

Family Church Foundations

Pursuing the Basics of God's Design for Our Lives in Community

Five Sessions that Introduce New Family Church Members into Community and
Explores the Basics of Pursuing God's Design for Our Lives

1. The Gospel: God's Love Demonstrated

2. The Bible: God's Love Revealed

3. Prayer: Talking with God

4. Community: Living in God's Family

5. Missional Living: Living on Mission for God

A Leader's Guide

Facilitating relational learning through dinner table discussions.

Leaders assign Scripture reading and pose questions for 15-minute table discussions followed by the presentation of key themes and ideas for the basics of pursuing God's design in our lives.

WEEK 1

THE GOSPEL: GOD'S LOVE DEMONSTRATED

At your table read 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 and Romans 5:8-9

Discuss together "What is the Gospel?"

"Jesus _____ on the _____ for our _____,

He was _____, and God _____ him from the _____."

The good news, the Gospel, is that "Jesus died on the cross for our sin, he was buried, and God raised him from the dead." God created mankind in His image, created without sin, but with a free will to love God. However, we fell from innocence and chose sin. In our state of sin we are spiritually dead and unable to save ourselves.

The gospel is the **"good news"** that God the Son, Jesus Christ, stepped into our world, lived the perfect life none of us could live, willingly offered up His own life for our sins, and conquered death through His resurrection. Christ's victory over sin and death is what changed everything forever. Jesus showed his unbelievable love for us by taking the punishment that we deserved for straying from God. In the same way that Adam and Eve's sin brought death to everyone, Jesus' resurrection is what brings life to anyone who receives Him as their Savior and Lord.

Our goal in this session is to help you pursue the basics of understanding the transformational power of the Gospel.

At your table read Romans 8:22-23

Discuss together "How is the Gospel universal?"

Discuss together "How is the Gospel personal?"

There are two frames of reference from which we are to understand the Gospel. One Gospel, two vantage points. Both views are necessary to fully appreciate the magnitude of Christ's finished work of atonement.

The Gospel applies to the "whole creation" in the restoration across all of God's universe. The Gospel applies to the whole creation we see how God's power is restoring all of creation from brokenness. The Gospel "of the whole creation traces the grand themes of Scripture: Creation, the Fall, redemption, and final consummation.

The Gospel applies "to us ourselves" in the restoration of every person as a child of God. In the Gospel "In Time" we see the power of God's grace for personal transformation. The Gospel to us ourselves traces the biblical truths about God, man, Christ, and man's response to the Gospel.

Consider together "How might the two views of the Gospel be related?"

At your table read Genesis 1:31; 3:1-8; Romans 8:18-24; and Revelation 21:1-4

At your table then read Galatians 2:20 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-55

Once we turn from our sin, repent, and believe in Jesus we are made new. In our reborn state, Jesus works in us to transform us into His likeness and he works through us to bring restoration to all of God's creation. God does not need us to accomplish His redemptive work of restoring all of creation but He blesses us with the opportunity to

participate. Adam and Eve's sin brought death to everyone and brokenness to creation, Jesus' resurrection is what brings life to anyone who receives Him as their Savior and Lord (Romans 5:8) and brings restoration to creation. When Jesus enters our lives, our brokenness can be made whole again. When Jesus returns the restoration of creation and Christ's followers will be complete.

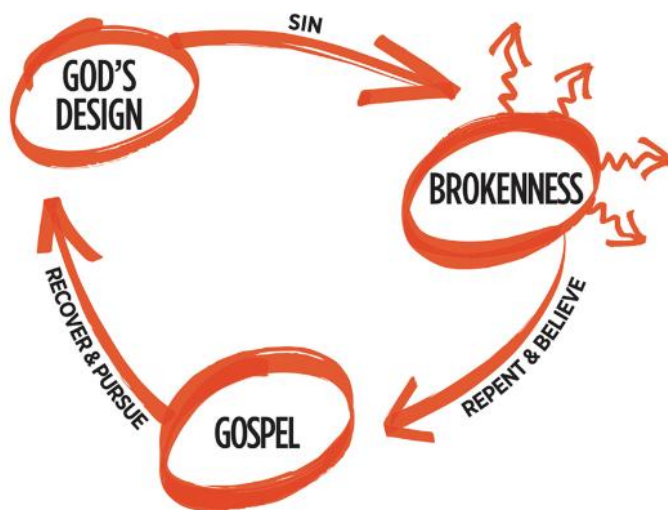
We share this amazing story of God's redeeming love using our 3 circle tool. God created all that exists and has a design for our lives. We see God's design all around us: in the beauty of creation—a golden sunrise or a pink sunset—and in our own amazing bodies. Tragically we have all rebelled against God's good design for our lives, and this is what the Bible calls sin. Unfortunately, our sin takes us all to a place of brokenness. Brokenness could look like struggling relationships, addiction, isolation, or despair.

The good news, the Gospel, is that God sent His Son, Jesus, to live a perfect life (down arrow), die the death we deserve because of our sin (cross), and be raised from the dead (up arrow). The Bible says that when Jesus died on the cross, God did a miracle. He took all of our sin and put it on Jesus, and then He took all of Jesus' righteousness and put it on anyone who believes in Jesus. This means that we are no longer broken in God's eyes. We are made right with Him. All we have to do to get this right standing with God is repent and believe in Jesus.

Once we repent and believe, we can begin to recover and pursue God's design.

Practice with each other sharing the amazing "Good News" using the 3-circle tool

NOTE TO LEADER: For the 3-circle practice, check if there are "experienced" 3-circle people in the room and put them with newbies. Tell the participants that their demonstration needs to last no longer than three minutes. Then, give them each 3-5 minutes to practice with each other, so 6-10 minutes for practice. THEN cover the debriefing questions below and extend the challenge. Be sure to follow up and check if anyone did the practice at the beginning of session 2.



How did that go?

What is something your partner did that you liked or helped you see the gospel better?

How could you improve?

Challenge: Practice sharing the 3 circles with a friend this week.

WEEK 2

THE BIBLE: GOD'S LOVE REVEALED

The leader asks everyone to consider, “Does God speak to us?” if so “What is He saying?”

The leader then reads Psalm 19 to everyone

All of creation is constantly shouting about how amazing and glorious God is (verses 1–6). Words alone just can't capture His majesty. Every sunrise is like a fresh reminder of His love, His faithfulness, and how He provides for us. Through nature — what we call God's *General Revelation* — God is showing Himself to us and speaking to our hearts.

But as much as we can learn about God from creation, it's not everything we need to know. In verses 7–11, we see that God isn't just the one who set natural laws in motion — He's also the one who gives us moral laws. The Bible, God's law, is described as perfect, trustworthy, right, pure, clean, and true. Seriously, what else in this world can we rely on like that? The Bible is how we come to truly know God. That's why it's called God's *Special Revelation* — it's more valuable than gold and sweeter than honey.

Then notice the shift in tone in verses 12–14. When we stand under the authority of God's revelation — when we *really* understand it — we can't help but recognize our own brokenness and deep need for Him. It humbles us and leads us to repentance. These final verses remind us just how much we need a Savior — and that Savior is Jesus Christ.

God's breathtaking glory, our brokenness, and the rescue we have through Jesus — that's the big story the Bible is telling from beginning to end.

Our goal in this session is to help you pursue the basics of reading the Bible. According to the book, *MOVE*, Bible engagement is the #1 predictor of spiritual growth, far more than any other spiritual practice. Some of you may have spent many years reading Scripture, while some of you may have never opened the Bible. Wherever you are in experience with the Bible, we hope to help you increase the rewards of reading the Bible in your life.

Scripture shapes our entire being. In this session we will discuss:

What to Know About the Bible (Our head)

How to Feel About the Bible (Our hearts)

How to Read the Bible (Our hands)

Understanding the Bible means for us “standing under” the authority of Scripture in our life. Scripture requires us to approach the Bible and to be shaped by the Bible with our entire being. When we approach God's Word with our heads, our hearts, and our hands (behavior/action) God transforms our heads, hearts, and hands toward Him.

What to Know About the Bible (Our head)

At your table read 2 Timothy 3:14-16

Consider together “How is Scripture described?”

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter.

Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

- Scripture is the written record of God revealing in history who He is, what He is like, who we are, what we are like, what He expects of us, and what He has done for us in Christ
- The Old Testament begins with creation, describes the fall, and tells the story of the People of Israel up to the time of Christ. The OT sets up the need for Christ and the promise of Christ.
- The NT is the record of the birth of Jesus Christ, His life and ministry, and the ministry of his disciples, which was carried on after he was crucified. The NT covers the Presence of Christ (Spread of the gospel through the church?) and the hope of Christ's return.
- Through the 66 books of the Bible we see one grand story of God's good creation, our fall into sin, God's work of redemption through the life, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the consummation of creation upon Christ's eventual return
- In other words..... The story line of the Bible reveals the need for Jesus, the promise of Jesus, the anticipation of Jesus, the incarnation/arrival of Jesus, the teachings of Jesus, the crucifixion of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, the ascension of Jesus, and the promised return of Jesus.

How to Feel About the Bible (Our hearts)

At your table read Psalm 119:97

Consider together "How does reading the Bible make you feel?"

We can engage our hearts, and have our hearts shaped, when reading the bible by reading:

- **Thankfully** – Scripture is such a gift, we can know the holy, loving, creator of all that exists! God gives us his Word and does not leave us alone to figure out life, our identity, our purpose, we have God's word!!
- **Humbly** - "But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is HUMBLE and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word" (Isaiah 66:2).
- **Practically** - "But be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22).
- **In Community** - "not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near (Hebrews 10:25)." Reading with others brings richness and depth to the Bible by seeing God's Word through other people's perspectives and experiences.
- **Prayerfully** - "With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!" (Psalm 119:10). Ask God for understanding and receptivity.
- **For the Glory of God** - "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31).

How to Read the Bible (Our hands)

H.E.A.R. Journaling

HEAR journaling is one approach we can use to read the Bible. **HEAR** stands for Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond.

- To begin, pray and ask God to open your mind to understand the word. This is always a good way to begin your times with God.
- Write the Scripture reference of the passage you will be reading at the top of the page, along with the date.
- Below the passage put the letter H. Highlight or underline the part(s) you identify and put the verse number next to the H (highlight).
- Below that, write the letter E (Explain) in the margin. Write, to the best of your ability, what the parts you highlighted mean. This can be just a few sentences. Here are some questions to answer in the section:
 - Why was this passage written?
 - Who wrote it, and who were they writing to?
 - How does it fit with the verses before and after it?
 - Why did God put this passage in the Bible?
 - What does He want me to know or do?
- Next, write the letter A (apply) in the margin.
- Here is where you will consider how this truth impacts your life. Consider questions like:
 - How does God want me to obey him?
 - What can I learn from this passage?
 - What difference does this make in my life today?
- Below this, write an R (Respond) in the margin.
 - This is for you right now. To respond.
- You can use this section several ways. You could write an obedience step you want to take, or an action plan. You could also write a short prayer of response asking God for his help, strength, or guidance as you seek to obey him.
- Journaling forces you to think more carefully and specifically about the Bible. Let's give it a try.

Practice HEAR journaling using Galatians 2:20

NOTE TO LEADER: After the participants have practiced HEAR journaling, cover the debriefing questions below and extend the challenge. Be sure to follow up and check if anyone did the practice at the beginning of session 3.

How did that go?

What is something you learned?

What can you apply?

Challenge: Practice HEAR journaling in Mark Chapter 1 next week.

WEEK 3

PRAYER: TALKING WITH GOD

In this session, we will discuss prayer. What's more important, the Bible or prayer? Answer: both. Which wing of an airplane is more important, the left or the right? We inhale the Bible, We exhale prayer. You hear the word of God spoken to you, in prayer, we speak back to God. Inhale. Exhale.

Prayer is unquestionably central to the life of Jesus. Luke 4, 5, and 6, Jesus is consistently heading off, by himself, to the wilderness or the mountain all night to pray (4:1; 5:15; 6:12). In Chapters 9 and 10, He keeps this pattern but begins to invite His disciples along with Him more and more often (9:18, 28; 10:21-24). And in Luke 11:1-4, they can't help but ask Him to teach them how to pray. Of all the things they have seen in the life of Jesus, what grips them as most central, most important, most necessary for them to learn from and model from his life is to pray like Jesus.

At your table discuss the following questions.

How would you describe what prayer is?

How important is prayer in your life right now? (scale 1 to 10)

What are some reasons why we don't pray?

Our goal in this session is to help you pursue the basics of life in prayer. Some of you may have deep wells of prayer life while some of you may have never prayed out loud. Wherever you are in your prayer life we hope to help you increase the richness of praying in your life.

In this session we will discuss:

- **What is Prayer?**
- **Why do we need to Pray?**
- **How should we Pray?**

What is Prayer?

Prayer is Talking with God

Hand in hand – Fellowship with God.

Grace in our grasp - A Treasured Gift.

Arms open wide - Child to Father.

- God made us and has redeemed us for fellowship with himself, and that is what prayer is.
- God speaks to us in and through the contents of the Bible, which the Holy Spirit opens up and applies to us and enables us to understand.
- We then speak to God about himself, and ourselves, and people in his world, shaping what we say as response to what he has said.
- This unique form of two-way conversation continues as long as life lasts.

- Prayer is described in the Bible as seeking God's favor (Exodus 32:11), pouring out one's soul to the Lord (1 Samuel 1:15), crying out to heaven (2 Chronicles 32:20), drawing near to God (Psalm 73:28), and kneeling before the Father (Ephesians 3:14).

Why Do We Need to Pray? Because Prayer is:

The only way to truly know ourselves

The only way to change

The only way to get the good gifts God has for you

- Prayer is the only way to know yourself
 - You cannot know yourself until you know God
 - As you come to know God you see yourself as God sees you. You realize you are the created and He is the creator. He is holy, heavenly, all powerful, righteous, and we are none of these. A vibrant prayer life allows you to see God for who He is, and that allows you to better see who you are. You are an unworthy, broken, rebellious sinner. God, who is just and holy, loved you enough to redeem you from your sins. This perspective can only truly be gained from prayer.
 - The knowledge of God and knowledge of self either atrophies or grows together
- Prayer is the only way to change
 - Real change only comes about when loves are reordered
 - If you love A and B more than you love God then the only way to get past A and B is to change what you love. You can only do that through prayer
- Prayer is the only way to get what God has for you
 - This is not "name it-claim it" but a promise in scripture
 - Matt 7:11, James 1:5, Rom 10:1, Matt 6:11, etc.
 - We are told and guided to pray for things!
 - But all the love, wisdom, provision, joy, etc. is dangerous if we are not a person of prayer
 - Prayer allows us to see God for who He is, know who we are, and align our heart with His heart.

How Should We Pray? We Should Pray:

As a child to a father

(not as an employee to a boss)

The prayer life of an employee to a boss is so sad! The Characteristics of the boss relationship are:

- Flowery words, Babbling (Matt 6:7)
- Public prayer life but no private prayer life
- Just asking for things, making it all about getting what you need
- Comes and goes, depending on what you are doing

You become like an employee begging for the payment of the boss with no real relationship growth, just incessant need. You are in a never-ending struggle to try and gain control of God by pushing the right buttons with your words.

Jesus teaches us about the good Father! Jesus tells us that praying is a response to God's good grace and love and that praise completes the joy of love.

The Good Father Prayer

At your table read Matthew 6: 9-13

Consider together the key aspects of the Lord's Prayer

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus epitomizes the Good Father prayer method, showing five types of prayers. These prayers are in specific order. The first one frames the rest of your time spent praying with God. The five are:

Adoring

You cannot miss this part! This is the most crucial! When Jesus prays, wants, asks, or anything beside the complete worship and awe of God comes after this moment of adoration. This part of the prayer becomes the framework for the position of your heart for the rest of the prayer. You see yourself as the creation admiring the creator.

- As we adore, we put our hearts in a position that acknowledges and praises God for who He is
- By the praises of your mouth you declare your love for Him.
- What better way to transform your heart than to proclaim His greatness

"The most important discovery you will ever make is the love the Father has for you. Your power in prayer will flow from the certainty that the One who made you likes you, he is not scowling at you, he is on your side." (Pete Greig, Founder 24-7 prayer Movement)

Accepting

"Thy will be done", that is a bold statement! But for a Christian it gives us rest. In accepting, we are putting everything in God's hands, ready to do what we are dealt. Whether I understand or not! I KNOW it will be all right

- (ONLY) Here our soul finds rest
- We get on the same page with God

This type of prayer is exemplified by Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane.

Asking

This is the part of prayer we tend to like the most. We spend a lot of time here. Our adoring and our accepting of God's will, however, will frame and change what we ask. Thank goodness God does not give us all that we ask for because, as Tim Keller puts it, "our prayers tend to have a good core and a stupid part." God graciously gives us what we need, not exactly what we want.

- But we are called to ask - James 1:5
- God can and does drop the stupid parts of what we ask for
- If done in the framework of adoring and accepting, we can ask according to His will

Admitting

Admitting is where we deal with the sin in our lives.

- What does this mean? Confessing sin is about both admitting and forsaking - John Stott
 - You need to be broken over sin, not just over its consequences.
 - Psalm 51:4 - sin is not just against the people of the world, it is direct rebellion against God
- You must forgive as you are forgiven
 - Being unforgiving corrupts the heart, leading to pride and a sense of superiority over others. Forgiveness helps you to show humility and love.

Rebellion Against the Evil of the World

- Evil is real
- We are to pray against the injustice, cruelty, etc.
- We rebel against evil intellectually and volitionally by praying God will move in the situations and through us!
 - Praying changes us and makes us a part of what God is doing

A simple tool to use for prayer

PRAY

Praise, Repentance, Asking, Yielding

We can use the acronym PRAY to guide us in prayer

- PRAISE - acknowledge who God is. This can be through a title or attribute (Father, Holy, All Powerful, Good...)
- REPENTANCE - tell God where you have departed from His design or where you are struggling in your relationship with Him.
- ASKING - be specific in what you are seeking from God. These asks can include prayers for needs, for people in your life who are still in brokenness or for clarity in your relationship with Him.
- YIELDING - We thank God for who he is and what he has done. Thanksgiving includes statements of surrender. Regardless of our requests, we yield to our good Father. He knows what is best for our lives. We yield to His will.

At your table choose from Psalm 23, 51, 91, 139, 44, or 100

Based on your selected Psalm, pray together through the passage using the PRAY approach.

NOTE TO LEADER: After the participants have prayed using PRAY, ask how it went. Also, consider introducing the approach of praying the Scriptures and closing the session praying through your favorite scripture passage.

WEEK 4

COMMUNITY: LIVING TOGETHER IN GOD'S FAMILY

At your table discuss the following questions

Describe the past communities that you belonged to that were most important and formative. (e.g. a sports team, a work team, a military organization, etc.)

What are some common characteristics of these communities that were so impactful for you?

Once we repent and believe in Jesus, we are reborn as children of God and adopted into a new community much more important and impactful than any other community that we might belong to. In fact, God adopts into not just into a community but into our new family – the church! In this session, we will discuss how we are called to live together in community as brothers and sisters in our new church family. We will first discuss our newborn Christian identity, our new family, and our new purpose.

Our goal in this session is to help you pursue community living within the church family. Some of you may have lifelong experience with being a member of a church while some of you may have never attended a church before in your life. Wherever you are in your experience with church membership we hope to help you increase the richness of living as a family member within our church.

At your table read 2 Corinthians 5:17 and John 1:12

What are some of the implications from the passages in your life?

Once we have repented and in faith entrusted our lives to Christ – we are made new! A newborn child. Based solely on His grace, God adopts us as His children once we repent and place our belief in Christ. As God's children, we are now a new member of His family with new brothers and new sisters, all united in our faith in Christ. Not only does God adopt us as His child, He adopts us into a new family, the church. In Paul's letter to the Galatians he tells us in chapter 4, that "when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. With our new church brothers and sisters, we can together call the majestic creator of all that exists our Father, our Papa!

At your table read Acts 2:41-47

How is the first church described? List all of the things the church *DID*.

The Church is the family of God and the presence of Christ on earth. Recognizing that we are now members of a new family, God's church, we might want to know ***how are we led, what is our purpose, and how do we live together in community?***

At your table read Matthew 16:18 and Ephesians 4:11-16

How are we to be led in the church?

- Christ leads ***His*** church
- Christ built and builds the church
- Christ equips some people to serve the church in a variety of leadership roles under His lordship

Regarding the specifics of leadership at Family Church, we are (according to our FC bylaws):

- Christ-centered
- Pastor-led
- Staff-directed
- Deacon-served
- Committee-advised, and
- Congregationally-approved.

Please note that sometimes “authority” is a bad word in our culture. The problem is not authority but BROKEN authority. Authority is a good word in our faith---- beginning with the authority of God, the authority of Scripture, and the authority of Christ over our lives and His Church. We do live under authority in the church family – and that is good.

At your table read Ephesians 4:11-16

What do you believe our purpose is in the church?

- In our church family, we are called to worship God together, learn from God’s Word together, care and support one another, and live together in love and unity. We find both encouragement and accountability in our church family. Together in our church family we:
 - **Worship God** (Acts 2:47) There is a unifying factor when believers worship God together, whether it’s through music or preaching or serving. Psalm 34:3 emphasizes a call to corporate worship: “Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together.”
 - **Study God’s Word** (Eph 4:13-14) for spiritual maturity. A church family provides consistent Bible teaching. This often comes through small groups, Bible studies, teaching from the pastor, Sunday school lessons, and so on. The church family is called to grow spiritually together, spurring one another on.
 - **Find Support & Accountability** (Acts 2:45; Eph 5:15) When trials come, a support system is crucial. When in need, you will want your brothers and sisters in Christ to uphold you in prayer and assist with practical needs like meals, cleaning, and childcare. Galatians 6:2 encourages us to “carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” The church also provides a practical framework for accountability. Once relationships grow and friendships form, there is someone to encourage you, rebuke you when necessary, and rejoice with you. Proverbs 27:17 says, “Iron sharpens iron; so man sharpens his friend’s countenance.” Accountability is crucially important in the battle to overcome sin, and the church family is a great place to find someone to pray with, talk to, and confide in.
 - **Serve Others** (Acts 2:45; Eph 4:16) We not only receive support in the church; we give it as well. Your calling in the church is to contribute, not just to receive. When we are in close fellowship with other believers, we know when they need support and prayer. We can step in and help in practical ways.
 - **Make Disciples** (Acts 2:47; Eph 4:16) There comes a time when we need to learn to feed, not just be fed (Hebrews 5:12). We can evangelize, teach, encourage, and “disciple” our church family.

At your table read either 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 or Colossians 3:12-17

How should we live together in our community as adopted children of God?

Church involvement is not optional for the Christian life (Heb 10:25). Church is where we live out all of the one-another commands. No earthly communities behave in this manner. Scripture provides us the following principles for living together in community within the church family:

1. As one body with many members

¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. **1 Cor 12:12-13**

2. Bearing with one another in love

¹²Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. **Colossians 3:12-13**

3. Being Transformed into Holiness

12 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. **Romans 12:1-2**

WEEK 5

MISSIONAL LIVING: LIVING ON MISSION FOR GOD

At your table read Galatians 2:20 and Colossians 3:1-17

Discuss how turning to Christ and trusting in Christ changes the way we live.

Missional living should be the lifestyle of every true Christian. To live on mission means to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with others.

Our goal in this session is to help you pursue the basics of living on mission for Christ. We will discuss why we are to live on mission and how we can live on mission for Christ.

At your table read Matthew 28:18-20

What is missional living and why are we called to missional living?

We've been given the greatest gift, eternal life by grace through faith in Christ. Christ ended his earthly ministry with clear instructions in the great commandment: *"Go into all the world and make disciples of every nation"* (Matthew 28:19). The first phase in making disciples is sharing with people the good news and helping them think about its implications in their lives. There are other reasons, besides Jesus' command, that should also motivate us to live on mission and share the greatest news in the world with people who haven't heard it:

- Living on mission is an overflow of Christ's love and work in us. When two people fall in love, they cannot help but let everyone around them know it. Joy shows on their faces; stars glitter in their eyes. They are eager to tell anyone who will listen about the wonderful person they love. So it is when we've fallen in love with Jesus. We cannot help but tell people about Him every chance we get. We think about Him all the time. We're drawn to His Word, to worship services, and to others who love Him. We look for opportunities to share His truth with someone who is far from Him. Because of the life-changing joy we have found in Jesus, we can share with others the "hope that is within us." *Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved* (Romans 10:1).
- Sharing the Gospel is an act of love. Love must define us as followers of Jesus Christ (John 13:35; 1 Corinthians 13:1-7). It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, so anyone who walks in the Spirit will demonstrate love in dealing with people (Galatians 5:16, 22-23). We possess the best news in the world, and love propels us to share it with those who haven't heard. Love wants everyone to have a chance to respond to God's offer of salvation. We are blessed to serve as ambassadors for Christ, where God is making his appeal through us (2 Cor 5:20) for others to be reconciled to God. To truly love God is to will love the people whom Jesus came to save (John 3:16-18; 1 John 4:20). *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd* (Matthew 9:36-38).
- Missional living strengthens our own faith. Nothing helps us learn a subject like teaching it to someone else. When we make a practice of sharing our faith with those in our lives, we strengthen our own beliefs. Missional living forces us to address the hard questions, find answers for ourselves, and prepare to respond to the questions of others. We should *"always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect"* (1 Peter 3:15). We prepare by studying God's Word for ourselves, listening to sound Bible teachers, and staying in close fellowship with Jesus. Those practices keep our own lives pure so that we are not hypocrites who preach one thing but do another (Galatians 6:1).

- Living on mission provides eternal benefits. Jesus tells us to “*store up treasure in heaven*” (Matthew 6:19). That treasure consists of rewards for what we did on earth in His name and for His glory. It is not self-centered to make choices that will ensure eternal treasure for ourselves. Jesus told us to! Our service to Him can be as simple as offering a cup of cold water to one of His own (Matthew 10:42). The parable of the unjust steward underscores the importance of doing whatever we can to bring people to faith in Christ (Luke 16:1–13).
- Missional living pleases the Lord. The Christian life must never be lived according to “shoulds.” Yet we hear that word often in relation to Bible reading, prayer, church attendance, and other Christian practices. “I should do that, but . . .” The but is a bigger problem than we want to admit. God’s children will naturally want to please their Heavenly Father; it is their greatest delight. So our compass is set with God at true north. In everything we do, we feel the magnetic pull toward pleasing God. Even mundane tasks can be completed with joy because we are doing what God has given us to do (1 Corinthians 10:31). So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Teaching other people how to have a relationship with Jesus is one way to please Him. And in pleasing Him we are most fulfilled.

At your table read Colossians 4:5-6

Consider how we can live on mission for Christ.

In order to live on mission for Christ we must develop missional rhythms and missional practices in our lives.

Missional rhythms are patterns of presence in places where we can connect with people outside the church. Missional Rhythms can help us resist the natural tendency to associate with people most like us in conviction and worldview, fellow Christians. Missional rhythms are habits of life that weave the mission of God into what you are doing on a daily, weekly and monthly basis.

Missional practices are deliberate actions we take in order to engage with people outside the church. These practices include beginning with prayer, praying for God to send you people or tasks. We must also listen to the needs of those around us and to listen to see where God is already at work. Once we discover the needs of others we must serve in helping them. We are called to meet both their practical needs as well as their spiritual needs. Finally, as we get to know others we can share the good news of Jesus Christ.

A simple way to remember ways to live missionally for Christ is to remember the B.L.E.S.S. acronym of missional engagement:

1. **B** – **B**egin with prayer for divine appointments for others far from God
2. **L** – **L**isten to the needs, the hurts, and the opportunities to join where God is already at work.
3. **E** – **E**at with others in building relationships and affirmation.
4. **S** – **S**erve others, meeting practical and spiritual needs.
5. **S** – **S**hare your testimony, share the Gospel.

NOTE TO LEADER: Conclude the session discussing with participants how they might B.L.E.S.S. others in the coming week.

CONCLUSION

Leaders: Conclude your sessions by helping your guests take their next steps.

Try the Script below:

We Now Encourage You to Take Your Next Steps

First and foremost, thank you for joining us these past few weeks. We hope that you have made some new friends and experienced growth in your walk with Christ.

We encourage you to reflect on the past few weeks to recognize your growth and gain insight into your ideal next steps in pursuing God's design for your life. Consider:

- What have you learned about yourself during this time?
- How will you apply what you have learned?
- What do you see as the biggest challenge to your spiritual growth?
- Have you noticed any changes in your thinking, feelings, or behavior?

Determining your next step is crucial for continued spiritual growth. Pray for direction and let us know how we can help.

Common Next Steps

While each person's next steps will vary, here are some common pathways to consider:

Join a Small Group

If they are not already part of a small group, connecting with one is an excellent next step, providing community, growth, and support. If you are interested, we'll facilitate this connection.

Serving Opportunities

We have briefly discussed the importance of serving. If this feels like the right step, consider where God has gifted you with the capabilities, experiences, and passion to serve. Reach out to us to help you connect to the right serving opportunity.

Baptism

If you have not yet been baptized by immersion and are interested, let's discuss this exciting news further. Resources are available at www.gofamilychurch.org/baptism.

Daily Bible Reading

Pursue Devotional

NOTE TO LEADER: Discuss additional and/or any specific next steps available at your neighborhood church. Encourage everyone to express their next step with an "I will" statement!

Colossians 3

¹²Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.