



YOUTH GROUP RESOURCE PACK

RESOURCE PACK

This kit is designed to help you work with your students after YC has finished and you are back in your regular setting. Use this tool in its entirety or bits and pieces as you feel it best works for you.

Included in this kit:



4 STRATEGIES TO BUILD ON THE YC EXPERIENCE

BY: DR. RON POWELL

Enthusiasm is running high!

New commitments have been made. Now what are you going to do? The temptation is to rejoice, give a sigh of relief and then relax. The danger is that in this exciting time commitments may be forgotten. Students might not get the help that they need to follow through. Here are 4 proven strategies to help students build on the experience...

1. Debrief or Sharing Time

This can be built right into your groups YC Experience. One small youth group packed into two hotel rooms one for guys and one for girls to work through a number of questions to follow up. In amongst the thousands of youth that attended it was difficult to know what the kids got out of the event. Here are some debriefing questions you can use:

- What was the best part of YC?
- Which speaker or workshop was the best, why?
- What is your big take away from YC?
- What decisions or commitments did you make while you were here?
- What changes to your life do you plan to make when you get back?
- How can we help you when we return?

2. The After Party

Many youth groups move quickly to solidify what happened at YC. An after party could include any or all of these elements:

- A video that you made at the event
- Short clips of some of the speakers or sessions
- One minute testimonies from students
- Singing some of the songs from the event
- Breaking into small group and using the debriefing questions from above
- Goal setting for individuals or small groups.
- Setting up accountability partners

3. Follow Up of New Converts

I hope that your group already does this regularly and you have a good resource to work through with a student. The most important thing is that the student understands the decision that they have made and has a plan to begin their discipleship journey. A good program should go 4 to 6 weeks. They should meet at the same time and place each week. The person doing the follow up should provide the new convert with materials and pray for him or her every day. Here are some important topics to discuss and spiritual disciplines for the new Christian to practice

- Understanding Salvation and Lordship of Christ
- Fellowship –being part of the body of Christ through youth group, small group and church.
- Prayer and Worship –communicating constantly with the One who saved them –living a life of gratitude
- Reading the Bible (daily devouring it devotionally) –Provide a plan and basic suggestions for understanding and acting up it
- Sharing and Service –living a life to serve God by caring for others and sharing the God's love

4. Accountability Partners and Groups

Students have a general sense that they want to be better Christians after an event like this but the commitment can be short lived (do you even remember your New Year's resolutions this year?)

A coach, a mentor, personal spiritual trainer, or just a friend can help keep a student on track (at least until the next camp, retreat or conference.)

One way to do this is that each student craft 3 goals. Each time that they meet with their mentor, coach, peer or group they report on their progress toward the goals or their struggles that week moving toward them.

Another approach is to have a partner to share the promises of a promise keeper. They work really well also.

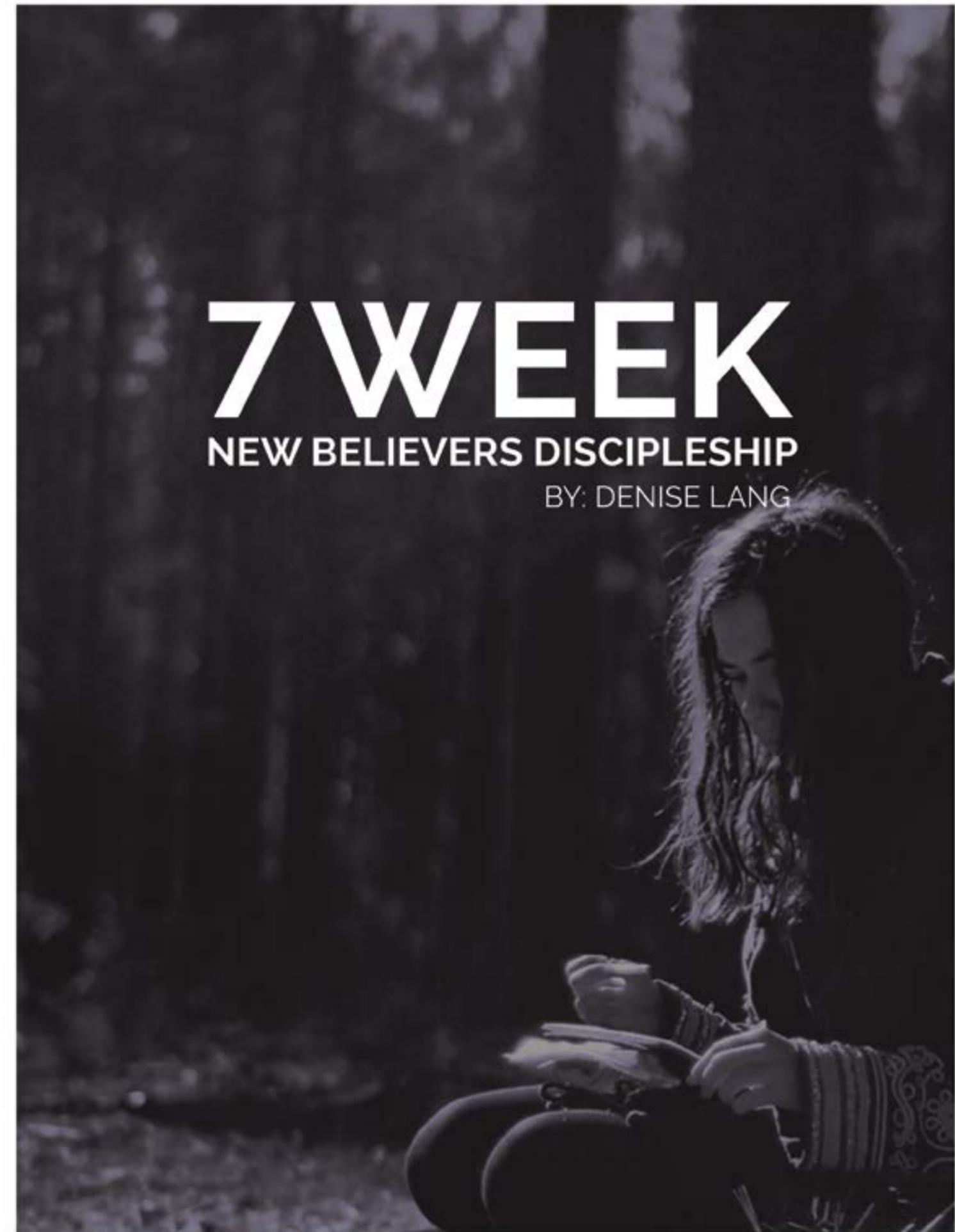
Here are the 7 questions to ask:

1. **PROMISE 1:** Have you kept up your commitment to honoring Jesus Christ through worship, prayer and obedience to God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit?
2. **PROMISE 2:** Have you kept your commitment to pursuing vital relationships with a few other people, understanding that he needs brothers to help him keep his promises?
3. **PROMISE 3:** Have you kept your commitment to practicing spiritual, moral, ethical, and sexual purity?
4. **PROMISE 4:** Have you kept your commitment to building strong relationships with friends and family through love, protection and biblical values?
5. **PROMISE 5:** Have you kept your commitment to supporting the mission of your youth ministry and the church by honoring and praying for your pastor, and by actively giving your time and resources?
6. **PROMISE 6:** Have you kept your commitment to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity?
7. **PROMISE 7:** Have you kept your commitment to influencing your world, being obedient to the Great Commandment (Mark 12:30-31) and the Great Commission?

Make the Most of the Experience

Many have missed out on a lot of these opportunities partly because they didn't plan ahead and partly because they were so exhausted after YC that they wanted to sleep for a week. Get help in advance to make sure that some of these follow up activities take place.

Remember you planned to make a lasting impact in the lives of students. Taking a few extra steps afterward will help students live up to the commitments that they made and become stronger Christians.



7WEEK

NEW BELIEVERS DISCIPLESHIP

BY: DENISE LANG

WEEK ONE: A NEW AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

"but to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12

Your decision to follow Christ will change your life if you let it!

Over the next weeks you will learn what it means to call yourself a Christian. You will also learn about what living for Christ looks like. You took the first step, which is huge! It is a step towards a NEW life and a NEW relationship with Jesus Christ.

The bible says that, "for everyone who is in Christ he (or she) is a new creation." You are a new person, whether you believe it or feel it yet. This is because God's Holy Spirit came along side of you and drew you towards Christ. You made a decision to receive his forgiveness and to follow Jesus.

This NEW life and the NEW you isn't about becoming a better, better behaved or happier version of you. That's part of it, but it is also the beginning of a NEW life. Your OLD life ended and an OLD life was left behind. Now, with Jesus you are on a hopeful journey that will lead to a "full and satisfying life." (John 10:10)

The moment you truly believed that Jesus died for you and that only he could save you, was the beginning of something awesome, something bigger than you can imagine. God wants you to be successful in your new life and in your new relationship with him. Part of that success is you understanding what it means to be a Christian and how being a Christ follower actually impacts your day to day life, your present and your future.

Here's What to Expect this Week:

The truth of the matter is that many people say that after they received Christ they didn't feel different. You may find that you are struggling with the same old sins and feel like your decision to receive Christ "didn't take." Perhaps you noticed a dramatic difference right away. When a person becomes a Christian the experience is quite personal. That's part of the reason Christians talk about having a personal relationship with Jesus. Even though this is the case, there are some things that are true for all Christians. Becoming a Christian is a decision that you make for yourself. When you decided to follow Christ you responded to the nudging of the Holy Spirit and that was real. We know this because the bible says, "for no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up." (John 6:44 NLT) God drew you to himself. That's comforting because this means God

chose you and wants you. You made a sincere response to his invitation and here you are! You didn't earn God's forgiveness. You have it because of what Jesus did on the cross. If you are feeling like you aren't good enough or that this isn't real, put that to rest. You are not the same, because you "are in Christ." It's going to take some time to get used to this, but in this case feelings don't count, the truth of what the bible says does.

The bible makes it clear that "to all who believe in him he gave the right to become children of God." (John 1:12)

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

- 1. You Are Loved:** John 3:16 says that, "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have ever lasting life." This means God loved you so much that he sent his Son Jesus to die for your sins. Jesus did this freely, God did not force him to do this. Jesus came to earth on a rescue mission; to save all of us from eternal death and separation from God.
- 2. You Are Forgiven once you receive Christ:** God forgives completely. The bible says this, "If we confess our sins to God he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) This means that your past, present and future sins are covered by Christ.
- 3. You Are Accepted:** God accepts, loves and likes you. You don't have to do anything to earn his love.

Consider this Analogy:



If I put a letter in an envelope, wherever the envelope goes the letter goes as well. Suppose I put the envelope in my book bag. Where is the letter now? In the book bag of course. When the envelope is not in the book bag, can the letter be in the bag? Not as long as it is in the envelope. The same thing is true for our salvation. It is found in one place (or to be consistent with the analogy-one envelope), in Christ. Wherever Jesus Christ is, life is there. Where he is not, life is not. That is the point of 1 John 5:12. Without Jesus we are destined to life without God now and forever. If you have Jesus then you have eternal life and a lifetime relationship with him now. (adapted from CRU- formerly Campus Crusade for Christ)

"God saved you by his grace when you believed. you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it." ephesians 2:8,9

Take a Closer Look:

John, a disciple of Jesus and one of his best friends, wrote a letter to help give confidence to believers who were becoming unsettled by false teachers. These were people who were trying to tell them that their faith in Christ needed to involve more than what Christ did for them. As you read the following scripture together use questions to help you think about your own salvation and how God saved you.

Read 1 John 5:9-13

Questions:

1. According to this scripture what has said God said about Jesus concerning your salvation?
2. What two things does God say are true in this scripture? (1 John 5:11) Hint: Eternal life is through Jesus- his Son. God has given us eternal life as a gift.
3. According to 1 John 5:10 what are you calling God if you don't believe his testimony regarding his son?

A New Life?

You and I need a new life because without it we are dead. God made everything in the world including humans (read it in Genesis 1-2). He made Adam and Eve to be perfect. God is perfect and since he made us in his image he wanted that Adam and Eve too. Because in the beginning they had a perfect and close relationship with God they were able to hang out with God. The problem was that they broke God's trust by disobeying him. They did the one thing he asked them not to do. (Genesis 3) This is where their trouble and our trouble begins. When they did that, the bible calls this sin, basically sin is doing what we want instead of what God wants (it shows up in our lives in all kinds of ways). This rebellion against God's lordship over their lives meant that now Adam and Eve separated from God and would now eventually experience physical and spiritual death. They could no longer hang out with God as they had been. Sin made it impossible for them to enjoy a close relationship with God. Romans 6:23 says, "for the wages of sin is death."

Not Cool!

Because you and I are related to Adam and Eve by our shared humanity that means each of us are born with sinful nature (a natural bent towards sin). We all sin, there is not one person who could say they haven't. The Bible says this, "All have sinned and have fallen short of God's standards." (Romans 3:23) We know this to be true. Think about it: you don't have to teach a toddler how to misbehave, it's just comes naturally (even if it's just a one time deal).

BUT HERE'S SOMETHING THAT IS COOL:

The rest of story is that God didn't leave us in this mess. Jesus who is God's son was perfect. He never sinned and when he was on earth he lived the perfect life that we couldn't. Jesus offered himself to die on cross on our behalf. When he died and rose again he paid the penalty that our sins deserved and he showed the world that he really was God. He made a way for all of us to be forgiven and to be in a right relationship with him. 2 Corinthians 5: 21 says, "God made him who had no sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Jesus brought you life! Life with God now and eternal life when you die. Your sins and my sins would have kept us

separated from God forever, but God took care of that. And by YOU (and me) accepting his sacrifice you/we have gained life!

Your New Life With God:

Jesus said, I am THE Life! Christians refer to Jesus as the source of truth. John 14:6 says, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Jesus is TRUTH. And when we receive him we have life, a full and abundant life today, you don't have to wait until heaven to enjoy Jesus. You can have that life right now too. Ask your mentor how their relationship has impacted their life?

Questions:

1. How does having new life make you feel? Do you see your life differently now?
2. Can you describe how you see Jesus now? Is it different from before?
3. Has this new life changed the way you see others? How?
4. Have you really thought about what led you to turn to God? If not, think about it now.

DTR: Defining Your relationship with Jesus

A lot of relationships are full of drama. If you and I didn't have Jesus we would have nothing but drama, but fortunately for us that is not the case. **Read Romans 5:6-10.** Focus on **verses 6-8.** Here the apostle Paul is saying that there may be a time when someone will sacrifice themselves for somebody or something they love or for a really great person. But very rarely would anyone do this for a terrible person or for their enemies. Jesus is different. The verses say that, "Jesus died for us while we were still yet sinners" and didn't even admit to our sin and that we are justified. Justified is a legal term that means that we have been declared innocent. Through the blood of Jesus shed on the cross your guilt was wiped away.

Watch The Judge and his Friend on YouTube
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JowBUFltXtg>)



Take a look at Romans 5:10. Apart from Christ, we are God's enemies. Yikes! Verse 10 has something else important to say. The word reconciled: it means to be restored or to bring back together. You and I were God's enemies before we received Christ. Colossians 1:21 says, "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour." (Our sin: wanting to do things our way and not God's.)

Jesus' payment for our sins brought us back into right relationship with God. Without Christ you wouldn't be allowed to be with God, to know him and to be close with him. Jesus restored your relationship with God, this is one of the best parts of your NEW relationship!

Questions

1. **What part of your NEW relationship with God are you enjoying most right now?**

1. **What has been the biggest surprise for you in this relationship?**



New Purpose

Our purpose is basically our reason for being here. It includes our goals, where we spend our energies, thoughts and actions. When God gave you a new life he also gave your life NEW meaning and NEW purpose. In many and almost all ways your purpose is very much tied to your relationship with Christ. A big part of your purpose is to be loved by God and for you to love him back. Another part of your purpose is tied to Christ's Lordship over your life (a term the Bible uses to describe what it means to put God in charge). When you became a Christian you also became under new management with a new job and new job description. This doesn't mean you are not free to pursue your dreams and goals. It just means that now God would like you pursue them with him in mind. He'd like you to ask his opinion about things too, this also includes you becoming more like Christ every day. That is his ultimate purpose for all of His children.

Here are few things that the Bible has to say about our purpose:

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." Matthew 28:19

"Who (Christ) gave us a ministry of reconciliation." 2 Corinthians 5:18

"And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8

"For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters." Romans 8:29

Each of these verses speak into your NEW purpose. You now have a new lens through which to look at the world with.

The way you used to see things will change as God starts to transform you. You will be able to see people as God sees them. You will start to love people the way Jesus does! You will likely start seeing your present and your future the way Christ does. His plans will become your plans.

Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart." Psalm 37:4

1. Does having a NEW life with Christ change the way you see your future? How? Talk about it with a friend.
2. How do you think your relationship with Jesus could impact your future?

God wants to be involved in your life; in the little things and in the big things. He wants to journey with you. God isn't a control freak and his desire is not to be a kill-joy. But he created you and he knows you best. We are free to make our own plans but life is best done with God at our side, not only as the leader of our lives but as our companion. That's another aspect of being a Christian, we never have to be alone in our decisions. God wants to guide us, encourage us, stretch us and empower us to do his will. When we are in God's will we really shine.

HOW DOES KNOWING CHRIST AFFECT YOU NOW?

- IF YOU ARE IN JUNIOR HIGH
- IF YOU ARE IN HIGH SCHOOL
- AS YOU MAKE COLLEGE/CAREER PLANS

"Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own.

Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track.

Don't assume that you know it all. Run to God! Run from evil! Your body will glow with health, your very bones will vibrate with life!

Honour God with everything you own; give him the first and the best. Your barns will burst, your wine vats will brim over."

Proverbs 3:5-6 | The Message

**FOR I KNOW THE PLANS
I HAVE FOR YOU
DECLARES THE LORD.
PLANS TO PROSPER YOU AND NOT TO
HARM YOU. PLANS TO GIVE YOU HOPE AND A FUTURE**
JEREMIAH 29:11

Relax, think about all of this and soak it all in

It's good to take a break and take things in. Might we suggest you take some time to look back at this week's lesson and review what you learned. Let it really sink in...

Let the truth of what happened to you when you received Christ take root in your heart and mind. You are a NEW creation! Live in that moment for awhile, rest in that truth, and be secure in the knowledge that God loves you, forgives you and accepts you!

WEEK TWO: A NEW PEACE: CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

"YOUR SINS AND STRUGGLES WILL AFFECT HOW YOU EXPERIENCE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST. FOR HE IS ALWAYS WITH YOU." HEBREWS 13:5

Just because you are a Christian it doesn't mean that you will automatically stop sinning. Change takes time. But the good news is that because you have the Holy Spirit guiding you, convicting you and reminding you of who you are in Christ, you will want to sin less and that is a good start. Although Christians are forgiven, we still struggle with sin and failure to obey God. If you ask your Christian friends, they will probably tell you that they still struggle with some areas of sin. I bet if you ask them if things are getting better they would say, "Yes, by the grace of God." He is changing me and when I commit myself to obey God and his word I sin less".

In this lesson, we are going to take a closer look at struggling with sin, and a way to deal with the sins we commit. The central truths we will be talking about are GRACE and FORGIVENESS. These are two very important words for you to know. Grace is God's unmerited favour and love towards us. Forgiveness is what God extends to us through Christ. Jesus died in our place for all the sins we have committed and will commit in the future. Because of this, and the fact that we received Christ as our Saviour, God now is willing and able to forgive us any time we sin. All he asks is that we admit our sin to him and let him be the leader of our life once again.

It's helpful to check in with others in the area of struggling with sins and failures. The bible is full of promises that remind us that God is forgiving and compassionate. Look up these verses and see what they say about God's forgiveness. Take a look at the section entitled ask a friend and think about this. Take some time to discuss the questions below with your mentor or friend. They probably have some helpful things to share with you.

Ask a Friend

- **Do you still sin as a Christian?**
- **How does that make you feel?**
- **What do you do to deal with this?**

Psalm 103:1-12
 Ephesian 1:7
 Hebrews 10:17
 Colossians 1:13-14
 Micah 7:18-19
 Matthew 26:28

Think About this:

1. How do you feel when you know you have failed another person?
2. How do you think these feelings affect your responses and actions towards them?
3. How would it impact you if someone wouldn't forgive you?
4. How might it feel to be forgiven?
5. Sin has the same impact on our relationship with Christ. How?

Answers: 1. Guilty, unworthy, a failure 2. We tend to withdraw, or hide or feel uncomfortable 3. We might worry, be anxious, feel far from them 4. We feel free and secure and at peace 5. Sin can cause us to want to hide from God. We might even feel ashamed. We lose our sense of closeness with God when this happens. It puts a strain on the relationship

ROMANS 6:11,14; JAMES 3:2; 1 JOHN 2: 1-2; 1 JOHN 1:9

Encountering sin as believer can be frustrating and confusing. You are all set out to live this new life, then one day you find yourself doing the same old things and making the same mistakes. One day you wake up and you are still tempted to: you can fill in the blank. You may even wonder, "How can this be happening? Why am I still messing up? I don't want to sin; what's my problem?" So why are you? Why are we still tempted to sin from time to time? Its important to know what the Bible says about this. You need to know what changes and what doesn't change in people's lives concerning sin after you become a Christian. The Bible says that while Jesus' death freed us from the reign and absolute rule of sin in our lives (Romans 6:11&14), we haven't yet been completely freed from the presence and influence of sin.

Adapted from Joshua Harris- Dug Down Deep

Look up: Romans 6:11&14
 Circle or underline the phrase: "You live under the freedom of God's grace."

Consider this: What do you think "live under freedom" means?

Read James 3:2. What is this saying about us even as Christians?

Read 1 John 1:8. What do you think this verse means?

Consider this Analogy:

This analogy is flawed, but in some ways we're like prisoners of war who have been freed from captivity but are still behind enemy lines. In a very real sense we have been rescued; remember the lost sheep? We are no longer locked up and at the mercy of the enemy, but at the same time, the war isn't over. We're waiting for our commander to return and completely wipe out the enemy. The world we live in is still affected by sin, the devil and our own wandering hearts. That puts us at risk. "We have to be on guard." Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit to help us when we are tempted to sin and to give us the power we need to overcome all temptations. We are not yet perfect, so we will sin from time to time. We need the power of Christ inside of us to follow Jesus fully. But don't get discouraged, because one day our struggle with sin will be over. And in the meantime little by little God is working in you to make you more like Jesus.

(Adapted from Joshua Harris - Dug Down Deep)

What's the Solution?

So what do we do?

1 John 2:1-2 says this, "But if you do sin, there is someone to plead for you before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who pleases God completely. He is the sacrifice for our sins. He takes away not only our sins but the sins of the world."

1. What do you think this verse is talking about? What can we do sin?
2. "If we confess our sins to God he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (John 1:9) What does this say about what happens to all our sins when we confess them to God?

This video is a great illustration of what it's like for us when we don't confess our sins to God.

Go to YouTube: onetimeblind-Trash



Confession and Repentance

Confession & Repentance are the two parts of receiving forgiveness from Christ when we sin. When we confess our sins to God we are admitting we have done something wrong. We are agreeing with God about the sin we have committed. When we repent of our sins this means that we are not only agreeing with God about our sin but we are also agreeing to turn away from sinning in this way again. When we repent we are telling God that have changed our minds and want to turn to him and want to do things his way, not ours.

The next step is to Receive. When we confess our sins and repent of them we need to remind ourselves of what the Bible says about God's forgiveness towards us. Psalm 103:10-13 says that, "God does not punish us for all our sins; he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve."

"For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far from us as the East is from the West."

"you can't reach for anything new if your hands are still full of yesterday's junk"

This means God completely forgives and we need to receive his forgiveness. The last step is to continue to walk with Christ; following and trusting him.

WRONG ATTITUDES TOWARDS SIN

- My sin doesn't matter
- I don't sin anymore
- I've done nothing wrong, it's impossible for me to sin now

CORRECT ATTITUDES TOWARDS SIN

- I must continue to walk with God and live in light of who he is, as he changes me to become more like Christ
- I need to openly and honestly admit to God when I sin, ask for forgiveness and repent and receive God's forgiveness
- I need to try to avoid sin and obey God with the help of the Holy Spirit
- I don't need to carry my sin around with me like yesterday's trash

Admit it
Confess and Repent
Receive God's forgiveness
Continue to walk with God

You made it through another week. If you are up for a challenge, why not try to memorize 1 John 1:9; it's a good one to know. The next time you find yourself messing up, use this scripture to remind yourself of what you need to do!

"A true follower of Jesus Christ will see that he or she will increasingly want to sin less and want to please God more."
mark driscoll

WEEK THREE: UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT: LEARNING TO WALK BY THE SPIRIT

"and I am sure that God who began the good work within you will keep right on helping you grow in his grace until his task within you is finally finished on that day when Jesus Christ returns." philippians 1:6

CHANGED

CHANGING

TO BE CHANGED FOREVER

The Christian Life in many ways is about change. At the moment you accepted Jesus' forgiveness and asked him to be the leader of your life, you experienced a change. You were changed by Christ in an instant but the change in you is also ongoing. God wants you to become more like Christ. The Bible instructs us to imitate Jesus (Ephesians 5:1-2). 1 John 2:6 says that, "Whoever claims to be a Christian must live as Jesus lived." This is not always an easy thing to do, but if we cooperate with the Holy Spirit, He will empower us to live as Christ lived. One day, the Bible tells us, this change will be complete. (Philippians 1:6) Until then all Christians are going to experience the ups and downs of transformation. This week we are going to take a closer look at what it means to "walk by the Spirit" and how this relates to becoming more like Christ.

Some Important Words you Need to Know

Sanctification

If we are new people as the Bible says, then how is it that we often act like the old us? If we are changed by Christ, why do so many parts of our lives still seem like the old self? Why is transformation taking so long? The questions surrounding how a Christian deals with obeying God and becoming more holy has to do with something the Bible calls sanctification, which simply means becoming increasingly more like Jesus.

The Process

Sanctification requires some work on your part. It's not about earning your salvation, (Christ did what was necessary for you to be forgiven and accepted by God), but it is about cooperating with the Holy Spirit who lives inside of you, empowers, equips and helps you to obey God day by day. Becoming like Christ is a joint effort- you and the Holy Spirit. Sometimes this is referred to as being under "New Management." Once we become Christians we have a new boss, a new leader in our lives. We are no longer in charge of our lives, we are under "new management" - the Holy Spirit. God's word tells us this is the best way for us to live.

Not an Option

God's Word teaches that sanctification is not really an option for a believer. Hebrews 12:14 says, "Strive for holiness without which no one can see the Lord." This verse indicates that a true believer will experience change and will desire to be changed as they continue to become like Christ. If a person is truly saved by Christ it should show up in a new way of living. This won't happen all at once, but we should see more and more evidence of a life that has been changed by God. God's truth should show up in our lives: at school, at home with our friends, in our bedrooms, our money, our time, our desires and in our dreams. Eventually Christ is given more access to every area of our lives.

Think About this:

1. Where have you experienced God's transformation in your own life already?
2. How have you come to terms with the fact that you still sin as a believer?
3. What frustrates you the most about the struggle?

TAKE A LOOK: Watch the YouTube video: [onetimeblind-the stool](#). It's a short video on what it can look like to remove Christ from the control centre of your life (walking by the flesh and not by the Spirit).



"For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do." Galatians 5:17-18

- What does this scripture tell us about the flesh and the Spirit?
- What does this tell us about why we still sin?

So What Can We Do?

Fortunately for us God hasn't left us hanging. This is what the Bible has to say about how to deal with our "indwelling sin." Romans 13:14 says, "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires." We need to learn to "live by the Spirit" or to "walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh." (Galatians 5:16)

Take a Look at this: The following diagrams and excerpts are from the book called "Dug Down Deep." It's a good book we highly recommend!

1. This is you. Or us. We're humans made in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27).

Feeding
the
FLESH

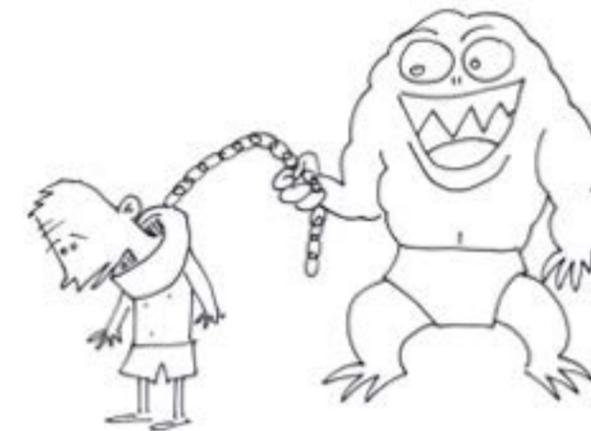
by Joshua Harris



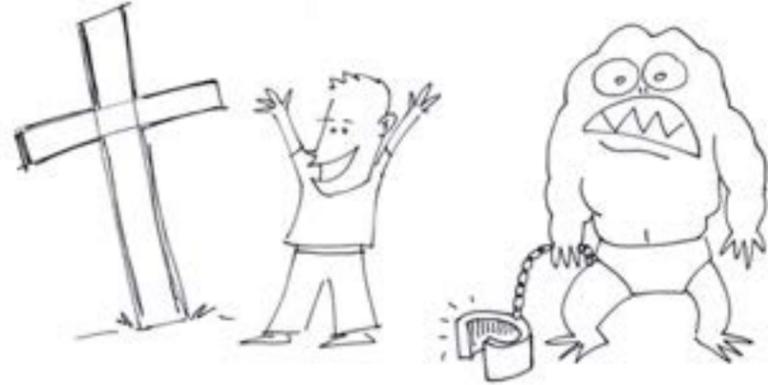
2. This is the flesh. It's not talking about our physical bodies--it's who we are apart from Christ. The flesh refers to our sinful desires to live for ourselves and disobey God's laws and commands (Romans 7:18).



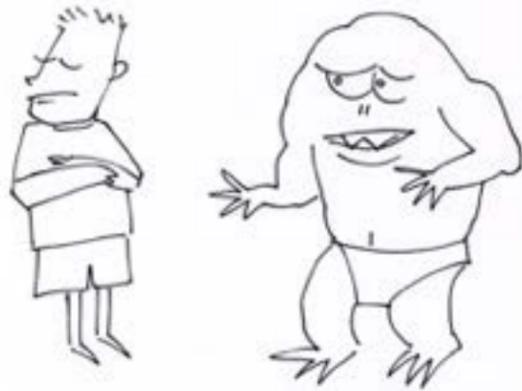
3. Before Jesus saves us, the bible tells us that we are slaves to our sinful desires (John 8:34; 2 Peter 2:19). Our flesh is the boss. It tells us what to do even if we feel like we are in control (Proverbs 5:22). Even the good things we do are stained by sin and selfishness. This is because all of us are born with a sin nature. Our nature stained by sin makes have a bent towards wanting to sin, without Christ, we all in some way or another want to be in charge of our lives



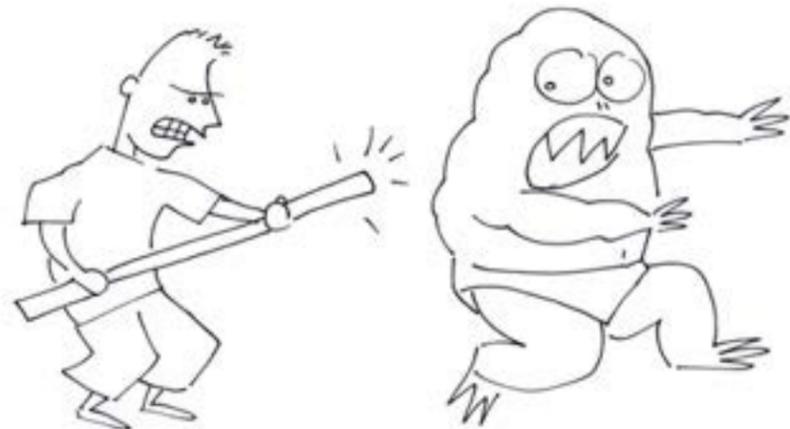
4. When we trust Christ for salvation something changes in how we relate to our sin nature. Because Jesus died on the cross and conquered sin and rose again, we are freed from the power or dominion of sin (Galatians 2:20). It no longer dominates us (Romans 6:22). It's no longer our boss. We are no longer slaves to sin, to the flesh. We are no longer slaves to sin.



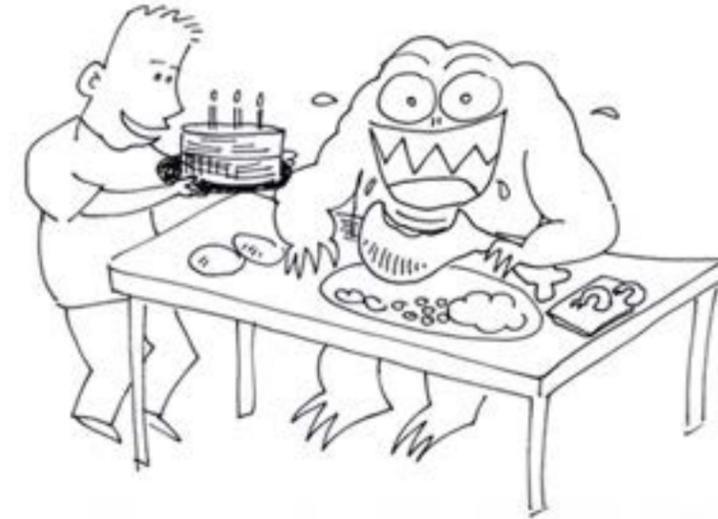
5. But our flesh doesn't disappear entirely, but it is no longer in charge either. (Galatians 5:16-17). It still bothers us and tries to get us to go back to our old ways of pleasing ourselves. After we're Christians, we're no longer slaves to sin, but the flesh can still tempt us. Jesus broke the power of sin, but not its influence. The great news is that the Holy Spirit lives inside of every believer and we have the power to say no to the flesh. He (the Holy Spirit) is at work in us, changing us to be like Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18).



That's why the Bible tells us to fight our fleshly desires. We can't live at peace or be friends with the flesh. We have to attack it and deny it and kill it (Romans 8:13; 13:12).



7. The problem is that very often Christians think they can still be friends with their flesh. In fact they feed their flesh. (see Romans 13:14). We feed our flesh when we do things that encourage or encourage our old sinful desires. This is choosing to live like who we used to be. Giving in to temptation, dwelling on sinful thoughts, spending time with people and in places that celebrate sin are like giving our flesh three well-rounded meals a day with snacks and dessert. We might think that since we've been freed by the Cross, it's okay to indulge the flesh, but that's not true (Galatians 5:13, 24). And there's a real problem when we feed the flesh.



8. Our flesh can grow! And before we know it, the flesh is bigger and stronger than we are and starts to push us around (Romans 6:12). This is why even genuine Christians, who are no longer wearing the chains of sin, can feel like their flesh is bullying them (Galatians 6:7-8). That's why Paul tells us in Romans 13 that we need to...



STARVE THE FLESH

Excerpts from Dug Down Deep by Joshua Harris © Copyright 2010 Multnomah Books

9. Starve our flesh! This is what we want our flesh to look like. We want the flesh to starve to death. (2 Corinthians 7:1). We should never expect it to be completely gone until Jesus returns and forever frees us from the presence of sin. Even a wimpy flesh can try to trip us up (1 Corinthians 10:12-14). But when we starve the flesh, it's easier to resist temptation and walk in obedience.

Now What?

Don't be fearful or afraid of what you learned today. Instead be brave and courageous because you have everything you need to successfully follow. You will change, God's word promises that. The good news is that you have already been changed and the even better news is that the Holy Spirit who lives inside of you is there to help you. Your part is to cooperate with what He is already planning to do in you!

This week here is your homework. Look up the verses below and make note of what you think they are saying. As you do think about what change is taking place in you, take some time this week to review these scriptures.

Galatians 5:13-16 ~ Ephesians 5:8-20 ~ Matthew 7:24-28 ~ Colossians 3:1-17

Take note of how God is asking you to live in these passages.

Write it down and ask God to show where you can start cooperating with his plan to transform you into Christ-likeness.

Learning to **"walk in the Spirit"** takes times and practice. In some ways its like learning to walk all over again similar to when you were a little kid. **Sanctification** (becoming more and more like Jesus) doesn't happen over night. God is fully aware of this and that is where His grace comes in for you and me. Remember what the bible says about you now. "You are a **new creation**, the old is gone the new has come." (2 Corinthians 5:17) You can do this with God's help. You will experience transformation in all that God wants for you. Make it a practice to walk with the Spirit, by committing to following Jesus the best way you know how every day!

WEEK FOUR: A NEW WAY TO GROW

God speaks to us through the bible
we speak to God through prayer

Ephesians 4:15-16 says this, "We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ." God desires to have a close personal, life giving relationship with every one of his children. Part of a healthy, strong and growing relationship is a steady stream of communication between two people. It is the same with our Father in Heaven. Hearing from God daily is an essential part of becoming more like Christ. Talking to Jesus compliments this growth because we get to feel close to Him as we spend time with him in this way. As we read and think about scripture we learn from God. As we pray and share our thoughts and feelings with God through prayer we start to experience peace and a closeness with Christ. We experience growth as we obey God's word and through this process of communication and application of God's truth we become more like Christ. 1 Timothy 3:16-17 says this, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work."

This week we will look at reading the Bible and Prayer. You may want to split this lesson up as it covers a lot of ground. The first part of this lesson will focus on things you need to know about the Bible and we will offer you some suggestions on how to get the most out of your bible reading. The second part of the lesson will be about prayer and how you can learn to talk to God in a way that is comfortable for you. The Bible and Prayer go hand in hand. When we read the Bible, remember it is God speaking to us. When we pray, we speak to God, we ask questions of God and take to listen to the answers he provides. In this way we can be sure to experience a sense of His presence too.

God's Library

Some people say that the Bible is just a book. Others refer to it as fiction or outdated. They say it has no use for our world today. But interestingly enough the Bible is still the number one best seller of all time. It is the most translated book and the most published book. Christians believe that the bible is true and that it is God's very word to us. The Bible is unique in that it was written over a span of 1500 years by 40 different authors. Unlike other religious writings, the Bible reads as a factual news account of real events, places, people, and dialogue. Using the authors' own writing styles and personalities, God shows us who He is and what it is like to know him.

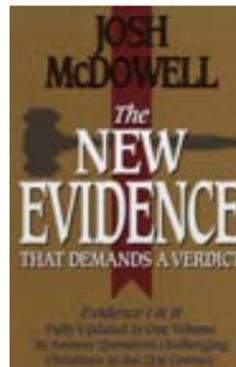
There is one central message consistently carried by all 40 authors of the Bible: God, who created us all, and who desires a relationship with us. He calls us to know him and trust him. The Bible not only inspires us, it explains life and God to us. It does not answer all the questions we might have, but enough for us to be able to live for God. It shows us how to live with purpose and compassion. How to relate to others and it encourages us to rely on God for strength, direction, and enjoy his love for us. The Bible also tells us how we can have eternal life. (This information adapted from www.everystudent.com)

Archaeology can (and does) substantiate the Bible's historical accuracy. Archaeologists have consistently cross referenced the names of government officials, kings, cities and festivals mentioned in the Bible.

The Old Testament's accuracy was confirmed by an archaeological discovery in 1947 along today's West Bank in Israel. The New Testament, is humanity's most reliable ancient document. We have thousands of copies of the New Testament, all dated closely to the original writing. In fact, we are more sure the New Testament remains as it was originally written by its authors, than we are sure of writings we attribute to Plato, Aristotle, or Homer's Iliad. See link below for comparisons of ancient writings and the bible.

<http://www.everystudent.com/features/bible.html#writings>

One of the best books written on the subject of the reliability of the Bible and Christianity is written by Josh McDowell Evidence That Demands a Verdict. He started out a full fledged atheist and through careful investigation he came to the conclusion that Jesus was who he said he was and that the bible is a trustworthy source of evidence for Christianity. If you are someone who has questions about this sort of thing we highly recommend this book!



What you Need to Know About the Bible:

- **FACT #1** The Bible is made up of 66 books.
- **FACT #2** The Bible is split into two testaments: The Old Testament & The New Testament.
- **FACT # 3** The Bible is the story of God and us. It's the story of how God pursues, rescues, loves and cares for his people in both in the past and the present. The different books in the bible are mostly laid out in chronological order, but not all. The bible starts in the book of Genesis (this means beginning) and ends in the book of Revelation.
- **Fact # 4** When people speak of the Bible as inspired, they are referring to the fact that God divinely influenced the human authors of the Scriptures in such a way that what they wrote was the very Word of God. In the context of the Scriptures, the word inspiration simply means "God-breathed." Inspiration means the Bible truly is the Word of God and this makes the Bible unique from all other books.
- **Fact # 5** The Bible has different types of books, some are poetical, some are historical stories, some are wise sayings, other books contain lists of laws and commands and some

are letters. As you get to know your Bible you will learn how to read each book in the way it was meant to be understood. This is important for you to know when you begin because this will help you to make sense of what you are reading.

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

As much as the Bible is one big over-arching story of God and us; there are also many smaller (true) stories about people, places and circumstances that illustrate God pursuing, rescuing and loving the people he created. These stories aren't cleaned up either. They are about real people in real life situations.

The Stories Within the Story:

1. CREATION
2. GOD CREATES HUMANS; THEY FAIL
3. GOD CALLS A PEOPLE TO BE HIS OWN
4. GOD'S PEOPLE BECOME SLAVES
5. GOD FREES THEM
6. GOD MAKES HIS PEOPLE A GREAT NATION
7. THESE PEOPLE ARE A SUCCESS
8. GOD'S PEOPLE KEEP MESSING UP
9. GOD MAKES PROMISES FOR THE FUTURE
10. GOD'S PLAN TO RESCUE IS FORETOLD
11. GOD'S MISSION COMES TO LIFE~JESUS
12. JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION
13. GOD'S RESCUE MISSION STARTS TO SPREAD
14. GOD'S MISSION COMPLETED
15. JESUS RETURNS AND MAKES THINGS NEW

TOPICS IN THE BIBLE

The Bible has much to say about a variety of topics that we care about. Your best bet is to purchase yourself a study Bible. If possible try to find one that has notes that will help you understand things a bit better. Many student Bibles are great because they have a list of topics in the back of it that you can turn to if you are wondering about what the bible has to say about a certain topic. You need to know that the Bible won't have a list of issues by name (for instance you won't find the phrase: sex before marriage) but if you think about the root of the topic, you can look that up and see what it says. For example you might be interested in what the bible has to say about up marriage or sexual purity, friendship, gossip, the poor and host of other relevant topics.

Here are some great suggestions for a good youth Bible:

- Teen Application Study Bible NLT or NIV version (available on amazon.ca or at most bible bookstores)
- Life Application Study Bible (available at amazon.ca or most bible book stores)
- Both of these range in price from \$25-\$35
- You Version Bible App. (<https://www.bible.com/sign-up>) is a free application available for download.
- Visit <http://harvest.org/store/bibles-bible-studies> for an alternate list of affordable bible that you can order online.

Here are a Few Topics you Can find in the Bible:

1. **Being able to come to God freely: Psalm 145:18; John 14:6; Ephesians 3:12; 1 Peter 3:18**
2. **Being Generous: Proverbs 11:24; Proverbs 19:17; Matthew 10:42; Acts 20:35**
3. **Being Humble: Matthew 5:3; Matthew 23:12; Mark 10:45; Romans 12: 10; 1 Peter 5:5**
4. **Feeling Angry: Proverbs 15:18; Romans 12:19; James 1:19**
5. **Feeling Nervous or Anxious: Isaiah 41:10; Matthew 6:33-34; Philippians 4:6-7; Philippians 4:13**
6. **Feeling Sad: Psalm 55:22; Psalm 121:1-2; Isaiah 66:13; Matthew 5:4**
7. **Forgiveness: Psalm 103:8-12; Matthew 6:14; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Ephesians 1: 7-19**
8. **Friendship: Proverbs 13:20; Proverbs 17:17; Proverbs 27:17, Romans 12:10; 2 Corinthians 15:33**

“they said to each other, “it felt like a fire burning in us when Jesus talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us.”

luke 24:32

How to Read the Bible for All it's Worth: 2 ways to get going

We never want to read just for the sake of reading. It's possible to know a lot about the bible but not know the God of the bible. That's why it's so important take the time to “dig deep” into the scriptures and to meditate (think deeply) on them.

Way #1: Meditating on Scripture

Not like the yoga form of meditation that involves emptying your mind. Meditating on scripture means that you are allowing God's word to fill your mind with knowledge and thoughts about him. This means you simply read God's word and think about how to apply it to your life right now

- Step 1 Ask God to help you focus on him. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help you see God's truth in your reading.
- Step 2 Read the portion of scripture slowly (usually a chapter at a time works well). Read it again focusing on each word or the phrases.
- Step 3 If you get distracted just re-focus on what you are reading. Now read the verses one more time. This time you are looking for phrases, ideas or thoughts that pop out to you. You may choose to circle, underline or write down the words, phrases or ideas that come to you

Think a little more deeply:

- Think about how these verses are affecting you. How do you feel? What are you thinking? What do you want to say to God after reading this? What is he saying to you?
- How could these verses or truths that you just encountered change your life or your outlook on your day or circumstances? Make a plan to live out what you learned.
- Pray and thank God for what He has shown you through your reading today.

*You can use this method with pretty much all of scripture. Psalms 100 or Psalms 23 can be a good place to start. Other good books to start with include the book of Romans through to Jude or Proverbs.

Way #2 Digging Deeper into the Scriptures

Studying God's word is highly recommended. Miners dig for gold or other precious stones and that's what you want to do with God's word. Dig in and you will find something very worthwhile. As you do this you will find greater understanding of a specific passage.

- Step 1 Select a passage to read. A word of advice, try to read one book in the bible at a time and read it through. With study you can either choose to read one passage or one chapter. Yes, it will take longer to get through a book but it's worth it. Read your passage. Read it again, paying attention to what stands out as important. You should try to pay attention to who the author is, who the audience is, what the circumstances are or the reason it was written (a good study bible will have this information at the beginning of each book in the bible in the introduction. Be sure to read that first.

Write down any words or phrases that you think are important. Circle words you may not understand and use a dictionary to look them up. Write down any questions you might have after reading the passage. (Ask your youth leader or pastor for answers if you can't find them yourself. Search commentaries available online <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/>).

- Step 2 Know the content. Go back a few verses or even to the previous chapter and read until you come to your passage. Then read a few verses past or even the next chapter. This will give you a better idea of what is going on.
- Step 3 Find the main ideas. Write down what you think the main idea or ideas are. What is the author trying to communicate? What does it mean and how does it apply to your life right now.
- Step 4 Live out the truth you just received.

the bible is meant to influence your life and to change you. come up a few ways you could apply what you just read to your own life personally. some people find that using this acronym helps them to think of ways to do this.

- S** Is there a **sin** mentioned that I need to confess?
- P** Is there a **promise** that I need to hold to?
- A** Is there an **attitude** I need to adopt or change?
- C** Is there a **command** that was given that I need to obey?
- E** Is there an **example** I need to follow?
- P** Is there a **prayer** that rises within me from what I just read? Do I feel like I need to talk to God about something as a result of what I just read?.
- E** Is there something I can take away as **encouragement**?
- T** Is there something that I can **thank** God for?
There is so much you can learn from God if you read the bible this way

WEEK Five: TALKING TO GOD

Prayer is ONE to ONE with God

Some people make prayer more complicated than it needs to be. Yes, we are talking to a Holy God who is very different from us, but we are also spending time talking with our Father who loves his children. Jesus himself said in scripture that God desires to talk with us and to answer us. God wants to answer our prayers and to give us what's best for us. (John 10:27; Matthew 7:11). As you continue to grow closer to Jesus, prayer will be one of the most important parts of your relationship. Communication is the key to any healthy and strong relationships we have. The same is true for our relationship with Christ.

Start with five minutes a day but I guarantee the more you pray the more you will want to pray, especially if you pair this up with reading your bible. You can start by just focusing your thoughts on God and sitting quietly in his presence. Move to thanking him for his goodness to you, praise him with words telling him how wonderful he is. Continue on to tell him about your day, your concerns and struggles; ask him for help. You don't need to sound religious, change your voice, or come up with new words you don't normally use. Speak to Jesus as you would any good friend. Be real. Be yourself. Some people use the acronym ACTS, and it seems to help them to know how to talk to God. Take a look at the sample below and think about trying it yourself.



For a great video about how we sometimes get prayer wrong watch this: (Type in: **The Skinny on Prayer** on YouTube).

ACTS prayers

Divide your prayer time into four two minutes segments using the A.C.T.S acronym. Allow two minutes for each segment, you will be amazed at how easy it is to talk to God.

A (Adoration- giving God praise for who He is). You can use your own words, just be real with him

C (Confession): confessing to God any sins that you may have committed. Name the sin, ask f or forgiveness and repent (turn to God to live his way and not yours) and then thank him for his forgiveness.

T (Thanksgiving: Thanking God for what he does or has done for you.

S (Supplication): Asking God to supply your needs, or the needs of others, asking God for help, wisdom, guidance etc.

You might even want to set a time for yourself for each segment. But you can certainly go longer, God won't mind!

THE LORD'S PRAYER: JESUS' MODEL FOR US

The Lord's Prayer, is how Jesus taught his disciples to pray. It wasn't really meant to be repeated like some mantra but rather as a model for to follow. Jesus' shows us how to pray with humility and with the proper understanding of God and our need for Him. Watch the video on the previous page as the Skit guys give a great explanation of how to put this into practice.

Matthew 9-14 The Lord's prayer

V. 9 Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name: Jesus begins addressing God as his Father and God is our Father too, meaning that He cares for us. We hallow His name, meaning we declare that it is holy. This opening line, then, recognizes that God is both our Father and our King. He loves us, and He is far greater than we.

V. 10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven: Because God cares for us and is greater than us, we submit our will to His. We trust that His way is better and pray that His will be accomplished on earth.

V. 11,12 Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors: We not only desire God's will on a grand scale, but also on the smaller scale of our lives. We look to Him for our daily needs—spiritual, practical, relational, emotional, and physical (Matthew 6:33). One of our biggest needs is to be forgiven. Without God's forgiveness, we were dead in sin. Because we are forgiven, we are called to forgive. Christians should get really good at forgiving because we have been forgiven so much. Forgiveness restores our fellowship with God and with others. This is why it's so important for to confess and repent of our sins daily (see week two of this series). We don't want anything standing in the way of us feeling close and at peace with God.

V. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: This final request demonstrates a heart that is eager to please God. God will not lead us into temptation (James 1:13). This prayer is an agreement with God. That we do not want to sin against Him. We pray to be aware of the evil that tempts us and to readily see the escape He has provided (1 Corinthians 10:13). Some say that "temptation" in this verse may also refer to trials. In this sense, we are asking God to keep us from harm.

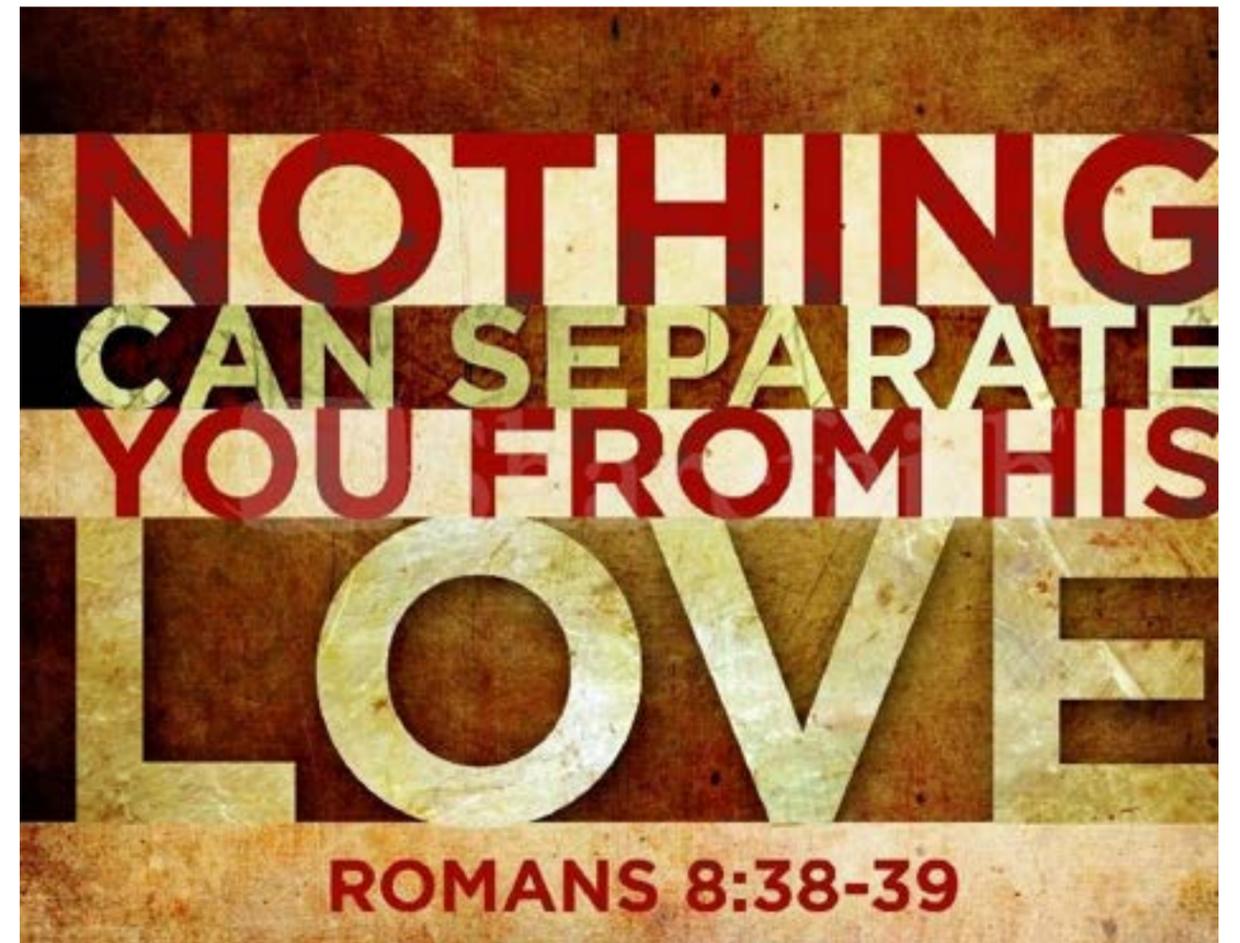
The above information was adapted from: <http://www.compellingtruth.org/Lords-prayer.html#ixzz3cs8Jl5gg>

Come as you are

You don't need to pretty up your language or change your tone when you talk to Jesus. He wants to tell you things and he wants to hear from. There are many ways to pray and you will find a way that feels comfortable to you. The Lord's prayer is a place to start but this is just the beginning of you keeping the lines of communication open with God.

YOU MADE IT! FIVE WEEKS OF EXPLORING ABOUT YOUR BRAND NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST! LIFE IS JUST GETTING STARTED WITH JESUS!

"I say this because I know what I am planning for you," says the Lord. "I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you. I will give you hope and a good future."
JEREMIAH 29:11



YOU ARE ON YOUR WAY TO BECOMING ALL THAT GOD WANTS YOU TO BE. THE NEW YOU IS JUST WAITING TO BE DISCOVERED AND YOU WILL NEVER HAVE TO JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE ALONE. GOD THE FATHER, GOD THE SON AND GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL BE RIGHT THERE WITH YOU EVERY STEP OF THE WAY!

WEEK Six:

BAPTISM

going public about your new life life!

The Spirit told Philip, "Climb into the chariot." Running up alongside, Philip heard the eunuch reading Isaiah and asked, "Do you understand what you're reading?"

He answered, "How can I without some help?" and invited Philip into the chariot with him. The passage he was reading was this:

As a sheep led to slaughter, and quiet as a lamb being sheared, He was silent, saying nothing. He was mocked and put down, never got a fair trial.

But who now can count his kin since he's been taken from the earth?

The eunuch said, "Tell me, who is the prophet talking about: himself or some other?"

Philip grabbed his chance. Using this passage as his text, he preached Jesus to him.

As they continued down the road, they came to a stream of water. The eunuch said,

"Here's water. Why can't I be baptized?" He ordered the chariot to stop. They both went down to the water, and Philip baptized him on the spot. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of God suddenly took Philip off, and that was the last the eunuch saw of him. But he didn't mind. He had what he'd come for and went on down the road as happy as he could be.

Acts 8:26-40 The Message

**FAITH IS PERSONAL
-BUT NOT NOT PRIVATE**

BAPTISM: WHAT'S THAT ALL ABOUT?

One of the best examples of baptism besides Jesus getting baptized (Matthew 3:14-16) is from the book of Acts. In Acts Chapter 8, a believer named Philip is travelling on a desert road. God leads him to a very powerful Ethiopian traveller who is searching for God. Someone must have given the Ethiopian man an Old Testament, because Philip can hear him reading from the book of Isaiah out loud. One event leads to another, and God uses Philip to bring him to Jesus. It's interesting that the first thing that the Ethiopian wants to do is to be baptized. Conveniently with God's timing, they arrive at a body of water by the road. 'Look, here is water,' the Ethiopian said, "Why shouldn't I be baptized here and now?" In other words he is asking if there is any reason why he can't be baptized immediately since he believes in and trusts Jesus as his Saviour. Philip's response indicates that there isn't! So they go for it! The Eunuch is baptized and Philip is making more disciples!

Among many things, baptism is meant to be an awesomely clear reminder of what God has done for you. Baptism is your public declaration of where you stand with Jesus and it is also a command given to Christ followers in the Bible. Before Jesus left his disciples he gave them instructions on what to do in his absence, he very clearly told them to make disciples and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19 & 20). This command applies to us as well. If you have received Jesus as your forgiver and your Saviour God wants you to be baptized.



Baptism is simply when you immerse someone in water as an outward sign that they have been united with Jesus. In Christ means more than you like Jesus a lot, or are trying your best to follow him. He died on the cross – your sins died with him. He rose from the dead – you will too. It's guaranteed.

Many people think of baptism as standing up in front of their family and friends to declare that they want to follow Jesus. That is part of it. (Acts 2:38; 8:12-38; 9:18; 22:16)

In the Bible, the heart of baptism is actually more about what God says to us, rather than what we say to God. It's more about his promises to us, rather than our commitment to him. God has promised that if you are 'in Christ' then you will receive all the promises of the Old Testament, eternal life and a life with God now and forever, regardless of who you are, what you've done, or where you come from. Your sins will be forgiven, and you will receive the Holy Spirit! (Romans 8:1, Ephesians 1:3)

BAPTISM: WHAT'S THAT ALL ABOUT?

Baptism doesn't make you a Christian. Trusting Jesus through faith in what he did on the cross for you does. Think of it this way. Say down the road you get married and your spouse gives you a wedding ring to remind you and symbolize that you are married. It represents who you are as a couple, the promises to love and be committed to each other. I hope this doesn't happen, but let's say you lose the ring somewhere. That doesn't make you divorced. Phew! But, you've got to wonder what's wrong if one day you suddenly refuse to wear it without a good reason. You wear the ring because of what it symbolizes and it serves to remind you of your love.

Baptism is a symbol. It is something you can do to show publicly an inward change and an act of obedience (Matthew 28:18). There's nothing magical about the water. If you trust in Jesus then you are a Christian. (Rom 10:9) So, if you are a Christian, I wonder what there is to stop you from being baptized? Like Philip said to the Eunuch, "Nothing!"

Think about what you have learned regarding baptism and talk to a trusted friend or youth leader. If this is something you would like to pursue, we can help you get the process started! You belong to Jesus and because of his blood you are set free! Free to live as he has planned for you, free to love like Jesus, and free to obey and trust him with your life! You were made to follow Jesus and that includes the waters of baptism!

A COOL STORY:

On the last night of a waterskiing camp, a guy became a Christian. He said much the same thing as the Ethiopian, "Why shouldn't I be baptized here and now?" They were standing on a jetty (they must be from Australia) and one big push would have baptized him pretty thoroughly! In the end he decided to find a church to support him first, and get baptized later. But the question is, will he follow through with getting baptized? Not getting baptized does not preclude him from being a Christian, but if dark times come, will he wonder whether God will really forgive him, or whether he will rise from the dead on the last day. Baptism is a milestone marker that you can reflect back to for affirmation. Baptism is an event that we can look to as a visible reminder of God's great promises.

Adapted from Fevr youth baptism explanation: <http://fevr.net/bible/the-beginners-guide-to-baptism>

WEEK Seven: A PLACE TO BELONG

They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Acts 2:42

When you read the book of Acts, which is the account of how the early church got started, it becomes clear that the first followers of Jesus went to church. The buildings and the services may not have looked like the church we meet in, but they definitely gathered together regularly. They met to praise God, build community, study the bible, pray, share, serve each other and their world (Acts 2:42). Being part of a church community is something God wants us to do as his followers. Some people say, "You don't have to go to church to be a Christian," and this is true. Belonging to a church or going to church doesn't make you a Christian. Trusting Jesus for your salvation does. But being a part of a church community where you can experience solid biblical teaching, have the opportunity to worship God through music and serving is going to benefit you in so many ways. A church is a place where you can interact and build strong friendships with fellow believers. You will have a place to call home and belong.

"You were called to travel on the same road and in the same direction, so stay together, both outwardly and inwardly. You have one Master, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who rules over all, works through all and is present in all."

Ephesians 4:4-6 The Message

WHY DO WE NEED CHURCH?

In the same way that we need to spend time with God in order to grow, we need to spend time with other Christians. By spending time with other Christians, we become encouraged in our faith and realize that we're not alone whether we're facing struggles or experiencing joy. We also need other Christians to keep us on track and to help us see where we need to grow.

FELLOWSHIP

You may hear the word fellowship thrown around a lot in church. This is just a fancy way of saying that we spend time with other Christians; not just for social interaction, but for spiritual interaction too. Whether it's through a close friendship, the larger church or a small group, we all need to be close to other Christians. They will encourage us in our faith and help us to say strong and committed to Christ. We were never meant to do life alone. We all need people to lift us up and we need to do that for others too. Fellow believers need us as well.

LEARNING

Learning new things about God stimulates our thinking, which in turn will help us grow in our faith. God has appointed pastors and teachers within our churches who are gifted in preaching and teaching. Other believers can also teach us and encourage us in our growth. As growing Christians, we need instruction from those who are more mature in their faith, and we need to hear other's perspectives and insights.

If we just focus on our own beliefs, we can run into some risks:

- not thinking or learning anything new; then we are not challenged to grow
- being blind to the faults in our life or in our incorrect conclusions
- becoming absorbed in our own way of thinking so that we only feed off it and don't grow

SERVING

Besides receiving a lot of spiritual nourishment from going to church and experiencing authentic community we also need spiritual exercise. If all we do is take, and never give, our faith will become stagnant because we will not be incorporating what we're learning and experiencing into our daily routines. Not only do we need to give for our own sake, we need to give for the sake of others. God gives us so much love that we need to let that love overflow from our life into the lives of others.

But don't worry! You don't have to give up your dreams and ambitions in order to serve God. Ministry is simply reaching out to others and giving of yourself wherever you are. It can be something we do through our church on a regular basis, or something we do on our own from time to time. God designed the church, the body of Christ, to work like a human body (read 1 Peter 4-10 and 1 Corinthians 12:5&27). Just like your body needs all of its limbs and organs to do their part to function normally, a church needs everyone to do their part to function normally. When we all do our part to make things work, we not only meet our needs, but also the needs of those around us. When we aren't doing our part, the whole body of believers suffer.



ASK A FRIEND

1. How did you find your church?
2. What do you like the most about the church you attend?
3. What or how has being a part of a church, or the community in your church helped you in your relationship with God?
4. Do you serve in your church? How has that helped you to grow as a believer?

Not that your mama's church is bad. In fact your parents may happen to go to a great church where the Bible is preached, Jesus is worshipped and the Holy Spirit is leading people to do great things to make a difference in this world for Christ. Don't get me wrong there is no perfect church or people who are perfect in the church. Everyone is a work in progress just like you. All of us need Jesus to live the life God wants us to live. You will have challenges and struggles; sometimes with the people in your church. But with God's help we can all learn to love God and each other because of what brought you together -your faith and trust in Jesus Christ.



For tips on how to find a church:
 Youtube: How do I find a good church? oneminuteapologists
www.youtube.com/watch?v=36i1U1qq3pQ

HOW WILL I KNOW?

TRUTH

It is important that the church you attend is rooted in the truth of God's Word. Does the church recognize the Bible as the ultimate authority in knowing who God is and what He wants for our lives? Is the Bible used in worship services? Does the time in worship and prayer reflect who God is? Do you have opportunity to learn more about the Bible? Do the majority of people in the church seem to want to live in a way that reflects biblical principles? God's Word must be the foundation of any ministry that is committed to the healthy spiritual growth of those who are involved.

LOVE

Truth has to be balanced with love. A church that exhibits love for those within the church, the community and throughout the world demonstrates that God's truth is a part of their lives. Are there opportunities for people to serve and care for each other? Are people involved in the ministry of the church? Is the church concerned for the spiritual needs of the world around them? Love for others is what testifies that we truly belong to God (John 13:34-35).

Once you have determined that the church you're looking into exhibits both truth and love, the rest is a matter of preference. Some people like quiet, traditional church services, others like modern music and a relaxed setting. Some like big churches, some like small ones. Even though the style is what initially causes us to like or not like a church, it's one of the last things to consider. God wants you to belong to a church family. Pray about it, ask God to direct and to guide you.

HOPEFULLY AT THIS POINT WE HAVE GIVEN YOU SOME COMPELLING REASONS TO FIND A GOOD CHURCH! WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO FIND A CHURCH AND A PLACE TO BELONG!



CHECK OUT JOE SOLOMON AS HE TALKS ABOUT "WHY CHRISTIANS NEED CHURCH."
 AND SOME OF HIS OTHER GREAT WEBSODES @chasegod.tv.

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We hope this pack will serve you as you disciple students to become fully devoted followers of Christ.

As Vanguard College we are here to serve you. Please let us know if there is any way we can partner with your church and ministry. We offer ministry teams, leaders development and training and any other way we can help. Please feel free to contact us at any time.

God bless,
Vanguard College

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