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23):** The parable of the sower shows that the “seed” of the kingdom message meets with different responses in people, depending on the condition of their heart (the “soil”). Some hearts are hard like a path, some are shallow like rocky ground, and some are choked by the worries of the world like thorns. Only the good soil—a receptive and obedient heart—produces fruit.
- **The Present Mix of Good and Evil (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43):** The parable of the wheat and the weeds teaches that in this present age, true believers (“wheat”) and false believers (“weeds”) will exist side-by-side in the world and even in the visible church. The enemy (Satan) sows the weeds, but the master commands his servants to let them grow together until the harvest. The final separation will only happen at the judgment at the end of the age.

There are two ways to read the parable of the pearl of great price (Matthew 13:45-46), and both have something true to teach us.

The first reading sees *us* as the merchant. When a person discovers the true worth of the kingdom, he joyfully gives up everything else to have it. This is not works-righteousness. The man in the parable of the treasure sells all “in his joy” (Matthew 13:44); this is the response of faith, the same response Paul describes when he counts everything as loss “because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Philippians 3:7–8; see also Luke 14:33). We do not buy salvation with anything we own; we simply let go of everything that competes with Christ.

The second reading, which some teachers prefer, sees *Jesus* as the merchant. He is the one who “sold all that he had”—He left the glory of heaven and gave His life—to purchase His precious possession, the church (the pearl). This reading reminds us that God’s initiative always comes first: “what God in Christ has done for you” comes before “what you must do for God.”

Both readings are legitimate, and they belong together. This gives us a key to interpreting all the parables: we should first ask, “What does this story teach me about God’s character, His grace, and His actions in the world?” and then ask, “What does this story tell me to do?” The first question protects the gospel and keeps the focus on God’s initiative in salvation; the second keeps us from hearing the parables without responding to them.

PART 3

The Rescue Mission: The Work of Jesus

This part focuses on the central events of the gospel: the crucifixion and resurrection. It explains how Jesus accomplished our salvation.

7

LESSON

The Cross: The Greatest Sacrifice

MAIN IDEA

To explain that Jesus’s death on the cross was not a tragic accident, but a multi-faceted, purposeful act of God that accomplished our salvation by dealing with our sin, defeating evil, and demonstrating God’s love.

The Need for Atonement

The Bible is clear: “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), and “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Because of our sin, we are separated from a holy God and stand under His just judgment. To bridge this gap and reconcile sinful people to a holy God, a sacrifice was necessary.

Multiple Pictures of the Cross

The New Testament uses several powerful pictures or “theories” to help us understand the rich meaning of what happened at the cross. These pictures are not contradictory, but complementary, showing different facets of the same precious jewel.

- **Penal Substitution (The Courtroom Picture):** This is a foundational view in evangelical theology. The word “penal” refers to the penalty for sin. The word “substitution” means to take someone’s place. This view says that Jesus, our substitute, stood in our place and took the just penalty (*penal*) for our sins upon Himself. God’s righteous anger against sin was poured out on Jesus, satisfying the demands of divine justice. Key texts like Isaiah 53 (“He was pierced for our transgressions”), Romans 3:25-26, and Galatians 3:13 (“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us”) support this view. God treated Jesus as if He had lived our sinful lives so that He could treat us as if we had lived Christ’s perfect life (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- **Christus Victor (The Battlefield Picture):** The death and resurrection of Jesus was a cosmic battle and a decisive victory (*Victor*) over the powers of sin, death, and the devil. Jesus came to “destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8) and to “disarm the powers and authorities” (Colossians 2:15). This view emphasizes liberation from bondage. Through His death, Christ defeated the powers that held humanity captive.
- **Ransom Theory (The Marketplace Picture):** This view of the early church, related to Christus Victor, sees Jesus’s death as a “ransom” paid to free humanity from slavery to Satan. Jesus Himself said He came to “give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). While early theologians debated who the ransom was paid to (Satan or God), the key idea is that a price was paid for our freedom.

These pictures work together. Penal substitution is the foundation that makes the other aspects of the atonement possible. Christus Victor emphasizes the victory over Satan, but what gives Satan power over humanity in the first place? The Bible teaches that sin gives Satan a legal claim or foothold. The “sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law” (1 Corinthians 15:56). Satan is the “accuser” (Zechariah 3:1; Revelation 12:10) who uses our actual guilt before God’s law against us. For Jesus to truly defeat Satan, He had to deal with the root problem: our sin and guilt before God. Penal substitution explains how He did that. By taking the penalty for our sin, Jesus satisfied the just requirements of the law. He paid our debt to God. Once the legal debt of sin was paid, Satan’s power was broken. He no longer had a valid charge against us. Therefore, the act of penal substitution on the cross was the means by which Christ won His victory (Christus Victor). One is the legal foundation, the other is the cosmic result. Seeing them together gives us a more complete biblical picture of the cross.

8

LESSON

The Empty Tomb: The Greatest Victory

MAIN IDEA

The resurrection of Jesus is a historical, verifiable event that is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. It confirms who Jesus is, what He did on the cross, and guarantees our future.

The Certainty of the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-11)

The apostle Paul begins his great chapter on the resurrection by establishing the absolute certainty of Jesus's resurrection. He says this is the gospel he preached, which the Corinthians received, and in which they stand. He bases his argument on two pillars:

1. **The Testimony of Scripture:** Paul emphasizes that Christ “died for our sins *according to the Scriptures*,” and that He “was raised on the third day *according to the Scriptures*”. The resurrection was not an afterthought; it was the fulfillment of God's promises in the Old Testament.
2. **The Testimony of Eyewitnesses:** Paul then lists an impressive list of people who saw the risen Jesus: Peter (Cephas), the Twelve, more than 500 brothers at one time, James, all the apostles, and finally, Paul himself. He adds that most of these 500 witnesses were still alive when he wrote this letter, essentially challenging his readers to check the facts for themselves.

Beyond Paul's testimony, historians point to several facts that are best explained by a literal, bodily resurrection:

- Jesus died by crucifixion. This is a nearly certain historical fact.
- His tomb was found empty. The fact that the Jewish authorities spread the story that the disciples stole the body (Matthew 28:11–15) is strong indirect evidence that the tomb was, in fact, empty. If they could have produced the body, they would have done so to stop the Christian movement in its tracks.
- The disciples had real, transformative experiences of seeing the risen Jesus. These were not mere visions; the accounts describe touching Him and eating with Him (Luke 24:39–43; John 20:27).
- The disciples were radically transformed. They went from being frightened, hiding cowards to bold preachers who were willing to suffer and die for their belief in the resurrection. People will die for what they believe is true, but they will not die for something they know is a lie they made up.

The Theological Importance (1 Corinthians 15:12-19)

Paul then makes a powerful argument by showing the consequences if there were no resurrection. If Christ has not been raised, then:

- Our preaching is useless.
- Our faith is futile.
- We are still in our sins (meaning the cross alone, without the resurrection, does not save us).
- The apostles are liars, misrepresenting God.
- Those who have died in Christ are lost.
- Christians are the most pitiful people in the world.

In short, without the resurrection, there is no Christianity. It is the event on which everything else rests.

The doubters in Corinth asked a practical question: “With what kind of body do they come?” (1 Corinthians 15:35). They could not imagine how a decayed body could be brought back to life. Paul answers with an analogy from nature: a seed. A seed is “sown” in the ground and “dies,” but a new plant grows from it. The plant is connected to the original seed, but it is also gloriously different.

He applies this to the resurrection body. It is sown in corruption, but raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, but raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, but raised in power. It is sown a “natural body,” but raised a “spiritual body”.

A “spiritual body” does not mean a non-physical body made of spirit. It means a physical body that is completely enlivened and empowered by the Holy Spirit, no longer subject to decay, disease, or death. It is perfectly suited for life in the new creation. This teaching is crucial because it affirms both the *continuity* of our personal identity (it is *our* body that is raised) and the radical *transformation* needed to inherit the eternal kingdom (“flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God”). It gives us a concrete and hopeful picture of our future.

9

LESSON

How We Are Made Right with God

MAIN IDEA

To explain the doctrine of justification by faith: we are declared righteous by God, not because of our own works, but as a free gift of grace, received through faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work.

The Problem: Universal Sin (Romans 3:9-20, 23)

The apostle Paul lays the foundation for the gospel in his letter to the Romans. He argues that all people, without exception, are guilty before God. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”. There is no difference between Jews, who had the law, and Gentiles, who did not. Both groups are in the same lost condition and cannot meet God’s standard of righteousness by keeping the law.

The Solution: A Righteousness from God (Romans 3:21-24)

But then comes the good news, which begins with the words “But now...” Paul announces that a righteousness from God has been revealed, and it is “apart from the law.” This righteousness is not something we earn or work for. It is given “freely” (*dorean*), as a pure gift, by God’s grace.

The Means: Faith and Redemption

How do we receive this gift? “Through faith in Jesus Christ”. Faith is trusting in what God has done for us in Christ. This righteousness is made possible through the “redemption that is in Christ Jesus”. The word “redemption” (*apolutrosis*) is a term from the slave market. It means to be bought back and set free. We were slaves to sin, and Christ paid the price to set us free.

The Basis: Atonement (Romans 3:25)

God presented Jesus as a “sacrifice of atonement” (*hilasterion*) in His blood. This is a crucial theological term with deep Old Testament roots.

- *Hilasterion* is the Greek word used in the Old Testament for the “mercy seat”—the lid of the Ark of the Covenant where the atoning sacrifice was made on the Day of Atonement. It was the place where God’s presence dwelt and where sin was atoned for.
- The word carries the dual meaning of *propitiation* (the turning away of God’s righteous wrath against sin) and *expiation* (the cleansing or wiping away of sin itself).
- By presenting Jesus as the new *hilasterion*, God showed that He is both “just” (He punishes sin by laying it on His Son) and the “justifier” of those who have faith in Jesus (He declares the sinner free by grace). He solved the dilemma of how a holy God could forgive sinners without compromising His own justice.

The Connection to the Resurrection (Romans 4:25)

Paul connects justification directly to the resurrection. He writes that Jesus “was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification”.

- His death paid the penalty for our sins.
- His resurrection is the proof that the payment was accepted by the Father. It is God’s public declaration that justice has been satisfied. If Jesus had stayed dead, we would have no proof that His sacrifice worked. His resurrection is the divine receipt for our justification. It is the guarantee that we who are in Him are counted as righteous.

The doctrine of justification by faith is the great equalizer. It destroys any basis for human pride or ethnic prejudice. Since no one is saved by works, ancestry, or religious performance, but all are saved in the same way—through faith in Christ—there is no room for boasting. Paul says there is “no difference”. This means the ground of acceptance before God is identical for everyone. This is not just a doctrine about how an individual gets saved; it is a profoundly church-centered doctrine. It is the theological foundation for the one new humanity in Christ, where previous divisions

between Jew and Gentile are erased (Ephesians 2:14-16). This is a powerful and relevant message for any community struggling with tribal or ethnic tensions, showing that our unity in Christ is deeper than any earthly division.

PART 4

The New Life: Living as God's People

This final part explains the resources God has given to believers to live out their new identity in Christ: the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, and the church.

10

LESSON

God's Spirit in Us

MAIN IDEA

To introduce the Holy Spirit not as an impersonal force, but as the third Person of the Trinity, who now lives in every believer to empower, guide, and transform them into the image of Christ.

The Personhood of the Spirit

Although the Spirit is sometimes described as “wind” or “fire,” He is a person, not an impersonal force. The Bible describes the Spirit with personal characteristics:

- He teaches (John 14:26).
- He guides (John 16:13).
- He can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30).
- He makes choices (1 Corinthians 12:11).
- He can be lied to (Acts 5:3-4).

Jesus called Him “another Helper” (*parakletos*), just like Himself. He is a person with whom we can have a relationship.

The Deity of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit is also fully God, equal with the Father and the Son. Scripture testifies to His deity by giving Him divine attributes and works. He is eternal (Hebrews 9:14), all-knowing (1 Corinthians 2:10-11), and active in creation (Genesis 1:2) and new birth (Titus 3:5). The baptismal formula in Matthew 28:19 places the Spirit on equal footing with the Father and the Son: “...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

The Work of the Spirit in the Believer

What does the Holy Spirit do in our lives?

- **New Birth:** The Spirit gives us new spiritual life. Jesus said we must be “born again” by the Spirit (John 3:5-8). This is the work by which He makes our dead hearts alive.
- **Indwelling:** In the Old Testament, the Spirit came upon certain people for specific tasks, but in the New Covenant, He lives permanently inside every believer from the moment of salvation (1 Corinthians 6:19).
- **Sealing:** The Spirit is God’s “seal” on us. In ancient times, a seal was a mark of ownership and security. The Spirit is God’s mark that we belong to Him, and His guarantee that He will keep us safe to the end (Ephesians 1:13-14).
- **Sanctification:** The Spirit works in us to make us more holy and more like Christ over time. The “fruit of the Spirit”—love, joy, peace, patience, etc. (Galatians 5:22-23)—is the result of His transforming work in us.
- **Empowerment:** He gives us power to be witnesses for Jesus and to live the Christian life (Acts 1:8).

The gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost marks a fundamental shift in how God relates to His people. In the Old Covenant, the Law was an external rule written on tablets of stone. The prophets, however, looked forward to a New Covenant where God would put His law *inside* His people, writing it on their *hearts* (Jeremiah 31:33), and put His Spirit *within* them (Ezekiel 36:27). Pentecost (Acts 2) is the fulfillment of this promise. The power to live the Christian life is no longer primarily an external matter of trying to obey a written code, but an internal matter of relying on the power of the indwelling Spirit. This is what makes the “higher righteousness” of the Sermon on the Mount a possibility, not by human effort, but by the Spirit’s work.

11

LESSON

God’s Gifts for His Family

MAIN IDEA

Every Christian is supernaturally gifted by the Holy Spirit with special abilities (*charismata*) to serve and build up the church.

The Purpose and Source of the Gifts

In 1 Corinthians 12:7, Paul says that to each one “the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good”. Spiritual gifts are not badges of spiritual maturity or rewards for good performance. They are tools given for the job. Their purpose is not personal pride or benefit, but to build others up in the faith and to serve the community.

Paul also stresses that although there is a diversity of gifts, they all come from the same source: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). This unity in diversity is a key theme.

The Gifts of the Spirit

The New Testament gives us several lists of spiritual gifts, mainly in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4. These lists are likely representative, not exhaustive. They include a wide range of abilities that might be seen as both “miraculous” and “natural,” but all are empowered by the Spirit for ministry.

The Gift	Where to Read About It	How It Helps the Church (Its Function)
Prophecy	Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10	To speak God’s truth to encourage and build others up.
Service/Helps	Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28	To meet the practical needs of people in the church.
Teaching	Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28	To explain the Bible clearly so people can understand and grow.
Exhortation	Romans 12:8	To encourage, comfort, and motivate others to follow Christ.
Giving	Romans 12:8	To share resources joyfully and generously to support God’s work.
Leadership	Romans 12:8	To guide and organize the church with wisdom and care.
Mercy	Romans 12:8	To show compassion and give comfort to those who are suffering.
Word of Wisdom	1 Corinthians 12:8	To bring divine insight into difficult situations.
Word of Knowledge	1 Corinthians 12:8	To understand and share deep truths about God and His Word.
Faith	1 Corinthians 12:9	To have an extraordinary trust in God to do great things.
Healing	1 Corinthians 12:9, 28	To be a means through which God brings physical and spiritual healing.
Hospitality	1 Peter 4:9	To make people feel welcome and loved.

Christians have different views on whether some of the “sign gifts” (like tongues and healing) stopped with the death of the apostles (*cessationism*) or if they continue today (*continuationism*). While this is an important conversation, the crucial, unifying point is that the purpose of *all* gifts is to build up the church in love. Every believer should seek to serve the body with the gifts God has given them to glorify Christ. The gifts are not abstract ideas; they are practical tools that allow us to participate in the life and ministry of the church.

12

LESSON

We Belong to Each Other: The Church**MAIN IDEA**

The Christian life is not a solo journey. God saves individuals into a new community, the church, which is described as the Body of Christ, where every member is essential and interconnected.

The Metaphor of the Body (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)

The apostle Paul’s most important metaphor for the church is that of a human body. This picture teaches us several important truths.

- **One Body, Many Parts:** Just as a human body has many different parts—eyes, hands, feet—the church is made up of many different people with different gifts and functions. There is no “one size fits all” in Christianity.
- **Unity in Diversity:** Despite this diversity, we are all part of a single body, united by the one Spirit who baptized us into it. Our unity in Christ is more fundamental than any of our differences.
- **Mutual Dependence:** No part can say to another, “I don’t need you.” Every member is valuable and necessary for the health and functioning of the whole body. The eye cannot work without the hand, and the head cannot work without the feet. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts rejoice with it. This means we are responsible for one another. We are called to support, encourage, and carry each other’s burdens.

Christ as the Head

In his letters to the Ephesians and Colossians, Paul adds a crucial detail to this metaphor: Christ is the “head of the body, the church” (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). This means He is the source of life, authority, and direction for the church. Just as the body gets its commands from the head, the church gets its direction from Christ. The body must stay connected to the head to live and grow.

The teaching of the church as the Body of Christ is the practical, lived-out reality of the doctrines of justification and spiritual gifts. Justification (Lesson 9) breaks down the walls that separate

people and makes them equal before God. Spiritual gifts (Lesson 11) explains that God gives each of these now-equal members a unique function for the good of the whole. The doctrine of the Body of Christ (Lesson 12) provides the picture of how this works in practice. It takes the *legal reality* of justification and the *individual potential* of spiritual gifts and puts them into a *living, organic community*. You cannot fully understand what it means to be the church without understanding justification and spiritual gifts. And you cannot fully appreciate the purpose of justification and spiritual gifts without understanding that they are meant to be lived out in the context of the Body. They are three interconnected parts of one beautiful reality.

13

LESSON

Following the King's Example**MAIN IDEA**

While Jesus is our unique Savior, He is also our perfect example. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are called to follow in His steps, imitating His life of love, humility, and obedience.

Savior and Example

It is crucial to understand that Jesus is first and foremost our Savior. He did for us what we could never do for ourselves: He atoned for our sins and reconciled us to God. We are saved not by imitation, but by atonement. But after He has saved us, He is also our perfect model for human life. We do not imitate Him in order to be saved; we imitate Him because we *are* saved.

Following in His Steps (1 Peter 2:21-25)

The apostle Peter says explicitly that Christ left us an “example” so that we might “follow in his steps,” especially in His patient suffering. What can we learn from His example?

- **An Example of Sinlessness:** He “committed no sin.” When tempted, He resisted by relying on God and His Word. We are called to strive to overcome sin in our lives.
- **An Example of Trust in God:** When He suffered, He did not strike back but “entrusted himself to him who judges justly”. He trusted completely in His Father’s plan and care. We are called to entrust our lives and circumstances to God.
- **An Example of Sacrificial Love:** He laid down His life for others, even for His enemies. The apostle John writes, “whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked” (1 John 2:6). We are called to love one another with sacrificial love.

The Power to Follow

We are not left alone to try and imitate Jesus in our own strength. That would be impossible. It is through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit that we are enabled to become “more like Christ”.



The Christian life is a process of being “transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

This final lesson brings the entire study to a meaningful conclusion. It answers the question, “Now that I am saved, what is the purpose of my life?” The story of the Bible begins with humanity created to reflect the image of God. Sin marred that image. The entire story of redemption—the covenants, the cross, the resurrection, the Spirit—is God’s plan to restore that image. Jesus is the perfect image of God (Colossians 1:15). Therefore, the ultimate goal of salvation is not just for our sins to be forgiven and for us to go to heaven, but for us to be “conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:29). Following Jesus’s example is not just another topic; it is the culmination of everything that came before. It is the end goal of creation and redemption. It is our highest calling and our greatest joy.