



VOL. 5

Salvation & Church

MILESTONES

Connecting God's Word to Life



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MILESTONES / INTRODUCTION

Milestones is from the creators of *Bible Studies for Life: Students*, which exists to point students and student leaders to the application of biblical teaching to everyday life through weekly group Bible studies and additional resources. Every lesson within *Bible Studies for Life* contains a bible study that points students to Jesus, is rooted in Scripture, and provides application for living in today's context. The topics and subjects chosen in each quarter of *Bible Studies for Life* fit within a larger framework called *Levels of Biblical Learning*. *Levels of Biblical Learning* consists of ten theological topics we believe students should grasp before graduating high school. These include:



Within these ten topics are 52 theological statements, which make up the core content students would be exposed to and learn each year as they go through *Bible Studies for Life*. The quarterly topics and Scripture passages that make up each lesson in *Bible Studies for Life* are tied the framework of *Levels of Biblical Learning*, which guides the Scripture selection.

While we are able to connect students to the *Levels of Biblical Learning* and the theological statements in each lesson of *Bible Studies for Life*, we wanted to provide a resource capable of going deep into the weight and significance these levels have for personal faith and discipleship. This is what *Milestones* seeks to do. Over the course of six volumes, each of the 52 theological statements will be explored in depth, noting both the theological importance and personal application each has for everyday life. By going through these six volumes, we hope students will grow in their personal knowledge and understanding of God and His world. We also pray that God will use these resources to equip another generation to boldly proclaim the truth of the gospel in a world where Jesus—the truth—is desperately needed.

MILESTONES / HOW TO USE

This Bible-study book includes eight weeks of content for group and personal study. Each session is divided into the following components:

ENGAGE

Each session opens with a *Levels of Biblical Learning Statement*, which gives an overview of the session's topic. Following the statement, each session contains an introduction to help your group as you begin your time together, setting up a natural transition into the material for each week.

DISCUSS

The Discuss section expands upon the *Levels of Biblical Learning Statement*. During this time, groups will explore Scripture, answer questions, and engage with additional content to help explain the session statement.

LIVE IT OUT

The Live It Out section is designed to close out your group time by calling out three specific points of application under the headings of Christ, Community, and Culture. By doing so, this section seeks to demonstrate specifically what the session material teaches us about Christ, how to live in Community, and how to engage with Culture.

DOING, BEING, AND APOLOGETIC STATEMENTS

This section also contains Doing, Being, and Apologetic statements. These statements are directly related to the *Levels of Biblical Learning Statement*, and provide opportunity for the group to expand on what these doctrinal truths communicate about us as individuals, how we are to live, and how we might engage culture apologetically.

DEVOTIONS

Three personal devotions are provided for each session to take students deeper into Scripture and to supplement the content introduced in the group study. With biblical teaching and introspective questions, these sections challenge students to grow in their understanding of God's Word and to respond in faith.

LEADER GUIDE

At the back of this book, you'll find a leader guide to help you prepare each week. This guide will help you gain a broad understanding of the content and learn ways to engage with students throughout your time together.

GOD'S PLAN FOR SALVATION

1



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING STATEMENT



Before the beginning of time, God's plan for salvation centered on Jesus' death and resurrection, which make salvation possible.

Because of rebellion against God, all people have been cut off from a relationship with Him, and deserve eternal death and hell, which is the punishment for sin.

Being on the water, especially during the summer, offers us many ways to enjoy the outdoors or time with our friends. Whether you're tubing or wake boarding at the lake, swimming in the ocean, or jumping off the diving board at the community pool, you've probably cooled off from the summer heat by jumping in the water.

How much do you enjoy activities like this?

Regardless of what activity you choose, it's good to have a healthy respect for water. Most of the time we're at the water, we're not even aware of the lifeguard stations up and down the beach, the life preservers hanging near the pool, or the life-vests stowed under the boat seats. And though you hope you never have to use them, having access to one of these devices could be a matter of death.

Many people go through life thinking they're fine on their own. They think they don't need saving, in an eternal sense, believe they'll simply take care of themselves by praying or by being good. But sooner or later, we will all find out we're unable to save ourselves. Thankfully, God has a plan.

Why do we need God to save us?

PEOPLE'S REBELLION

When you know Christ as Savior, you'll still make mistakes. You'll also begin to recognize the bad habits you have that go against the things God desired for me. For the most part, you may behave respectfully toward your parents. But maybe sometimes you grumble under your breath when they ask you to do something. Maybe you're tempted to become irritated or angry, at your friends over things that don't really matter. Maybe you even promise yourself you'll never respond this way again. But the things you don't want to do, you do—again and again. And maybe it's tough to do the things you know you should do.

When have you noticed this pattern in your life?

Paul talked about this same thing in the Book of Romans:

For I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not practice what I want to do, but I do what I hate.

ROMANS 7:15

We all struggle with this issue, and the reason is because we are all, by nature, sinners.

Before sin entered the world, people had the privilege of living in a close relationship with God. However, things changed the moment Adam and Eve chose sin. They were cut off from God instead of having a close relationship with Him. Since then, sin and death has been passed down to all people, who are descended from Adam (Rom. 5:12). Because of this, all people are born with a sinful nature. We aren't sinners because we sin—the truth is that we sin because we are sinners. No matter how hard we may try to avoid sinning, we will sin anyway because it's our human nature. We are still responsible for our actions, though. Any time we act (or even think) in ways that aren't in line with God's standards, it's due to a lack of faith in Him and His best for us.

Many people believe we only need to be "good people"—that if we pray and are kind to people, God will be pleased with us. But this isn't true. Only Jesus lived this perfectly. The rest of us, even by choosing one faithless act are rebels who deserve God's displeasure. We've all sinned and fallen desperately short of God's glorious standard (Rom. 3:23).

What makes us sinners?

Why does God hold us responsible for our choices?

WHAT WE DESERVE

When we make choices to rebel against the authorities in our lives, there are consequences. All who have sinned—and that's all of us—have felt the pains associated with sinning because of the choices we've made. For disobeying our parents, we are grounded or have video game privileges revoked. For not completing assignments, we receive bad grades. For speeding, we have to pay the fines. For making foolish relationship choices, we have our hearts broken.

What's the worst punishment you've ever received for disobeying?

For different kinds of sins, there are potentially worse consequences. Sometimes, we may be tempted to think, This sin isn't really a big deal, and there really won't be any consequences. However, this is blatantly wrong! Any sin, no matter how big or small we may think it is, is brazen rebellion against God, is enough to sever our relationship with Him, and deserves His harshest punishment. Take a look at the way Isaiah describes the consequences of our sin.

But your iniquities are separating you from your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not listen.

ISAIAH 59:2

But there is good news for us. Because God is patient and gracious, He often chooses to spare us from immediate judgment. There's no escaping this truth: Because we've all sinned, we all deserve death. Thankfully, this isn't the end of the story.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 6:23

List the kinds of sins you struggle with.

Why do all sins, even ones we may see as small, deserve God's punishment?

GOD'S PLAN FOR SALVATION

There are many ways we would characterize God. For instance, God is holy and powerful. He is kind and patient. He is loving, good, generous, wise, eternal—the list is endless!

What words would you add in describing God?

God is also just. Essentially, God is impartial and gives everyone exactly what we deserve. We may be tempted to believe God could choose to overlook sin and let people off the hook when it comes to the consequences of sin. But it doesn't—and can't—work like this. God's justice demands that He gives to all people what they deserve. And because of our sin, we all deserve death (Rom. 6:23).

God always knew people would rebel, and He had a plan to deal with our sin, because He loves us so much. Since He is just, God couldn't simply overlook sin. Thankfully for us, God is also gracious and merciful. Let's break down those qualities.

- **Gracious:** Grace is God's giving good things we don't deserve.
- **Merciful:** Mercy is God's withholding punishment we do deserve.

For God's justice to be satisfied (and to reveal His grace and mercy), a sinless person had to die in place of the sinful. Jesus—the only sinless person who ever lived—was willing to give His life for us. On the cross, Jesus exchanged His righteousness for our sin, and we've been freed from the consequences of our sin (2 Cor. 5:21).

The gift of salvation may be free to us, but it's certainly not free. Jesus paid a great price, and for us to receive this gift, we are called to follow Jesus in giving up our lives (Luke 9:23). Christians aren't perfect, but we are characterized by quickly turning from our sin when we recognize it. And when we do, God is happy to forgive us and instead give us eternal life in Christ (1 John 1:9).

What does it mean for us that God is just?

What is required for us to receive God's forgiveness?



BEING // Because salvation is a gift from God and has been secured by the sacrifice of Christ, we become children of God forever when we surrender to Him in faith and turn away from sin.

DOING // Though we can't work to earn salvation, true faith is evidenced in how we live. Therefore, we should seek to know and do all that God commands.

APOLOGETIC // Many people believe we will go to heaven as a matter of works—because they try to be good people, they pray, or they simply believe in God. Salvation can't be earned and comes only by faith in Jesus.

CHRIST

Without Jesus and His sacrifice for us, there would be no forgiveness of sin. We couldn't pay the debt we owed. But Jesus—perfect and holy—could and did take God's wrath for our sin on Himself on the cross.

Look up the following verses. What do each of these mean for your relationship with God.

- **Romans 3:23:**

- **Romans 6:23:**

- **2 Corinthians 5:21:**

- **1 John 1:9:**

Take a moment and pray, thanking God for the salvation that is available in Jesus.

COMMUNITY

The church is called to be a light to the world, which is lost in darkness. Today, many churches are working hard to reach the lost with the gospel—in their neighborhoods and around the world. But there's always room for us to grow in the area of evangelism.

What will you do with your group or church to reach the lost in your community?

What opportunities are available to reach those outside your community? How will you get involved?

CULTURE

Many in our world today believe we go to heaven when we live “good” lives. However, the truth is that no one is good (Rom. 3:10). Therefore, we are called to carry the message of the gospel to the whole world. We do this so they may understand the truth about God and themselves and receive the salvation we all so desperately need.

How is the message of the gospel offensive to people who don't understand it?

Write out one way you can communicate the gospel that will help people understand.

Whom will you share that message with this week?

LEADER GUIDE / SESSION 1

ENGAGE

Start the session by reading the *Levels of Biblical Learning Statement* on page 6. Then, use the introduction provided as a way to begin your group time before transitioning to the Discuss section.

DISCUSS

Be sure to read the Discuss section on pages 7-9 before coming together as a group. Doing so will allow you to be familiar with the material and will help you select which portions of the material you would like to cover in the allotted amount of group time. Look for places in the Discuss section where you can add a personal anecdote to a question or a Scripture passage to share in addition to what has been provided. Making preparations like these will help your group time run more smoothly and be more effective in the end.

LIVE IT OUT

After your group works through the Discuss section, take some time to move through the application found in the Live It Out section on pages 10-11. Look for specific, personal ways you can connect with the material from your own past. Sharing a personal story or illustration that connects with the lesson is a great way to connect with students and creates an atmosphere where students also feel comfortable sharing.

WEEKLY LEADER TIPS

- Introduce the personal devotions that follow Session 1, and remind students to complete the session devotions on pages 12-15 before your next meeting.
- Challenge students to memorize the Levels of Biblical Learning Statement for Session 1.
- Encourage students to be in the habit of building into their personal prayer lives with what they have learned this week.

WEEKLY LEADER NOTES

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2



THE ONLY WAY



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING STATEMENT

No amount of good works can save a person, and Jesus' paying the penalty for our sin is the only way to be reconciled to God.



If you've ever stepped inside a visitor center in a national park, you've probably noticed maps displayed along the walls and at least one person in a beige and green uniform. There's a reason for the maps and the rangers: the safety of the people, the wildlife, and the lands within the national parks.

It's always a good idea to grab a map so you know where the main trail is—and where it isn't. Sometimes, unknown dangers wait off-trail. People most often get lost, hurt, or worse, when they aren't prepared or don't follow the clearly marked path. Without guidelines, you can get yourself into quite a mess in the outdoors!

When have you needed to get yourself out of a sticky situation?

When it comes to the most important things in life, we're pretty good at making a mess. We certainly messed up our relationship with God when we walked away from Him. There is only one way out of the mess—except that it isn't as simple as being prepared or following the trail. In fact, there's absolutely no way for us to make things right with God.

When we were trapped in our sin, God graciously made a way for us to be restored. The one way is Jesus!

People claim there are many ways to heaven. What are some ways you've heard?

NOT BY WORKS

At some point in your childhood, someone probably asked you what you wanted to be when you grew up. Especially in the United States, you could hear anything from doctor or movie star to computer engineer or zoo keeper.

What's something you dream of doing?

The “American Dream” of being able to do anything if you work hard and catch a break or two has spoiled us into thinking we’re completely independent. Tragically, most people believe they can earn heaven the same way they reach their goals in school, sports, music, or their careers: They just have to work hard and catch the right breaks. This simply isn’t true. Eternal life doesn’t come as the result of our hard work, or even our striving to please God. The Bible says we are saved through our faith, not our works.

For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast.

EPHESIANS 2:8-9

We are saved by God’s grace—an undeserved gift from our heavenly Father who loves us. Because of our sin, we don’t deserve anything good, much less God’s forgiveness and salvation in Christ. But because He loves us so much, God sent Jesus to pay the price for our sin, and when we trust Him, we can be restored in our relationship with God and spared the penalty of our sin. We don’t deserve it/ We can’t earn it. Nonetheless, God makes it possible.

When have you overestimated your abilities? What happened?

Why is salvation available only because of God’s grace and not our works?

JESUS PAID THE PRICE

Each year, we celebrate certain days by giving gifts to those we love, with birthdays and Christmas being at the top of the list. When you were a kid, toys probably topped the list. But as we grow older, things like gift cards move to the top of our wish lists. We can ask for gift cards to just about anywhere to purchase almost anything we desire.

If you could have a gift card to any store, where would it be? What would you buy?

This is the essence of redemption: When we see an item we want, we give something in exchange for that item, much like a gift card. From a biblical perspective, redemption is used specifically in reference to the purchase of a slave's freedom. Scripture's teaching that we are *redeemed* implies that we were previously in slavery. In fact, that's exactly what we were apart from Jesus' setting us free.

Many people think God's rules restrict our freedom. But this isn't true. We've all experienced struggling with our choices, thoughts, or emotions; committing to do better; and then falling back into the same patterns. This is because, apart from Christ, we're slaves to sin.

We were powerless to break free from sin without a redeemer to set pay the price for us. The price for our freedom was the blood of Jesus, and when Jesus gave His life on the cross, He paid the price for all who come to Him in faith.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.

EPHESIANS 1:7

Because of our sin, we were separated from God, but because of His great love, He wanted us for Himself—and He paid the price.

When have you wanted something so much you were willing to pay a great price?

What was the price for people to be redeemed to God?

THE ONLY WAY

We all face things that are beyond our control. Maybe you've applied for your first job and are waiting to hear back from the hiring manager. Maybe you've studied and tried out for the next school play, but the roles haven't been posted yet. Or maybe you ran for class president, but the votes haven't been tallied. At this point, all you can do is hope that the person making the decision gives you the job, the role, or the office. It's out of your hands.

When it comes to our eternal state, we're in an even worse situation. We were completely hopeless to save ourselves from the crushing weight of our sin. But God's standard is holiness. This means if we've fallen short of complete perfection—and we've all failed miserably—we're lost, and there's absolutely nothing we can do about it.

But God had a plan to help us out of our helplessness. His name is Jesus. Only hours before He'd be hung on the cross, Jesus asked God for another way, yet committed firmly to His Father's will (Luke 22:42). He already knew there was no other way. As He had just said to Thomas and the other disciples:

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

JOHN 14:6

Jesus didn't say a way, but the way. There is no other way to heaven except through Jesus, and He made that way available for us through His death on the cross. Take a look at the way Peter phrased it:

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.

ACTS 4:12

When we were in an impossibly desperate situation, hopeless to save ourselves, God had made a way through Jesus. Because of His great love, Jesus made salvation possible for all those who are willing to give up sin and trust in Him.

Why is Jesus the only way to be saved? Explain.

What other ways do people seek salvation today?

BEING // Because salvation is a gift from God and has been secured by the sacrifice of Christ, we become children of God forever when we surrender to Him in faith and turn away from sin.

DOING // Though we can't work to earn salvation, true faith is evidenced in how we live. We should seek to know and do all that God commands.

APOLOGETIC // Many people believe we will go to heaven as a matter of works—because they try to be good people, they pray, or they simply believe in God. Salvation can't be earned and comes only by faith in Jesus.

CHRIST

Before coming to Christ, we all bought into the lies of the world. Perhaps we even believed there were multiple ways to God. But the Bible teaches there is only one way, and we've come to understand that by God's grace.

Write out John 14:6 in your own words. This week, try to memorize this verse.

Journal a brief prayer thanking God for leading you in the way of everlasting life.

COMMUNITY

Scripture teaches that the way to eternal life is narrow and few find it (Matt. 7:14). Further, without the continual help and encouragement from Christian friends, we'd surely stumble along the way, maybe even straying from the path.

How have friends helped you to remain on the narrow path that leads to God?

List the names of some people you know who need encouragement. Make it a point this week to send a text or make a call.

CULTURE

Though many people in our society believe there's more than one way to heaven or that we can earn our way into God's "good graces," the Bible teaches we are only capable of earning death because of our sin (Rom. 6:23). Yet, because of Jesus, we have the opportunity to be restored to God.

Think of a time you got yourself into trouble, and maybe you didn't realize it at first. What was your experience like the moment you realized there were consequences for your choices?

Whether they realized it or not, all people have earned punishment from God because of their sins, and one day they will stand before the Judge. Yet there is one way they'll be spared: by placing their trust in Christ. God has called us to share the gospel so that those far from God can be restored to Him.

Jot down the names of three friends who don't have a relationship with Christ.

Pray for them every day. Make it a point to connect with them this week.

LEADER GUIDE / SESSION 2

ENGAGE

Start the session by reading the *Levels of Biblical Learning Statement* on page 16. Then, use the introduction provided as a way to begin your group time before transitioning to the Discuss section.

DISCUSS

Be sure to read the Discuss section on pages 17-19 before coming together as a group. Doing so will allow you to be familiar with the material and will help you select which portions of the material you would like to cover in the allotted amount of group time. Look for places in the Discuss section where you can add a personal anecdote to a question or a Scripture passage to share in addition to what has been provided. Making preparations like these will help your group time run more smoothly and be more effective in the end.

LIVE IT OUT

After your group works through the Discuss section, take some time to move through the application found in the Live It Out section on pages 20-21. Look for specific, personal ways you can connect with the material from your own past. Sharing a personal story or illustration that connects with the lesson is a great way to connect with students and creates an atmosphere where students also feel comfortable sharing.

WEEKLY LEADER TIPS

- Introduce the personal devotions that follow Session 2, and remind students to complete the session devotions on pages 22-25 before your next meeting.
- Challenge students to memorize the Levels of Biblical Learning Statement for Session 2.
- Encourage students to be in the habit of building into their personal prayer lives with what they have learned this week.

WEEKLY LEADER NOTES



NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING STATEMENT

God's salvation is eternal, and once we are adopted into God's family, nothing can separate us from Him.



Rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 on the following factors:

- **intelligence:**
- **boldness:**
- **free-thinking:**

In the right context, these qualities can be good. But in the wrong setting, they can range from difficult to dangerous. Think about when you were a kid, wanting to grow up and assert your independence. Maybe you even became angry when mom or dad wanted to hold your hand in a crowded place. As good as independence is, your parents' protection was better. Without the hand holding, you might have been separated from them. At the very least, you would have been frightened, or maybe even lost.

In life, we may think we're doing okay, but we're often unaware of many realities around us. Without the protection of our Father, we'd get into deep trouble. Thankfully, God loves us, and He holds us in His hands. For His children, there's nothing that can separate us from the love of God.

When have you needed guidance from someone older and wiser?

SALVATION IS ETERNAL

We use the word “so” in so many ways. But we often use it to communicate something that is “to a great degree.” For instance, we say things like:

- “That shirt is so cute!”
- “This car is so awesome!”
- “My mom is so strict—I can’t believe have to be home by 10pm!”

What kind of words do you use to communicate “to a great degree”?

If you grew up in church, you likely memorized John 3:16 in early childhood. Over the years, thousands of people have memorized it like this: “For God so loved the world...” But the word so isn’t used the way we often use it. A better way to think about it is this: God loved us “so” much “that” He did something to show it. The words “so” and “that” go together. Take a look at this familiar verse in the Christian Standard Bible.

For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

JOHN 3:16

Because God loves us and created us for a relationship with Him, He put together a plan to deal with our sin and rebellion and restore us to a right relationship with Him. He didn’t just restore things to the way they were before the fall, He made a way for us to have eternal life with Him.

Because of sin those who have received Christ have become subject to corruptibility, but we will be raised incorruptible (1 Cor. 15:53). Though we all certainly face death, for those who trust in Christ for salvation, eternal life in Jesus begins right now. Unless Jesus returns first, we will only die in a physical sense. In a spiritual sense Christians can know with confidence that we have eternal life in Christ, even now. Sadly, those who never trust Jesus face both a physical death and an eternal spiritual death,

What does it mean to be immortal?

How is it that we can die, and still have eternal life?

ADOPTED AS SONS AND DAUGHTERS

When God created us, He intended for us to live in a relationship with Him. Despite the fact that sin separated us, Jesus made a way for us to be restored to God forever! When we come to Christ, we must receive Him as Savior and Lord—these are perfectly appropriate titles to use when speaking of Jesus. But if we only think of God as Lord, then we miss out on much of who He is to us. If we read Scripture, and we think only of the rules, then we may think of a sovereign Lord who desires to run our lives and ruin our fun.

Though it is absolutely true that God is our sovereign Lord, He is also our Father who loves us, and who wants the best for us in all circumstances. Take a look at what Paul says about the relationship we have with God the Father.

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father!”

ROMANS 8:15

We aren’t simply slaves called to cater to every beck and call of God. Instead, we’ve been adopted as sons and daughters into God’s family. “Abba” means “daddy,” and is a term of intimacy and affection. We are invited to address our heavenly Father this way because of the affections that He has for us.

And I will be a Father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.

2 CORINTHIANS 6:18

When we are born again—even adopted—into God’s family, we can approach Him as sons and daughters of the King, and we can know with confidence that we are His for eternity. He loves us and wants a close relationship with us. There’s no greater privilege.

He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

EPHESIANS 1:5

Why is it so important for us to think of God as Father?

What is the significance of being adopted into God’s family?

NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US

We serve a God who makes promises to His people. He promised Abraham and David that He would make their names great (Gen. 12:2; 2 Sam. 7:9). God made promises to His people, Israel, and He followed through by sending Jesus as the Messiah. God promised Jesus that He will sit upon the throne of David, ruling over His eternal kingdom. And He promised us that when we surrender to Him in faith, we will be His sons and daughters, He will set His love upon us, and we will never be separated from that love.

Many of us have experienced broken promises, and sometimes we're hesitant to trust others including God. But the truth is that our relationship with Him is rooted in trust. We have access to His saving grace through genuine faith, which is trust lived out in obedience. Without this trust, there is no salvation. But we still struggle at times to believe all God's promises.

We can be confident that when God communicates something to us, it is unfailingly and absolutely true. We know, then, that Paul's claim that nothing can separate us from God is absolutely true. We don't need to be anxious about eternity.

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMAN 8:38-39

When we are found in Christ and made part of God's family, we receive God's covenant love. It's not possible for anything in all of creation to ever be able to separate us from Him. We may doubt, but children of God are His forever. Because He loves us, we can know we have His eternal blessings.

What difference does God's covenant love make in our lives?

How has God's love affected you personally? How has it changed your life?



BEING // Because salvation is a gift from God and has been secured by the sacrifice of Christ, we become children of God forever when we surrender to Him in faith and turn away from sin.

DOING // Though we can't work to earn salvation, true faith is evidenced in how we live. We should seek to know and do all that God commands.

APOLOGETIC // Many people believe we will go to heaven as a matter of works—because they try to be good people, they pray, or they simply believe in God. Salvation can't be earned and comes only by faith in Jesus.

CHRIST

Even though we know we're saved by grace and not by works, we may still struggle at times with being "good enough." We're never to take lightly the issue of obedience, as our fruit is the evidence of genuine salvation. Nonetheless, it's a great comfort to know God loves His children and nothing can separate us from His love, no matter what.

What words would you use to describe the love of God?

In Romans 8:39, what does it mean that God's love is found "in Christ Jesus our Lord"?

How will you live this week in light of this truth?

COMMUNITY

Love is meant to be experienced. It's certainly an emotion, a feeling, but it's meant to be expressed. Sometimes, though we know what the Bible says about God's love for us, we may not necessarily "feel" loved. This is why our church family is so important. Since Jesus has ascended to heaven, in His physical absence God has formed believers today into the body of Christ so we would demonstrate His character to others. This means the church is to be an expression of Christ's love to one another.

How have you felt unloved? How has the church shown you the love of Jesus?

Who in your church family could use a little extra love and support right now? Make it happen.

CULTURE

God loves all people (John 3:16), and He shows mercy and kindness to all. He blesses all people with sun, rain, and air. Further, He spares us all from the immediate judgment our sin deserves. However, God doesn't love all people in the same way. This isn't to say He loves some more than others—He doesn't. It means those who have exercised faith in Jesus have the special privilege of enjoying God's relational, covenant love. This allows us access to forgiveness based on God's eternal grace.

It is our responsibility to share with those who don't know God the truth about His love. Otherwise, they'll never know His forgiveness.

How would you describe God's love to a non-believer?

Who do you know that needs to experience the love of God? Share with them this week.

LEADER GUIDE / SESSION 3

ENGAGE

Start the session by reading the *Levels of Biblical Learning Statement* on page 26. Then, use the introduction provided as a way to begin your group time before transitioning to the Discuss section.

DISCUSS

Be sure to read the Discuss section on pages 27-29 before coming together as a group. Doing so will allow you to be familiar with the material and will help you select which portions of the material you would like to cover in the allotted amount of group time. Look for places in the Discuss section where you can add a personal anecdote to a question or a Scripture passage to share in addition to what has been provided. Making preparations like these will help your group time run more smoothly and be more effective in the end.

LIVE IT OUT

After your group works through the Discuss section, take some time to move through the application found in the Live It Out section on pages 30-31. Look for specific, personal ways you can connect with the material from your own past. Sharing a personal story or illustration that connects with the lesson is a great way to connect with students and creates an atmosphere where students also feel comfortable sharing.

WEEKLY LEADER TIPS

- Introduce the personal devotions that follow Session 3, and remind students to complete the session devotions on pages 32-35 before your next meeting.
- Challenge students to memorize the Levels of Biblical Learning Statement for Session 3.
- Encourage students to be in the habit of building into their personal prayer lives with what they have learned this week.

WEEKLY LEADER NOTES

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CONFIDENCE IN OUR SALVATION



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING STATEMENT



We can be confident in our salvation when we, as a matter of desire, live in obedience to God and in ways that reflect Jesus.

Around the New Year many people set goals for themselves, whether related to health, finances, relationships, or something else entirely. Some people don't stick with their goals or put in the work to make changes in their lives, but the desire is still there. The point is this: If you want to make your life better in some way, then you have to take action.

When have you felt challenged to make improvements in your life?

Many times, people think they're Christians based on what they want and do. Though our wants and actions can be good indicators, sometimes we get it backward. Our works don't make us Christians, but our being Christians drives our choices and desires. It's a matter of identity.

When we try to do what's right, but it's not really who we are, eventually we'll stop. However, when our actions flow from the core of our being, we can never stop. It's who we are.

When have you tried to do something that you really didn't want to do deep down?

CONFIDENCE IN OUR SALVATION

Confidence is a fickle friend. At times, being confident serves us well. It helps us do bold things. But at other times, confidence—or the lack of it—hurts more than it helps.

Rate how confident you are, 1 being fearful and 10 being arrogant.

1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10

Scripture teaches that pride is generally a negative thing:

- God opposes the proud but shows grace to those who are humble (Jas. 4:6).
- Disgrace and conflict follow pride, but humility leads to wisdom (Prov. 11:12; 13:10).
- God hates pride and arrogance (Prov. 8:13).

But pride is not confidence. Pride means we think too highly of ourselves or think of ourselves too much. Confidence doesn't mean bragging about our strengths—as if we were strong enough to do anything about our broken state—but our weaknesses. It's our helplessness that most clearly demonstrates the power of Christ in our lives (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

At the judgment, many people will stand before God, believing they will be welcomed into heaven. But they'll be turned away, because they didn't understand God's standards. It's the power of Christ that saves us, and we can have confidence in our salvation because it's not up to us to earn it. Look at what Jesus says about this:

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.”

MATTHEW 7:21

Only faith in Christ saves. Real faith leads to obedience. We'll never be perfect in this life, but the pattern of our lives will be a real pursuit of Jesus.

What is the evidence we've truly been saved?

Why do you think so many people who don't obey God's Word still believe they're saved?

A DESIRE TO OBEY

We are people with senses, and we designate things as good (or bad) based on what we taste and smell, hear and see. And we don't only do this with ice cream or movies. We apply this same kind of thinking to the people around us as well—even ourselves! We're naturally inclined to think we're good people. Many mistakenly believe if they don't smoke and curse, fight and steal, then they're okay with God. However, we aren't made right in our relationship with Him based on our behavior. We can never be good enough.

Though many believe in a works-based salvation, we aren't saved by works. We are saved by genuine faith in Jesus as our Savior, which flows from our hearts as God works in us. In Jesus' time, the Pharisees (Jewish religious leaders) devoted themselves to knowing God's law, and they lived by even the finer points. Because of this, they were supremely confident in their standing before God. However, Jesus knew where they truly stood:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of the bones of the dead and every kind of impurity. In the same way, on the outside you seem righteous to people, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

MATTHEW 23:27-28

When our lives look good and clean on the outside, we may be tempted to believe God is pleased with us. But it's possible to have neat and tidy lives and be a wreck internally. God has never been pleased by external acts, but a heart that's truly broken over sin and loves Him with all we are.

You do not want a sacrifice, or I would give it; you are not pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken spirit. You will not despise a broken and humbled heart, God.

PSALM 51:16-17

God cares about our choices, words, and behaviors—but in and of themselves, these aren't worth very much. When our actions represent a heart that truly desires to honor God, we can have confidence He is at work in our lives.

Why can works never save us? Explain.

How can we know our works are pleasing to God?

LIVES THAT REFLECT JESUS

As it sounds, genetics is the study of genes, which includes heredity, or traits that are handed down between parents and offspring. Maybe people tell you, “You have your mother’s eyes” or “You have your dad’s smile.” These are very simple examples of genetics.

Do people say you look like a family member? What features do you share?

Ultimately, we were created to look like God. But this isn’t about genetics.

So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female. God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.”

GENESIS 1:27-28

When God created people, He formed us in His image. This means we were created to reflect His character in the ways we live in relationship with others and in our authority over creation. Beyond this, God designed us to live in a relationship with Him. This means we should pick up more and more of His character, continually growing in our capacity to reflect Him to those around us.

When we sinned, this whole plan was temporarily thrown off track. But God had a plan for that too. Jesus left heaven and came to earth where He perfectly lived out what we were all created to do. Because of Jesus’ obedience—and His heart—we have a perfect picture of what it means to love God and follow Him. And Jesus—because He is God—is the full representation of God’s character in human form (Col. 2:9).

Jesus loved His with wholehearted affection. He followed His Father’s will with an intense devotion. And in doing so, He fulfilled the plan God originally had for all people. When we place our faith in Christ and follow God’s will for our lives, we’ll share in this experience. Truly reflecting God in the ways we live is the best indicator that we’ve been born again into His family, and this gives us confidence in our salvation.

What does it mean that we have been created in God’s image?

How does reflecting God’s character give us confidence in our salvation?

BEING // Because salvation is a gift from God and has been secured by the sacrifice of Christ, we become children of God forever when we surrender to Him in faith and turn away from sin.

DOING // Though we can't work to earn salvation, true faith is evidenced in how we live. We should seek to know and do all that God commands.

APOLOGETIC // Many people believe we will go to heaven as a matter of works—because they try to be good people, they pray, or they simply believe in God. Salvation can't be earned and comes only by faith in Jesus.

CHRIST

Jesus, through His life, death, and resurrection, provides the assurance of salvation for those who trust in Him. Further, the Holy Spirit gives testimony to the fact that we're children of God. The Bible helps us to know what our lives should look like when we're saved (1 John 5:13). Take a look at some indicators you're a child of God:

- Do your choices and desires indicate that you continually take up your cross in following Jesus?
- As you evaluate your life against the truth of Scripture, does the Spirit give you confidence in your salvation?

How do these things help you know you're a child of God?

COMMUNITY

Today, many people don't think it's necessary to be part of a church. After all, your relationship with God is personal. Right? Though this is true on some level, we're called to be part of a church family. When we isolate ourselves, we may begin to believe things that aren't true, and we will face struggles alone.

What questions do you have about your salvation today?

This week, ask a trusted friend or leader to help you work through those.

CULTURE

There are essentially four conditions in regard to our salvation.

- Saved and confident in our salvation.
- Saved and not confident in our salvation.
- Not saved and confident in our salvation.
- Not saved and not confident in our salvation.

Most people in the world don't know God but are confident that they'll spend eternity in heaven with God. One day they'll be shocked to find out that their confidence was misplaced.

How will you help someone who doesn't know Christ understand how we can truly know we're part of God's kingdom?

LEADER GUIDE / SESSION 4

ENGAGE

Start the session by reading the *Levels of Biblical Learning Statement* on page 36. Then, use the introduction provided as a way to begin your group time before transitioning to the Discuss section.

DISCUSS

Be sure to read the Discuss section on pages 37-39 before coming together as a group. Doing so will allow you to be familiar with the material and will help you select which portions of the material you would like to cover in the allotted amount of group time. Look for places in the Discuss section where you can add a personal anecdote to a question or a Scripture passage to share in addition to what has been provided. Making preparations like these will help your group time run more smoothly and be more effective in the end.

LIVE IT OUT

After your group works through the Discuss section, take some time to move through the application found in the Live It Out section on pages 40-41. Look for specific, personal ways you can connect with the material from your own past. Sharing a personal story or illustration that connects with the lesson is a great way to connect with students and creates an atmosphere where students also feel comfortable sharing.

WEEKLY LEADER TIPS

- Introduce the personal devotions that follow Session 4, and remind students to complete the session devotions on pages 42-45 before your next meeting.
- Challenge students to memorize the Levels of Biblical Learning Statement for Session 4.
- Encourage students to be in the habit of building into their personal prayer lives with what they have learned this week.

WEEKLY LEADER NOTES

A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

5



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING STATEMENT



The church is a community of believers who are called to meet together regularly to study Scripture, pray, worship, serve and encourage one another, and proclaim the gospel to the world.

We are surrounded by other people: family, friends, classmates, teammates, band members, the people who live in our neighborhoods, go to our churches, and attend our youth groups. When we think of some of these groups, we of more formal gatherings like school, sports practices and games, shows, and church services.

What groups, teams, or organizations are you a part of?

Belonging to a church isn't simply a formality. It's a matter of deep, relational connections. To experience this in ways that really make a difference in our lives, we have to gather together. God calls all His children to make spending time together a priority. Because whether we realize it or not, we need each other.

When have you experienced the benefit of being connected with the church?

A COMMUNITY

Every four years, millions of Americans and billions around the world tune in to watch the world's best athletes test their skills against one another.¹ And while we may not necessarily be best pals with everyone at our schools, the moment the champion runner from our country takes the blocks, even people with differences are all rooting for the same thing: victory.

When have you experienced a connection with someone because of a common interest?

Interests have a way of bringing together people who otherwise have great differences. Though these are certainly powerful, there's an even stronger bond that connects followers of Jesus. Take a look at what Paul said in the Book of Ephesians.

So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household.

EPHESIANS 2:19

Because of our sinful condition, plenty of things separated us from God and from other people in our lives. But Christ's work in our lives means we are no longer strangers destined to live in alienation from God and others. We've been made members of God's family.

Another way to think of this is *community*. We have things in common with those who are part of our faith community, and we experience a special unity because of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives (Eph. 4:3-4). In the early days of the church, we see an extraordinary example of this. After the Holy Spirit filled the lives of those who had devoted themselves to Jesus, their hearts were joined together around a specific set of interests (Acts 2:42-44).

Today, loneliness is one of the biggest problems we face as Americans.² Christians aren't immune to this, but it's important to understand that we've been made part of God's family through of our relationship with Christ. We've been called to share our lives, and our Father desires that we would experience belonging and help others do the same (Heb. 10:24-25).

Why do you think so many people experience loneliness today? Explain.

Why is it so important that we live in real community with our church family?

TO ONE ANOTHER

We're all familiar with this idea: Look out for number one. We express our tendency to live this selfishly in many ways. Maybe we're never willing to share, even when we have extra and know of someone else in need. But our self-centeredness can be less evident. Maybe we're happy to share of ourselves with others, but we're rarely willing to listen.

What are ways you act selfishly, though you may not have realized before?

All people are naturally inclined to thinking of ourselves first. However, when Jesus made it clear that to live as He lived involves giving up the self-centered, me-first life (Luke 9:23). Because Jesus was willing to give up even His life for us to know God's blessings, we must choose to give up being selfish and instead live each day in a way that reflects Jesus' sacrifice. Take a look at what Jesus said about how we should treat one another.

"I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another."

JOHN 13:34

The Bible is full of "one another" statements. There are over 50 other statements in the New Testament about how we should treat "one another."³ And the purpose behind these is to help one another experience God's goodness and to grow in understanding and reflecting the glory of God to others.

We are united in unity by the power of the Spirit. We also receive specific gifts for building up the body of Christ and equipping its members for ministry (Eph. 4:18-19). Through this, we all grow together in faith, and God is glorified.

If we do what comes naturally—specifically living for ourselves—we will miss out on many good things God desires for us, and those God would have us serve also miss out on His blessings. When we devote ourselves to Scripture and allow the Holy Spirit to lead us in loving others as Jesus did, everyone benefits, and God gets the glory.

List some examples of ways people live selfishly today.

When is it tough for you to live selflessly? How does the Holy Spirit help us prefer others to ourselves?

TO THE WORLD

Often, we may be tempted to think others will know we're followers of Christ by our Bible knowledge, what we do or don't do, or how we pray, speak, or dress. While all these things are good, they aren't the clearest marks of Jesus followers.

How do others know you're a Christian? See what Jesus had to say in the Book of John:

"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

JOHN 13:35

Jesus made it very clear that we are to love others, particularly those who are part of God's family. Here's how:

- We serve our brothers and sisters within the church to help each other grow in our faith, develop our gifts, and offer encouragement—particularly when life is tough.
- As we selflessly and sacrificially love our brothers and sisters outside the church—particularly despite our differences—they notice something different about Christians.

God made us and saved us so we would reflect His character to those around us. God is love (1 John 4:16), the greatest gift God has given us is love (1 Cor. 13:13), and the best way for us to help those who don't know God see Him is to love others well. Take a look at Jesus' parting words before His ascension.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

ACTS 1:8

After Jesus accomplished the work the Father had for Him on this earth, He left His mission in the hands of His followers. That mission is to see those who have been cut off from God restored in their relationship with Him. This only happens by God's grace. But He chooses to use our witness—both our words and our lifestyle—to impact others' lives. When we love others well, people have the opportunity to see God's love through us.

How do you think the world would describe Christians?

Why is it so important to show love to people both inside and outside the church?

BEING // When we are brought into God's family by faith, we become part of a family connected for the sake of loving, supporting, correcting, and encouraging one another.

DOING // Because we are part of a family—God's church—we should prioritize spending time together and sacrificially serving one another.

APOLOGETIC // Many today believe we can have a relationship with God without belonging to a church. Although attending church is not what saves us, we belong to a church to worship corporately, to be fed, and to serve the needs of others. When we fail to engage with our church family, we're not following Christ in serving sacrificially.

CHRIST

If we want God to be at work in our church family, we should be in regular prayer for our brothers and sisters in Christ as we continue to foster our relationships with them.

List three people in the church you can pray for this week.

Beside each name, go back and list specific prayer requests for each person.

COMMUNITY

When we regularly meet with our church, we have more opportunities to serve and love those in need. Even something as simple as inviting people over for dinner or spending the afternoon with them will allow you to strengthen your relationship, serve them, and encourage them.

Who in your church can you spend time with this week?

How will you serve and encourage them when you meet?

CULTURE

God calls us to go into the world to make disciples. One important part of the faith community is that we can make a much bigger impact when don't go alone.

What are some reasons we can make a bigger impact when we work together?

Find someone from your community or school this week and invite them to your youth group.

LEADER GUIDE / SESSION 5

ENGAGE

Start the session by reading the *Levels of Biblical Learning Statement* on page 46. Then, use the introduction provided as a way to begin your group time before transitioning to the Discuss section.

DISCUSS

Be sure to read the Discuss section on pages 47-49 before coming together as a group. Doing so will allow you to be familiar with the material and will help you select which portions of the material you would like to cover in the allotted amount of group time. Look for places in the Discuss section where you can add a personal anecdote to a question or a Scripture passage to share in addition to what has been provided. Making preparations like these will help your group time run more smoothly and be more effective in the end.

LIVE IT OUT

After your group works through the Discuss section, take some time to move through the application found in the Live It Out section on pages 50-51. Look for specific, personal ways you can connect with the material from your own past. Sharing a personal story or illustration that connects with the lesson is a great way to connect with students and creates an atmosphere where students also feel comfortable sharing.

WEEKLY LEADER TIPS

- Introduce the personal devotions that follow Session 5, and remind students to complete the session devotions on pages 52-55 before your next meeting.
- Challenge students to memorize the Levels of Biblical Learning Statement for Session 5.
- Encourage students to be in the habit of building into their personal prayer lives with what they have learned this week.

WEEKLY LEADER NOTES



WHERE GOD DWELLS



ENGAGE

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING STATEMENT



The church isn't a place or a building' but is made up of the people who belong to the family of God, and whereas under the Old Covenant, God dwelled in the temple or the tabernacle, today God dwells in His people and works through them to advance His kingdom.

The Israelites had the tabernacle in the wilderness. Solomon built the Temple. And the believers in the early church typically gathered in believers' homes. Today, we gather in buildings specifically designated for worship, or we may even gather in places like movie theaters and schools. When we say we're going to church, we're likely thinking of the building where we gather with other believers to worship.

But here's the thing: Without people there's no point to a church building. But where the people of God gather, wherever that may be, God is with us. That is the real church.

How have you experienced God's bringing people together?



THE CHURCH IS THE PEOPLE

What does your regular Sunday morning routine look like?

In our culture, we're often inclined to thinking of the church as a building, or a place we go to meet together with other believers. However, this isn't necessarily the picture the Bible paints for us. As you've probably heard before, the church isn't a building.

In the New Testament, we read about the church 112 times. The specific word used is *ekklesia*, which means assembly or gathering and refers specifically to a group of believers coming together for worship and hearing from God's Word. The Bible speaks of the church in two ways:

- **Global Church:** The church consists of people from all walks of life who united in the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13).
- **Local Church:** Paul opened his letter to the Galatians by addressing the churches in the region. Each local church is a family of believers living in close relationship.

When we "go to church" each Sunday, most of us go to a building, but the true church is not made of bricks and mortar. Read how Peter describes the church:

You yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 PETER 2:5

A church can certainly be in a building designed specifically for the purpose of a church family's meeting there. However, a church can also exist in a school cafeteria or a hay field, in a movie theater or a thrift store. A church can even meet in a house (Rom. 16:5). Anywhere God's people come together for the purpose of hearing from and offering worship to Him, God is happy to dwell among them.

How would you define the church in your own words?

Why is it so important for God's people to come together?

GOD ONCE DWELLED IN THE TEMPLE

When God made a covenant with Moses and the Israelites, He promised that, if they'd be faithful to Him, He'd make them a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:3-6). This means God's people would have access to Him—He'd live among them and give them the opportunity to come to Him with their prayers and worship.

What are the privileges of having access to God?

God called Moses up to the mountain and gave him specific instructions about how to build the tabernacle, about the objects that it would contain, and about the practices the priests were to perform in approaching God (Ex. 25–40). After Moses had followed through on all God commanded, here's what happened:

The cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

EXODUS 40:34

The tabernacle was a tent because God's people had no permanent home at the time. After God had given the promised land to His people, David realized he had an amazing house while God only had a tent (2 Sam. 7:2), so he wanted to build God a temple fit for the King. However, David wouldn't be the one to build the temple, but God said his descendant would build a new house for Him (2 Sam. 7:12-13).

For generations, Israel had worshiped God in the tabernacle. For generations more, they would worship Him at the temple. But no one (except the high priest, only once per year), was allowed into the most holy place where God's presence dwelled. Because people are sinful, but God is holy, His presence would immediately kill anyone who entered (Lev. 16:2).

When Jesus died on the cross everything changed: "Suddenly, the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth quaked, and the rocks were split" (Matt. 27:51). Before we were separated from God because of our sin. But when the curtain was split, God removed the barrier that kept us from Him. By the blood of Jesus, we're now allowed to enter into God's presence.

How would you describe the privilege—God dwelling among them—Israel enjoyed?

What is the significance of the temple veil being torn from top to bottom?

TODAY GOD LIVES IN US

Mount Moriah is a place of great significance among God's people:

- It's the place where Abraham led Isaac to offer as a sacrifice (Gen. 22:2).
- The threshing floor David bought from Araunah was atop Mount Moriah (2 Sam. 24:25).
- It's where Solomon built the temple, and where the Lord dwelled among His people (2 Chron. 3:1).

However, if you travel to Israel today, there's no temple standing atop the mountain. You'll find the remains of the temple complex, but none of the other things which were necessary for worship under the old covenant. Jesus predicted that the temple would be torn down. In fact, He told His disciples,

"Do you see all these things? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here on another that will not be thrown down."

MATTHEW 24:2

Forty years later, this would become a reality as the Romans ransacked Jerusalem, slaughtered many Jews, and destroyed the temple. The Jewish people's anguish was overwhelming. Although they'd lost loved ones, they thought they lost the privilege of living in a relationship with God. No temple meant there was no place for God's presence. No sacrifice meant no worship, and no forgiveness. They didn't understand that God had ushered in a new system of worship and sacrifice.

God doesn't live in an earthly temple (Acts 7:48). In fact, as Solomon said, not even the heavens can contain the Lord (1 Kings 8:27). For a time, God's design was for His people to worship in the tabernacle and later at the temple. But the sacrificial system served only to point His people to a greater future reality made full in Jesus. It was His death, not that of lambs, that bought our forgiveness. Today, God lives in us as individual believers and the church body (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19).

Today, the church—the people—has replaced the temple as the place where God dwells. Therefore, we should live every moment as an act of worship to Him.

Where does worship occur since the temple no longer stands?

What does it mean that "your body" is the temple?

BEING // When we are brought into God's family by faith, we become part of a family connected for the sake of loving, supporting, correcting, and encouraging one another.

DOING // Because we are part of a family—God's church—we should prioritize spending time together and sacrificially serving one another.

APOLOGETIC // Many today believe we can have a relationship with God without belonging to a church. Although attending church is not what saves us, we belong to a church to worship corporately, to be fed, and to serve the needs of others. When we fail to engage with our church family, we're not following Christ in serving sacrificially.

CHRIST

Without the church, most of us wouldn't have heard the Gospel. When we're a part of a church, we're challenged to grow in our faith alongside other believers.

Reflect on how the church has strengthened your relationship with Christ.

How can the church continue to help your walk with Christ?

COMMUNITY

The church is made up of believers of all different backgrounds. The church thrives when we all come together for the sake of lifting one another up and honoring Christ.

How can you take a more active role in your church?

CULTURE

Most in our culture don't understand church and the reason we gather together. The world is full of division and hatred, and many people are looking for a place to belong and be loved.

How has the church been a place of belonging and love for you?

List the names of a few people you can invite to church this week.

LEADER GUIDE / SESSION 6

ENGAGE

Start the session by reading the *Levels of Biblical Learning Statement* on page 56. Then, use the introduction provided as a way to begin your group time before transitioning to the Discuss section.

DISCUSS

Be sure to read the Discuss section on pages 57-59 before coming together as a group. Doing so will allow you to be familiar with the material and will help you select which portions of the material you would like to cover in the allotted amount of group time. Look for places in the Discuss section where you can add a personal anecdote to a question or a Scripture passage to share in addition to what has been provided. Making preparations like these will help your group time run more smoothly and be more effective in the end.

LIVE IT OUT

After your group works through the Discuss section, take some time to move through the application found in the Live It Out section on pages 60-61. Look for specific, personal ways you can connect with the material from your own past. Sharing a personal story or illustration that connects with the lesson is a great way to connect with students and creates an atmosphere where students also feel comfortable sharing.

WEEKLY LEADER TIPS

- Introduce the personal devotions that follow Session 6, and remind students to complete the session devotions on pages 62-65 before your next meeting.
- Challenge students to memorize the Levels of Biblical Learning Statement for Session 6.
- Encourage students to be in the habit of building into their personal prayer lives with what they have learned this week.

WEEKLY LEADER NOTES



TO TRAIN AND EQUIP



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING STATEMENT



The church is called to train and equip its members for works of ministry, including giving their time, resources, and talents to serve those within the church and reach those outside the church.

Picture something you really wanted to do. Like, become a starting pitcher for the baseball team or landing the lead role in the school play. You likely won't get there overnight, and you won't get there by accident. And it probably wouldn't be a bad idea to seek tips and training from an experienced coach, trainer, or teacher.

How have you tried to learn new skills to reach a goal?

Sometimes we think if we just learn the right tricks or come up with the right strategy, everything will change in an instant. But this isn't how it works. There's no substitutes for persistent effort and old-fashioned hard work.

Our faith life is similar. Growing as Christians requires the same thing. Thankfully, God has provided church leaders, teachers, and servants who are wiser and more experienced than we are. They give us tips, share their wisdom, and encourage us as we strive to grow in Christ. Sometimes, we may think it would be nice if maturity happened overnight, but this isn't the way God has designed it. Christlikeness requires training, and with the help of the right people in our lives, it can be a reality.

When has skill and expertise come much more slowly that you would like?



DISCUSS

TO TRAIN AND EQUIP

A baby can't do much on its own and must rely completely on the help of others in order to eat, remain clean, and stay warm. Babies depend on others to grow up. The Christian faith is similar. God intends for us to first be fed by others. As we grow, we must learn to feed ourselves simple foods, but we can't get stuck there. We must grow into maturity, and learn to dine on spiritual foods with real substance (Heb. 5:12-13).

The author of Hebrews complained to his audience: "Although by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the basic principles of God's revelation again. You need milk, not solid food" (Heb. 5:12). Since coming to faith, they'd had time to grow into maturity, yet they remained as spiritual infants. They could only handle the basics. Either they failed to feed themselves with the Word of God or the church failed to raise up those who were young in the faith.

Just as people need to lean into others to learn and grow throughout our lives, we must do the same in terms of our faith. This is where the church comes in. Paul taught that the Lord has given each Christian a gifts to strengthen one another for His glory.

And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, equipping the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ's fullness.

EPHESIANS 4:11-13

Without those more mature in the faith, we'd all be left helplessly on our own in a world that's ready to swallow us up. However, when we're willing to listen and learn, God will use our church family to help us grow in knowledge and develop our gifts. Then, we will be able to more fully reflect Christ.

Why is important to recognize our growth is largely dependent upon others?

What happens when people don't invest in the development of those who need to grow?

FOR WORKS OF MINISTRY

One way or another, we've all experienced tough times. But the Bible is clear that all people experience good things too. Jesus said that God "causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matt. 5:45), and James tells us "every good and perfect gift is from above" (Jas. 1:17).

We may be tempted to view our good gifts from God as intended only for us. God does want us to enjoy the things He gives us. However, He really wants us to enjoy using those gifts in serving others. We are to set our hope "on God, who richly provides us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do what is good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and willing to share" (1 Tim. 6:17b-18).

This means we are to use all these things in serving others and honoring God:

- **Time:** Every moment we have on this earth is a gift from God. Whether or not we realize it, we are sustained by God. We should devote our time to serving Him and others.
- **Resources:** Most of us have the food and clothing we need for today—and so much more! We're to live in continual thanks for God's providing our immediate needs. Anything else He gives, we're to be open to sharing so others would be blessed.
- **Talents:** We're all good at certain things. God gives us our strengths to use to serve others and point them to Him.

Scripture is clear. When we waste the good things God gives us, He won't give us more. However, when we're faithful in the small things, He gives us more. This is ministry—using the good gifts God gives us all to serve the needs of those God has placed in our lives:

According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the proportion of one's faith; if service, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching; if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness.

ROMANS 12:6-8

What good things has God given you?

Have have you kept these for yourself? How would God have you use them to serve others?

TO REACH THE LOST

As Christ followers, we enjoy certain freedoms. We were once slaves to sin, no matter how hard we tried, we couldn't break free of sin's pull on our lives. We simply weren't free to live as God desired we would. But thanks to Jesus, who destroyed sin's grip on us, we live free from the curse of sin (John 8:36).

This doesn't mean we can now live our lives any way we please. We may sometimes claim our freedom in Christ as an excuse to do things that in no way bring honor to God. Christ hasn't set us free to live indulgent lives with no regard for others. It's just the opposite—He freed us from bondage to sin and hate to freely demonstrate kindness and love to our neighbors. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul said:

Although I am free from all and not anyone's slave, I have made myself a slave to everyone, in order to win more people.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:19

Because he'd been set free from the selfishness of the flesh, Paul was happy to give up indulgent freedoms in order to point to Jesus those who didn't have a meaningful connection with God.

This is the responsibility of all God's children—to win others to Christ. However, many of us aren't gifted in evangelism (sharing the good news of the gospel). After all, you may ask, aren't we supposed to use our gifts in serving others? Yes, but that's not the complete story. Paul told Timothy, "do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5b). Many believe Timothy wasn't a gifted evangelist, but he was called to share the gospel with the lost. And in doing so, he fulfilled the ministry God had given him.

Today, we are called to the same things. We are certainly called to enjoy the freedom we have in Jesus. Specifically, the opportunity to demonstrate His love to others, and the fruit that comes from sharing the good news with those who need to hear it.

What freedoms do you have in Christ?

How have you used these to show your love for God? In reaching others?

BEING // When we are brought into God's family by faith, we become part of a family connected for the sake of loving, supporting, correcting, and encouraging one another.

DOING // Because we are part of a family—God's church—we should prioritize spending time together and sacrificially serving one another.

APOLOGETIC // Many today believe we can have a relationship with God without belonging to a church. Although attending church is not what saves us, we belong to a church to worship corporately, to be fed, and to serve the needs of others. When we fail to engage with our church family, we're not following Christ in serving sacrificially.

CHRIST

When we're surrounded by other believers, we get the benefit of learning from their experiences so we can grow in our faith. If we want to experience spiritual growth, we must discipline ourselves daily to do the things God has called us to do.

List three spiritual disciplines you need to practice.

Why did you choose these three? Explain.

COMMUNITY

Jesus has called his disciples to train and equip more disciples. When someone trains us in discipleship, it is our responsibility to do the same for others, passing on what we've learned.

Who in your church can you begin investing in?

What practical steps can you take to train and equip them?

CULTURE

Reaching the lost is a crucial part of discipleship in which every believer should be participating. The more we bring people into God's family, the more opportunities we have to equip and train devoted followers of Christ.

Who is one person you can begin investing time in for the sake of bringing them to Christ?

LEADER GUIDE / SESSION 7

ENGAGE

Start the session by reading the *Levels of Biblical Learning Statement* on page 66. Then, use the introduction provided as a way to begin your group time before transitioning to the Discuss section.

DISCUSS

Be sure to read the Discuss section on pages 67-69 before coming together as a group. Doing so will allow you to be familiar with the material and will help you select which portions of the material you would like to cover in the allotted amount of group time. Look for places in the Discuss section where you can add a personal anecdote to a question or a Scripture passage to share in addition to what has been provided. Making preparations like these will help your group time run more smoothly and be more effective in the end.

LIVE IT OUT

After your group works through the Discuss section, take some time to move through the application found in the Live It Out section on pages 70-71. Look for specific, personal ways you can connect with the material from your own past. Sharing a personal story or illustration that connects with the lesson is a great way to connect with students and creates an atmosphere where students also feel comfortable sharing.

WEEKLY LEADER TIPS

- Introduce the personal devotions that follow Session 7, and remind students to complete the session devotions on pages 72-75 before your next meeting.
- Challenge students to memorize the Levels of Biblical Learning Statement for Session 7.
- Encourage students to be in the habit of building into their personal prayer lives with what they have learned this week.
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WEEKLY LEADER NOTES



THE ORDINANCES



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING STATEMENT

The ordinances of the church are the Lord's Supper, which represents the body and blood of Jesus as the payment of our sin, and baptism, which represents our sharing in Jesus' burial and resurrection.



Scripture tells us that our relationship with God is the most important thing in our lives. In Him we have joy and peace, rest for our souls, hope for eternity, and so much more. Still, sometimes we allow ourselves to get so busy that we forget to follow through, even though God is important to us.

The Bible says remembering is very important, and we can see this in our lives every day. When you forget to do your homework, your grades suffer. When you forget to ask your parents about staying out late, you're grounded. When you forget to obey the speed limit, your parents take your car. Forgetting has consequences. And when we forget to live in light of Christ's sacrifice for us, the consequences are eternal.

Since remembering is so important, God gave us tools to help us remember. When we receive the Lord's Supper, it serves as a reminder of the sacrifice Jesus gave so we could be reconciled to God. And when we think back on our baptism, it serves every day as a reminder that we've been buried with Jesus and share in His resurrection. So let's actively remember to live in ways that honor God.

What helps you remember to do the things you need to do?

ORDINANCES

When we speak kindly to others, go to church, and or are willing to share what we have: Does this make us good? In the Bible, one well respected man went to Jesus, greeting Him as “good teacher” (Luke 18:18). Jesus’ response is surprising: “‘Why do you call me good?’ ... ‘No one is good except God alone’” (v. 19).

According to many beliefs, we need to do certain things to find favor with God. Even certain “Christian” faiths subscribe to a system of works-based beliefs which say we can be made right with God by pursuing certain activities. A system of “sacraments” is one of these. A sacrament is literally a ritual a person carries out that causes God to give grace to that individual. It’s commonly accepted that there are seven sacraments—baptism, communion, confirmation, confession, anointing the sick, marriage, and holy orders (the ordaining or church leaders)—and these are seen as “necessary for salvation.”¹

However, the truth is that we can never do enough—or be good enough—to earn salvation. The Bible teaches that,

There is no one righteous, not even one.

ROMANS 3:10

God’s standard for living in relationship with Him is holiness, perfection—not even a hint of sin. And we can never measure up to that standard no matter how hard we may try.

The ordinances of the church—the Lord’s Supper and baptism—are very similar to sacraments. However, there is one major difference—they aren’t seen as necessary for salvation, but as symbols of Jesus’ work on our behalf.

What surprises you about Jesus’ statement that God alone is good?

How do we receive salvation if we can’t be saved by specific works?

What do the Lord’s Supper and baptism each represent? Explain.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Remembering is good. In fact, the word “remember” shows up several times in Scripture. For instance, after the flood, God said that He would remember His covenant with His creation, and never again send a flood (Gen. 9:15). Further, God calls the church who had fallen into sin to remember their former ways and return to them (Rev. 2:5). And God calls His people to remember His promises with confidence that He will never forget us (Isa. 44:2).

Even as His people suffered as slaves in Egypt, God heard their groaning and remembered His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to bless their descendants (Ex. 2:24). So God acted. He miraculously set them free through sending a series of plagues on the Egyptians. The final plague was the angel of death’s taking the life of the firstborn son of all those without the blood of a lamb on their doorposts. This was called the Passover, and God called the Israelites to celebrate this throughout the generations in remembrance of His freeing His people (Ex. 12:12-14).

Years later, Jesus participated in the Passover Feast. The tradition had been carried out all these years, and was central to Jewish life. As a faithful Jew, He’d been careful to observe the feasts, but the time had come when Jesus would celebrate His final Passover on earth. As He reclined at the table with His disciples, He shared with them the elements of the meal, then He said something profound:

“Do this in remembrance of me.”

LUKE 22:19B

Throughout history, the Passover was celebrated as an intentional act of remembering God’s delivering His people from slavery to Egypt. But at the initial Lord’s Supper, Jesus helped His disciples (and us) understand the bigger purpose. The Passover always pictured God’s setting us free, but ultimately it pointed to Jesus, who sets us free from sin!

When we receive the bread and the cup, it serves as a reminder that it’s only through Jesus—His body and blood—that we are set free from slavery to sin. Let us continually remember Christ’s sacrifice for our sins.

What does it mean that people are slaves to sin?

How do Jesus’ body and blood set us free?

BAPTISM

When John the Baptist came on the scene, he came “proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mark 1:4). So when Jesus came to him, asking to be baptized, John tried to stop Him. After all, Jesus didn’t need to be forgiven of sin, and He certainly didn’t need to repent of anything. However, Jesus replied that “this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15b). So, John baptized Him.

Essentially, “to fulfill all righteousness” means to live rightly according to God’s will for our lives—to live in obedience. After Jesus was raised from the dead and before He ascended to heaven, He shared with His disciples what we know as The Great Commission:

“All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

MATTHEW 28:18-20

Notice, all Jesus’ followers are to be involved in carrying the gospel to those who are far from God, teaching them to follow all He taught so they would be true disciples. And the sign that we are His followers is baptism. It was necessary the Jesus was buried and then raised for us to know forgiveness. Through baptism, we share with the world that we identify with Jesus’ burial and resurrection—we go under the water and are then raised from it (Rom. 6:3-5). The water itself has nothing to do with making us clean. However, because God has called all His children to be baptized, it is a matter of obedience. It’s something God calls us to do for righteousness would be fulfilled and expressed in our lives.

How is baptism a symbol of our identification with Jesus?

Why is baptism so important as a matter of obedience to God?

BEING // When we are brought into God's family by faith, we become part of a family connected for the sake of loving, supporting, correcting, and encouraging one another.

DOING // Because we are part of a family—God's church—we should prioritize spending time together and sacrificially serving one another.

APOLOGETIC // Many today believe we can have a relationship with God without belonging to a church. Although attending church is not what saves us, we belong to a church to worship corporately, to be fed, and to serve the needs of others. When we fail to engage with our church family, we're not following Christ in serving sacrificially.

CHRIST

When Scripture speaks of baptism and the Lord's Supper, we're instructed to remember what Jesus has done in and through us.

What do you remember about Jesus and the gospel through the ordinances?

- **Baptism:**

- **The Lord's Supper:**

COMMUNITY

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are not meant to be taken alone. We partake of the ordinances within the church as a way to celebrate Christ's work together as a family.

What can you remember that God has done in you and your church through the ordinances?

CULTURE

As we remember what Christ has done in our lives, we should be driven to share our faith with others so they can experience the same blessings.

What has Christ done in your life that's worth sharing with others, especially those who don't know Him?

LEADER GUIDE / SESSION 8

ENGAGE

Start the session by reading the *Levels of Biblical Learning Statement* on page 76. Then, use the introduction provided as a way to begin your group time before transitioning to the Discuss section.

DISCUSS

Be sure to read the Discuss section on pages 77-79 before coming together as a group. Doing so will allow you to be familiar with the material and will help you select which portions of the material you would like to cover in the allotted amount of group time. Look for places in the Discuss section where you can add a personal anecdote to a question or a Scripture passage to share in addition to what has been provided. Making preparations like these will help your group time run more smoothly and be more effective in the end.

LIVE IT OUT

After your group works through the Discuss section, take some time to move through the application found in the Live It Out section on pages 80-81. Look for specific, personal ways you can connect with the material from your own past. Sharing a personal story or illustration that connects with the lesson is a great way to connect with students and creates an atmosphere where students also feel comfortable sharing.

WEEKLY LEADER TIPS

- Introduce the personal devotions that follow Session 8, and remind students to complete the session devotions on pages 82-85 before your next meeting.
- Challenge students to memorize the Levels of Biblical Learning Statement for Session 8.
- Encourage students to be in the habit of building into their personal prayer lives with what they have learned this week.

WEEKLY LEADER NOTES
