

### Once Broken...

*"People's actions are simply reactions to the situations that they find themselves in and the way they have been treated. The messes we find ourselves in come in various degrees...we all have something missing, something broken about our lives."*

When you consider the world we live in, it is easy to see the mess human beings have made. Poverty and war, acts of hatred and neglect, self-indulgence and sin – have torn at the fabric of humanity. We are a broken people in need of a savior. The first step we take toward God is the one of acknowledgement, admitting our sin and selfishness, and understanding that without God, we will continue to be empty and broken.

Can you identify areas of your life that were broken before you came to Christ? What were/are they?

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No matter how long we have been walking with Christ, there are still areas where brokenness in our thinking, behaving, and choosing can keep us out of the will of God and struggling in our faith. We need our Savior every day of our walk with God, not just the first day. When we surrender to the Holy Spirit, God takes what has been broken and makes it new.



Read Isaiah 61:1. What does this verse reveal about God's heart for those who are broken?

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### Prayer

*Dear Lord, thank you for being a merciful God with a heart for broken people with broken lives. Thank you for sending your Son Jesus to be the Savior of the world and of me. Search my heart, Oh God, and show me the ways that I am broken in my thinking, believing, behaving, and choosing so that I can surrender to your work and become the new creature You have created me to be. Forgive me for my selfishness, which has led me away from you and into a life of brokenness and sin. I no longer want to live in darkness in this messy world. I choose to embrace truth and walk in the light of your grace and forgiveness.*

**Get Specific:** Remember that faith is a choice – not just a simple prayer or a good idea. As you close today's devotion, write out a prayer of your own to Him addressing those areas of brokenness in your life and asking for His help in turning those areas over to Him.

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**Not How it's Supposed to Be**

*"When Adam chose independence from God, we (humanity) had to depend on ourselves. Selfishness (the nature of sin) entered the world and we lost our relationship with God."*

It was never God's intent that man be lost in sin and separated from a life of fellowship with Him. The heart of the Father was always to be in close *relationship* with mankind. He created man in His image and give man the heart to love Him. But God wanted a people who would willingly choose that relationship, so he gave man free will. Sadly, man was quickly seduced by the temporary pleasures of sin and selfishness.



Read Genesis 1:26-27. What did God have in mind when He created man?

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How did that purpose change after Adam and Eve sinned – when man chose sin over God? (See Genesis 5:1-3).

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By choosing sin, man was no longer a reflection of the image and likeness of God. That is why God sent Jesus – so we would be restored to relationship with Him *and* be re-created in His image, as was His original intent. This does not happen overnight. It is the process of becoming that new creature in Christ – a process God will "carry on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1:6).

**Prayer**

*Dear Lord, thank you for the work you are doing in me. I want to be a reflection of your character in the earth so that others can see Your goodness. I know that I am a work in progress, and I surrender my own will, Lord, to the work the Holy Spirit is doing in my life. Guide my footsteps and show me how to walk in faithfulness. May my words, choices, and deeds be transformed and shaped to honor you, Lord.*

Get Specific: According to Colossians 2:6, those of us who have received Christ Jesus are to "walk in Him." The Christian journey is a walk made up of thousands of steps closer to the heart (and image) of God. Close your prayer by addressing your walk with God and where you need specific guidance in your footsteps:

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**The Godship of Christ**

**Day 3**

*“Jesus fulfilled more than 60 prophecies from the Old Testament regarding God Himself coming to intervene to ‘save’ His people – the chance of just 8 being fulfilled by one person has been worked out as more than 1 in 100 million billion!”*

Settling the issue of Christ’s identity is an important part of discovering our own as a new believers. To know who we are in Christ, we must first know and understand who *He* is. While many religious people of His day and even historians over time have suggested that Jesus was merely a prophet or a teacher, the fact is that Jesus is God. It was His godship that enabled Him to fulfill prophecy, defy death, and be raised from the dead. Certainly no mere prophet or teacher could have accomplished such a feat.



What does each verse below tell us about who Christ was?

John 10:33 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 1:18-25 \_\_\_\_\_

Accepting that Jesus is God is predicated on the assumption that we accept all that the Bible says about Him – his birth, life, miracles, death, and resurrection. It is impossible to profess faith in Christ without accepting these simple, albeit profound, truths. Jesus is not a concept or an idea. He is God and He was man.

What is your mindset about the godship of Christ?

- I accept this fully without hesitation.
- I accept this but have some doubts/confusion about the more difficult-to-believe things the Bible says.
- I want to believe but I struggle to accept that truth because it doesn’t seem logical to me.

To fully embrace your walk with Christ, the issue must be settled. The foundation of our faith is an unwavering belief that Christ was raised from the dead – something He could only have accomplished if He was more than human.

**Prayer**

*Dear Jesus, I come before you with a grateful heart ready to believe and accept your godship over my life. I believe you were more than a prophet, teacher, or a good man. I know that you are more than a concept or an idea. I believe that you are God with the power to save and change lives. Where I may have doubts about these truths, I ask for a divine revelation of your undeniable existence and pray for the strength to walk in faith under that revelation for all of my days.*

Get Specific: It helps sometimes to address our doubts. Write down those scriptural truths about Jesus’ divinity that you may struggle with – then ask God to help you to walk in faith.

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**Rescue Mission**

**Day 4**

*“God is a good God, full of love and mercy, yet completely holy and just. He couldn’t let man’s failing go unpunished, so He sent His own Son to pay the price on our behalf.”*

The word *redemption* means “released upon payment of a debt.” In ancient times, people who were unable to pay their debts were sent to debtor’s prison or sold into slavery. They could be “redeemed” or purchased back by a family member or a friend who could pay off the debt on their behalf. This is exactly what Christ has done for us. God sent Jesus to rescue us from the “debtor’s prison” of sin. Because God is a just god and abides by the rule of fairness, all sin must be accounted and paid for. But because of His love for us, He sent Jesus to pay the debt for us.



Read Ephesians 1:7-8. What was the payment for your redemption?

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What did this payment “cost” Jesus? What does this say about how much He loves you?

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There was no way that man could pay off the debt of his own sin, not with money or with time. Romans 6:23 tells us that the *“wages of sin is death,”* which means the only just payment for our sin would be death. Christ went to the cross to pay that debt. He paid through death the wage of sin, and as a result, we have life!

**Prayer**

*Dear God, thank you for the amazing blessing of your Son, who took my sin upon Himself and gave His life on my behalf. I am forever grateful for that gift and the access to heaven it has given me. Through that sacrifice, I now have access to your throne, where I can have relationship with you and dwell with you all of my days. Teach me to walk in humble appreciation for that sacrifice that I might live as a reflection to others of your mercy and grace.*

Get Specific: Every one of us can fall quickly at the feet of Jesus in profound gratitude for the life of sin that was forgiven when we gave our lives to Christ. Write out a special prayer thanking Him for your salvation.

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Amazing Grace

"Salvation is not something we can work for or earn; it is a free gift."

In the Greek, the word grace (charis) means "gift." While some have referred to grace as the "unmerited favor of God," the reality is that God's gift of Christ as an atoning sacrifice is so much more than an unmerited "favor." It's not quite the same as having a sweepstakes check show up at your door that you had to do nothing to earn. Our sin should have earned man a punishment, which makes God's grace through Christ an even greater gift. It does not come as the result of something earned, bought, or bargained for. Nor is it like a birthday gift or Christmas present given in recognition of a milestone or holiday. And we are all recipients of God's grace because He loves us, not because we deserve it.



Read Titus 2:11. To whom is grace given by God? Is anyone exempt?

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According to Ephesians 4:7, did we earn grace? How was it given?

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What profound love the Father had for each of us to offer a gift in place of punishment. When we were lost in sin, He had mercy on us and gave us Jesus. We continue to walk under that grace every day of our lives in Christ.

Prayer

*Dear God, I cannot imagine the amount of love it took for you to offer your Son on my behalf. Who am I that the Lord of all the earth would care to know my name? And yet you not only know my name, you loved me enough to save me from myself through the sacrifice of your Son. What an incredible gift! Lord, teach me to truly walk in grace throughout my life, never forgetting or taking for granted the sacrifice you made for me but living every day with the gratitude of one who knows and understands the depth and breadth of my salvation.*

Get Specific: What does God's gift of grace mean to you? Tell Him.

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**The Exchange**

*“When we decided to believe in Jesus and what He did on the cross, we were freed from the state of ‘sin’ to a state of ‘righteousness,’ which means to be right with God.”*

At the moment of salvation, when we profess Christ as Savior and genuinely place our trust in Him, a divine exchange occurs. Our old nature, once a slave to sin, is replaced with the new nature of Christ. While the Bible is very clear that we do not suddenly become perfect (we will need to grow and mature in our faith), we do experience an immediate replacement of the old for the new.



Read 2 Cor 5:17. According to this verse, what happens to the new believer?

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In Corinthians 3:18 we are told that as believers we are all “being transformed into the same image” as Christ. The word *transformed* here comes from the Greek word for *metamorphosis* – the biological term for how a caterpillar changes into a butterfly. The divine exchange that occurs at the moment of salvation is rather like the transformation that takes place between the caterpillar and butterfly. That caterpillar becomes an entirely new creature, beautifully transformed...no longer bound to an old life of “crawling” but released to a new life of flying. The journey of growing, maturing, and learning how to fly toward the “upward call of Christ” begins.

Consider your old nature before you gave your life to Christ. In what areas have you seen a ‘divine exchange’ in your life since coming to Christ?

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**Prayer**

*Dear Lord, I believe that I have been transformed. When I gave my heart to You and accepted Your gift of salvation, I know that I received a new nature. Help me to speak, act, and behave as one transformed so that others will see the change in my life, a living testimony of who You are. I commit to the journey of faith to walk out this transformation every day.*

Get Specific: Where are you still struggling to be “transformed?” What remnants of your old nature are still sticking around? Ask God to help you with those areas.

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**Salvation – It’s Settled!**

*“Regardless of how you are feeling, if you confess that Jesus is Lord of your life and believe that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”*

The journey toward spiritual insight and maturity will be fraught with mistakes and an ongoing struggle with sin. It is inevitable that even after salvation, we will all mess things up. But no matter what mistakes we make, what self-doubt we may possess, or whether we feel worthy of it, we can be confident in our salvation and in the unflinching grace and forgiveness of our Savior.



Read Rom 10:9. What two criteria are indicated here for salvation?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

Given those clear requirements for salvation, check which statements below are true:

- I can lose my salvation if I continue to sin.
- I’m only saved if I’m perfect and never make a mistake.
- In order to stay saved, I need to earn that status by doing good deeds.
- I can never lose my salvation.

Thank goodness our salvation does not depend on us – our own choices, worthiness, or good deeds! Our salvation is a gift given freely by Christ, and He will not take it from us. While we are expected to embrace a life of faith and choose to do good works as a reflection of a changed mind and heart, they do not earn us salvation “points” with God. According to Eph 2:8, godly works and good deeds have no correlation to salvation, “lest any man should boast.” God gets the credit (and the glory!) for our salvation – not us.

**Prayer**

*Dear Jesus, I am so grateful for my salvation. I understand that it is a gift and that no matter what I do (or don’t do), my place in heaven is secured. But I promise never to take that security for granted, never to use that gift as an excuse to sin or do as I please. I pray to never forget the path I was on before you rescued me; I promise to press on toward the life you are calling me to.*

Get Specific: Do you operate under the wrong mindset about salvation? Do you secretly fear you may disappoint God or fall so short that you may lose your salvation? Be honest with God here and talk it out.

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**A Baby all Over Again**

*"We now have this nature. We don't have to do anything else to get it; however, we need to discover how to live according to this new nature."*

Perhaps you have heard the phrase "born again" to describe a new Christian. Because we grew up and matured under our old sin nature before we came to Christ, we have to start all over again when we receive our new nature at salvation. Even if we possessed physical, emotional, or even intellectual maturity before we came to Christ, we all begin our journey of faith as a spiritual "infants," having been reborn with our new nature in Christ.



Read John 3:1-5. What does Jesus tell Nicodemus in verse 3? \_\_\_\_\_

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What is Nicodemus' reply? \_\_\_\_\_

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Jesus tells Nicodemus that "no man can enter the kingdom of heaven unless he is born of water and Spirit." The water birth he is referring to is the natural birth of every man who emerges from the "water" of his mother's womb. But it is the second birth – of "Spirit" – where the old sin nature of man is exchanged for the spirit of Christ, that Jesus says must occur for us to have access to heaven. At the moment of your salvation, you became "born again" and began a journey from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity that will continue all of your life.

The new Christian learning to change and adapt to a journey of faith is much like a newborn baby learning to walk, talk, and behave in a new way.

What kinds of things does a newborn have to learn? How would you describe the learning process for a baby?

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**Prayer**

*Dear God, I understand that you have given me a new spirit and that you want me to mature and grow in my walk with you. Teach me to walk out my new beliefs as a mature Christian, to speak and communicate in a way that reflects my relationship with you, and to behave and make choices that demonstrate my faith. I thank you for giving me a new spirit in place of my old nature.*

Get Specific: Where do you need to walk, talk, and/or behave in a new way?

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***New Hunger, New Food***

*“Until Jesus comes back, when we will be transformed ‘in the twinkling of an eye,’ we will live in the tension between our new nature and our old sin nature.”*

In 1 Peter 2:2, we are instructed as new believers to *crave* authentic spiritual nourishment. Newborn babies get their nourishment entirely from the milk provided by their mothers. It has everything needed for growth and development. If we were to give a baby junk food, that child would not likely grow to be healthy, strong, and physically mature. Likewise, a new believer who continues to feed on the “junk” of the world rather than the nourishing milk of God’s Word and His instruction will remain a spiritual infant, unable to step into the mature purposes of God that he/she has been called to fulfill and more likely to fall back into a life of sin and disobedience.



Let’s take a closer look at the 1 Peter 2. Read verses 1-3. According to verse 1, what should we be “ridding” ourselves of? \_\_\_\_\_

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How does verse 2 help the believer to avoid those sins and begin to walk in maturity? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read verse 2 again. Peter reminds us here that we have a big incentive for turning from the vices listed in verse 1 and seeking spiritual nourishment. First and foremost, it is the only way we will grow. Very few people want to stay stuck in infancy! After all, babies are given few, if any, freedoms or responsibilities. And they can’t be entrusted with tasks and assignments until they demonstrate their maturity. But there is another reason Peter gives for ridding turning from sin and growing in maturity. What does verse 3 reveal?

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More than anything, we should turn from sin because we have already seen first-hand just how good God is. We now have the revelation of knowing what Christ did for us on the cross, and it is our gratitude for His goodness that should compel us to a life of devotion.

**Prayer**

*Father God, I am so grateful for your goodness. I have tasted and seen it for myself. May that revelation compel me to a life of devotion that I may have the desire to turn from sin and embrace a life of spiritual feasting. I know that it is the only way I will grow into maturity and be ready for the life of purpose you have ordained for me.*

Get Specific: Consider the sins Peter addresses in verse 1. Which ones do you struggle with?

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\_\_\_\_\_

**Walking your Talk and Talking your Walk**

*"I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin." - Psalm 39:1*

When we receive our new nature from God, it definitely takes surrender and practice to stop talking and behaving the way we did before we came to Christ. We have to "watch our ways" by making choices and engaging in behavior that is pleasing to God and bears out good spiritual fruit of maturity over time. That's "walking the talk." But we also have to keep our "tongues from sin," which means we have to speak and communicate differently, choosing words that reflect our new character and nature. That's "talking the walk."



What do the following scriptures have to say about walking the talk?

James 4:17: \_\_\_\_\_

2 Pet 5:7: \_\_\_\_\_

What do these scriptures have to say about the talking the walk?

Prov 18:21: \_\_\_\_\_

Prov 21:23: \_\_\_\_\_

James 1:26: \_\_\_\_\_

If we are to understand spiritual growth, we must first accept that it is a process, not a fixed point. The Christian life is a pursuit, not an arrival. Keeping ourselves from sinful behavior and poor choices requires a commitment to discipleship. Read John 15:7-8.

What does it mean to "abide" (remain) in Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you have to do to have the Word "abiding" in you? \_\_\_\_\_

We will be able to walk out our profession of faith and honor God in our speech when we are "abiding" in God and His word is abiding in us.

**Prayer**

*Lord, the hardest part about my walk of faith is letting go of my old habits – my old way of choosing and talking. But, Lord, I know that you want me to walk in holiness. That means I have to commit to the process of replacing my old choices with new ones, choices that are guided by Your Word. Help me to have discipline in this area and to seek you out in Your Word so that my words and actions are transformed.*

Get Specific: Consider your own pattern of life choices. Where do you need to make Word-inspired choices? Where do you need to let the Word of God transform the way you speak?

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**Church is People, not a Building**

*"In the Bible, the 'Church' is a translation of the Greek word ekklesia which is about people – 'the called out ones.' God has called us out from living in the 'darkness' of not knowing Him into the 'light' of living in a relationship with Him."*

It is a common mistake, for believers and nonbelievers alike, to refer to the church as a place. After all, we talk about going "to church" or walking "into the church" or meeting people "at church." But the truth is that from the beginning, Christ established His people to *be* church. At the moment of salvation, we each step out of darkness and into the light of those walking with and serving Him. We become part of a corporate body of believers – the *Church*.



Read Mat 16:13-19. What does Jesus say He will build on the "rock" of Peter's (and ours) declaration that He is "the Christ"? \_\_\_\_\_

What power will be given to "the Church" (vs 19)? \_\_\_\_\_

When Simon tells Jesus that he believes Jesus to be "the Son of the Living God," Jesus praises Simon for this response. He commends Peter for having received this revelation directly from God and not from man. It is this revelation – that Jesus is Lord – which serves as the "rock," or foundation, for every believer. When we receive revelation from God about Jesus and declare Him as Lord, we become part of the Church He is establishing in the earth, we are given the keys of heaven (through our acceptance of Christ's sacrifice on the Christ), and we are empowered to partner with God to do His work in the earth. Once established, Christ works *through* His Church to impact the world.

Read Ephesians 1:23. What does this say about the Church? \_\_\_\_\_

**Prayer**

*Dear Lord, thank you for the revelation that brought me to salvation. I know that you are calling me to be part of your Body of believers in the earth and that I am not to live my life of faith in isolation. Thank you for the gift of your Church and the blessing of being able to learn, grow, and serve alongside other Christians to fulfill your purposes in the earth.*

Get Specific: What was your perception of "church" before you came to Christ? What is it now?

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\_\_\_\_\_

**Why Fellowship?**

*“Imagine a community of believers who know who they are in Christ, who are becoming all that they can be and who see themselves as a vital part of the household of God...the community that forms as a result of salvation...each of us contributing in some way to the health, life, and expression of what we are about.”*

In the life of the new believer, fellowship with other Christians is essential, not only for personal growth and accountability, but also to connect up to the corporate purpose of Christ for the Church. God uses this gathering, or fellowship, of believers to bring unity in the Church and speak to the corporate body. There is a critical connectedness that occurs when we worship and seek God *together* that cannot happen if we choose to isolate ourselves from other Christians.



Read Acts 2:42. How does this verse describe the fellowship of the early church?

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According to verse 43, what was the outcome of this degree of fellowship and connectedness?

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Which of the following describes your attitude toward consistent fellowship in church?

- I believe it is critical to my life as a Christian. I look for any opportunity to be in God's House and/or with other Christians.
- I know it is an important part of being a Christian and believe in attending weekly services as often as possible.
- I enjoy church services but I don't think you have to be there all the time to be a good Christian.
- I think it's possible to follow Christ without having to attend church or hang out with other Christians.

If you checked either of the last two, read Hebrews 10:24-25. What does God have to say about turning away from fellowship? What reason is given here for why it's so important?

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**Prayer**

*Lord, I thank you for the blessing of a Body of believers with whom I can fellowship, grow, and “do life.” If ever I grow complacent or lazy in my mindset about the importance of fellowship, I pray that you will spur me toward connection with other Christians so that I don't grow isolated in my faith. I recognize that encouragement, support, and corporate worship are an important part of my own growth and critical to Your purposes.*

Get Specific: Consider your own commitment to fellowship. How would you rate your devotion to church?

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**Planted in the House**

*“Those planted in the House will flourish. It is God’s will for you and I to flourish in life as we plant ourselves in the local church.”*

If you know anything about gardening (even if your thumb isn’t green!), you can appreciate the fundamental truth that anything you are trying to grow needs to be planted in good soil, fed faithfully, and consistently nourished to put down good roots. A plant also needs to be pruned to encourage healthy growth. All of this causes the plant to flourish and produce its fruit. So it is with God’s children.



What do these verses say about being “well planted”?

Psalm 92:12-13 \_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 17:7-8 \_\_\_\_\_

These verses have a lot to say about the kind of “trees” we will become if we choose to position ourselves in the best place for growth, development, and bearing good fruit. While you can receive good nourishment from books, videos, and other Christian resources, the primary sources of our sustenance as believers are God’s Word and His House.

Read Galatians 5:22-23

What kind of “fruit” should we be bearing? List them. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How are these characteristics better nurtured and developed in fellowship with other believers?  
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**Prayer for**

*Lord, I know that I cannot become all You have called me to be if I am isolated, attempting to navigate my spiritual journey alone. I need the fellowship, encouragement, and accountability of other believers. Thank you for positioning men and women of faith in my life to guide and support me. I pray for zeal and love for Your House and Your people – one that compels me to stay connected to my local church and to my brothers and sisters in Christ.*

Get Specific: How well planted are you in the House of God? Where do you need to connect?  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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**The Church – One Purpose, One Mission**

*“Jesus said he would build only one thing – the Church...”*

Connecting to the House of God isn't just about personal growth and spiritual development. Ultimately the purpose of coming together as believers is to fulfill our mutual mission, working together in harmony as the "Body of Christ" to impact the world. It is for this reason that God gives to each believer a set of gifts that, when deployed in coordination with other believers, will fulfill His purposes in the earth.



Read Ephesians 4:11-13. What do our gifts prepare us to do?

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Having a passion for the purposes of God means having a passion for His House, for it is through the local church that God will work in the lives of people.

Read the following scriptures:

- Psalm 84:10
- John 2:17

What do these verses have to say about fellowship and our role in the local church? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Prayer**

*Lord, I know that You have an amazing plan for Your Church, and I am an important part of that plan. Thank you for positioning me in a life-giving church where I can grow and fulfill that purpose alongside other believers who are devoted to You and to each other. Help me to be obedient to your plan by committing to service and fellowship in Your House.*

Get Specific: What opportunities are offered through your church to get connected to the mission of God's House? How can you get involved and contribute to those efforts?

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**The Fellowship of Communion**

*“When we eat the bread, we remember Jesus’ body. His body was broken so that ours doesn’t have to be. There is also an emphasis on our attitudes toward each other as we remember that we are all part of the church – the body of Christ.”*

Though some might consider it merely a symbolic ritual, the act of breaking bread through formal communion has a profound purpose and place in House of God. In Luke 22:17-20, Jesus instructed His disciples (and us) to engage in breaking bread and sharing in the communion cup as a frequent reminder of Christ’s sacrifice and the grace that brought us back into fellowship with God. When we might get caught up in the “business” of church life, engaging in communion keeps each of us from forgetting *who* we serve and why we’re here.



Read Acts 2:46-47. What was the early church doing? How often? What was the result?

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What does 1 Cor 10:16-17 say about communion? \_\_\_\_\_  
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Coming together to commemorate Christ on the cross in communion is part of keeping the body of Christ focused *on* Christ. This is another reason why it is important to engage in faithful, consistent fellowship with believers through your local church. Avoiding fellowship means not only that you’re separated from the accountability and support of other believers, but it also means that you are cutting yourself off from connecting frequently to the cross through the breaking of bread.

**Prayer**

*Dear Jesus, may I never forget or take for granted your sacrifice on the cross – ever forget your broken body or shed blood for my salvation. Thank you for the gift of communion with other believers, where we are reminded of your grace and compelled to greater devotion and obedience. May I be steadfast in my love for your House, my fellowship with your people, and my faithfulness to your table.*

Get Specific: What does God’s gift of grace mean to you? Tell Him.

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**Who Am I?**

*“When you tell people who you are, what do you say? I am \_\_\_\_\_.”*

People spend most of their lives trying to figure out “who” they are. In an effort to answer that question, we will often seek identity in a variety of things – work, hobbies, other people, etc. None of those things, however, ever satisfies the question, *Who am I?*

Where did you seek your identity before you came to Christ?

- My career/profession
- My hobbies or talents
- My social/economic status
- My spouse or significant other
- My family
- My nationality or race



Who does 1 John 3:1 say you are? \_\_\_\_\_

Read Rom 8:16-17. What does it mean to be an “heir”? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 1:11-13 tells us that we were chosen in Him and that we were included “in Christ” when we heard the word of truth at our salvation. Verse 13 goes on to say that we were marked in Him with a seal, given the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our “inheritance.” This is good news! We are His! We no longer have to wonder who we are or why we were created, and we no longer have to seek our identity in the transitory things of this world. We are His children, heirs to His Kingdom, and sealed by His Spirit for His purposes.

**Prayer**

*Father, what a privilege and joy to be called your child! I am now part of a heavenly household and have been given the inheritance of a favored child. I am now sealed by Your Name and have a new identity. I am no longer who I was – marked or defined by my accomplishments, failures, relationships or possessions. I am now defined by who You are in me.*

Get Specific: Where do you still struggle with allowing people, circumstances and failures to define you? Go to God with these needs and ask Him to help you.

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**Identifying with Christ**

*“We didn’t choose how we were born. We are each born into this world as a human being. We are born with the characteristics that we had no choice in. But when we hear the good news of Jesus Christ and trust Him as our Savior and Lord, we are instantly identified with Christ and part of His family in God’s eyes. We are ‘in Christ.’”*

What does it mean to “identify” with someone? One source defines it as “considering oneself as similar, associated, or united with another.” When we are born, we are spiritually dead. We live, behave, and choose according to our flesh. We identify (and are identified by) our own needs and our own will. But when we receive Christ, our old nature is replaced with His, and we then live according to His identity. This means not only that we identify with Him, but more importantly, that *others* identify us with Christ. We should walk so closely to Him, that others consider us “associated or united” with Christ.



Read Col 3:3-14. According to verse 3, *where* is the new believer?

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What aspects of our “earthly nature” should we now be avoiding (vs. 5, 8)? \_\_\_\_\_

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What characteristics (verse 12) should we display so that others “identify” us with Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

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We may not be able to choose our race, gender, parents, nationality, etc., and many things happen to us during the course of our lives that are likewise out of our control. But each of us can *choose* relationship with Jesus and embrace the new identity that comes with being a follower of Christ. We don’t have to be defined by our past or continue to let our past behaviors and choices define us in the eyes of others. When we take on the identity of Jesus and begin to make choices that align with His will, soon those around us will recognize the change and begin to define us by our new identity – Jesus Christ. Hopefully, over time your friends and family will say, “You’re not who you used to be.” And you can respond, “You’re right. My identity is now with Christ.”

**Prayer**

*Lord, I am forever amazed that you would choose to place your identity on me – to give me a new name and a new purpose. My identity is now in Christ Jesus. I want my friends, family, and coworkers to see this new identity evident in my life. Help me to mature and grow in my faith so that my choices and behaviors reflect Jesus – that others may see Christ in me and be drawn to relationship with you through my changed life.*

**Get Specific:** Where are you still identifying with your old life or your old “self”? Where do you need to embrace your new identity?

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**Living in Freedom**

*"We no longer need to live for acceptance and identity. We can now live from acceptance and knowing who we are."*

Your new identity in Christ means the favor and approval that our Heavenly Father bestowed on His Son is now bestowed on you. We don't have to worry about being accepted, loved, and approved of by the world. We receive all of those things from God because we have our identity in Christ, His Son.



Read Matthew 3:17. What does God say about Jesus here?

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If your identity is now in Christ, how does that verse now apply to *you*? \_\_\_\_\_

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Galatians 5:1 tells us that "Christ has set us free to live a free life." Knowing that we have our identity, acceptance, and approval from God, we can live free from the insecurity and pain of rejection. We don't have to seek love and acceptance from people or things. We can have access to unconditional love and acceptance from our Heavenly Father.

What would it mean to live a life truly free of insecurity? \_\_\_\_\_

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How much importance do you place on the approval and acceptance of others? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Prayer**

*God, I have spent much of my life seeking the love and approval of people who, being sinners like me, were not able to satisfy that need. Only You can offer unconditional love and acceptance because only You can see me as one with Christ – identified with His nature. You love me because you first loved Him. I can walk in the freedom of knowing I am loved by God! I don't have to seek the approval of man or live in insecurity or fear of rejection, because I know you will never reject Him whom you love. Thank you for your gift of love and approval.*

Get Specific: Make a list of the people whose approval and affirmation you have historically sought. How does your relationship with Christ free you from being bound by that need?

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**Taking the Plunge**

*“Water baptism: An outward declaration of what has happened in your heart.”*

An important part of our identification with Christ happens through water baptism. Water baptism for the Christian symbolizes and appropriates our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ. “Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4) The new believer who embraces salvation through Jesus Christ takes a critically important and *public* first step by identifying with the death and resurrection of Christ through baptism. When we are lowered into the water, we are identifying with Christ’s death on the cross and declaring the “death” of our old sin nature. Likewise, when we are raised up out of the water, we are identifying with Christ’s resurrection and publicly declaring that we are “resurrected” – leaving our old nature behind in the water.



Read Matthew 28:18-20. What does Christ have to say about baptism?

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Like a wedding ring, baptism is an outward sign of an *inward* commitment. It is not merely a religious ritual or symbolic act. It is a public declaration of a spiritual change. Without true repentance and acceptance of Christ, baptism is nothing more than a dip in the pool. This means baptism as a baby (or at any other time of your life where the act was merely a sacrament or symbolic ritual) does not qualify as true baptism.

Summarize the following scriptures:

Mark 16:16: \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 8:36-37: \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 2:38: \_\_\_\_\_

Based on these scriptures, who should be baptized? \_\_\_\_\_

**Prayer**

*Father God, I thank you for the opportunity to publicly declare my salvation and new life through baptism. I embrace water baptism as an outward sign of my inner commitment to repent of my sins and walk according to my new nature. I devote myself to celebrating that baptism every day through spiritual growth, as I answer the upward call you have placed on my life.*

Get Specific: Have you been baptized? If not, why not? What’s holding you back?

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**A Note About Repentance**

*“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of the Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2:38)*

Many think the word repent means “get it together” or “straighten up.” Repentance actually means *to turn*. It requires the believer to adopt an entirely new perspective – God’s perspective. When you continue to view your old nature and your sin from your own perspective, you fall into the trap of either self-justification or guilt. But when we see our sin from God’s point of view, it is the natural result that we will feel profoundly sorrowful for it. True godly sorrow brings about a change of the heart. This is why repentance is such a critical part of coming to Christ and seeking baptism.



Read Acts 2:36-41. What prompted this baptism (verse 36)? \_\_\_\_\_

What did Peter tell the people they had to do to be baptized? \_\_\_\_\_

Romans 2:4 tells us that it is God’s kindness that leads us to repentance. It is His unconditional love and grace that gives us favor even in the confession of our sin, because we know that He has not rejected us because of our sin. He has forgiven us through His son. Knowing that He loves us no matter what we do brings us to repentance and a desire to turn from sin.

What does 2 Cor 7:10-11 have to say about the benefits of godly sorrow? \_\_\_\_\_

**Prayer**

*Dear God, I repent of my sins and thank you for Your loving kindness, which makes me able to approach You with my sin, seek Your forgiveness, and turn from that sin for good. I know that only godly repentance will empower me to change, and I pray that my sorrow would not be worldly sorrow but the sorrow that comes from knowing I have displeased You. Thank you for Your forgiveness, mercy, and grace.*

Get Specific: Repentance requires you to be specific. Make a list of the things you need godly sorrow about. Offer them up to God with a sincere heart that desires to change.

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**Metamorphosis**

*“God wants to change you. He wants your life to be such an amazing example of His grace that people see the eternal and divine in your life...conclusive evidence that accepting what He did for you on the cross transforms your life.”*

Despite the fact that we are given a new identity at the moment of our salvation, most of us realize pretty quickly that we've got a lot of work to do if we ever hope to live up to our identity in Christ. Transformation is a journey. It takes a daily surrendered walk with God through the Holy Spirit to break down the old man and rebuild the new. Getting saved is just the first step. It will take time and devotion to see manifested on the “outside” those transformational changes God is working on the “inside.”



Read Philippians 1:6. What does this say about *God's* commitment to your spiritual growth and maturity? \_\_\_\_\_

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Knowing God isn't going to bail out on the process, how does that impact your own commitment?

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We are told in 2 Cor 3:16-18 that if we turn to the Lord, the Spirit makes us “more and more like Him as we are changed into His glorious image.” We must first seek God then listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit as we think, behave, speak, etc., so that over time we are transformed into the likeness of God. It happens one thought, deed, or action at a time.

Consider your own approach to spiritual growth. Which of the following are you faithfully engaging in?

- Praying to hear the heart of God
- Reading/studying the Bible to know the Word of God
- Seeking guidance and counsel from pastors and teachers to seek the will of God
- Serving in ministry to serve the people of God

**Prayer**

*Father, I praise you that I am being transformed into Your image every day through the Holy Spirit! I commit to the journey of transformation, even when it is painful or uncomfortable. I want to be changed from the inside out.*

Get Specific: How would you assess your spiritual maturity? Where do you need to grow and develop?

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### Spiritual Maturity

*"Maturity has nothing to do with how long you've been a Christian or how much knowledge you have, but the truth outworking in your life. Maturity is putting God's word into practice."*

There are two kinds of maturity – the kind that occurs naturally (physical maturity) and the kind that occurs by intent and experience (emotional/spiritual maturity). Like emotional maturity, spiritual maturity does not occur automatically over time. Sadly, many believers receive Christ but never mature. They never embrace discipleship and personal growth so that they can walk in abundance and answer the call God has placed on their lives, which is why you can see believers who are chronologically young but spiritually mature, and others who are chronologically older but spiritually immature. To be mature is to be Christ-like, which means self-denial and surrender to the Holy Spirit in order to bear mature spiritual fruit.



Read Luke 9:23. How do we become like Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

What does it mean to take up His cross "daily"? \_\_\_\_\_

Christianity is not something you do once at the altar. Christianity is a lifestyle you embrace every single day. It is a personal commitment to the statement of belief you made at the moment of your salvation. It's saying every day, "Yes, Lord." It means *daily* saying "no" to old habits and behaviors until we are transformed. This is literally what is meant by putting God's word into *practice*. And you know what they say...practice makes perfect!

What does Phil 2:12 have to say about "working out salvation"? \_\_\_\_\_

### Prayer

*Lord, I know that it takes devotion and discipline to work out my salvation – to transform over time to become a reflection of Jesus to the world. Help me to stay focused on that upward call. May I not grow complacent over time. I want the world to see Jesus when they look at my life, and I know it takes work and faithfulness!*

Get Specific: Where do you need spiritual discipline? Have you grown complacent in embracing spiritual maturity? If so, how?

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**Empowered**

*“The same power that raised Jesus from the dead lives in me!”*

The journey of transformation would seem rather daunting (and pretty much impossible) if we were forced to go through it alone under our own strength. The human will can be weak and fickle, prone to distraction and certainly drawn to sin. Thank goodness we don't have to “fight the good fight of faith” under our own power. In His infinite wisdom and compassion, God recognized that His children would need a little help. The Holy Spirit is a deposit of God's power in each of us – our Counselor and companion on the journey. He indwells every believer who seeks that deeper connection to God. With the Holy Spirit on the inside of us, we are filled with the same power that raised Christ from the dead – certainly enough power to help each of us to be *overcomers* of this world and to live for God's glory!



What did Jesus say about the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:8?

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Read Luke 24:49. What was being sent that the “Father had promised”? \_\_\_\_\_

What were the disciples to be “clothed in” when this arrived? \_\_\_\_\_

This kind of powerful indwelling of the Holy Spirit does not happen automatically at salvation. Though we receive Christ at our profession of faith and exchange our old nature with His through baptism, the *power* to carry out what God has called us to do happens through baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Carefully read Acts 8:14-16. Were the Samaritans already believers? \_\_\_\_\_

What had yet to happen to them? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Prayer**

*Lord, I rejoice in the gift of the Holy Spirit to empower me on my journey of faith. I joyfully accept the full baptism of your Holy Spirit into my heart and life. I want to walk under the power of Your Spirit all the days of my life so that I can be effective for the kingdom of God. Teach me to hear Your Spirit, to acknowledge Him and respond to the transformation happening in me.*

Get Specific: Have you sought God out through baptism in the Holy Spirit? If not, what's holding you back?

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**What is My Purpose?**

*“When you give your life to God and come into agreement with Him, He will all align you with His purpose for your life.”*

All of humanity struggles to find purpose. In every culture, you can see people searching for “the meaning of life.” God has placed in each of us a yearning to know why we were created. It is the rare person who is willing to accept the false truth that life has no meaning and that we are all here by accident. Accepting Christ means accepting that we have a destiny, that we were uniquely created by God for a purpose. It is the journey of the new believer to get close to God’s heart and figure out what that unique purpose is.



Read Eph 2:10. What does this have to say about your destiny/purpose? \_\_\_\_\_

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Ultimately, seeking God is about discovering our assignment in the body of Christ. Each has a unique purpose and work to do for the kingdom of God. To be in “alignment” with that “assignment” means first and foremost to get into agreement with God’s plans. You can’t fight the work God is trying to do with you; you have to be a cooperative partner. In that way, you get your mind and will into agreement with His so that He can get you positioned for your ministry assignment.

What do the following scriptures tell us about the:

Purpose of God (John 17:3) \_\_\_\_\_

Call of God ( 1 Pet 2:9) \_\_\_\_\_

Destiny of God (Romans 8:29) \_\_\_\_\_

Will of God (1 Thess 4:3, 5:16-18) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Prayer**

*Father God, I thank you that You created me with a purpose and that You have a destiny for me to fulfill in my life. I know that I have to be an engaged participant in that goal. Help me to surrender to the work You are doing in me so that I can find and know my unique purpose in the Body of Christ. Teach me to listen to the Holy Spirit so that I can stay in agreement with Your plans and in alignment with my purpose.*

Get Specific: Do you question your purpose? What are you doing to discover God’s purpose for your life?

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**Different Role, Same Goal**

*"Instead of trying to find out God's plan and purpose for your life, align your life with God's purpose and plans."*

While God has given you a unique set of gifts and talents, and He has provided you with a unique assignment in the Body of Christ, it is important for all believers to understand that our purpose is fundamentally the same – to fulfill the Great Commission ("...to seek and save the lost." -Luke 19:10). The purpose of Jesus is that humanity is reconciled with God, and if we are to be "Christ-like," then our purpose should align with His.



What do the following scriptures have to say about our purpose in Christ?

Mat 5:13-14 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Eph 1:11-12 \_\_\_\_\_

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Consider the description of the "body" of Christ in Eph 4:11-16. Each part of the human body has a unique role to play but the ultimate goal is the same for each. Christ is the "Head" (vs 15) of the Body, and we follow the direction of the Head to the perfect functioning of the Body as a whole and responsive to the same call. So as part of the functioning Body of Christ, what is our role?

2 Cor 5:15-21 \_\_\_\_\_

How do we fulfill this role? Romans 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What help are we given? Acts 1:8 \_\_\_\_\_

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**Prayer**

*Dear Jesus, I acknowledge You as the Head of the Body of believers I am now a part of. I am committed to fulfilling the Great Commission in my life – drawing people into relationship with God. As I seek You for guidance with my gifts and talents to fulfill my unique purpose in Your plan, help me to stay focused on the "big picture."*

Get Specific: Consider your day-to-day routine. Where can you be bolder in your witness to the "lost"?

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