



# ROOTS

The practices, principles,  
and priorities of Christianity

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# INTRODUCTION

It seems like today, people are very eager to point out differences. Debates about different political and social views are everywhere.

One of the things I love about my church is that we have so many different kinds of people. But as followers of Jesus, the things we have in common are much greater than what sets us apart. For thousands of years, Christians have agreed upon certain elements of faith and practice that are central to who we are. These things bind us together and help us live as the Church.

Unfortunately, many Christians today feel disconnected from all this. They know there should be a greater depth and richness to their faith than what they're experiencing. They just don't know how to find it.

That's why we've created Roots. In this 12 week small group journey, we'll walk through some of the ancient, foundational teachings of Christianity. We've divided them into three categories: the practices, the principles, and the priorities of the Christian faith.

We start with practices because our habits are what form us. These practices include things like scripture, prayer, worship, and confession.

Then we'll move on to the principles. We'll discuss the story of the Bible, touching on the key doctrines that we hold.

Finally, we'll explore some of the priorities of our faith. These are the virtues that foster a vibrant life with God—things like faith, holiness, justice, and mission.

Most importantly, we'll do it together. Christianity wasn't meant to be done alone. So join us.

Sincerely,  
Phil Wiseman

# TIPS FOR LEADERS

Thanks for agreeing to lead a Roots group! Our prayer is that the next 12 weeks will be formative and fulfilling. As you lead, here are a few things to keep in mind:

1. Pray for your group every day, and reach out to them throughout the week. Make sure they know that this isn't just a "one night a week" sort of thing. Let it become more than that!
2. Always read ahead. Some weeks have different activities, such as breaking into smaller groups or times of silence. If you want to plan ahead for that, you'll need to read the group study first.
3. Notice that week 3 involves taking communion. Our suggestion is to have a cup of grape juice and a loaf of bread so people can tear a piece off and dip it in the cup.

Once again, thanks for your leadership. Blessings on your ministry!

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## PRINCIPLES

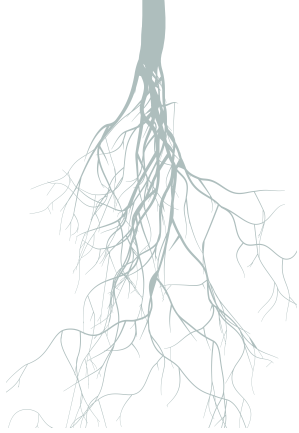
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**PRACTICES**



# SCRIPT

*Living Out the Bible*

**The Point:** Christians are characters in God's great drama, and the Bible is our script.

## **Discuss:**

1. What does it mean for the Bible to be our "script?"
2. How does understanding the Bible as a script differ from viewing it as an instruction manual, newspaper, or novel?
3. Today, people live out many different scripts. What are some of the false scripts that threaten to draw our attention away from the truth of scripture?
4. We've laid out the Bible in FOUR ACTS. Take a moment to review:

**Act I: CREATION.** We read about this in **Genesis 1-2**. An all-powerful, loving God forms the universe. He then places his image bearers inside this world to represent him, and he calls it "very good."

**Act II: FALL.** This happens in **Genesis 3**, and it keeps getting worse, all the way through chapter 11. It's where God's people stop trying to reflect God and instead try to be God. All of creation is now broken, and things start to fall apart.

**Act III: REDEMPTION.** It starts in **Genesis 12**, where God puts his rescue plan into action. He begins by calling Abraham and his descendants to show the world how he made them to live. It leads us to one Israelite named Jesus, whose life, death, and resurrection show us how everything can get back on track. This is the act that we are still living out today.

**Act IV: COMPLETION.** We read about this in the book of Revelation. It's where God will one day make all things right again, and we will live with him, and nothing will get in the way.



**5.** On the one hand, the Bible is complete, with nothing to be added or taken away (**Revelation 22:18**). On the other hand, we're still living out the story of Scripture (Act III). How might understanding Acts I and II—as well as what's to come in Act IV—help us live out Act III today?

**6.** Take 10 minutes or so to reflect as individuals on one of the following passages. Ideally, not everyone would use the same passage. Choose from **Deuteronomy 6:1–12**, **Psalms 51**, **Matthew 6:25–34**, or **Colossians 3:1–17**.

Once your passage is chosen, follow these 5 steps:

**QUIET** your heart and mind. Take a minute to simply ask God to speak through his word.

**READ** the entire passage slowly.

**LISTEN** for something in the passage to grab your heart. This could be just one verse, a simple phrase, or even one word. Whatever comes to the surface, consider it a word from God.

**REFLECT** on whatever verse, word, or thought God brought to the surface. Chew on it and enter into it. What would it look like for you to live out this word from God? What area of your life do you need to submit to this word? How would living this out give you more life in Christ? Write down some thoughts below:

**PRAY** a prayer of thankfulness and action. Thank God for his voice in your life, and ask him to seal this word in your heart.

7. As a group, share some of the ways that God spoke to you through his word.
8. We've discussed the four great acts of the Bible. How does your passage call forth redemption (Act III) in your own life as well as the world around you? How is it inviting you to join God in renewing what was broken in the fall?
9. Now that you've had a chance to reflect on scripture in this way, what does it mean to "live out" the Bible? How is this more than simply knowing scripture, understanding scripture, or even obeying scripture?
10. The simple 5 step method we used for approaching scripture—quiet, read, listen, reflect, pray—is an excellent way to weave scripture into the fabric of your life. However, we all know that sometimes it's hard to make Bible reading a regular discipline. As a group, set a goal: for the next week, commit to following this method for at least 5 days, and write down the ways that God speaks to you. Next week, come prepared to share with your group at least one new way that God is calling you to live out scripture. Space is provided below to help you practice.

*QUIET · READ · LISTEN · REFLECT · PRAY*

## **DAY 1**

Passage: **Lamentations 3:22-33**

As you listened, what part of the passage did God bring to the surface for you?

Reflections:



## **DAY 2**

Passage: Psalm 31:1-5

As you listened, what part of the passage did God bring to the surface for you?

Reflections:

## **DAY 3**

Passage: John 6:26-33

As you listened, what part of the passage did God bring to the surface for you?

Reflections:

## **DAY 4**

Passage: Romans 6:12-14

As you listened, what part of the passage did God bring to the surface for you?

Reflections:

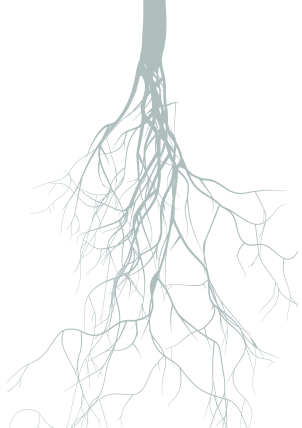
## **Day 5**

Passage: Philippians 2:5-11

As you listened, what part of the passage did God bring to the surface for you?

Reflections:





## VOICE

*Cultivating a Life of Prayer*

**The Point:** Prayer isn't just talking to God, it's hearing from him too.

**Discuss:**

1. What is the difference between talking to God and talking with God?
2. Saying we heard something "from God" can sound a little crazy; and yet most of us would say we've heard from God at least once in our life, in one way or another. Discuss a time you heard God speak. How did you respond?
3. How could our everyday lives change if we spent our days in a back and forth conversation with God?
4. If hearing from God sounds crazy, then it's time to get crazy! Stop for a moment and answer the following questions individually, using the space provided.

The kind of prayer life I want to have with God looks like this:

I think this might be stopping me from getting there:

In your group, divide into pairs and share those thoughts together. Pray for each other, asking God to make it real.

**5.** Come together as a group. What are some things that are stopping us from having a more conversational relationship with God?

**6.** What is one change that you are going to make this week to help you hear from God?

**7.** Spend the next week experimenting in conversational prayer with God. We've included some simple steps to get you going. Look these over as a group and remember: prayer is as much about hearing God as it's about talking to him. If this is new to you, remember there's no right or wrong way to start. **Just start.**

### **Practicing Prayer**

**Make Space.** Remove external distractions like other people or your phone and your task list, but also internal ones—the stuff you think might be in the way, the things that keep you from hearing God's voice clearly. Perhaps you'll need to forgive someone or get forgiven. Maybe it's hard for your mind to settle down, or maybe you just need to tell God straight up that you're not sure he's listening. Whatever it is, put it out there. Know and trust that God is in the room with you (even if you don't feel it yet) and let the Holy Spirit help you to even picture Jesus sitting with you like a friend.

**Interact with God's Word.** Go over the day's passage once to read it, a second time to know it, and a third time—more slowly this time—to let it sink in.

**Start a conversation.** You'll see there are some prompts provided. Complete them in a new way each day. Don't just fill in the blanks like you're taking a test. Talk to God as you write. He hears your prayers whether you write them out or not. The action of writing it down is for you, not for him.

Work through this practice slowly. Remember, this is an experiment with God, so it's ok if it feels a little strange— you're just trying things out. As you write, sit and listen. When you think you might be hearing God's voice, respond. Journal through the experience as you go. Come back next time ready to share with the group at least one way God spoke to you through the practice this week.

## **Day 1**

Make space.

Open your bible to **Psalm 8**.

*Read it, know it, let it sink in.*

Begin the conversation.

God, you're good because ...

Today I'm handing this over; it's heavy and it's in the way...

Thank you for ...

I'm asking for ...

Journal:

## **Day 2**

Make Space.

Open your bible to **1 John 1: 5-10**.

*Read it, know it, let it sink in.*

Begin the conversation.

God, you're good because ...

Today I'm handing this over; it's heavy and it's in the way...

Thank you for ...

I'm asking for ...

Journal:



## Day 3

Make Space.

Open your bible to **John 17: 20-26**.

*Read it, know it, let it sink in.*

Begin the conversation.

God, you're good because ...

Today I'm handing this over; it's heavy and it's in the way...

Thank you for...

I'm asking for...

Journal:

## **Day 4**

Make Space.

Open your bible to **Colossians 3:12-17**.

*Read it, know it, let it sink in.*

Begin the conversation.

God, you're good because ...

Today I'm handing this over; it's heavy and it's in the way...

Thank you for ...

I'm asking for ...

Journal:

## **Day 5**

Make Space.

Open your bible to **Ephesians 6: 10-18**.

*Read it, know it, let it sink in.*

Begin the conversation.

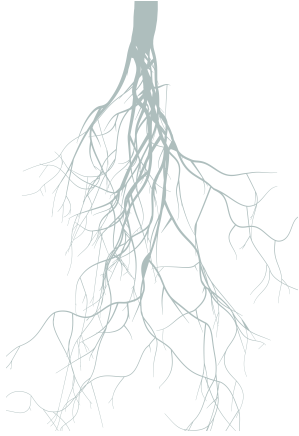
God, you're good because ...

Today I'm handing this over; it's heavy and it's in the way...

Thank you for...

I'm asking for...

Journal:



# MAIN STREET

*Submission Through Worship and Sacrament*

**The Point:** Worship is a two-way street where we submit to God and God changes us.

## **Discuss:**

1. What do we mean when we say that worship is a “two-way street?”
2. Why are we so comfortable making worship about what we do for God, instead of what God does to us?
3. Share a story of a time when God changed you through worship.
4. Everyone worships something. Do you agree? What does it mean for us to worship something other than God?
5. Worship is powerful. What we worship changes us—because worship is always an act of submission. What are some of the idols that threaten to draw our worship away from God? Make a list as a group.
6. Look over your list. While not all of these things are necessarily bad, each of them has the potential to pull us away from God. What are some of the specific ways each of these idols can get us off track?
7. Read **Romans 12:1-2**:  
And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.<sup>1</sup>

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Sometimes, the things we do in worship seem weird. For example, we talk about eating Jesus' body, being washed by the blood, and dying with Christ! That may sound strange to the world, but remember, our passage tells us that we shouldn't "*copy the behavior and customs of this world.*"

Think about all the things that communion teaches us—from Christ's sacrifice, to our own sinfulness, to the forgiveness we have in Jesus. How does something like communion re-train us to think differently than the world?

**8.** Consider the following lyrics from common worship songs we sing. Sometimes, we sing through these powerful words without even thinking about what they're saying. Discuss how these lyrics can "change the way we think" when we sing them meaningfully and with a heart of submission to God.

>> O trampled death, where is your sting? The angels roar for Christ our King<sup>2</sup>

>> Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders, let me walk upon the waters, wherever you would call me<sup>3</sup>

>> Praise him, all you sinners; sing, O sing, you weary; O praise him all you children of God<sup>4</sup>

>> There is power in the name of Jesus to break every chain<sup>5</sup>

**9.** As a group, you will now have an opportunity to worship through communion. Your leader should have provided a loaf of bread and a cup of juice. Read through the following liturgy together:

**Pray as a Group:** God, every good and perfect gift comes from you. Today, as we humbly submit to you, give us the gift of your heart-changing love. Examine our hearts and reveal to us any selfish desire, evil intention, or inner hurt that has not been surrendered to you.

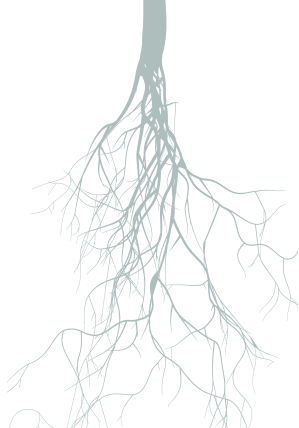
*1 minute of silence.*



**Group Leader:** Lord, hear our prayers, and forgive us for all unrighteousness. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

**Group Leader:** The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” (1 Corinthians 11:23b–25)

*You may now break off a piece of bread, dip it in the cup, and prayerfully take communion.*



## GIFT

*Receiving the Freedom that Comes Through Confession*

**The Point:** Confession isn't simply about guilt. It's also a gift.

### Discuss:

1. When you hear the word confession, what is your first thought?
2. Have you ever thought about confession as a gift? How does this ring true?
3. Confession gives us **security, forgiveness, and family**. What's another gift you might add to this list?
4. **Security.** We live in a world that is infected with insecurity. What is the source of this disease, and how is confession the antidote?
5. **Forgiveness.** We know confession leads to forgiveness—but we don't always act that way. What is it about the gift of forgiveness that is so difficult to receive?
6. **Family.** In his book, *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes,

"He who is alone with his sins is utterly alone... in confession the break-through to community takes place... if a Christian is in the fellowship of confession with a brother he will never be alone again, anywhere." <sup>6</sup>

How does confession bring us together?

7. We are going to practice confession together. Let's remember that we are never alone, and we hold each other up.

As a group, read aloud:

*Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we have done,  
and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
have mercy on us and forgive us;  
that we may delight in your will,  
and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your Name. Amen.<sup>7</sup>*

What line from that prayer hit home the most? Why?

**8.** In this prayer of confession, we are led to confess the things we've left undone. You may have heard this explained as sins of "commission" and sins of "omission." How can our failure to act be sinful?

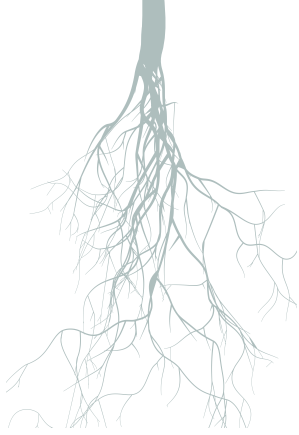
**9.** Repentance is a key step in the process of confession and forgiveness. Repentance doesn't just mean we're sorry we've been caught in sin; repentance means we're grieving our sin, and how it's hurt God and other people. It means we are ready to completely turn our back on that sin, and go the other direction.

Have you experienced the difference between confession with and without repentance? What impact did repentance make?

**10.** As we close, let's not forget the point of today's lesson: ***confession is not simply about guilt; it's also a gift.*** Whenever the prayer we said above is spoken in the church, it's always followed by this reminder of God's gift to us. Take this with you as you go:

*Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. Amen.*

**PRINCIPLES**



# BEGINNING

*Understanding Why We Were Made*

**The Point:** God created us as royalty, gave us responsibility, and invites us into relationship.

## Discuss:

1. "Is a can opener a can opener if it never opens a can?" What does our answer to this question say about where we draw purpose?
2. Our identity comes from the one who made us, not from what we do. How is this understanding of identity different from other popular understandings in our world?
3. Read **Genesis 1:26–28**:

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground."

<sup>27</sup> So God created human beings in his own image.  
In the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground."

Today we know that when Genesis was written, Israel's neighbors had their own ideas of why we were made. Many of them believed that humans were created out of violence in order to be slaves. However, Genesis gives us a very different picture.

What do these differences mean for how we should understand ourselves?



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**4.** When it comes to questions about our origins, people often want to focus on the “how.” We wonder if God created the world in 6 literal days, or whether or not he used evolution to do it. These “how” questions are important, but sometimes they draw us away from the point of Genesis. Genesis is much more interested in the “why” of creation than the “how.”

God created us as royalty, gave us responsibility, and invites us into relationship. Why would an almighty God want to do such a thing?

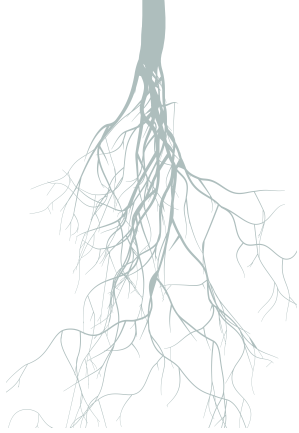
**5.** What unique responsibilities has God given you charge over? How can you represent him well in those areas?

**6.** How does understanding our God-given royal status address lies of low self worth?

**7.** Take a moment to review what we mean by the word Trinity: *there is one God in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*. What does the fact that God exists in relationship tell us about how we ought to live our lives?

**8.** What are the areas of your life that you are most likely to keep isolated from God?

**9.** Just as God entered into a covenant relationship with Abraham, God wants to have an all-encompassing relationship with us. Let’s commit to moving those isolated areas of our lives out into the open. God doesn’t want a relationship with part of you—he wants it all.



# FALL

*Understanding the Consequences of Sin*

**The Point:** Sin makes us slaves, spreads chaos, and causes us to be alone.

**Discuss:**

1. What is your initial reaction to the word sin?
2. Do you think that our culture has an increasing dislike for the word sin? If so, why do you suppose this is?
3. Last week, we learned that God created us as royalty, gave us responsibility, and invites us into relationship. This week, we're seeing how sin wrecks each of those categories:
  - >> Sin moves us from royalty to slavery.
  - >> Sin distorts our God-given responsibilities and spreads chaos instead.
  - >> Sin destroys relationships and causes us to be alone.

However, this is not all that sin does. What are some other consequences of sin?

4. What are some specific ways that sin makes us slaves?
5. We often think of sin as just a personal thing. The truth is, sin spreads. It corrupts systems, cultures, and institutions. In the early chapters of Genesis, one sin led to another, getting worse every time—until all of humanity was caught up in the chaos. Yet, we are often told that something is OK as long as it doesn't hurt anyone else.

What's wrong with this logic? In other words, how do even the most private sins threaten to affect those around us?

6. Recent research has shown that many people believe in a God who "exists, created the world, and defines our general moral order, but not one who is particularly personally involved

# PRINCIPLES

in our affairs—especially affairs where we would prefer not to have God involved. Most of the time, the God of this faith keeps a safe distance.”<sup>8</sup>

How does this view of God differ from the infinitely relational, covenant-making God we learned about last week?

**7.** If it is true that God is relational—and is therefore near, not far—then how might this change our view of even the most private sins?

**8.** The Bible says that we’ve all sinned (**Romans 3:23**). But what are some of the root causes of those sins? Read the following 3 passages out loud and discuss what they say are some dangerous sin-starters: **Proverbs 16:18**, **1 Timothy 6:10**, and **James 3:6**.

**9.** Which of the causes of sin from the previous question tempt you the most?

**10.** Any discussion of sin must end with hope. God has provided the cure to sin in Jesus Christ, and as we will discuss next week, Jesus defeats sin in our lives. But for now, let’s take 3 things away this week:

**FIRST**, let’s carry a sense of sorrow for our sin. Remember, sin infects everything: it makes us slaves, spreads chaos, and causes us to be alone.

**SECOND**, let’s remember the cure: Jesus Christ. Through Jesus, sin has lost its power. We’ll learn more about that next week.

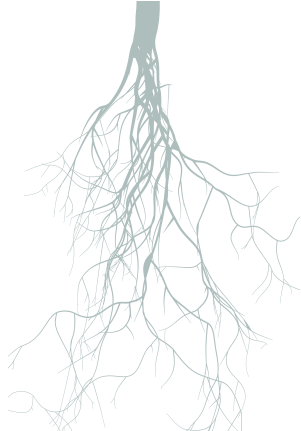
**FINALLY**, consider revisiting the prayer we learned in Session 4 when we discussed confession. Perhaps this could be something you practice this week:

*Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we have done,  
and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,*

*have mercy on us and forgive us;  
that we may delight in your will,  
and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your Name. Amen.*

And each time you pray this prayer of repentance, remember the truth of **1 John 1:9**:

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins  
and to cleanse us from all wickedness.



## REDEMPTION

*Understanding the Gospel as Good News*

**The Point:** The gospel is the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection—which means that God sets us free, renews all things, and adopts us as children.

### Discuss:

1. Share about a time when you received some life-changing news.
2. Why is it important to remember that the gospel is good news, and not just good advice?
3. We've defined the gospel in just one sentence: The gospel is the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection—which means that God sets us free, renews all things, and adopts us as children.

However, the gospel is too big to fit into just a few words! Read the following scriptures and share what you might add: **Romans 8:1, Ephesians 2:4–5, 2 Corinthians 5:15, Philippians 2:5–11, 1 Thessalonians 5:23.**

4. **1 Thessalonians 5:23** suggests that God doesn't just forgive us but makes us holy as well. What does it mean for the gospel to be "more than forgiveness?" How is the good news meant to change us?
5. **Philippians 2:5–11** teaches that Jesus was God, but he made himself nothing and died on a cross. What does it mean for us to live with this same mindset?
6. We've said that because of the gospel, God sets us free, renews all things, and adopts us as children. Which of those three grabs you the most right now? Why?
7. We learned in the previous lesson that sin makes us slaves, spreads chaos, and causes us to be alone. But the gospel solves these problems:



- >> Instead of slaves, we are set free (**John 8:36**)
- >> Instead of chaos, all things are made new (**Revelation 21:5**)
- >> Instead of being alone, we are adopted as children (**Galatians 4:5**)

Which of those areas is most difficult for you to live out right now?

**8.** We learned in week 1 that we are actors in God's great drama, and the Bible is our script. Today, we are living out this story by the power of the Holy Spirit. What are some opportunities you have in your life to bring this good news to those who need it?

**9.** The Bible says that scripture is "alive and active" (**Hebrews 4:12**). Therefore, one of the best ways we can live it out is to memorize it. As a group, challenge one another to make scripture memory a regular habit. Start this week by memorizing these simple, yet powerful redemption passages:

**Day 1:** **John 8:36**

So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.

**Day 2:** **Romans 8:1**

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.

**Day 3:** **John 3:16**

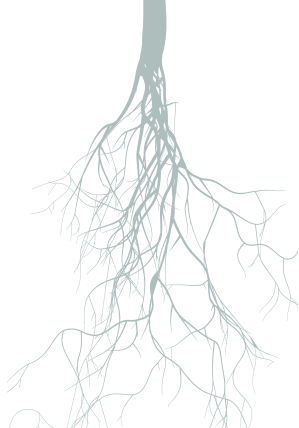
For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

**Day 4:** **Galatians 2:20**

My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

**Day 5:** **1 Thessalonians 5:23–24**

Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. God will make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful.



## COMPLETION

*Joining God in the Renewal of All Things*

**The Point:** God is making everything new—and that includes you.

### Discuss:

1. Talk about a time when you finished something that was difficult. What kept you going?
2. Many people today look at the world around them and feel hopeless—perhaps you can relate. How can the fact that God finishes what he starts help restore hope?
3. Read **Revelation 21:3–5**:

I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.” And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!”

What do you imagine a world where everything is made new will look like?

4. One of the important things to remember is that God is making everything new. Sometimes we assume that God’s work is only a spiritual thing, and we forget about the physical part. The truth is, God doesn’t make such big distinctions between “spiritual” and “physical” as we sometimes do. God will renew it all!

Get into groups of two and go through the table on the next page. It describes the difference between a “divided” view of God’s work—where his work is only a spiritual thing—and an “integrated” view of God’s work—where God is renewing all things. What rings true about this? Is anything confusing? On which side do you think you’ve tended to fall?

### **Divided**

God's domain is "upstairs" in heaven, not here on earth.

Evangelism means telling people how they can have their sins forgiven.

The gospel is just about how sins are forgiven.

The physical realm is a burden and will be cast off.

The spiritual realm is what matters most.

We address physical needs so that we can address spiritual needs.

### **Integrated**

Jesus announced the arrival of God's kingdom here on earth. (**Mark 1:15**)

Evangelism means announcing the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection—which includes but isn't limited to the forgiveness of sins.

The gospel is about the renewal of all things, including the forgiveness of sins.

The physical creation is not a burden, but part of God's renewing mission.

The spiritual and the physical intersect at all levels.

We address physical needs not as a means to an end, but because it is important to God's work in the world.

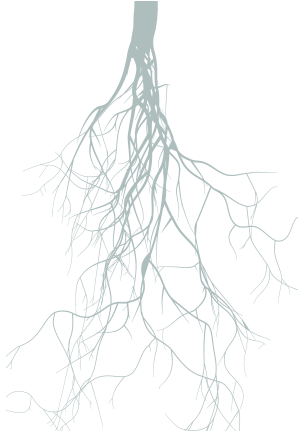
**6.** Get back together as a group and share about your discussion of the table above.

**7.** The Bible teaches that God's renewing work has already started (**Acts 2**, **Mark 1:15**, **Colossians 1:20**). When God renews something, he repairs what's broken. When has God done this in your life?

**8.** Where do you need renewal today?

**9.** As the group ends, get back into pairs. This time, pray for one another, paying special attention to the things that were shared in the previous question. Ask God to bring his renewing power into the heart and life of the person you are praying for.

**PRIORITIES**



# FAITH

*Following God with Trust, Boldness, and Humility*

**The Point:** Faith is a response to God's perfect love.

**Discuss:**

1. Faith is a response, not just a belief. How does understanding faith in this way help us expand our definition of it?
2. Read the following verses out loud: [Matthew 9:2](#), [Romans 1:16–17](#), and [Romans 5:1](#). What do these verses teach us about the importance of faith?
3. We've broken faith down into 3 parts: trust, boldness, and humility. Is it possible to trust someone without showing it? What are some ways we demonstrate our trust?
4. Sometimes the word "boldness" has negative connotations. Discuss the difference between unhealthy and healthy forms of boldness in our faith.
5. How can faith in God make us more humble?
6. Keep in mind that doubt and faith are not opposites. It's possible—and even commendable—to hold to faith even in the face of doubt. The truth is, faith doesn't always come easily for everyone. Do you ever wrestle with doubt? In what ways?
7. [Romans 12:3](#) says,

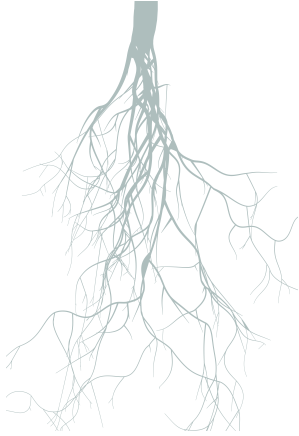
Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.

There are two things in this verse we should notice. First, when it comes to evaluating ourselves, what counts is faith (not intellect, skills, money, or looks!). Second, we read that God gives faith to us.

# PRIORITIES

If God gives us faith, then it seems appropriate to pray for more faith. In what areas of your life do you need to ask God to give you more faith?

**8.** In groups of two, close the discussion by praying for one another. Ask God to increase the faith of your friend in whatever areas they feel they need it.



# HOLINESS

*Living a Life of God-centered Love*

**The Point:** Holiness isn't about scoring points. It's about loving the game.

## Discuss:

1. What does it mean to try to "score points" with God?
2. If holiness is a life of God-centered love, how does trying to "score points" get things backwards?
3. Holiness is something God does in us. When God unleashes power in our lives that we don't deserve, it's called grace. Judah Smith says,

"Grace is so simple that we have a hard time believing it could be true. But I'm convinced that unless it's too good to be true, it's not grace."<sup>9</sup>

How do we take a simple truth—like the fact that grace is something we're given but don't deserve—and make it complicated?

4. Read [James 4:7-10](#). We've discussed how holiness is something God does in us. This verse makes it clear that we do have a part to play. What is it?
5. Read [1 Thessalonians 5:23-24](#). Sin makes us slaves, spreads chaos, and causes us to be alone. Yet we often assume that it's just a part of who we are. Based on this passage, what is God's vision for your life? Do we have to settle for a life of slavery to sin?
6. Sometimes when we recognize a cycle of sin in our lives, we become discouraged. But remember, one choice to love God today leads to another tomorrow. One small act of obedience can unleash an avalanche of God's power!

What are some helpful ways to break the cycle of sin?

**7.** In your group, spend a few moments in quiet reflection. Where are you settling for slavery, chaos, or isolation?

Dream a little. What would your daily life look like if that sin were gone? What's in the way?

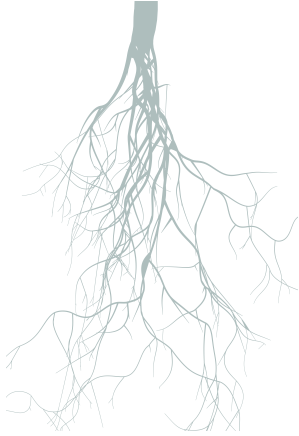
**8.** As you finish, pray the lyrics to Charles Wesley's hymn, *O For a Heart to Praise My God*:

*O for a heart to praise my God  
A heart from sin set free  
A heart that always feels thy blood  
So freely shed for me*

*A heart in every thought renewed  
And full of love divine  
Perfect and right and pure and good  
A copy, Lord, of thine*

*Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart  
Come quickly from above  
Write thy new name upon my heart  
Thy new best name of love*





# JUSTICE

*Making Wrong Things Right*

**The Point:** Justice is closing the gap between where things are and where they should be.

**Discuss:**

1. Think about the world of 18th century England. What similarities do you see to our own?
2. In Wilberforce's day, the majority of the church embraced Christianity by name, but not in practice. The assumption was that faith was simply a private matter. However, among them there were growing groups of believers who refused to divorce their faith in God from everyday life.

Is it possible to be a Christian without living it out in your daily life?

3. Wilberforce was a member of Parliament, which was very corrupt at the time. When he returned to his faith, he wasn't sure he could stay, and considered working as a minister instead. However, his friends convinced him that he should do both: serve God and work in Parliament. He chose to close the gap between where things are and where they should be.

Can you relate? What's it like where you work? How can you close the gap?

4. Justice is closing the gap between where things are and where they should be. Read these scriptures together: [Isaiah 58:6-9](#), [Micah 6:8](#), [Luke 4:17-18](#), [Galatians 5:13](#).

What does God have to say about how things "should be"?

5. Read [Mark 12:28-31](#):

One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the debate. He realized that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

# PRIORITIES

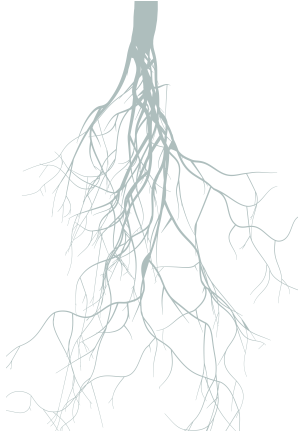
Jesus replied, "The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these."

It's easy to get overwhelmed by all the problems in the world, but here we see Jesus make it very simple. When it comes to loving God with our whole lives, where does Jesus suggest we start?

**6.** Take a moment to pray individually. Ask God to point out one place in front of you where things are not as they should be. Ask him to reveal ways he wants to use your social standing, passions, abilities, and voice to close the gap.

Take a couple of minutes to sit on this in prayer. Use the space below to write down what God shows you.

**7.** Share what God showed you with your group and pray for one another. Take action right away, and hold one another accountable. Remember not to go it alone. Perhaps there is a way you can join together even this week to move the world closer to how it should be.



# MISSION

*Sharing Jesus with the Whole World*

**The Point:** We are sent by God, who is already working.

**Discuss:**

1. Sometimes, the longer we are Christians, the fewer people we know with different views. Is this true for you? How can we fight this trend?
2. What does it mean for God to be “on mission?”
3. We believe that God is already at work in the world, often in places we least expect. The key is to have eyes to see where he’s working. What are some ways you’ve learned to identify God at work around you?
4. As followers of Jesus, it is helpful to be able to clearly and quickly explain the message of our faith. That way, when we find ourselves in a God-appointed conversation with someone who wants to know more about Jesus, we’re ready.

Below is a tool that can help you explain what you believe in 4 simple truths. It’s impossible to say everything in a few sentences, but it’s a good start nonetheless. Get into groups of 2 or 3 and work through each step and verse that goes with it. Below each verse is an example of what you might say to explain each truth.

**God loves you.**

**Romans 8:38:** And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love.

*One of the most important things we can understand is that God loves us more than we can imagine. As this verse makes clear, God will stop at nothing to show us this love.*

## **Sin causes death.**

**Romans 6:23:** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

*The problem is that we are broken. That brokenness is called "sin." We all try to do God's job, and in doing that, we fight against him. This separates us from God forever, and it causes eternal death.*

## **Jesus gives life.**

**Ephesians 2:4–5:** But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)

*Jesus provided a way for our sin problem to be cured. He did it by sacrificing his own life for you, and when God raised him from the dead, that meant that when we decide to make Jesus our master, sin will no longer have victory in our lives!*

## **Live for Jesus.**

**2 Corinthians 5:15:** He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.

*The key to receiving this new life is that we no longer live for ourselves, but for Jesus! It's God's upside-down sort of way. To have an abundant life, we must give it away! Sounds crazy, but it's true. Jesus offers life to us, and all we have to do is surrender to him.*

5. It's important to discern when and how to share something like this. What are some contexts where a tool like this might be most helpful? What are some times it might be less helpful?
6. Read **Matthew 28:18–20**. This passage is known as the "Great Commission."

Jesus sends his disciples and promises to go with them. Remember, we are sent by God, who is already working. How does the fact that God is already at work set you free to share without pressure?

**7.** This study has brought us to this crucial point: we are called to be disciples and to make disciples.

As you finish your discussion, think about one person in your life who isn't a disciple yet. As a group, pray for God to stir their hearts and for you to have a chance to share.

Now as you go, rest in this foundational truth:

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Romans 8:38–39**

# NOTES

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1. Unless otherwise noted, Scriptures are taken from the New Living Translation.
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Roots was written by Phil Wiseman, Megan Koch, and Jake Thurston.

Video production by Jay Wilde.

Graphic design by Jesse Murawski and Lisa Stahl.

