



**Truth Seekers
Fellowship**

Equipping The Faithful To Be Fruitful

MilktoMeat
PHASE 1

Discovering THE WAY Part 01 Recovering The Master Story

AWARE > ALIVE > AWAKE > FREE > FAITHFUL > FRUITFUL



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Fellowship**

Equipping The Faithful To Be Fruitful

DISCOVERING THE WAY

Part 1: Recovering The Master Story

“I am **The Way**, The Truth and The Life;

No one comes to the Father

except through me.”

Jesus the Messiah

[John 14:6]

| **AWARE** | ALIVE | AWAKE | FREE | FAITHFUL | FRUITFUL |

Discovering the Way Part 1: Recovering The Master Story

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For more information about Truth Seekers Fellowship call or write

Truth Seekers Fellowship

5390-1 Estate Office Drive

Memphis, TN 38119

Tel: 901/866-685-3385

email: connect@tsfmemphis.org

You can also visit us on the web at: www.tsfmemphis.org

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For
Tom Murray
who taught us the importance of
teaching the truth, in the right order, at the right time.

And many thanks to
all our students over the years
who have served as our
editors, encouragers and supporters.

CHRIST we proclaim
by warning and teaching all people with all wisdom
so that we may present every person mature in Christ.
Toward this goal we also labor,
struggling according to His power
that powerfully works in us.
| Colossians 1:28-29 |

The MilktoMeat Map		
Phase 1 Discovering The Way	1. Recovering The Master Story	Aware
	2. Enlightened By The Gospel	Alive
Phase 2 Walking In The Truth	3. Realizing Your New Identity in Christ	Awake
	4. Rooted and Growing in Christ	Free
Phase 3 Living The Life	5. Empowered By The Presence of the Spirit	Faithful
	6. Serving as the Body of Christ	Fruitful

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Introduction to MilktoMeat

“Christ we proclaim,
warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom,
so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.”

~ COLOSSIANS 1:28, OUR TRANSLATION ~

Who is This Study For?

We have designed this study around a simple idea: *these are the truths that we wished someone had taught us as new believers, new followers of Jesus.*

» *If you are a new follower of Jesus, or*

» *If you have never been trained how to follow Jesus, or*

» *If you want to learn how to train others to follow Jesus...*

then you are PERFECT for this study.

* *If you plan to facilitate a MilktoMeat group or teach this material, please see “A Few Notes for Facilitators and Teachers” on page 114*

What is The Story Behind MilktoMeat?

Do you want to grow spiritually but aren't sure where to start or what will work? For over twenty years we have been developing and refining MilktoMeat based upon what makes a difference in people's lives. Many men and women, from various walks of life, ages, and backgrounds have been transformed while going through this study. This study is an invitation to experience how Father-God working in Jesus Christ through the power and presence of His Holy Spirit will transform You.

We believe that this is a powerful tool and resource for anyone who wants to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). We pray that this study will become a means for you to connect more deeply with Father-God's love and purposes for you in Christ so that *you make your life's journey worthy of your destination!*

Tom Murray, the founder of Truth Seekers Fellowship, began to follow Jesus in his late twenties. At that point, he was what all new followers of Jesus are: a

blank sheet of paper. Although Tom was hungry and willing to pursue spiritual growth, he found that his early years as a student of Jesus were not as fulfilling and productive as they could have been. Tom got bits and pieces of important truth and practices, but he had no one to lead him and train him in a logical and sequential way with the goal of spiritual maturity in sight.

After many years of searching, learning, and growing through trial and error, Tom decided to put together a study that would, *“teach others what I wish older, more mature Christians had taught me as a new believer.”* This study and curriculum became MilktoMeat. The guiding principle behind all of MilktoMeat is simple: *teaching the truth in the right order at the right time.*

What are Our Core Commitments?

» **Bible Based** | The Bible has been given to us by God to instruct us in His Ways and give us hope. This study is **Bible Based** because we are confident that the Message of the Bible (the Written Word) gives us hope by guiding us to Jesus Christ.

Romans 15:4 For everything that was written in former times was written for our instruction, so that through endurance and through encouragement of the Scriptures *we may have hope.* {NET}

2 Timothy 3:14–15 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, and you know that from childhood you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

» **Christ Focused** | Jesus Christ is the Creator, Savior, and King of all creation and therefore the ONLY Way that leads us to the One True God. Therefore, this study is **Christ Focused** because we are confident that He is Creator, Savior, and King of all Creation and therefore central to all things:

Hebrews 12:1b–2 ...Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, 12:2 **keeping our eyes on Jesus**, the source and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that lay before Him endured a cross and despised the shame and has sat down at the right hand of God’s throne.

» **Life Transforming** | Father-God Works in Christ His Son through the Holy Spirit to transform our lives. When anyone is presented with the

truth and goodness of God in the glory of Jesus Christ, that person will be affected. The Lord-God has revealed Himself to us in His Written Word—*The Bible*—and this Word points us to the Living Word—*Our Savior and Lord Jesus*—so that we can see Him. We are confident that Father-God has given us His Word and is working in Christ through His Spirit to set free, heal, and transform anyone who is willing to turn from their old way of life and to trust and follow Jesus Christ who leads us in *the way of true life*.

2 Corinthians 3:16–18

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 3:18 We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.

What is the Larger Structure of MilktoMeat?

MilktoMeat is divided into three Phases: 1) Discovering the Way, 2) Walking in the Truth and 3) Living the Life. Each of these Phases consist of two 7 Session study units. These units are designed to lead you in the process of Spiritual Transformation that takes place as you grow in your relationship with Father-God in Christ.

» Phase 1 | DISCOVERING THE WAY

In this first phase, our goal is *to build a frame of reference* for life by recovering The Master Story of the Bible. This Master Story sets the context for understanding The Gospel—the Good News about Jesus and The Kingdom which enlightens our lives. We focus on the three core life questions: 1) *Where have we come from?* 2) *Why are we here?* And 3) *How will our lives turn out?* We then turn to explore the major Gospel Questions: 1) Why Did God Create Us? 2) What Went Wrong? 3) What Did God Do? 4) What is God Doing? 5) What will God Do? and 6) How Should We Respond? Our Father-God working in Christ through The Spirit has provided answers to these questions that give us the one thing that we need more than anything else: **HOPE**. This phase is divided into two seven-session workbooks: *Recovering the Master Story* and *Enlightened by the Gospel*

» Phase 2 | WALKING IN THE TRUTH

In our second phase, we explore what it means to trust and follow Jesus **ALONE** as our only Savior. We focus on our **new identity** and **position** in Christ and how

this new reality fulfills our need for 1) *Security*, 2) *Significance* and 3) *Fulfillment* as people created in the image and likeness of God. We also explore issues related to The Great Spiritual War in which we find ourselves—broken and wounded by sin, but now being transformed to be like Christ Jesus. Our lives are journeys of FAITH; we are all **trusting** in someone to show us The Way. This phase is divided into two seven-session workbooks: *Realizing Your New Identity in Christ* and *Rooted and Growing in Christ*

» **Phase 3 | LIVING THE LIFE**

In our final phase, we consider what it means to be a life-long disciple/student/apprentice of Jesus. We focus on the significant role everyone “in Christ” has. “In Christ” we are each gifted and empowered to serve *as* the Body of Christ (The Church) *in* the World where Jesus is leading His mission to seek and save those who are spiritually lost, dead, and enslaved in the Dominion of Darkness. God is love. As we come to know Jesus Christ truly, following Him wherever He may lead, we too become people characterized by His self-sacrificial **LOVE**. This phase is divided into two seven-session studies: *Empowered by The Presence of the Spirit* and *Serving as The Body of Christ*.

Session 1

How Do You Get the Most From This Study?

1.1 **Beginning With The End in Sight**

If you study the history of humanity, you cannot miss seeing our restless, unending, *search for meaning in life*. In order to make sense of life, we all must find the answers to three foundational questions: Where did I come from? Why am I here on earth? Where am I going? This search for meaning drives scientists to probe earth and sky looking for answers while philosophers formulate complex systems of thought to explain our origin, our purpose, and our destiny. Everyone wants to know *the truth*. But what is *The Truth* regarding our origin, our existence, our purpose, and very importantly, our ultimate destination?

The beginning of something is always significant. How we begin often determines where we will end up, where we will finish. It is important to have a view of where we are going so that we can see if we are making progress along the way. We are going to begin this study with this statement:

The only way for us to find the meaningful and fulfilling life that we desire is to submit to the Truth of the Word of God and follow Jesus our Savior and Lord.

This statement may sound too exclusive or radical to you. You may not accept it completely, or you may not believe it at all. You may believe it, but you don't know how to live it out. We have become convinced that this statement is true and everything that we will present from this point forward will seek to give the reasons we believe it is so. If you are willing to move on with us then we will begin where Jesus himself began:

Mark 1:14–17 ... Jesus went to Galilee, preaching the good news of God:

1:15 “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near.

Repent and believe in the good news!”

1:16 As He was passing along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, Simon’s brother. They were casting a net into the sea, since they were fishermen. 1:17 “Follow Me,” Jesus told them, “and I will make you fish for people!”

Jesus began His teaching with a revolutionary statement: “The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is near.” *Jesus’ proclamation that The Kingdom was near challenged His audience’s understanding of reality.* This statement still challenges our understanding of reality. It is as powerful today as it was when Jesus first said these words over 2000 years ago.

This short passage touches on most of the central, core truths and ideas that we are going to be exploring and developing in this first phase *Discovering the Way*.

1.1.1 **Jesus is Central to All Things**

Jesus is the person who is at the center of all we will discuss. Jesus’ name means, “The Lord Saves.” He has one name, but many *titles*. As we move through this study we will discover that Jesus is our *Teacher* and calls us to follow *His way of life*. Jesus is also called *Messiah* (Hebrew) and *Christ* (Greek), a term which means “the Anointed King.” Jesus is called *Lord* and so He is Master over all things. Consider this:

Colossians 1:15–18 He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 1:16 For everything was created by Him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things have been created through Him and for Him. 1:17 He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together. 1:18 He is also the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He might come to have first place in everything.

Jesus is centrally important to all things. As we move through this study, we will learn about Him and how He calls us into a deep, personal relationship.

1.1.2 **Jesus Proclaimed the “Good News”—The Gospel**

Jesus came to reveal the One True God to us. What Jesus teaches us about God and His Kingdom is *good news* and has its origin in God Himself. You often hear this “good news” referred to as *The Gospel*. Ever since the first man and woman rebelled against God The Creator, He has been working in and through His-

tory—making *promises* to His people—to fix and mend what had been broken in their rebellion. Throughout the whole story of humanity, God had been working to establish His Kingdom where truth, goodness, and beauty characterized all things. *Jesus told his first followers that the time of preparation had been fulfilled and that this glorious reality was now near.*

1.1.3 **The Reality of The Kingdom Is Near**

Jesus' message to His first followers and us is that The Kingdom has come near.

Key Definition: **The Kingdom** is the place where the Truth of God defines reality, the Goodness of God is experienced deeply, and the Glory of God is seen clearly.

When we look at the overall big picture of the Bible and what it says about history, we discover that when all is complete The Kingdom of God—the Kingdom of Christ the Beloved Son—will be the only government and reality that exists on planet earth! In the last book of the Bible, John (one of Jesus' first students) is given a glimpse of this future reality:

Revelation 11:15 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become The Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.” {NET}

In the end, all that exists will be under the rule of the One True God completely. So, here is what every human being needs to know: *The Kingdom of God is coming and it cannot be stopped.* This one point makes understanding the nature of The Kingdom vitally important for us.

This is why Jesus and His first followers believed the news about The Kingdom being near was “good news.” During His earthly life, Jesus gave people a taste of The Kingdom:

Matthew 9:35 Then Jesus went to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness.

When The Kingdom comes in full, there will be no more disease or death. There will be no more rebellion against the One True God. Everything will be set right, put in its proper place. There will be no evil and “no mourning, crying or pain” (see Revelation 21:4). *The Kingdom is a revolution.* Jesus is inviting us

into the present reality of His revolution, preparing us for the day when the Kingdom comes in its full reality.

1.1.4 **The Gospel requires a response**

But here is the catch: *the only people who will be able to live joyously in this Kingdom are those who can submit to the Truth, Goodness, and Glory of God in this present life.* The truth of The Kingdom of God calls us to *change the way we think about everything.* That is what Jesus is calling us to as He says, “Repent and believe the Gospel!”

Key Definition: **Repentance:** Changing the way we think about everything so that the way we live is also changed. Repentance involves changing *who you are following* and *who you are trusting* to lead you through life.

You may have a false idea of what repentance is. You may think of repentance as “cleaning up your act,” or “getting your life straightened out” so that you can then do what pleases God. That is not exactly right. Repentance comes as the proper response *when we discover we are wrong and heading in the wrong direction.* At its core, repentance is simply changing *who you are following* and *who you are trusting* to lead you through life.

Notice how Jesus ties repentance together with *believing*. He wants us to believe His teaching and trust Him to lead us in true and fulfilling life. These are the two key spiritual and mental activities that we are going to be exploring in this first phase of study.

1.1.5 **Jesus Invites Us to Follow Him so that He May Transform Us**

In the passage from Mark, Jesus invites Simon (who is also called Peter) and Andrew his brother to follow Him so that He could turn them into fishermen who “fish for people”! Simon and Andrew were fishermen by trade but Jesus had other plans for them. They would still be “fishermen”, but they would no longer be catching fish. Now they would “catch” men and women with the Gospel.

As we accept Jesus’ invitation and follow Him as Master and Teacher we discover that *He will transform us as well.* Jesus has unique plans for each and every one of us to serve a vital and indispensable role in His Kingdom work. Through Father-God’s wise planning and the Holy Spirit’s empowerment, Jesus gives each of us gifts and abilities to serve others for His sake.

If you look at the history of humanity, you will soon discover that we do not naturally want to submit to the Kingship of the One True God by turning away

from other masters and “gods” and trusting Him. In this study we are going to look at the cause and effects of our rebellion against Father-God and the Kingdom of His Beloved Son Jesus. At the beginning we want to make something clear: *no matter how much we have rebelled, Father-God has been ever patiently working in Christ through the Holy Spirit to call us to Himself and make us ready for His Kingdom when it finally comes in full glory and power:*

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord does not delay His promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.

1 Timothy 2:2–4 [Praying for all people] is good, and it pleases God our Savior, 2:4 who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Key Realization: The main goal of this study is to help you know and love our Lord and Savior Jesus more deeply and prepare you for life in His Kingdom both in the “here-and-now” and the “hereafter.”

The illustration below sums up the big picture of this first phase of study: Through the Gospel, Father-God working in Christ through the Holy Spirit calls the smaller story of our lives out of the Dominion of Darkness and up and into the His Master Story.

Illustration 1: The Big Picture



1.2 Why MilktoMeat?

Hebrews 5:12–14 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. 5:13 Now everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced with the message about righteousness, because he is an infant. 5:14 But solid food is for the mature—for those whose senses have been trained to distinguish between good and evil.

Christianity is built on the work and teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus always intended for His followers and students (disciples) to be able to teach others the fundamentals, the basics of His way of life. Unfortunately, today (just as it has been in the past) *many of us have never had anyone teach us with a view to equipping us to share what we know with others as well.* The spiritual health and wellness of the Body of Christ, the Church, depends on each and every member being equipped to teach others the life-giving and life-sustaining Word of Christ:

Colossians 3:16–17 Let 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. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. {ESV}

So we begin this study with the end-goal in mind. This study is designed to train and equip *anyone* who is willing and ready to follow Jesus as He leads us in sharing what we learn from Him with others.

1.3 What is MilktoMeat?

MilktoMeat is a roadmap designed to show you the way of true life that God our Father provided for us *in* Jesus His unique Son *through* the power of His Holy Spirit. It is designed to provide the **proper diet** and **exercise** any hungry and willing student needs in order to grow spiritually healthy so that he or she is also equipped to teach and train others in the fundamentals of following Jesus.

MilktoMeat is the title that we have given to our larger curriculum for spiritual formation and discipleship. In the Bible, “**milk**” is used in a couple of passages to refer to the *diet* of a “spiritual babe” or “child” - someone who is new to the teachings of Christ and who is not ready for “**meat**” or solid food. “Meat” or “solid food” is a reference to teaching that mature followers of Christ can digest for greater spiritual nourishment. This curriculum is designed to begin with the

basic, core, fundamental teachings of the Christian Faith (the “milk”) and then move to the deeper, sometimes more difficult teachings (the “meat”) necessary to grow to spiritual maturity.

1.4 **How Do You Use This Study?**

Although you could go through this study on your own, we would suggest getting together with someone else to study and pray together. Husbands and wives can use it as a time to grow together—it could easily be used as a daily devotion. We have found that this study is most effective in a small group with 3 to 4 people. This smaller group allows for honesty, vulnerability, and safety. It also tends to generate more “real life” discussion.

We would also suggest that one person serve as the *facilitator* for each meeting. This person will guide the discussion. You might decide to be a *facilitator* and invite a few people to go through his study with you. As you move along, pass off the responsibility of facilitating to those who are in the group. In this way, everyone can learn how to lead a group.

Each lesson contains several key elements. You might keep your finger on this page and turn to Session 1 to follow along and get a view of how each session is put together. Here are the elements and how to work through them.

» **Key Question > Core Truth** | Each session is developed around a Key question that focuses on the major goal of our study that week. This Key Question is the **Title** for the Session. There is also a core truth that gives a summary answer to our key question.

» **To Remember** | There is a short verse from the Bible that we suggest you commit to memory. You can then meditate on and think about these truths throughout the week.

» **Objective** | Here we simply state the main goals for each session.

» **Prayer** | We suggest a simple prayer at the beginning of each session to be prayed throughout the week for you and your group. Prayer is one of the core spiritual exercises that we will discuss in the study.

» **WORDwork** | Each session is divided into four WORDwork assignments you can read and complete over the course of four days. These assignments are short and can be completed in about 15 to 30 minutes a day. *To get the most out of this study read these assignments before you meet.* The more work you put in, the more you will get in return. This study is designed to help you build a living and personal relationship with Father

God in Christ Jesus through the presence of the Holy Spirit. *Developing daily habits* to cultivate an awareness of His presence is essential to spiritual growth. *One of our goals is to help you develop good practices and habits that will cultivate your spiritual growth and character development.*

Each week you will be walking through a proven method of reading and studying the Bible. First, we will read through our key texts and talk about what we need to know and understand (Observation and Interpretation). Then we will link these passages with the bigger picture of the theology of the Bible (Correlation and Generalization). Finally, we will discuss how to implement what we have learned into our daily habits and practices (Application and Implementation).

Also notice the wide margins we have provided for you to write in.

» **Journaling** | Throughout the workbook there are places for you to write, journal, make some notes, or sketch out your thoughts. You might also want to start a Journal in which you record your questions, observations, prayers, etc., that come up in the course of your study. A Journal is a great way to see the progress that you make along the way.

» **Class time** | Each week, you will meet for about an hour in class time to discuss what you have been learning during the week. These weekly discussions will be based on the **WORDwork** assignments. *If you are facilitating a group, there is more help for you on page 114.*

» **Our Goal** | We hope that this study will be more than another program for you; *We pray that it will be an introduction to a new way of life.*

1.5

So How Do We Begin?

For next week, you will start working through the following sessions. In the first lesson, we are going to deal with the question of “What Do We Need to Know First?” We will focus on two key ideas: 1) Who we are as human beings, and 2) a Reliable Pattern for responding to The Truth. Both of these issues will be foundational and ones that we will return to time and time again throughout the course of this study.

Session 2

What Do We Need to Know First?

Core Truth: As human beings, we have been created in the image and likeness of the Lord-God and He has designed us for a relationship with Him.

To Remember: I will praise You because I have been remarkably and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, and I know this very well. {Psalms 139:14}

Objective: In this session, we are going to develop two big ideas that we will use as a frame of reference for the rest of this study: 1) Our design as Human Beings, and 2) A Reliable Pattern for Life Transformation.

Prayer: “Heavenly Father, we thank you that you have designed us and created us out of your great wisdom. Help us to understand what you have revealed to us and enable us to have the humility we need to receive to Your Truth. Amen.”

WORDwork | Day 1

In this first session we are going to work on two basic “tools” that we will be applying throughout this whole study: 1) a way to visualize who we are as humans, and 2) a reliable pattern of transformation.

2.1 Who Are We and How Were We Designed?

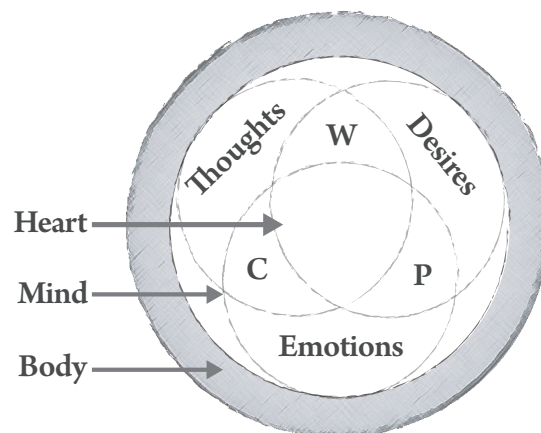
Colossians 1:16-20 ... for **all things** in heaven and on earth **were created by Him** [Jesus Christ]—all things, whether visible or invisible, ... all things were created **through Him** and **for Him**.

Genesis 1:27 **God created humankind in His own image**, in the image of God He created them, male and female He created them. {NET}

The One True God created us humans in His image and likeness. We are going to explore what all this means as we go along, but for today we are going to give you some basic, key concepts that we are going to use as “tools” throughout this study.

One of the main goals of MilktoMeat is to help you understand and visualize the process of spiritual formation and transformation that Father-God works in Christ through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in us. Take a look at the following illustration:

Illustration 2: Visualizing Our Design



Now we are going to discuss each of these components briefly.

- 1] **The Body.** The most obvious part about all of us is the fact that we all have a body. When the Lord-God created the first man, one part of him was created from the soil of the ground; this is our physical body. In the picture, the body is represented by the darker, outer circle. The physical body is the “vehicle” for our inner spiritual selves. Our bodies allow us to connect with one another and our physical world.
- 2] **The Mind.** The “Spiritual Organ” that is the “gate-keeper,” “manager,” “gardener” of our inner spiritual selves, particularly the Heart. Your mind is the place where you have access to all your *thoughts* (ideas, images), *emotions* and *desires*.
- 3] **The Heart.** The “Spiritual Organ” that produces our life—our thoughts, feelings, desires, etc. We are not talking about your physical heart. But just as your physical heart pumps blood and life through your physical body, all of our spiritual life flows from our hearts. In biblical terms, your Heart is not just the place of your emotions; it is the deep “spring” of your life—the core of your whole being.
- 4] **Spiritual, Inner Self.** We all know there is something happening on the “inside”—This is the spiritual part of us. In our illustration, this represented by the white inner circles.
- 5] **Thoughts.** *We are guided by our thoughts.* We process information from the “outside” in our thoughts. Our thoughts are words, images, sounds, memories, etc. that help us process and make sense of our world. The way we order and organize our thoughts is called *logic*. **Father God wants our thoughts to be shaped by The Truth.**
- 6] **Emotions.** *We are moved by our emotions.* Our emotions are “movements” that take place very deep within us; in fact, they may be closer to our hearts—the core of who we are—than almost anything else. Our emotions serve as the “barometer” for our hearts. Our emotions give us clues as to what is going on deep within us. **Father God wants our emotions to be shaped by His Goodness.**
- 7] **Desires.** *We are driven by our desires.* Our desires motivate us. We act and think in certain ways because we want to. Our desires are central to who we are and so they are a key part of what makes you a unique individual.

Father-God designed our desires to be patterned after His and He wants our desires to be shaped by His Glory.

- 8] **W—Will.** This important part of who you are is the determining factor in your life. Your will gives you the ability to choose.
- 9] **C—Conscience.** We all have a sense of right and wrong. Often this sense does not come to us as a thought, but as more of a feeling—a movement deep with us. Your conscience is shaped by your thoughts and emotions.
- 10] **P—Passion.** There are some desires that drive us deeply. There are some things that we want to do; there are other things that we have to do to feel alive and know that we are significant. Are passions give shape to our personalities and so they are unique and difference for each person as are the ways all these other components are shaped.



Today we want you to study the illustration of our design so that you are familiar with it and can reproduce it. See if you can draw your own version of the circles and think about explaining it to someone else.



The “tools” that we are introducing in this session give us a framework for understanding some basic realities of life. These tools are helpful in becoming more **AWARE** of reality.

*Cultivating a sense of Awareness is the first stage spiritual growth.

Key Growth Stage: Becoming **AWARE**. All that we experience in life is built on the basic attitude and mindset of being aware of what is really going on *around* and *within* us.

WORDwork | Day 2

2.2 How Do We Show the Image and Likeness of God?

Yesterday we introduced an illustration using circles to represent who we are as humans created in the image of God. Today we are going to introduce a few more key ideas that we will develop as we go along, but we want to lay out some basic things that we need to keep in mind as we move along. In the passages below, we hear about the creation of the first man and woman—Adam and Eve. It is important for you to know that these first humans are the “prototype” or the model for what we all are as human beings. God designed them to pass on the “Divine Design” to all of their children

Genesis 1:26–27 Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our **image**, after our **likeness**, ... 1:27 God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. {NET}

Genesis 2:7, 21–24 2:7 The LORD God formed the man from the soil of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being (soul)....

2:21 ... the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep, and while he was asleep, he took part of the man’s side and closed up the place with flesh. 2:22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the part he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. 2:23 Then the man said,

“This one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;
this one will be called ‘woman,’
for she was taken out of man.”{NET}

? 01 In whose image and likeness were we designed according to Genesis 1:26?

? 02 From what did God form the first man? What materials did He use?

- ? 03 What did God breathe into the man's nostrils?
 What do you think this means?
- ? 04 How does the Lord God make the woman?
 What do you think the significance of this is?
- ? 05 How does the man respond to seeing the woman?

2.2.1 We were created in God's Image and so We have a Physical Body.

In Hebrew (the language that the Old Testament was written in), the word “**image**” is used to refer to statues, models or replicas. In the Old Testament, this term is often used in reference to *idols* which are man-made, physical representations of unseen, false gods. Generally speaking, this term refers to a visible representation of something or someone. The Bible reveals that God in His true essence is Spirit and therefore *invisible* (see 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:27). We were designed to be the visible image of the *invisible God* in creation.

In Genesis 2:7 we see how God fashioned Adam from the “soil” or “dust” of the ground. The Lord-God takes physical matter to shape our physical bodies. When God designs and creates the first man, He gives him an appropriate *physical body* so that he can communicate God's likeness to a *physical* creation. Adam's physical body suits the purposes for which God created Adam.

2.2.2 We Were Created In God's Likeness and so We Are Also Spiritual

The term translated as “**likeness**” in Genesis 1:26 is a word which means “to be like” or “to resemble”—exactly what you would think. The sense here seems to be that not only would humanity give “form” to the invisible God, but that we would also be like Him sharing the pattern of His personality: we have thoughts, desires, and emotions, and all the rest because God does.

God breathes the breath of life into the first man. In the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) the word for “breath” is used in close association with the ideas of “wind,” or “spirit.” God's “breath” is often associated with His Spirit. Job says, “The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me

life” (33:4). In the Greek Scriptures of The New Testament, God is revealed as the source of all life who gives “life and breath” to all living things (Acts 17:25).

Here, in the beginning, we see that God makes Adam come alive by breathing His life into him. It is this “breath of life” that “empowers” and “enables” Adam to be the likeness of God in creation. Adam’s inner spiritual self, patterned after God’s own likeness, would control his physical body. We will discuss this in detail tomorrow. Turn back to circles that we discussed yesterday and see if you can link these ideas together with that illustration.

2.2.3 **Our Physical and Spiritual components are united: The Soul**

In Genesis 2:7, we see that Adam becomes a “living being” or literally in Hebrew, “a living soul.” The main point to see is that *you cannot separate what is physical in us from what is spiritual*; we were meant to function in both realms. Your physical body is the vehicle for your spiritual self. Without your material, physical body, no one could know what is going on “inside” you—in your depths! *In a very real sense, your soul is the whole you.*

2.2.4 **What about Eve?**

Eve was created from Adam to show that she was not inferior to Adam, but was of the “same stuff” as Adam. Even though women and men have different physical designs (and even spiritual designs), the basic “framework” is still the same. God created Adam first and then he created Eve from a piece of flesh that He removed from Adam’s side (Genesis 2:21-22). It is clear from Genesis 1:26 that Eve was not an “afterthought” on God’s part, but an essential part of His design for humanity. The Divine Image is expressed in the unique relationship of male and female in humanity. Therefore, in this first study we focus on the parts that we all share as humans, not in what makes us unique.

- ? 06 Can you relate what we have discussed today with our diagrams from yesterday? Take a few moments to think about and bring all of these ideas together.

WORDwork | Day 3**2.3 What is the Heart and Mind?**

Proverbs 4:23 Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life.

? 07 What does this Proverb tell you to guard more than anything else?
Do you think this is talking about a physical organ?

? 08 Why should you guard this more than anything else?

2.3.1 Your heart is the source of your life.

The heart we will be discussing is not the physical organ that pumps blood through your body. This heart is the “spiritual organ” that produces your life. In our times, we see red hearts on Valentine’s day cards and the concept of the heart has been overly romanticized. When most people speak about the “heart” they are referring to the place of their emotions. *This is not the Biblical view of the Heart however.*

In the wisdom of Proverbs, we are told to guard our hearts more than anything else. Why? Because our Heart is the place from which our lives flow—it is the source of life. Your Heart is the “deepest” part of your spiritual self and it produces your life. God designed your heart to be the “place” where He would have the closest, most intimate contact and fellowship with you. All your life flows from this deep relationship with the One who gives all life.

It is interesting to note that the first time the Bible mentions the heart is in reference to the Lord-God Himself:

Genesis 6:5–6 When the Lord saw that man’s wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every scheme his mind thought of was nothing but evil all the time, the Lord regretted that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His **heart**.

We are designed in the “likeness” of the Lord-God Himself; He has a heart and so do we.

Your heart is also the deep place within you from which all the facets of your personality are produced and come together to form *the deep reality of your true identity*. Your consciousness, your conscience, your thoughts, your feelings, your desires, your imagination are all produced by your heart. It is that place where the real and complete “you” exists. Take a look at what Jesus said about the heart:

Luke 6:45 The good person out of the good treasury of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasury produces evil, for his mouth speaks from what fills his heart. {NET}

Everything flows out of our hearts. If our hearts are alive and full of light the way God intended, then our thoughts and desires and feelings will also be good. But if our Hearts are dead and darkened then all that is within us will be dark and twisted.

2.3.2 Your mind is the “gateway” and “guardian” of your heart

Romans 12:1-2 Therefore I exhort you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice—alive, holy, and pleasing to God—which is your reasonable service. 12:2 Do not be conformed to this present world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may test and approve what is the will of God—what is good and well-pleasing and perfect. {NET}

? 09 What are we told NOT to do in Romans 12:2?

? 10 What are we told to do in Romans 12:2?

Your Mind is that part of your spiritual self that allows you to “manage” and oversee what is being produced by your heart. Just like our Hearts, we have a mind because the Lord-God does:

Romans 11:34 “For who has known the **mind** of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”

Your heart and mind are completely intertwined and it is difficult to separate the two entirely. However, it is helpful if you can think about your Mind as the “gatekeeper” and “guardian” for your Heart. As we just said, your heart is the

deepest part of your spiritual self, the place of the “real you.” The Mind exists to protect this deepest part of your personality. The Mind exists to manage what comes out of the Heart and also what is allowed into the Heart.

To give you an illustration of this relationship, imagine that during our first meeting we had asked you to share your deepest, darkest, most embarrassing and humiliating secret. How do you think you would have responded? I bet your first thought would have been, “How do I get out of here as quickly as possible!?” That response is your mind in action. Your mind’s primary purpose is to protect your Heart, the reality of the real you.

The Mind is also the “key” to your spiritual growth and transformation. In the brief quote from Romans above we first hear that we are exhorted—strongly encouraged—to present our whole bodies, our whole selves to God to serve Him. Then he makes two crucial statements:

- 1] **Do not be conformed to this world.** As we will see, the World (all that is hostile to the Lord-God’s truth, goodness, and glory) is seeking to shape us according to its lies, evil, and shame. On the other hand, Father-God working in Christ through the Spirit is seeking to do something else.
- 2] **Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.** Although it is hard to see in the English translation, the process of transformation is something that is being done to us. This passage could be very literally translated, “Allow yourselves to be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Here is the main point: Father-God desires for us to give ourselves over to His Truth that He has revealed in Christ, welcome His ideas and images into our thoughts so that we are transformed.

Understanding how your heart and mind work are central to all that we will teach you in this study. As a general statement, drawn from observations of many texts, it seems *God desires to do His work in your heart, but He has given you responsibility for your Mind.* This responsibility is vital to understanding Spiritual Formation and Transformation.

- ? 11 Based on what you have learned so far, how do you think the Heart, Mind, and Body are connected and interrelated?

WORDwork | Day 4

2.4 What is a Reliable Pattern of Life Transformation?

Mark 1:14–17 ...Jesus went to Galilee, **preaching the good news of God:**

1:15 “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near.

Repent and believe in the good news!”

1:16 As He was passing along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, Simon’s brother. They were casting a net into the sea, since they were fishermen. 1:17 “**Follow Me,**” Jesus told them, “and I will make you fish for people!”

This passage should look familiar to you; we discussed it in some detail in the last session. If you are still working through this study, we can assume that you want to push a little further into understanding who Jesus is and how Father-God desires to transform us—shape us to be like Jesus, fit for His Kingdom.

This episode from the very beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry has a pattern in it that we see repeated in other Biblical stories and also lived out in the lives of many men and women. Take a look at the chart below and then we will discuss it.

Illustration 3: The Reliable Pattern of Transformation			
Hear >>>	Turn >>> (Repent)	Trust >>> (Believe)	Follow
We begin by hearing the Gospel - the good news of what Father-God is doing In Christ through the Holy Spirit.	We have to change the way we are thinking which changes the <i>way</i> we are living: <i>turning away</i> from any lies and false saviors.	We turn to Jesus as our Savior and Lord who has saved us, sustains us and leads us.	We follow Jesus with our other brothers and sisters in Christ as He leads us through the Presence and Power of His Spirit.

2.4.1 **Step 1: Hearing the Gospel (Hearing the Good News of the Truth)**
The first step in becoming the people that Father-God desires for us to be is hearing what He says to us In Christ through the Spirit. God always tells us the truth. This truth is “good news” because it orients us to reality—how things really are, what is really real. This Truth offers **Hope**. We are going to be talking a lot about

THE Gospel in this study and how it offers Hope, calls for faith, and leads to love. For now, just know that the first step is simply hearing what is being said to us in Christ.

2.4.2 **Step 2: Turning (Repentance, Changing Our Thinking)**

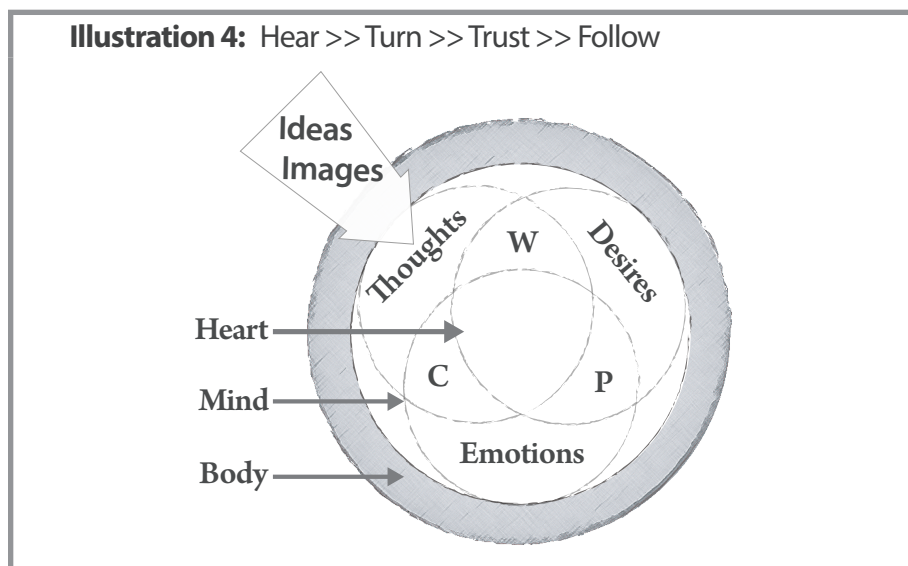
The Truth, the Good News, always requires some form of response from us. Almost always it requires that we change the way we are thinking about something (or even everything!) The word that is translated as “repent” in this passage points to changing one’s way of life as the result of a complete change of thought and attitude.

Key Definition: **Repentance** is the change in thought and action that takes place when we realize we are wrong and headed the wrong way. It is *turning* from one direction and heading another.

Notice the word *way* here: we have to change the *way* we are thinking which leads to a change in the *way* we are living. Remember what Jesus said:

John 14:6 ... “I am **the way**, and the truth, and the life.”

The main way we change our way of life to follow Jesus’ way is to let His way of seeing reality come in and replace *the lies and false images* that have become part of our false way of thinking. *We need truthful ideas and images* that can shape our thoughts to be in line with The Truth. Take a look at our circle diagrams with this in mind.



In this step we are actually turning away from other masters or “saviors” in order to turn to Jesus as the only Savior and Master.

2.4.3 **Step 3: Trust (Believe)**

As we turn from other masters and “saviors”, we *believe* and *trust* the Truth that comes to us in Christ. Belief leads to trust. The Bible refers to this as *faith*—believing and trusting. Belief and trust is a movement that involves our whole being—the way we think, the way we feel, the way we desire. It will also require us to use our bodies in certain ways.

2.4.4 **Step 4: Follow Jesus**

If you have found your hope in Jesus and you believe what He says and trust Him, the next logical step is to follow Him as He leads. Jesus is leading us all to become spiritually mature in Him, equipped to reign with Him in The Kingdom. We each have a unique role to play. He transformed Simon and Andrew from just “fishermen” into “fishers of men.” Jesus will turn each of us into men and women who play a vital role in His kingdom based on who He has shaped to be and how He has equipped us to function.



As you move on from this point, start to think about all that you are learning regarding thoughts, desires, and emotions and how they interact in the way you live.



In this first Phase, we are going to be focusing on the **Thoughts** and the Ideas and Images that shape those thoughts. In each session, we will ask you to think about the ideas and images that have caused you to rethink ways in which you may have been out of sync with reality. We will also ask you to think about how the truths you are learning are forming new ideas and images and how these move you toward trusting Father-God in Christ more.

**In Phase 2 Walking in The Truth we will focus more on the Emotions and in Phase 3 Living The Life we will focus more on the Desires.*

Session 3

What is The Master Story?

Core Truth: The Bible reveals the True Master Story that gives us answers to our foundational life questions in a way that gives us hope and direction for life.

To Remember: Everything that was written in former times was written for our instruction, so that through endurance and through encouragement of the Scriptures **we may have hope**.
[Romans 15:4 NET]

Objective: We will do a fast summary of the story of the whole Bible to get more perspective on what it tells us about reality. The main thing to see is that we need a Master Story that explains life and gives us **Hope**.

Prayer: “Father, thank you for giving us Your Word so that we can find the answers about life that we need. Thank you for giving us Hope in Your Word. Open our hearts and minds that we may hear, understand, and welcome Your Truth. Amen”

WORDwork | Day 1

3.1 Why do we need a Master Story?

“Meaning is one of the greatest needs in human life, one of our deepest hungers —perhaps it is, in the final analysis, the most basic need in the realm of the human experience.”

~ DALLAS WILLARD, *Renovation of the Heart* ~

“Life is like arriving late for a movie, having to figure out what was going on without bothering everybody with a lot of questions, and then being unexpectedly called away before you find out how it ends.”

~ JOSEPH CAMPBELL, *Creative Mythology* ~

? 12 Consider the quote from Dallas Willard above. Do you agree with it? Why or why not?

? 13 Consider the quote from Joseph Campbell above. Do you think it represents the way many people look at life? Why or why not?

3.1.1 The Master Story helps us see the “big picture” and make sense of all the details of life.

Life comes to us as a Story. There is a Beginning, a Middle and an End. Things are moving along. There are characters. *But what is the plot?* In order to make sense of life, we need a Master Story that explains both the “big picture” of everything and the “little picture” of all the details of our lives. *We are convinced that the Bible gives us THE Master Story which explains all other stories.*

We are all living according to some Master Story that answers three foundational life questions:

- 1] Where have we come from? [The **Past**: *The Question of Origin*]
- 2] Where are we heading? [The **Future**: *The Question of Destiny*] and
- 3] Why are we here? [The **Present**: *The Question of Meaning and Purpose*]

3.1.2 The Master Story gives meaning to life.

Discovering the true answers to these questions gives us a *way* to think about life. The way we answer these questions shapes the choices that we make in life. Without a way to answer these questions, making sense of life can be very difficult, if not impossible. *The way we answer these questions either leads us toward hope or despair.*

Someone has described an Epic as “THE story of all things.” This is an apt description of The Master Story revealed in the Bible. As the “story of all things,” the Bible should be viewed as a whole, taking note of how the independent parts work together to give us the “big picture of life.” This week we are going to do a “fly over” of this Story so you can see how it all fits together. We are going to present it as a single book with several chapters. *There is a chart on page 46 that shows this Big Picture of the Biblical Master Story on one page.*

The Bible is not a “divine rule book.” It is not an “instructional manual” for life. It does tell us a lot about life and how to live it, but not in the way a manual does. The Bible tells us THE Story about life on Earth in the larger framework of an eternal perspective. It is a narrative that answers our foundational questions about life. It also guides us in what we should think about and value.

3.1.3 The Master Story of the Bible gives us Hope.

Romans 15:4 For everything that was written in former times was written for our instruction, so that through endurance and through encouragement of the Scriptures *we may have hope.* {NET}

One of the most incredible truths that we can discover is that *the One who created us wants to be known by us.* God, our Creator, our Heavenly Father, has spoken to us so that we can discover the meaning and purpose of our lives.

In the Romans passage above we hear that everything written in former times was written *for our instruction.* This means the whole Bible. The Written Word of God has been given to us so that we may know *the way* to God, the Heavenly Father. Notice also that this instruction was given to us so that as we *endure*, keeping moving forward, being encouraged by the Scriptures themselves, *we may have hope!*

Key Definition: **Hope** is the confident expectation that all things—especially my life—will turn out well because God will be who He promises to be and do what He promises to do.

Someone has said,

“A person can live forty days without food,
three days without water, about three minutes without air,
but *not three seconds without hope.*”

Think about that. Hope nourishes our souls. Without hope, our lives are meaningless. The good news is that Father-God has spoken to us in the Bible so that we may hope in His Son, the Lord Jesus.

? 14 What three big ideas did you learn about The Master Story today?

WORDwork | Day 2

3.2 How Does The Bible Reveal The Master Story?

3.2.1 Prologue | Eternity (Past)

John 17:24 [Jesus prayed,] Father, I desire those You have given Me to be with Me where I am. Then they will see My glory, which You have given Me because You loved Me before the world's foundation.

The Master Story begins in Eternity—the “place” where the One True God dwells. Before anything else existed, God existed. God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—lived in a fellowship of truth, goodness, and glorious beauty. Our existence does not flow out of the endless dark of an eternal night, but from the glorious existence of a God who loves and loves to be loved. Glory is an important word that we will come across quite a few times. Think about this definition:

Key Definition: **Glory** is *radiant* (it gives “light” and is meant to be seen) *beauty* (captivating) that is *profound* (heavy, deep), *inexhaustible* (we never tire of thinking about it) and *remarkable* (worth taking about)

In the passage above, Jesus tells us about His life with the Father before the creation of the world and we hear that it was glorious and loving. Jesus wants all of His people to be with Him so that they too can experience this eternal reality.

3.2.2 Chapter 1 | Creation and Blessing [Genesis 1-2]

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Out of His pleasure, the Lord-God creates all things for His good purposes. Father-God designs the *physical realm* (the Earth and our Universe) and also the spiritual realm (The Heavens) which oversees and governs the physical. In the New Testament we learn that all things are created in/by, through, and for Jesus (Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2). We also hear that the Holy Spirit of God is the agent or means of His creation (Genesis 1:2, Psalm 33:6-7).

God is the “Sovereign Master” (He can do whatever He pleases and desires) because He is the Creator. Yet He chooses to create other beings to take part in overseeing His Creation and to share in His abundant life. In the Heavenly realm,

God placed the heavenly, angelic beings to oversee the **heavenly, spiritual, or cosmic** realm (Psalm 103:20). *There is more information on the heavenly beings in the Digging Deeper section on page 107.*

God then *designed* and *created* **humanity** to oversee His Kingdom on Earth (Genesis 1:26-27). God created us to be His *image* and *likeness* on Planet Earth. We were designed with a grand and glorious purpose and destiny. This whole first study will be concerned with God's plans and purposes for us on planet earth—how He has designed us and equipped us for His grand purposes.

As God looks at His creation, He says, “It is all very good” (Genesis 1:31). There was nothing wrong or flawed in God's original creation. Everything that He had created would accomplish the purposes for which He had made them.

3.2.3 **Chapter 2 | Rebellion and Fall [Genesis 3-11]**

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all men, because all sinned.

All true-to-life stories have a villain because our Master Story has a Villain. He is **Satan** (Hebrew for “Adversary”) also known as **The Devil**. Satan is one of the angelic beings and he leads a rebellion in Heaven in which 1/3 of the angels join (Revelation 12:1-4). The Adversary is a master deceiver and his mission is very simple: he comes to steal, to kill and to destroy all that God values—all that is true, good, and glorious (John 10:10, Revelation 12:9ff.). In this rebellion, **The Great Spiritual War** begins between the Light (God and His allies) and the Darkness (Satan and his allies, the rebellious angels that are now demons).

Shortly after their creation, the first two human beings—Adam and Eve—are persuaded by the Devil to join in The Rebellion. Adam and Eve choose to reject God's Kingship and to grasp at their *right to self-rule*. In this rebellion on Earth, Satan becomes “ruler of this World” (John 12:31) and “god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Human history now becomes the stage for the tyranny of the Dominion of Darkness and humanity becomes enslaved to these evil powers.

3.2.4 **Chapter 3 | Redemption [Genesis 12—The Gospel of John]**

God is not so easily frustrated or defeated by these rebellions and the seeming failures of His creation. In the longest chapter in our Story, God reveals His saving purposes through **the Nation of Israel** (the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) that culminates in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus the Messiah/Christ.

Matthew 1:1 This is the record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ,
the **son of David**, the **son of Abraham**. {NET}

Jesus comes to fulfill the promises given to and through Israel. Jesus is the “Son of Abraham” in that He fulfills the *promise* that all the families of the earth would be blessed through one of Abraham’s sons—a descendant. He is the “Son of David” in that He fulfills the promise that one of David’s sons would be King (Messiah/Christ) over Israel and ultimately over the whole earth (Psalm 2).

In a bold move, *God himself* enters into the human experience as a human! Jesus—the God-Man—does all that is necessary to destroy the Devil and save Adam’s rebellious and sinful family. Because Jesus deals once and for all with the problem of our rebellious sin, He is able to offer abundant, Eternal Life to all who trust Him (John 10:10). This is not just never-ending existence; it is living with the security, significance, and fulfillment that flows out of our relationship with the One True God.

Jesus Himself gives meaning and coherence to the Master Story. Before his birth, all history looks forward to Him through the promises Father-God made to Abraham and his family. After His death, resurrection, and ascension into the heavenly realm, all history looks back to the salvation that He provides and also looks forward to the renewing of all things at His glorious return.

? 15 Did anything in the reading today cause you to think in a new way?

WORDwork | Day 3

3.2.5 Chapter 4 | Proclamation [Acts-Revelation 18]

Ephesians 3:7–10 This grace was given to me—the least of all the saints—to proclaim to the Gentiles the incalculable riches of the Messiah, 3:9 and to shed light for all about the administration of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things. 3:10 This is so God’s multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavens.

After Jesus’ ascension to heaven, He entrusts the spreading of His message to His Body, the **Church**. In this chapter, Jesus empowers His people for this work through *the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit*. All those who are “alive in Christ,” engage the Great Spiritual War by self-sacrifice and proclamation of **The Gospel**. This Gospel is the “Good News” of Jesus’ birth, His great saving works, His present reign as “Son-of-God-in-power” and His return to establish His Everlasting Kingdom (see Romans 1:3-4, Revelation 11:15).

At the end of this present era (and the end of the fourth chapter of The Master Story) very difficult times will come (2 Timothy 3:1-9). In The Last Days, there will be a great **Rebellion** within institutional Christianity in which people will walk away from truth, particularly the truth that is “in Jesus.” There will be many “false teachers” and “false prophets” that come to lead many people astray (Matthew 24:4-5, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

In those days, **The Beast** who is also called the **Antichrist** will come to power and lead the world in a rebellion against God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, 1 John 2:18-22, Revelation 13-14). He will establish the worldwide empire through Satanically inspired power, miracles, and wonders. At this time there will be a **Great Persecution** of God’s people, especially the nation of Israel. The Last Days will be the darkest period of human history. But this is not the end; Christ will soon return to set things right.

3.2.6 Chapter 5 | The Restoration [Revelation 19-20]

Revelation 11:15 The seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying: The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Messiah, and He will reign forever and ever!

The beginning of the fifth chapter of the Master Story overlaps with the end of the fourth chapter. At the end of this present age, Jesus will return to defeat His enemies, destroying the Beast/Antichrist and all who have allied themselves with his Dominion of Darkness (Revelation 19:11-21).

After Jesus destroys the Beast and his Kingdom, He initiates a New Age, His Kingdom (often called The Millennium, Revelation 20:1-6). This Kingdom is the final age of human history. There is much that happens during this time (like the binding and loosing of Satan, the final rebellion) that we will cover in later studies. **This is also a controversial area of theology that has many different views.*

At the end of this final age, everyone will be judged by Christ and their eternal destinies will be confirmed (2 Corinthians 5:10). Those who have trusted Christ will be welcomed into His presence forever. Those who have rejected God's gift and have despised Him will be consigned to the place that they have desired—to be free from God's true, good, and glorious rule. This is **The Lake of Fire** that burns forever (Isaiah 66:24, Revelation 20:15).

3.2.7 **Epilogue | Eternity (Future) The Renovation** [**Revelation 21-22 (and selected portions of the Prophets)**]

1 Corinthians 2:9 But just as it is written, “Things that no eye has seen, or ear heard, or mind imagined, are the things God has prepared for those who love him.” {NET}

God will destroy/purge the present Heavens and Earth with fire (2 Peter 3:10-13). God creates the **New Heavens** and a **New Earth** where He will dwell in unbroken fellowship with His people. Finally, what was lost by Adam is restored by Jesus but in a more glorious way than anyone could fully foresee. In this beginning of the eternal age, all things are made new and the former things have all passed away—a *whole new era begins* (Revelation 21:4-5).

? 16 Can you see how the Master Story that we believe we are living in shapes the way we think about life and the life choices we make?

? 17 Take some time and think about this question seriously:
Are your thoughts and ideas about the world shaped by The Master Story revealed in the Bible that we presented this week?
Why or Why not?

WORDwork | Day 4

3.3 **How Does Jesus Relate to THE Master Story?**

John 5:39–40 “You pore over the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, yet they testify about Me. 5:40 And you are not willing to come to Me so that you may have life.”

Here Jesus is confronting some of the most religious people of his day who did not believe He was who He claimed to be. Jesus basically says to them, “You think you will find life by studying the Scriptures thoroughly, but the Scriptures actually point to me!” The Master Story of the Bible that we have considered this week should ultimately lead us to Jesus.

Later, after His death and resurrection from the dead, Jesus tells his first followers this:

Luke 24:44–45 Then He told them, “These are My words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that **everything written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.**” 24:45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.

What Jesus says here is so important. Jesus believed that the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms revealed things about Him and they had to be *fulfilled*. The three collections of Scripture that Jesus mentions was the complete Bible available during His time (the New Testament had not been written yet). Notice He says that things were writing about Him in those books that had to be *fulfilled*—*these books looked forward to Jesus and foretold His appearing and work!* Essentially Jesus is saying all the Scriptures that came before pointed to Him!

3.3.1 **Past | Origin: All things were created by Jesus.**

Colossians 1:16 **For in Him** (Jesus Christ) **all things were created**, in heaven and on earth, visible, and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created **through him and for him.** {our translation}

As we ponder, “Where have we come from?” the Bible tells us that all things, including the human race, were created *by/in* Jesus. He is the agent of all creation.

Even things that are invisible were created by Jesus. In the Biblical worldview, there is more to reality than what we can see with our eyes. Jesus created it all.

3.3.2 **Present | Purpose: All things were created for Jesus and He is now holding everything together and moving everything along.**

Notice also in the passage above that all things were created *through* and *for* Jesus. This is emphasized in the rest of that same passage:

Colossians 1:17 He himself is before all things
and all things are held together in Him. {NET}

Not only is Jesus holding everything together, He is moving everything along:

Hebrews 1:2–3 In these last days, He [God] has spoken to us by His Son [Jesus]. God has appointed Him heir of all things and made the universe through Him. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of His nature, **sustaining all things by His powerful word.**

The word that is translated as “sustaining” here speaks of *holding up* and *moving things* along like the wind moves a sailing ship across the water. Everything is held together, held up and moved along by Jesus!

3.3.3 **Future | Destiny: Everything will finally be summed up in Jesus.**

Ephesians 1:9–10 ... [God] revealed to us the secret of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, 1:10 toward the administration of the fullness of the times, **to head up all things in Christ**—the things in heaven and the things on earth. {NET}

In the end, all things are going to be brought together—summed up, headed up, united—in Father-God's purposes for all thing in Christ. As we heard earlier in Acts 17, we will all stand before Jesus to give an account of our lives. But Jesus is also bringing peace to our war-torn universe. He is setting all things right and in the final act, when everything is “fulfilled,” He will bring everything together.



As you look through this workbook, you can see that we like illustrations and charts and graphics. See if you can make a chart or an illustration that represents Jesus' role in our past, present, and future that we have discussed today.



Scan back over or reflect on this week's reading and ask yourself:

1. What have I learned that gave me new ideas and images?
2. How do these truths call me to change the way I am thinking?
3. How do these truths call me to trust Father-God more?

E T E R N I T Y

Prologue
*God lives
in love and glory -
The Mystery of the
Three in One*

Epilogue
*God lives
with His people
in unbroken
truth, goodness
and glory.*

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5
Creation and Blessing God, The Creator King, creates all things for His glory out of His pleasure.	Rebellion and Fall The Creation rebels against the Creator-King by asserting independence from His Truth, Goodness and Beauty.	Redemption God works in the fallen creation to bring about the salvation of fallen creation.	Proclamation God progressively extends His Kingdom over the Fallen Earth by the power of the Gospel.	Restoration The Creator-King purges Fallen Creation and Recreates it so that it can sustain Eternal Life.
Genesis 1-2 Answers the Question: <i>Where Did We Come From?</i>	Genesis 3-11 Answers the Question: <i>What Went Wrong?</i>	Genesis 12-John Jesus The Savior-King is Revealed Answers the Question: <i>What Does God Do About Our Predicament?</i>	Acts-Revelation 20 Answers the Question: <i>How Does the World Respond to God?</i>	Revelation 21-22 Answers the Question: <i>How Will It All Turn Out?</i>
? Origin				
? Meaning and Purpose				
? Destiny				

Illustration 8: The Master Story of the Bible

Session 4

How Do We Live in The Master Story?

Core Truth: Life comes to us as a Story; it has a beginning, middle, and an end. We need a larger story, a Master Story, in order to answer the foundational questions about life.

To Remember: ...continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, and you know that from childhood you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.
[2 Timothy 3:14–15]

Objective: We all have questions about life that we need to have answered: Who are we? Where have we come from? Why are we here? How will our lives turn out? In this session we are going to consider the basic answers that the Bible gives to these foundational questions and how Jesus plays a central role in each of these answers.

Prayer: “Father, thank you for sending your Son Jesus to teach us, guide us and save us. Help us to keep our focus on Him *so that we can know Him* and not just know *about* Him.

WORDwork | Day 1

4.1 **How Did Paul Use The Master Story?**

Paul was an *Apostle*—a representative of Jesus and His Message. But Paul did not begin as “Paul”—he began as Saul, a rabbi in training who was violently opposed to **The Way**—the name given to the followers of Jesus in the early days (see Acts 9:2). Saul believed that Jesus and The Way were bringing shame to God’s name. Jesus, however, had other plans for him.

The Lord Jesus appeared to Saul and set him on a new a course—a *new way*. Saul later changed his name to Paul as he became Jesus’ key representative to the Greek people of the First Century. He was “hand-picked” by Jesus Christ to carry His Good News—The Gospel—to those who had not yet heard it.

In the passage that we will read today, Paul is carrying out his mission, taking The Gospel of Jesus into new places. When he came to the ancient city of Athens, Paul became very troubled because he saw all of the *idolatry* (worshipping false or counterfeit gods rather than the One True God) that was present in the city (Acts 17:16). Why would Paul be upset by this? Read the following passage and think about the questions as you go along.

Acts 17:16–34 While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was troubled within him when he saw that the city was full of idols.

17:17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with those who worshiped God and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. 17:18 Then also, some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers argued with him. Some said, “What is this pseudo-intellectual trying to say?” Others replied, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign deities”—because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the Resurrection.

? 18 If you were to ask the different groups mentioned in this passage, “What is the meaning of life?” do you think they would all give the same answer? Why or Why not?

Acts 17:19 They took him and brought him to the Areopagus, and said, “May we learn about this new teaching you’re speaking of? 17:20 For what

you say sounds strange to us, and we want to know what these ideas mean.” 17:21 Now all the Athenians and the foreigners residing there spent their time on nothing else but telling or hearing something new.

**The Aeropagus—sometimes called “Mars Hill”—was a long established council which considered civic issues, especially in matters of religion and morality.*

? 19 What did the Athenians think about Paul’s teaching at this point?

Acts 17:22 Then Paul stood in the middle of the Areopagus and said: “Men of Athens! I see that you are extremely religious in every respect. 17:23 For as I was passing through and observing the objects of your worship, I even found an altar on which was inscribed: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.

? 20 Why do you think Paul begins this way?

Acts 17:24 The God who made the world and everything in it—He is Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in shrines made by hands. 17:25 Neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives everyone life and breath and all things.

? 21 How does what Paul say here help us understand what he thinks about reality?

Acts 17:26 From one man He has made every nationality to live over the whole earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live. 17:27 He did this so they might seek God, and perhaps they might reach out and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us..

- ? 22 How does Paul answer the question, “Where did we all come from?”
Who is the “one man” Paul talks about here?

Acts 17:28 For in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’ 17:29 Being God’s offspring then, we shouldn’t think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image fashioned by human art and imagination.

- ? 23 Why do you think Paul quotes Greek poets here?

Acts 17:30 “Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God now commands all people everywhere to repent, 17:31 because He has set a day when He is going to judge the world in righteousness by the Man He has appointed. He has provided proof of this to everyone by raising Him from the dead.”

- ? 24 How does Paul answer the question, “Where is history headed?”
Who do you think “the Man He has appointed” is?

Acts 17:32 When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some began to ridicule him. But others said, “We’d like to hear from you again about this.” 17:33 Then Paul left their presence. 17:34 However, some men joined him and believed, including Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

- ? 25 How does the reaction of the crowd reveal what they thought about Paul’s teaching?

WORDwork | Day 2

4.2 What Do We Need to Know About The Master Story?

Everyone has a **worldview** that directs the way they think about the World and their place in it. A worldview is a core part of our thinking process as humans so it is important that we understand what it is and how it works. Take a look at the following definition:

Key Definition: **Worldview.** The **core commitment** (at heart level) to a set of **ideas** and **beliefs** (whether true or untrue), most often set in the form of a **Master Story**, which directs the way we understand **reality** and **live our lives**.

Today, we continue our discussion from yesterday and analyze Paul's message to the Athenians. We are going to focus on one large idea from our worldview definition above: the Master Story.

4.2.1 There are Different Master Stories and they are in competition.

There are many different Master Stories in the world. Because they give different answers to the Three Foundational Questions, these stories are often in conflict with one another. In the Acts 17 passage we worked through yesterday, five different people groups were mentioned and they all had different ways of looking at the world.

The **Jews** are the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who followed the teachings of Moses received directly from the Lord-God. They believed there was only One God and that He has revealed Himself uniquely to the Jewish people. **God-fearing Gentiles** were not Jewish by birth but were interested in following the teachings of Judaism. We can assume that the **Greeks** “who happened to be there” in the marketplace were polytheistic—they believed in many gods. As the context makes clear, Athens was filled with temples to the multitude of Greek gods. The **Epicureans** were philosophers who sought a life of virtue, tranquility, and modest pleasure through simplicity. They were “practical atheists” because they believed that the gods did not intervene in everyday life. Finally, we have the **Stoics** who believed that personal well-being was achieved through self-sufficiency pursued in virtue, reason, and “natural law.” This was all done free from the influence of “passions.” They were pantheists who believed

that “god” was *in* everything (they called “god” the “world-soul”). They were at odds with the Epicureans.

Each of these views is in conflict with the others in the way they answer key worldview questions: Is there only One God as the Jews affirmed? or are there many gods? Both views can’t be right.

- ? 26 Take a minute to think about our culture now. How is our culture similar to that of Athens in Paul’s time? How many different world-views do you think exist in our time?

4.2.2 **The Master Story of the Bible challenges all other master stories.**

Paul was living in very different **Master Story** than the people he encountered in Athens. Paul believed that the True Story of Life had been revealed to him in Jesus Christ. In this episode, Paul takes this opportunity to show how his Master Story challenged the others.

Using a “hook” from his time in Athens—the altar to the “unknown god”—Paul sees a way to connect with the Athenians. He begins by getting his audience’s attention by praising them for being very *religious*. Paul starts with what he and his audience share in common—the pursuit to understand reality. At the core of every religion, philosophy, and worldview is the desire to understand reality. As he begins, Paul essentially says, “I am going to tell you about what you are ‘worshipping’ without knowing.”

4.2.3 **The Master Story answers the question of our common Origin.**

Paul describes God as the Creator of the World and everything in it. Not only is He the Creator, He is also the LORD—sovereign ruler—of both Heaven and Earth. Paul refers to God as THE God. There is only One in Paul’s worldview. This view would be acceptable to the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, but would have been repulsive and offensive to the philosophers and Greeks. Notice how they respond to Paul in this passage: he is a “babbler,” speaking nonsense. In the context of this passage, we see that the Athenians thought that Paul was speaking about “foreign gods” because Paul was talking about Jesus and his resurrection from the dead (Acts 17:17-18). *Jesus was not part of their traditional and popular religion and mythology.*

Paul also reveals in 17:26 that *all humanity has its origin in one man*. From this one man, all the nations, and tribes, and cultures of humanity came about.

We are all sons and daughters of this one man. We are united as the human race because we all come from the same original parents.

This “one man” is Adam (from the Hebrew word *adam* which means “man”) in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. He and his wife Eve were blessed by God and charged with filling the Earth with other humans. We all descend from them. This idea would have been just as foolish and offensive to the Athenians as it is to many today. The Athenians took great pride in the belief that they all originated from the soil of their homeland. Paul challenges this idea.

? 27 What three key ideas did you learn about Master Stories in this reading? List them out and think about the significance of each.

WORDwork | Day 3

4.2.4 The Master Story answers the question, “Who is God?”

In Acts 17:24-35, Paul reveals part of the answer to “Who is God?” The first step in getting our bearings in life is discovering who God is and why He created us, which are all questions related to the ORIGIN question. Paul’s view of the world was shaped by the revelation that God, working through Jesus Christ, created everything that now exists. We were created by God for His purposes.

When we ask the question, “who is God/god?” we are really asking, “Who has final power and authority?” There are many people who do not believe that a personal, knowable, all-powerful being (God) exists. Nevertheless, *everyone* is looking to some source, some authority to give them final and authoritative answers about life. Whoever or whatever that authority is functions as “god” in that worldview.

Notice that in 17:24 and 25 Paul says that God does not live in places made by human hands, nor is He served by humans since He Himself needs nothing. God is not “needy.” The One True God is totally *self-sufficient* and *self-satisfied*. God’s love, His justice, His grace, His perfection all flow from His perfectly self-satisfying existence. Ultimately this has significant ramifications for our understanding of God and reality. *If God does not need anything, why would He create anything at all?* Although Paul does not develop the idea here, we discover that Father-God creates—does all that He does in Christ through the Spirit—because *He wants to. He is moved by His desires.*

God’s self-sufficiency would have resonated with both The Stoics and the Epicureans because on some level, this is what they both aspired to be.

Notice in 17:25 how all “life and breath” is given to everyone and everything by God. In the Bible, the One True God is referred to as the “Living God” which is to say that He is the only being that *possesses life in and of Himself*. He is not dependent on anyone or anything else for His life.

God also provides what we need as humans because He is concerned with us; He is the sustainer of our lives. This would have stood opposed to how the philosophers conceived of “god.” However, Paul is making a case for a personal, caring Creator because that is truly who the One True God is. In 17:29, Paul argues that the One True God is not like any other. He is not the product of “human imagination”: He is the One True God who desires to be known by His creation. He cannot be represented in gold or silver or stone (like the Greek

idols) because He is spirit and beyond the human mind to fully comprehend or “put in box.”

4.2.5 **The Master Story answers the question of the meaning of life.**

In 17:26-27, Paul also makes the amazing statement that God placed every person where He desired them to be, “having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, *that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him...*” In His sovereign ruling and planning Father-God has placed us in the *exact time* (allotted periods) and *exact place* (boundaries) which would maximize our desire to search for and feel our way toward God!!! Why would He do that? Because we were designed and created to be in a living, personal relationship with the One True God!

In 17:28-29, Paul also reveals that God is real and present in the World, but He is not “in everything” as the Stoics taught. Because God is omnipresent – He is everywhere at all times - He is always “close” to each of us. In fact, even though we may not be aware of it, in Him we “move about and have our existence” (Paul quotes this line from a Greek philosopher and poet Epimenides). There is nothing that we do which is hidden from God. God is real and He is near. This would have stood against the beliefs of the Epicureans.

17:28 Paul quotes from another Greek poet Aratus who said, “It is with Zeus that every one of us in every way has to do, for we are also his offspring.” Paul quotes from part of this line—“for we are also his offspring...” and relates it to the One True God in order to show the Athenians that their thought does have elements of truth in it, *but it is pointing in the wrong direction*. Humanity was created by God, not Zeus. As Paul expands in his letters, we all have our origin in the One True God who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ.

4.2.6 **The Master Story answers the question of Destiny and challenges us to make sure we are headed in the right way.**

Consider what Paul says in 17:30: “although He (God) has overlooked such times of ignorance, he now commands all people everywhere to *repent*.” Paul is calling this group to realize *they are wrong* and *heading in the wrong direction*! This would have surely stung the whole audience. In effect, Paul says that they are acting in ignorance in their *idolatry* and *man-made religion*. The philosophers were pursuing human reason in order to escape from ignorance and now Paul says that in this pursuit that have actually become ignorant of reality!!!

In effect, Paul is *warning* his audience that they are on the wrong path which will not ultimately lead them to the truth. They need to *change their minds in order*

to change the course of their lives. Paul is calling this group to let go of their ignorance and cling to THE TRUTH which he is revealing to them.

Finally, Paul reveals that there will be a day of reckoning and accounting for all people—*there will be a day of judgment.* A day is coming when God will judge the World in righteousness. For now, let me simply define righteousness This way:

Key Definition: **Righteousness** is thinking and doing
1) the **right thing**, 2) in the **right way**,
3) at the **right time**, 4) with the **right motivation**.

This is God's standard. Who could live up to this? Nobody!!! We all need someone to save us from this impossibly high standard!

Notice also that there is “a man” who will carry out this day of judgment. Paul says that God has appointed A Man to fill this role *by raising Him from the dead.* Who is this “Man”? Jesus Christ. Remember this is the very reason that the people invited Paul to speak, because he has been teaching about Jesus and the resurrection. Now Paul reveals that Jesus is the judge of all people and therefore everyone will give an account of their lives to Him.

Now think about how the crowd reacts to Paul: Some reject Paul's Message and think he is crazy; others want to hear more; others believe the Message. This is the way it always is when The Truth is proclaimed. *Everyone responds in some way.*

? 28 What three key ideas did you learn about Master Stories in this reading? List them out and think about the significance of each.

? 29 How should the Master Story change the way you think about life and the way you live it?

WORDwork | Day 4

4.3 How Does The Master Story Relate to The Gospel?

1 Corinthians 15:3–6 For I passed on to you as of first importance what I also received—that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 15:4 and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 15:5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 15:6 Then he appeared to {NET}

In this passage, Paul reminds the Corinthians of the truths that are of “first importance” in The Gospel. First, the fact that Jesus died for our sins must be clearly proclaimed. Next, the reality that Jesus was buried and raised from the Dead must be clearly stated. Both of these truths were foretold by the Scriptures and so we are showing that the Lord-God’s Word is trustworthy. Lastly, something should be said about Jesus’ appearances after His resurrection from the dead. Those who saw Jesus after His resurrection became His witnesses, *living evidence* that He was alive and present with His people. So the Gospel should state three primary things:

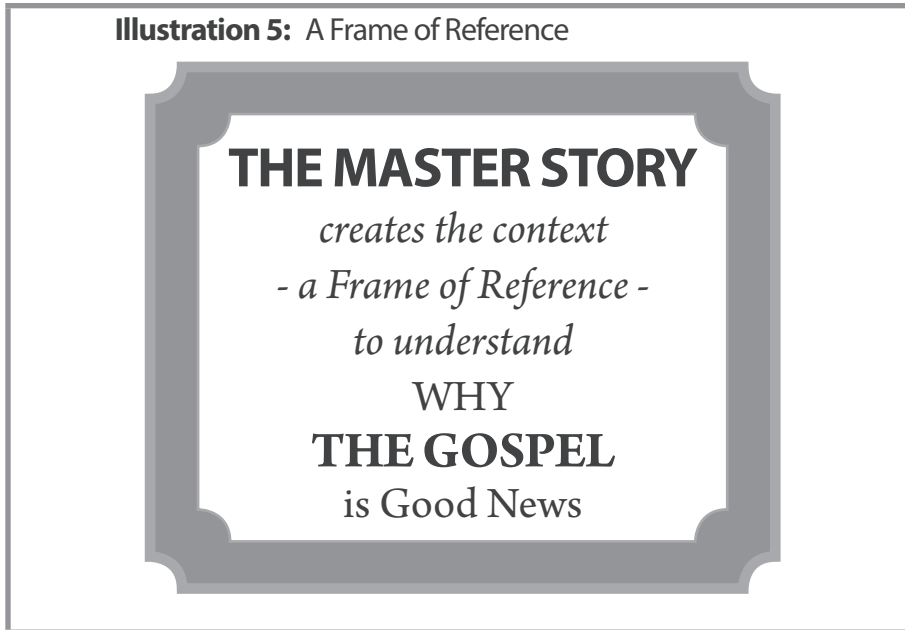
- 1] That Jesus died for our sins,
- 2] That Jesus was buried and raised from the dead, and
- 3] Jesus was seen by many after His resurrection.

Think about Paul’s presentation in Acts 17 that has been at the center of our discussion this week and consider this question: “*Where does Paul mention any of these ideas?*” Go back and read that passage again and see if you can find them.

Were you able to find those three key ideas mentioned clearly? The answer is “no”—Paul does not clearly mention any of those ideas in that presentation! The reason we bring this up is that many people consider Paul’s speech on Mars Hill as his presentation of the Gospel. We think however he is doing something else.

Clearly, Paul was asked to come and speak because he was proclaiming Jesus and the resurrection (see Acts 17:18). Here, as Paul gives a narrative from creation to judgment, *he creates a frame of reference for understanding why the Gospel is Good News*. That is what The Master Story does for us: it gives us the context so that we have a clear understanding of why the Gospel of Jesus is Good News.

Take a look at this illustration:

Illustration 5: A Frame of Reference

In Acts 7 Stephen gives another presentation of The Master Story. In this account Stephen is put on trial before the Sanhedrin—the key ruling council of Israel in that day. These leaders ask him to give an account of the things he is teaching about Jesus that seems to be in conflict with their tradition.

Stephen begins with Abraham, the forefather of the people of Israel, and tells a version of their Master Story showing that Jesus is the Messiah and Savior that had been promised to their people. He also makes the case that just like their fathers before them, the people of Israel were now rebelling against the Lord-God's purposes for them in rejecting Jesus. This passage is another great example of how a Master Story gives a frame of reference for understanding who Jesus is and why His Message is central in the bigger picture of things.



We have covered a lot of ground this week. Take the time now to collect your thoughts and take some notes on what a Master Story is and the key things we need to know about a Master Story.



Scan back over or reflect on this week's reading and ask yourself:

1. What have I learned that gave me new ideas and images?
2. How do these truths call me to change the way I am thinking?
3. How do these truths call me to trust Father-God more?

Session 5

Why Do We Trust the Bible?

- Core Truth:** The Bible claims to give us THE Truth about life; not A truth, but THE Truth. At the center of this TRUTH is the person of Jesus Christ.
- To Remember:** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. { 2 Timothy 3:15–17 ESV }
- Objective:** We all need an authoritative source—someone or something—to give us the answers we need to our core life questions. In this session, we are going to consider why we are convinced the Bible gives us these answers.
- Prayer:** “Father, thank you for giving us your Written Word, The Scriptures, so that we may know what you want us to know. Thank you for not leaving us on our own to figure things out. Help us to trust You and the Word which you have given to us. Amen.”

WORDwork | Day 1

5.1 **What is the Bible?**

The Bible is a controversial book. Some believe it is the most important book that has been given to us; some believe it is nothing more than a collection of good myths and wisdom tales. Others think it is completely useless and “out of date.” The goal for this week is to present the *evidence* for our confidence in the Bible as the source of Truth that tells us what is *really real*—reality.

We realize that we cannot *prove* that this is true, nor do we believe that we can *convince* anyone that this is true; that is the work of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 2:12-16; 12:3). However, we do believe that it is important to be able to give evidence for our confidence; we should be able to give a defense of the **hope** we have in us (see 1 Peter 3:15).

Key Definition: **Truth** describes and reveals *reality*—what is really real.

5.1.1 **The Bible is unique among all other books.**

The Bible has long been labeled **Holy** or **Sacred**. Both of these words point to the belief that the Bible is *a unique book, different from all other books*. Opponents and enemies of the faith have long tried to destroy the Bible. Men and women have given their lives to protect and pass the Bible down to future generations. In our times, the Bible irritates and infuriates the elite intellectuals. There is no other book in the world which has been so loved and so hated.

There are many religious books in the world. We believe and affirm that the Bible *alone* gives us THE Message that the One True God wants us to know and understand. As we seek to find answers to our basic and core questions about life, the Bible give us an eternal perspective on our world and our place in it.

The Bible is also the ONLY book which leads us to Jesus Christ as our Creator, Savior, and King. This is why we believe it is *unique* and deserves our attention.

5.1.2 **The Bible claims to be THE Truth.**

One of the reasons that the Bible is so controversial in our time is because The Bible claims to reveal THE truth; not just *some* truth or *a* truth, but THE Truth. Even more than this, the Bible claims that THE Truth is found in a person—Jesus Christ:

Ephesians 4:21 ...you have heard about Him and were taught in Him, as **the truth is in Jesus** ... {NET}

This truth is specific and exclusive: **The Truth is found IN Jesus**. We are not going to try to “prove” these claims now. Instead, we first want to see how they fit into the Master Story the Bible reveals.

5.1.3 **The Bible claims to be produced by God’s Holy Spirit working in the Hearts and Minds of its human authors.**

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is **breathed-out by God** ... {ESV}

The Bible also claims that it is a Message that has come to us directly from God. The Bible was produced by God’s Spirit working through Human agents. In 2 Timothy 3:16 we hear that every Scripture is “breathed-out by God.” Just as our breath gives “life” to our vocal cords so that we speak, so also God’s “breath” (His Spirit) gave “life” to the thoughts and words of the human authors of the Bible. This is often referred to as the **inspiration** of the Bible.

Sometimes, God worked “behind the scenes,” moving the authors along so that their words were the words that God wanted to speak. Sometimes, *God spoke directly* through these people as with the Prophets. Peter makes this a little clearer when he tells us that the Holy Spirit of God was “moving” these men along:

2 Peter 1:21 ... no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, men spoke from God **as they were moved by the Holy Spirit**.

Peter is using the word “prophecy” in the sense of a “message directly from God.” These are messages from God, *not from human imagination and thought*.

5.1.4 **The Bible tells One Master Story in its many individual books.**

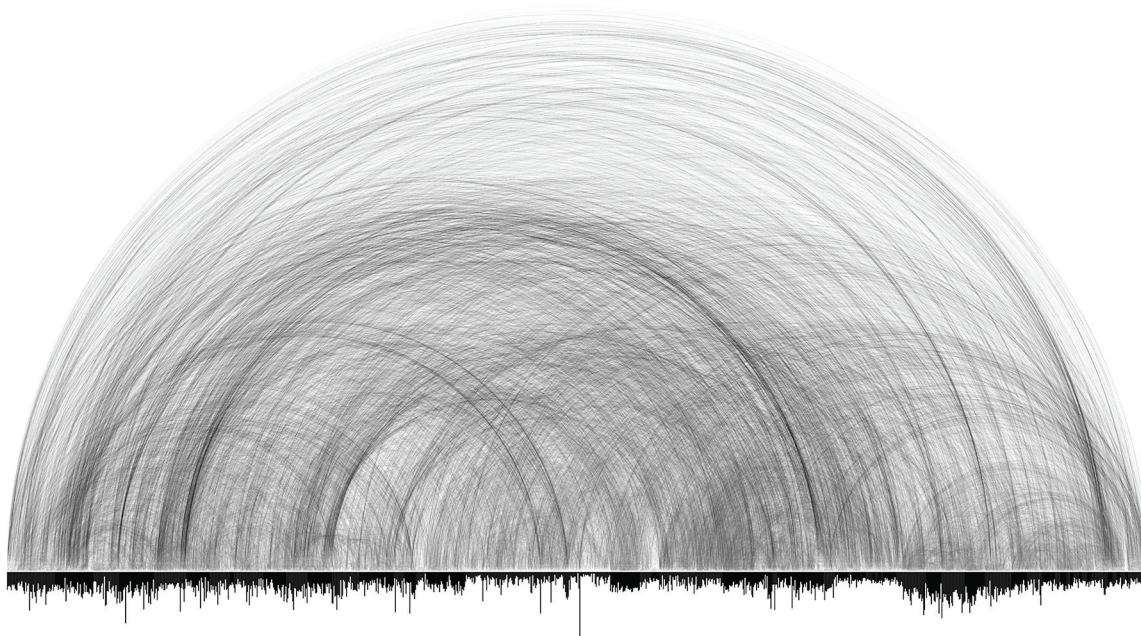
The Bible is made up of 66 individual books written by over 40 different human authors. When we trace the themes of the Bible from the first book Genesis to the last book Revelation, we discover that it is telling one unified and coherent story.

The Old Testament lays the foundation of the Master Story. The Bible is divided into two sections. The first section is referred to as the Old Testament and it tells the first and foundational part of the Master Story from Creation through the history of God’s chosen nation, Israel. The Old Testament was written mostly in Hebrew, the language of the Israelite people (The Jews), and so we will often refer to it as *The Hebrew Scriptures*. There are 39 books that make up the

Hebrew Scriptures. These are divided into three general classes: **Historical Writings, Wisdom Writings** and the **The Prophets**.

The New Testament reveals the completion of the Master Story. The New Testament picks up the Master Story where the Hebrew Scriptures leave off and takes us from the birth of Jesus all the way to Eternity (Future) in the New Heavens and Earth. The New Testament was written in Greek and so we will often refer to it as *The Greek Scriptures*. There are 27 books that make up the New Testament. These books can be divided into three general classes as well: **Historical Writings, Letters, and Prophecy.** (See the chart on **page 75**)

Illustration 6: Visualizing the Coherence of the Bible



Named one of the best science images of 2008 by the National Geographic News, "Visualizing the Bible"...brings to light the interconnected nature of one of the world's most familiar books."

WHAT YOU ARE SEEING: The dark bar graph that runs along the bottom represents all of the chapters in the Bible. The length of each bar denotes the number of verses in the chapter. Genesis is represented on the far left, Psalm 119 is in the middle, and Revelation on the far right. The arcs represent 63,779 cross references identified by Christoph Römhild. These threads show how key concepts are connected throughout the Bible.

Created by Chris Harrison, a Ph.D. student in the Human-Computer Interaction Institute at Carnegie Mellon University, in collaboration with Christoph Römhild, a Lutheran Pastor. You can visit his site to find the **full resolution color** version of this image: <http://www.chrisharrison.net/projects/bibleviz>

WORDwork | Day 2

5.2 Why Should We Trust the Bible?

We have been referring to the Bible all the way through this study. It may seem strange for us to deal with this question now. We have intentionally waited to deal with this question because we believe it is important to have a basic understanding of what the Bible says—the story it tells—and what it offers before we deal with the issues we will deal with in this session. Many people reject the Bible without reading it or understanding its Message.

The Bible, from beginning to end, presents itself as The Message from God to humanity. This is not enough to “prove” that the Bible is what it claims, however. We do not expect or believe that we can *prove* that the Bible is true to anyone. Although we cannot *prove* the reliability and truthfulness of the Bible, we can produce *evidence to support* this claim. The Bible as a whole has survived the test of time for nearly 4,000 years. **If we read it carefully and put it to the test we will see that it does not fail.**

• **Point of Commitment:** Before we go any further, there is an important issue we need to discuss. As we move through this study, there will be key times when we will highlight key issues that will require you to make a decision and commit to a way of thinking. These points of commitment are significant “mile markers” in all our spiritual growth. The first key question and commitment that you need to think through, maybe wrestle with is: **“Can I be open to the idea that I can trust the Bible to tell me the Truth?”**

It is important to come to a decision on this question and make a commitment before you move on. It will be hard to make other commitments until you have decided how you will deal with this first issue. By the end of this session, you should have some idea of how you are going to answer this question. *Since everything we will be discussing is based on the Bible, it is important that you are at least willing to hear what it says for the rest of this study to have any impact.*

5.2.1 The Master Story of the Bible is unified and coherent.

One of the best evidences, at least for the Bible’s uniqueness, is its unity. The Bible was written by over 40 different human authors from various backgrounds, on three different continents (Africa, Asia, Europe), in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek), over a period of about 2,000 years. Yet with this

incredible history of composition, the Bible tells one *unified* and *coherent* Story. This Story answers our Core Life Questions and also creates a frame of reference for understanding The Gospel—the Good News of Jesus—as we have already discussed.

5.2.2 **Historical, archaeological, and manuscript evidence supports the Bible's truth claims.**

Archaeology is the study of physical remains (fossil relics, artifacts, and monuments) of past human life and activities. Archaeologists dig in the dirt to find evidence that sheds light on human culture from the past. Archaeology would be meaningless if we did not have *history*, a written record of things that have happened in the past. This written history would be meaningless if the *ancient manuscripts* were faulty or untrustworthy. So you should see that history, archaeology, and ancient manuscripts go hand in hand as we try to rediscover what happened in the past.

The Bible continues to this day to be a valuable tool to both archaeologists and historians. In fact, much of the work in archaeology being done in the Middle East begins with the historical accounts from the Bible as the first clue in knowing where to look for ancient civilizations. Over the past 100 years archaeology has verified much of the history that is contained the Bible.

Critics of the Bible from past generations attacked the Bible because they claimed there was no evidence for people and places that it mentioned like the Hittites and King David. Now archaeological evidence has proved the skeptics wrong, not the Bible.

One of the most important areas of evidence pointing to the reliability of the Bible is based in the ancient versions and manuscripts of the Bible. It is true that we do not have any of the *original manuscripts* of the Bible. What we do have are numerous copies and versions. There are literally thousands of ancient copies of the books of the Bible. The Bible is the most copied book of the Ancient World. This fact alone speaks to its significance.

When all of these ancient copies are compared, another incredible fact emerges. These copies are all in agreement about 98% of the time regarding what the text of the Bible says. The number of copies of the Bible that have come to us from the Ancient World along with the degree to which they agree makes the Bible unique among ancient writings and supports the claim that the Bible we have today is the same one that the Holy Spirit inspired.

Until the 1940's critics of the Bible maintained that the copies of Old Testament could not be reliable since some of the earliest copies at the time were

made around AD 900 – almost 1500 years after the originals. Then a shepherd discovered the **The Dead Sea Scrolls** in the caves of Qumran. In the Dead Seas Scrolls, there was a nearly complete copy of The Book of Isaiah that was 1,000 years older than the earliest copy then known. This copy was nearly identical to the ones that were 1,000 younger. Again, the critics were shamed to silence.

If you want to dig deeper into this evidence, you will find that the Bible is a unique book, it is historically reliable, and the text that we have today is the same as what was written in the original manuscripts inspired by the Holy Spirit. In the **Digging Deeper** section on **page 110** there is more information on these topics.

5.2.3 **People have been transformed by the Message of the Bible.**

For me personally, the greatest affirmation of the Bible and its truth-claims comes in the way it has changed my life. It has transformed the lives of many others as well. Our Western world has been shaped by The Message of the Bible. There have been many men and women who have literally given their lives to protect the Bible and pass it on to the next generation. In our times, there are many men and women who are still sacrificing their lives so that others may come to know The Way, The Truth and The Life that is found in Jesus.

In the 20th Century the Bible was still the most read book in the Western culture. *Why would people still turn to this ancient Book if it were not truly relevant to life?* If we read the Bible intending to Hear what it says, we will find that there is no other book that speaks with greater **clarity** and **power** to the human condition. It is powerful in and of itself, all we have to do is **read it** and **hear it**.

So we would invite you to read the Bible to hear how it leads us to Jesus—the One who created us, sustains us and will bring all things to their conclusion in Him.

? 30 Think about what we have discussed today. What sticks out to you?

? 31 Have you ever read through the whole Bible?

? 32 Do you lean more toward trusting the Bible or distrusting the Bible?

WORDwork | Day 3**5.3 What Does the Bible Do for Us?**

Psalms 119:114 You are my shelter and my shield;
I put my hope in Your word.

5.3.1 The Bible gives us hope through it's Master Story.

So far, we have taken an overview of the Message, the Story of Life that the Bible reveals. This story is meant to give us **hope**. We learn that we were designed and created to be the One True God's image and likeness in creation; we were created with purpose. We also hear that although we have all rebelled against God's purposes for us, we can be redeemed—we can be saved and brought back into relationship with Father-God in Christ.

"Redeem" is a word that we will consider in depth later. For now, know that to "redeem" something is to pay a price for something to claim it for your own. We value things by the price we are willing to pay for them. Father-God was willing to pay the price of the life of His unique son Jesus in order to claim us for His own: we are loved and valued more than we can possibly imagine!!!

Today we come back to the topic of hope that we have discussed earlier when talking about the Master Story. Take a look at our definition of hope, we have added a little more to it:

Key Definition: **Hope** is the confident expectation that things will turn out well because God will be who He promises to be and do what He promises to do. Hope is built on the foundation of God's past works, yet always looks to the future completion and perfection of these works.

There are **three core virtues**—*attitudes that work their way out in our actions*—that define the lives of those who follow the way of Jesus: Faith, Hope, and Love. These are all interrelated. Hope is the foundation of all three. Consider this:

Colossians 1:5–6 Your faith and love have arisen from the hope laid up for you in heaven, which you have heard about in the message of truth, the Gospel 1:6 that has come to you. {NET}

Take note of the order of these virtues: *faith and love are produced as a result of hope*. This is a very important idea. We see it in other places in the Scriptures:

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for,
the proof of what is not seen.

We see the same order here: “faith is the reality of what we hope for...” Which comes first faith or hope? In this verse, hope comes first. Faith is the *reality*—the essential nature, the substance—of what we hope for. We cannot have faith until we have hope. Faith *realizes* hope. *Faith lives as if what is hoped for is already done*.

We find Hope in Christ. We place our faith (confidence and trust) in Him. This gives us the ability to love one another and others as He has loved us. *Hope is the starting place*. The Master Story revealed in the Bible gives us hope because it tells us we have been created in the purposes of Father-God, we have been saved in Christ and He is moving all things along toward His purposes to set all things right—to mend all that is broken in our world and in us. This basic truth should give us hope.

? 33 What gives you hope? What is your source of hope?

5.3.2 **The Bible has been given to guide us for Life.**

2 Timothy 3:16–17 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 3:17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. {ESV}

Up to this point, we have been making the case that the Bible shows us The Way to God and The Way of God because it is a Message from Him for us. In 2 Timothy above we hear that the Scriptures are **useful** for us in four basic ways. These four ways are all related to the following The Way of Truth:

- 1] **Teaching.** Because the Bible reveals God’s wisdom in Christ for us, it is useful for *teaching*—showing the Right WAY, the True Way of things, revealing the true path of life that leads to life. As you know by now, we believe that Jesus Christ is this WAY.
- 2] **Reproof.** When we stray from this Right Way, the Bible is useful for *reproof*—pointing out how we have fallen off The WAY, showing us that

we are getting “lost” along the way, that we are turning to some alternative “way” that is not in line with God’s truth, goodness, and glory.

- 3] **Correction.** Once we know that we have strayed away from The True Way, the Bible is useful for correction—telling us how to get back on the path.
- 4] **Training.** And finally, the Bible is generally useful for training in righteousness or the Right and True Way. In short, the Bible gives us everything that we need to discover who we are and the true path to life that God has revealed to us so that we can know what is glorious and good.

*In this passage, the phrase *the man of God* does not just apply to men. The Greek word used for “man” speaks to people in general, both men and women. The idea is, “the person who belongs to God.”

As we hear the Message of the Bible and come to understand the Master Story that it reveals, we will discover that God our Creator and Author of this Master Story has written a part, a role for each of us to play and live out. For all of us, God desires that we live our lives guided by His Truth, His Goodness, and His Glory.

? 34 What two major things does the Word of God do for us according to what you have learned today?

? 35 What are the four ways the Word of God leads us in The Way?

WORDwork | Day 4

5.3.3 The Message of the Bible has the power to transform.

Earlier, we considered how The Message of the Bible has transformed the lives of multitudes of people throughout history. The Message of Truth in the Bible has transformed our lives as well and this is why we want to help others understand how the Bible reveals Father-God's work in His Son Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. This promise of transformation is given to all who hear this Message and desire to get in line with God's plans and purposes.

The Bible, the Written Word, is the means that God uses to reveal Himself and His purposes and plans clearly to us. When we submit our thoughts, emotions, and desires to this reality through faith, we know that God's Spirit is at work within us. It is this work of the Spirit that brings deep-rooted transformation:

2 Corinthians 3:18 We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Our main prayer is that by going through this study you will **Hear** God's word. When you hear His word, we pray that you would then **See** His glory—His profound beauty that is absolutely remarkable. If these two things happen, *you will be transformed.*

As the passage above says, the Spirit of the Lord brings freedom. He frees us from all of the lies and deception that keep us shackled to the false "ways" of this present world. He sets us free to see the larger Reality of Life given to us in The Master Story that can only be seen when we see things from God's perspective. We learn to see things from this perspective by hearing what the Bible reveals about the One True God who exists and who wants to know us and be known by us.

Core Exercise 01: Hearing the Word, Seeing God's Glory (Receiving)

MilktoMeat is designed to give you both the "diet" and "exercise" you need to grow spiritually mature. We are going to discuss three core spiritual exercises throughout this study. Some people call these exercises *spiritual disciplines*, but we like the idea of exercise more. It takes discipline to exercise, but that is not the goal. *So what is a spiritual exercise?*

Key Definition: Spiritual Exercise A spiritual exercise is any activity that engages your body and your mind in a way that affects your core—your heart. Although these exercises require our effort, they always work in cooperation with Father-God’s empowerment—His grace.

Spiritual exercises are *essential* to growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. Some call these exercises *disciplines*. We are going to use the term *exercise* because it describes what we are doing by engaging in these activities—exercising our hearts and minds. *The Word of God is our diet*. As Jesus Himself told The Devil, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God’” (Matthew 4:4).

The first core exercise and the foundation of all our actions is *learning to hear the word of God and receiving what He has given us*. We take in the Word through *reading, thinking about* (meditating, pondering) and *memorizing* what Father-God has given to us in His Written Word. Like any other exercise, this is a process that takes time and practice. Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

1. **Get a Bible you can understand** | There are a multitude of Bible available today. Go to a bookstore and read a few. Get one that is easy for you to understand. The ESV or the NIV are good choices. There are many good study bibles available with good resources to help you understand what you are reading. We recommend the ESV Study Bible.
2. **Be Patient** | If you are new to reading the Bible, you will probably not understand everything you read on the first go. Be patient. The goal is not to have immediate understanding, but to become familiar with the Scriptures and get the Word into your thought life.
3. **Be Intentional** | Set aside some time everyday to simply read the Bible. Like any exercise, you have to work this into your schedule.
4. **Read slowly** | Don’t try to read too much. Start with a Psalm or one of the Gospels and go slow. Focus on receiving what you are reading more than just “getting it done.”
5. **Read with others** | One of the most important things you can do is read the Bible together with others, especially those who know a little more than you. Also, *reading the Scriptures out loud* allows you to hear them more clearly than simply reading to yourself. That may sound a little strange, but it really works.
6. **Ponder what you read** | Ask questions while you read: “Why does it say this?” “Why is this in this order?” “What does this mean?” If

what you are reading does not raise questions for you, you are not engaged in the reading.

Ultimately, through our reading and pondering God's Word, we want to cultivate *vision*. We want to be able to see reality the way Father-God does.



Exercise only works if you do it! Take some time now to think about what you need to do, what you may need to change in your daily habits to practice this exercise.



Scan back over or reflect on this week's reading and ask yourself:

1. What have I learned that gave me new ideas and images?
2. How do these truths call me to change the way I am thinking?
3. How do these truths call me to trust Father-God more?

Illustration 7: How the Bible is Arranged

The Old Testament | *The Hebrew Scriptures*

Historical Writings	Wisdom Writings	The Prophets
Genesis	Job	Isaiah
Exodus	Psalms	Jeremiah
Leviticus	Proverbs	Lamentations
Numbers	Ecclesiastes	Ezekiel
Deuteronomy	Song of Songs	Daniel
Joshua		Hosea
Judges		Joel
Ruth		Amos
1 & 2 Samuel		Obadiah
1 & 2 Kings		Jonah
1 & 2 Chronicles		Micah
Ezra		Nahum
Nehemiah		Habakkuk
Esther		Zephaniah
		Haggai
		Zechariah
		Malachi

The New Testament | *The Greek Scriptures*

Historical Writings	Letters	Prophecy
Matthew	Romans	Revelation
Mark	1 & 2 Corinthians	
Luke	Galatians	
John	Ephesians	
Acts	Philippians	
	Colossians	
	1 & 2 Thessalonians	
	1 & 2 Timothy	
	Titus	
	Philemon	
	Hebrews	
	James	
	1 & 2 Peter	
	1, 2 & 3 John	
	Jude	

Session 6

Who is the One True God?

Core Truth: The One True God reveals Himself as our Heavenly Father who loves us and has sent His One Unique Son—Jesus—to guide us back to Himself through the Holy Spirit.

To Remember: But Yahweh is the true God;
He is the living God and eternal King. {Jeremiah 10:10}

Objective: The One True God has revealed the **truth** of his existence to us in creation, or nature. He has revealed His **goodness** in the message of the Bible. He has revealed His **glory** to us in the person of Jesus Christ. To understand who the One True God is, we must understand that He is first our loving and gracious **Heavenly Father**.

Prayer: “Father, thank you for revealing yourself to us so that we can know you deeply and personally. Thank you for revealing Your Name to us so that we can know You and not just know about You. Help us to know how much you love us. Help us to understand Your purposes for our lives so that we can live with the security, fulfillment, and sense of significance we need. Amen.”

WORDwork | Day 1

6.1 **How has God revealed Himself to us?**

So far we have been making a major assumption: *God exists and He is not silent*. We believe that God's existence is clearly evident. He has made Himself know in His creation, in the Written Words of the Bible and in His One Unique Son, Jesus Christ. This reality may be *denied* or *suppressed*, but it remains true nevertheless. This week we are going to consider *how* the One True God has revealed Himself to us and *who* He is.

6.1.1 **God reveals Himself in Creation.**

Psalms 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
19:2 Day to day pours out speech
and night to night reveals knowledge. {ESV}

Romans 1:20 For His [God's] invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what He has made. As a result, people are without excuse.

When we look at our world and the vast expanse of the universe, we should come to the natural conclusion that there is a powerful and divine being—God—who created all these things. God continues to reveal Himself in all that He has created. For this reason, no one can say, “I did not know that God exists!” This is why Romans 1:20 tells us that people are without excuse.

If we only had creation as a witness to God's existence, we still would not know God *personally*. We need Him not only to reveal His existence, we also need Him to *speak to us directly so that we can know Him in a personal way*. The good news is that the One True God wants to be known and has spoken to us directly in both His Written Word, the Bible, and in His One Unique Son, Jesus Christ, the Living Word.

6.1.2 **God reveals Himself in The Bible (The Written Word)**

2 Timothy 3:14–15 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, 3:15 and you

know that from childhood you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

The Bible is called *the Word of God*. It has this name because the Bible claims to be a Message from God to us. We will call it the Written Word in this study because the Bible reveals and leads us to *The Living Word*—The Lord Jesus Christ.

Earlier we discussed why we are confident that the Bible shows us the True Way of Life. In 2 Timothy 3:14-15 we get to the heart this study: *The Bible, the Written Word, gives us wisdom for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ*. As we know, there is something wrong with us and our world. The Bible tells us clearly what these problems are and what He has done, is doing and will do to heal, restore, and renovate all things (salvation). All of this is focused in Jesus Christ.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the Lord-God reveals His personal name: *Yahweh*. This is the name that He gave to Moses and told him, “This is My name forever; this is how I am to be remembered in every generation” (Exodus 3:15). The Lord-God has many titles in Scripture, but only one name: *Yahweh*. This name means, “I am Who I am.” Traditionally, the Jewish people have considered this name to be holy, set apart and therefore it is not to be spoken. However, the Lord Himself told Moses this is the name that He is to be remembered by in all generations. The fact that the Lord-God would give us a personal name means that He invites us into deep, personal, intimate relationship with Him.

6.1.3 **God reveals Himself in Jesus, His One Unique Son (The Living Word)**

Hebrews 1:1–3 1:1 Long ago God spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways. 1:2 In these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son. God has appointed Him heir of all things and made the universe through Him. 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact expression of His nature, sustaining all things by His powerful word.

Finally, and most importantly, God has revealed Himself in His Son Jesus. Jesus is Father-God’s “one-of-a-kind” Son. *There is no one else like Him*. Even though God had revealed Himself in the Written Word before Jesus came into our world, when Jesus arrived He showed us what God Himself is like in human form. In this sense Jesus is the “exact representation of God’s true essence.” Jesus is the exact and true *embodiment* of the One True God and He is the focus of our attention.

We also hear that Jesus has been appointed “heir of all things” by Father–God. This means that everything belongs to Him—*everything*. Finally we hear that Jesus “sustains the universe by His powerful word.” Jesus is the One who is carrying, moving everything along toward His good and glorious conclusions.

As we turn to the Bible, we discover that it points us toward Jesus. Jesus himself tells us that all the Scriptures were given to testify, point to, give witness to Him:

John 5:39 “You study the Scriptures thoroughly because you think in them you possess eternal life, and *it is these same Scriptures that testify about me...*”

This study will focus on how the Bible reveals Jesus Christ to us. For now, think about what we have discussed today:

? 36 In what three ways has God revealed Himself to us?

? 37 Why do you think God chose to reveal Himself in these three ways?

WORDwork | Day 2

6.2 Who is the One True God?

Genesis 1:1 *In the beginning God...*

Everything begins with God. “In the beginning God...” is the first words we hear in the Bible. In the beginning, God is active. In the beginning, God moves, speaks, creates. In the beginning of everything else, God has always *been*.

Psalm 90:1-2 Lord, You have been our refuge in every generation.
90:2 Before the mountains were born, before You gave birth to the earth and the world, from eternity to eternity, You are God.

Before there was anything else, there was God. He was not created. He is not bound by time. God is *eternal*—He did not begin and He has no end; He simply **is**. It is easy to get caught up in all the ways that God is not like us; in this study we are going to consider what it means to know God personally. God is a person and He desires to be known in that way. We are convinced that our greatness need in this area is to know that God knows us and is concerned about us.

We could talk about God’s *omnipotence* (He is all-powerful), or His *omniscience* (He knows all things), or His *omnipresence* (He is everywhere at the same time). These are all good things to know and understand, but what really need to know is that *God cares about us*. He could be all powerful, know all things and be everywhere, but if He did not care for us, knowing these things would not help us much.

6.2.1 There is only One True God.

Deuteronomy 6:4–5 “Listen, Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One.
6:5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul,
and with all your strength.

In the verses above, we are told that “God is one.” The word “one” here implies a couple of different truths. The first is that the God who revealed Himself to and through the people of Israel was the One True God who was to be the object of their devotion and worship *alone*. So we hear that they (and we) are to love God completely.

The word “one” also carries the idea that the One True God is *unique*—there is no one or nothing else like Him. There is only One God in *essence* or “sub-

stance.” In Isaiah we hear, “I am the LORD, and there is no other, **there is no God but Me...**” [Isaiah 45:5]. Now there are many “false gods” or idols present in our world. Some are man-made, some are demonic, but there is only One True God, the One who created us all.

6.2.2 **The One God exists as three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit.**

Now we get to what may be the greatest *mystery* in all the Bible. The early Christians used the term **Trinity** to name the mystery of the One God who exists as Father, Son, and Spirit. Although you will not find that term in the Bible, it is helpful.

The reality of the Trinity is not something that you and I will ever be able to comprehend, *to get our minds around*. You can, however, know and understand the *importance* and *significance* of the Trinity. There is a difference between *knowing* and *comprehending*. This is the way we should approach the Trinity.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, there are hints of the Trinity. As we have already heard in Genesis 1:26, the Lord-God says, “Let *us* make humanity in *our* image, after our likeness...” Who is the “us” in this passage? Based on what we have revealed in the Greek Scriptures, we cannot help but see a hint at the Trinity here. Although this is not conclusive proof, it is an interesting reference. The full ideas that give us the concept of the Trinity would not be fully revealed until Jesus.

Remember the instructions that Jesus gives to the Eleven he chose to be his emissaries or apostles:

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

Baptism is a way of identifying people with the One True God and welcoming them into the fellowship with the other members of His family. Here Jesus’ followers will be identified and welcomed into the fellowship of the Father, Son, and Spirit. We also hear:

2 Corinthians 13:13 The grace of the **Lord Jesus Christ** and the love of **God** and the fellowship of the **Holy Spirit** be with you all.

Paul often uses the general title “God” to refer to the Father. As you move through the New Testament, you will see references to the Father, Son, and Spirit linked together in several key passages like the ones above. They all point to the reality that the One God exists as Father, Son, and Spirit.

Don’t get too hung up on the One in Three concept now. If you want to pursue this further, there is a longer discussion of The Trinity in the Digging

Deeper section on **page 111**. For now, we want you to think about this: **God the Father works *in* Christ Jesus *through* the power of the Holy Spirit**. This is going to be a major thread of our thinking throughout this study. Commit this to memory. Think about this carefully.

The truth of the Trinity is vitally important to our Master Story of Life because it reveals that God has always existed *in relationship*. God **IS love** because the Father, Son, and Spirit have always loved one another. God is also **faithful** because the Father, Son, and Spirit work together, unified, intent on always doing what is True, Good, and Glorious. Without the reality of the Trinity, nothing else in the Christian faith would have a secure foundation.

? 38 What are the major points that stuck out to you today? Why?

WORDwork | Day 3

6.3 What are the Untrue Views of the One True God?

We first develop our view of God through *our earthly fathers*. Sadly, many people have had fathers who did not form a positive picture of God. Before we move on we want to consider two false views of God that do not represent the One True God revealed through Jesus Christ.

6.3.1 God is not the sugar-daddy father of candy “love”

Some people think that God is like a “sugar-daddy” who pampers us and exists to cater to our every need. Candy “Love” is the term we chose to describe the type of love associated with this false view of God. This type of love offers someone a reward or a bribe. You can receive Candy “Love” from children by offering them a piece of candy or some other reward if they will do something in return.

Candy “Love,” however is not true love. If you use candy to bribe someone to love you, you will only be able to satisfy their “love” with more candy. The amount of Candy it takes to keep them satisfied will always keep increasing.

Unfortunately, there are those who present God as so desperate for our love that He is willing to offer all kinds of goodies (Candy) if only we would love Him back. This is a gross distortion of God’s very nature and certainly does not describe His love for us. God does not and never will stand with His hat in His hand offering anyone a reward or bribe to love Him back.

You should realize that God will never try to make a “deal” with you. God is not saying: “If only you will love me back, I will forgive all your sins, solve any problem you bring Me, make little or no demands of you in daily life, provide prosperity and health for you and yours, and then take you to a wonderful Heaven when you die.”

Genuine love does not allow us to be consumed with ourselves as Candy love does. A famous passage from the Bible states,

1 Corinthians 13:4-5 Love is patient, love is kind, it is not envious. Love does not brag, it is not puffed up. 5 It is not rude, it is not self-serving, it is not easily angered or resentful. {NET}

God does not beg, nor will He ever bribe, any person to love Him back. God knows that if He offers Candy “Love” it will always take more Candy to keep your love. And the first time God doesn’t deliver enough Candy for you, you will

be ready to end the relationship. Candy “Love” lasts only as long as the candy keeps coming!

6.3.2 **God is not the distant, tyrant father of smack “love”**

Some people think of God as a distant, harsh, rule-maker who is never satisfied with us. Smack “Love” is the term we chose to describe the type of “love” this false god offers. Smack “love” is a response to a threat or fear of punishment. Simply put, Smack “Love” is the exact opposite of Candy “Love”. Promise of reward is what drives Candy “Love.” Fear of punishment is what drives Smack “Love”.

Children will be obedient if they know that disobedience will result in a smack! Adult men and women often settle for this type of love by threatening or even abusing their mates. Smack “Love” responds out of fear, but fear ultimately produces only numbness and apathy.

Sadly, some present God as a fearsome tyrant who says to you: “If you do not give Me your love, I will cause all sorts of pain into your life (disease, death of a loved one, your own death, etc.) and then I will torment you in Hell forever and forever.” This is clearly not the type of love that God is and expresses.

If you get someone to respond to you using “Smack,” you will have to keep him or her with more “Smack.” You can scare a person only so many times and for only so long. Eventually, they will simply give up and cease to care about what you might do to them. Smack “Love” eventually produces only a numb mechanical response from the one being constantly threatened and living in fear. Smack love ultimately produces hatred and despair.

Smack “Love,” a response motivated by fear, does not and cannot satisfy the heart of God. In fact, nowhere in Scripture are we told that God gets any pleasure from threatening or punishing anyone. Smack “Love” is not what God had in mind when He created and designed us as human beings. God deserves and desires your reverential awe, loving worship, and total respect not because you fear that He will smack you if you don’t, but because of *who He is*.

God’s love, properly understood and received, will cast out all of your fears about how He sees you, and help you see His plans for your relationship with Him now on earth and eternally when you arrive at your eternal destination. Smack “Love” cannot possibly satisfy the heart of God.

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. So the one who fears has not reached perfection in love.

Who is the One True God then? What kind of love does He offer us? How does He desire for you to respond to this love? We will discuss that truth tomorrow. For now think on these questions:

? 39 What is “Candy Love”? Describe it in your own words.

? 40 What is “Smack Love”? Describe it in your own words.

? 41 Has your view of God been shaped by either of the false views that we have discussed today? Why or why not?

WORDwork | Day 4

6.4 Who is The True Father-God of Genuine Love?

Matthew 6:9 “Therefore, you should pray like this:
Our Father in heaven, Your name be honored as holy.

One of the most incredible truths revealed in the Bible is that God wants us to know Him as our Heavenly Father! God is our “father” because we all have our ultimate origin in Him (see Ephesians 3:14-15). But even more than this, He wants us to *know Him* and *experience Him* as a compassionate, loving Heavenly Father who desires to find us, heal us, restore us and transform us into people who think and act as His beloved children.

Genuine Love is the term we use to describe that type or quality of love that Father-God wants us to experience. This love is neither “Candy” nor “Smack.” Genuine Love is not driven by bribe, nor is it driven by fear. It is an unselfish love that focuses on the one being loved and puts the loved one’s needs and best interest above any self-interest and self-fulfillment.

Jesus tells us, “No one has greater love than this *that one lays down his life for his friends*” [John 15:13]. The greatest love that anyone can have is a *self-sacrificial kind of love*. The Genuine love of God is this type of love. Jesus sacrificed Himself for us—He laid down His life for us. Also, consider this:

1 John 4:9–10 God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His One and Only Son into the world *so that we might live through Him*.
4:10 Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

This passage reveals that God extends to us the purest and most sacrificial form of love you can possibly experience now and for all time. This love comes in Father-God’s willingness to give his One and Only—His One Unique—Son for us. Notice first **why** God has sent His Son: *so that we might live through Him*. Jesus has come to give us life—abundant life—as we have already heard.

The Father has sent Jesus to be “the propitiation for our sins.” Propitiation is a word that points to a sacrifice that deals completely with the issue of our sin and rebellion that keeps us separated from Father-God. In another key passage, we learn more about this sacrifice that Jesus makes for us:

Isaiah 53:4–5 Yet He Himself bore our sicknesses,
and He carried our pains;
but we in turn regarded Him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.
53:5 But He was pierced because of our transgressions,
crushed because of our iniquities;
punishment for our peace was on Him,
and we are healed by His wounds.

We all desire and seek Genuine Love to satisfy our deepest longing to be known and treasured by another person. The purest form of Genuine Love originates with God himself. This Divine Genuine Love is also intertwined with God's greater desires for us. As we will see, God loves us as we are, but He desires that we become like He is. We are all broken, spiritually bankrupt, rebellious, and sinful people *by nature*. The love of God our Father comes to *transform* us. We all learn to love by first experiencing love from someone else. Our Father desires that we *experience* His perfect, transforming love so that we may also be able to *express* this same type of love.

? 42 What is "Genuine Love"? Describe it in your own words.

? 43 How does the view of God presented today differ from the false views?



Scan back over or reflect on this week's reading and ask yourself:

1. What have I learned that gave me new ideas and images?
2. How do these truths call me to change the way I am thinking?
3. How do these truths call me to trust Father-God more?

Session 7

What Is Your Story?

Core Truth: Your life has significance both in the “here and now” and also the “hereafter.”

To Remember: “Your eyes saw me when I was formless; all my days were written in Your book and planned before a single one of them began.” {Psalms 139:16}

Objective: We need some perspective on our lives. We need to have a good grasp on who we are and where we have come from in each of our unique life-stories. There are many things in life that we have no control over: the fact that we were born, how long we will live, etc. However, we are given the great responsibility of how we will respond to what is given to us in life and what we will do with the time that is given to us.

Prayer: “Father, thank you for our lives. Help us to see how you have been moving and carrying us along—even in the darkest and hardest of times—so that we can know You deeply. Help us to trust you more. Help us to love you more. Help us to see ourselves as You see us. Amen.”

WORDwork | Day 1

7.1 **What Do We Really Want?**

- ? 44 Read the following quote carefully and think about it for couple of minutes. Do you think this statement is true to life? Why or Why not?

“Our greatest desire, greater even than the desire for happiness, is that our lives mean something. This desire for meaning is the originating impulse of story. We tell stories because we hope to find or create significant connections between things. Stories link past, present, and future in a way that tells us where we have been (even before we were born), where we are, and where we could be going.

Our stories teach us that there is a place for us, that we fit. They suggest to us that our lives can have plot. Stories turn mere chronology, one thing after another, into purposeful action of plot, and thereby into meaning.”

~ DANIEL TAYLOR, *Tell Me a Story: The Life Shaping Power of Our Stories*, 1-2 ~

David was the great warrior-poet king of ancient Israel. He wrote many of the Psalms that we have in the Hebrew Scriptures. In one of his most famous, he meditates on his relationship with the Lord-God. Read the following passage slowly and carefully, taking time to think about what David is saying:

Psalms 139:1–18

- Lord, You have searched me and known me.
 139:2 You know when I sit down and when I stand up;
 You understand my thoughts from far away.
 139:3 You observe my travels and my rest;
 You are aware of all my ways.
 139:4 Before a word is on my tongue, You know all about it, Lord.
 139:5 You have encircled me; You have placed Your hand on me.
 139:6 This extraordinary knowledge is beyond me.
 It is lofty; I am unable to reach it.
 139:7 Where can I go to escape Your Spirit?

Where can I flee from Your presence?
 139:8 If I go up to heaven, You are there;
 if I make my bed in Sheol [the Grave], You are there.
 139:9 If I live at the eastern horizon or settle at the western limits,
 139:10 even there Your hand will lead me;
 Your right hand will hold on to me.
 139:11 If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me,
 and the light around me will be night”—
 139:12 even the darkness is not dark to You.
 The night shines like the day;
 darkness and light are alike to You.
 139:13 For it was You who created my inward parts;
 You knit me together in my mother’s womb.
 139:14 I will praise You because I have been remarkably
 and wonderfully made.
 Your works are wonderful, and I know this very well.
 139:15 My bones were not hidden from You
 when I was made in secret,
 when I was formed in the depths of the earth.
 139:16 Your eyes saw me when I was formless;
 all my days were written in Your book
 and planned before a single one of them began.
 139:17 God, how difficult Your thoughts are for me to comprehend;
 how vast their sum is!
 139:18 If I counted them, they would outnumber the grains of sand;
 when I wake up, I am still with You.

7.1.1 **We need to know we are loved and secure.**

In Psalm 139 above, David is meditating on his relationship to the Lord-God. He comes to several key conclusions: there is nowhere he can go to escape from God or get away from him; the Lord-God knows David intimately—better than David knows himself; the Lord is the one who created David; the Lord knows about all of David’s days—past and future; all of these thoughts are too much for David to get his mind around.

We all have **core needs/desires** that drive us. We all need to know that someone really “has our back;” ultimately *we all need and want to know that we are loved*. Knowing that we are loved brings security. This is a core human need and ultimately it can only fully satisfied by knowing how much Father-God loves us in Christ.

7.1.2 We want our lives to be satisfying, fulfilling.

Living a satisfying life of satisfaction and fulfillment in this life is not grounded in what we have, but in who we know. Think about what Jesus says here:

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy;
I have come so that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.

Here Jesus is talking about His people, His “sheep” as he likes to call us. Jesus has come to us to give us *abundant life*. This is life in the fullest measure. The only way to discover full and satisfying life is to know Jesus and be known by Him.

7.1.3 We want to know our lives will be significant.

We want to know that our lives count for something, that we will make a difference, an impact in the time we have. We take comfort in knowing that we will be remembered even after we are gone.

But we need to know that the life that we have here on earth does not end at death. We will all exist forever, but we will not all *live* forever. What we are doing here on Earth is really training us for the next life to come. Consider this:

1 Timothy 4:8 For “physical exercise has some value, but godliness is valuable in every way. It holds promise for the present life and for the life to come.”

Godliness is living your life in the way that the Lord-God Himself would live it if He were you. The great news is that we have a living example of what this looks like: Jesus. He is God in human flesh. He is our great example and we want to follow Him.

For the rest of this week, we are going to look at your life up to this point and think about where you have come from so that you have a better sense of how Father-God has been working in your life through these desires and needs that He has placed in all of us.



Think about three or four of your greatest fears in life. How would you describe them? How many of them have one of the core needs/desires?



Think about three or four of your greatest dreams, desires for life. How would you describe them? How many of them have one of the core needs/desires?

WORDwork | Day 2

7.2 **Where Have I Come From? (Your Life-Story)**

Our lives have a Beginning, a Middle and an End—all the essential parts of story. We are moving; we are going somewhere. We each have a Life-Story. As we know by now, all things were created by Jesus Christ, are being sustained by Him and will find their end in Him. You are part of His Story. You do not get to choose whether you will play a role or not; you are already in the story. *The only choice that you have to make is how you will use the time that is given to you.*

One of the most powerful ways that we can see Father-God's work in our lives and in other's is through studying and sharing our Life-Stories. Reflecting on how Father-God has worked and is working in our lives becomes a powerful way to edify one another as we each focus on what Father-God has done and is doing in our lives by His grace and design. As we reflect on His work in us, we lay a foundation for the hope (confident expectation) of what He will do in our lives to fulfill the promises that He has made to us in the Lord—Christ Jesus.

7.2.1 **Your life has meaning and purpose.**

Ephesians 1:9–10 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure that He planned in Him 1:10 for the administration of the days of fulfillment—to *bring everything together in the Messiah*, both things in heaven and things on earth in Him.

Sometimes, it is hard to see what is going on with our lives because we get lost in the details. By making a **LifeMap**, we are able to take a step back and survey the “larger picture” of our lives.

We are convinced that absolutely nothing simply happens, or happens by chance. All things are moving forward in Father-God's plans for the “summing up” of all things in Christ Jesus. What is more, if you belong to Father-God in Christ through the work of His Spirit, you are being shaped and molded according to His good plans for you. You were created with purpose.

7.2.2 **Your Life-Story is Unique and Significant.**

Your Life-Story is the narrative of what God has done, is doing and will do in your life. Your life story is unique—it is your own. In the vast scope of human history, there has never been anyone exactly like you in terms of your personality

or your life experiences. Father-God is seeking to reveal something of Himself in your story.

7.2.3 Our life stories share common themes.

Even though our individual stories are unique, we all share similar common themes and experiences. Seeing the patterns in our own story and then talking with others who have shared similar experiences is one of the ways that we come to know who we are and what we are here for. You are unique, but you are never alone.

7.2.4 Your life affects the lives of others.

Father-God created us for relationship. We discover meaning through the relationship that we have with God in Christ through His Spirit and in the other human relationships that our Father has providentially provided in our lives.

As we see the reality of God's work in our lives, and share that with others, we edify one another, build true fellowship (the sharing of life) and sometimes provide a context for God's Spirit to mend and heal us in ways that we could not affect on our own. We were created to share life with one another.

7.3 How Do You Make a LifeMap?

This guide is intended to help you start making a LifeMap. As we begin, there is one point that is absolutely crucial in this process: Your LifeMap is your own. You do not have to share the work that you do here with anyone. There will be some things that you record and write about that you would not mind sharing. There will be other things that you would not want to share because they are too painful or seemingly shameful. Your LifeMap is first and foremost something you are going to work out with your Heavenly Father. In time, you may want to share more of what you discover, but at the beginning it is very important that you feel safe and secure, able to be completely truthful with yourself about that has happened in your life so far. *You will not be asked to share anything out of your LifeMap that you are not willing to share.*

- 1]** On **page 99**, we have a basic form for you to use for your life map. To get started, simply walk through the next several steps.
- 2]** On the left-hand side of the LifeMap, write the year of your birth in the horizontal line that is right above the chart.
- 3]** Now, on the far right-hand side, write the year that is 100 years after the year of your birth on the horizontal line that is above the "100" mark. This

allows you to see the general span of your life. If you were born in 1973, you would write 2073 on this line.

- 4] Now fill in all the other horizontal lines on the chart with the appropriate years that would come in 10-year segments. Again, if you were born in 1973, the dates would be 1983, 1993, 2003, etc. This gives you a framework for charting out your LifeMap. Now take a look at the chart of dates and draw a vertical line at the appropriate place on the chart for the current year. Write your current age on this line. This line divides your past from your future.

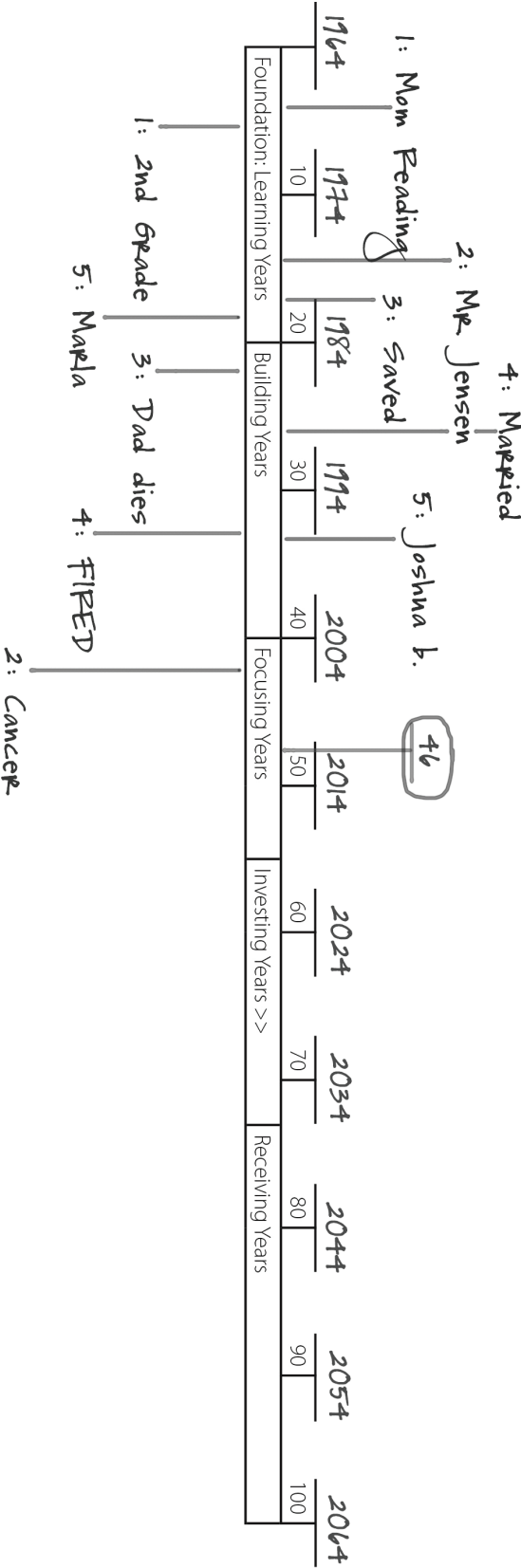
Name: _____ **Date:** _____



Illustration 9: Your LifeMap

Name: William Anybody Date: 2010.10.05

Illustration 10: Sample LifeMap



Some Critical Life Questions:

1. What did my **Father** contribute to my life-story?
2. What did my **Mother** contribute to my life-story?
3. What did my **siblings** contribute to my life-story?
4. What did my **grandparents** contribute to my life-story?
5. What did my **extended family** contribute to my life-story?
6. What did my **teachers** contribute to my life-story?
7. What have my **best friends** contributed to my life-story?
8. What have my **“enemies”** contributed to my life-story?
9. Who have been the most positive influences in my life?
10. Who have been my “heroes”?
11. Who have been the most negative influences in my life?
12. Who has shaped the direction of my life the most?
13. Who or What has brought the most joy in my life?
14. What people or events have caused the most pain and hurt in my life?
15. What have been the greatest disappointments in my life?
16. What sins have I struggled with the most in my life?
17. What addictions have I struggled with in my life?
18. What events or experiences in my life would be the most difficult to talk about with others?
19. What “roles” have I played in my life (son, father, daughter, mother, helper, victim, bully, abused, etc.)
20. What **responsibilities** have shaped my life the most?
21. What people or experiences has Father-God used the most to reveal Himself to me?
22. How has Father-God drawn me closer to Himself in my life?
23. What brings me the greatest joy in life?
24. What are my hobbies?
25. What do I think about the most?
26. What do I not want to think about the most but find myself thinking about?
27. What am I passionate about?
28. What makes me upset, angry?
29. What are my talents that others have recognized and encouraged?
30. What have been the most significant life lessons that I have learned up to this point?
31. What have been my greatest accomplishments so far?
32. What have been my greatest failures so far?
33. **What are my greatest fears?**
34. **What are my greatest dreams?**
35. **How do I see Father-God’s hand at work in the people He has brought into my life?**
36. **How do I see Father-God’s hand at work in the events that have shaped my life?**
37. **How do I see the hand of Father-God at work in the things I have experienced in my life?**
38. **Who would I like to be and what would I like to be doing 10 years from now?**
39. **Who would I like to be and what would I like to be doing 25 years from now?**
40. **Who will I be and what will I be doing 500 years from now?**

WORDwork | Day 3

There are two things that touch us more deeply than anything else – *beauty/glory* and *pain/suffering*. God uses both of these “tools” to shape us. On our LifeMap we are going to begin by charting out how our life has been touched by these two realities. We are going to chart out some of the most significant high-points in our lives up to this point and also some of the low-points. These significant points in our lives center around significant people, places or events.

- 5] Take some time now (you may reflect on this more deeply later) and think about the “high points” of your life. These are your best memories. These are the times in your life when things could not get much better. Now, pick **three** of the most significant high points of your life to map out. In the space above the chart of years, write a “1:” with a one or two-word identifier of this high point and a line descending down to the approximate year on your time line when this occurred. Do this for all **three** of your high points, “2:” and “3:”. Do these in the order they come to you; we are not “ranking” them in any order yet.
- 6] Now take some time and think about the “low-points” of your life. These are times of pain, struggle, difficulty. These are times that felt like your life was coming unraveled. Now, pick **three** of the most significant low points of your life to map out. In the space below the chart of years, write a “1:” with a one or two word identifier of this low point and a line leading up to the approximate year on your time line when this occurred. Do this for all three of your low points, “2:” and “3:”. Do these in the order they come to you; we are not “ranking” them in any order yet.
- 7] On the back of your LifeMap, there is a space for you to write out a few thoughts about both the high points and the low points as you reflect on them. As you think, remember, and reflect you will have more things you want to chart out. In the space provided, write a few sentences about what emotions you experienced during these times. Write out anything that comes to mind about these experiences: questions you struggled with, fears that surfaced, life-lessons that you learned. The more you just let things flow out, the more impactful this exercise will be.

There is a Sample LifeMap on **page 100**. There is also a list of 40 other critical life questions at the end of this session. These are helpful to work through over time to really dig into your life-story. We are going to be using your LifeMap throughout the other studies in MilktoMeat. *Keep your LifeMap safe. It will be a helpful tool in your spiritual development.*

WORDwork | Day 4

7.4 What Went Wrong?

Romans 5:12 ... sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all people because all sinned ...

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

We are going to end this study on a “cliff-hanger.” In this unit we have simply laid the foundation of some key ideas and tools that we all need in order to grow in spiritual maturity. As you have worked on your Life-Map you should be aware that your life has been touched by pain. We only have to live a short time on Earth to experience the pain of suffering, loss, and shame.

That leads us to a critical question, “What has gone wrong?” We all have a sense that things are not really working as they should be. We need to have some way to explain the chaos, death, and suffering that fills our world. As we did our overview of the Master Story, we heard that the first man Adam rebelled against the Lord-God and so brought sin (rebellion and its corrupting effects) and death into the human experience. We need to dig much deeper into those ideas, however. That is what we do in our next workbook: *Enlightened By The Gospel*.

In that study we will consider how Adam has brought ruin upon us all through the choices he made for us. The bad news is that left on our own, we continue to make the same choices Adam made: to rebel against the Lord and choose our own way of shame and chaos.

On the other hand we will hear how Jesus has come as the “Last Adam” to restore what Adam lost so that in the end things will be better, much better than they were in the beginning. Jesus sets us right with Father-God and gives us life and peace.

Romans 5:18–19 So then, as through one trespass there is condemnation for everyone, so also through one righteous act there is life-giving justification for everyone. 5:19 For just as through one man’s disobedience [Adam] the many were made sinners, so also through the one man’s obedience [Jesus] the many will be made righteous.

These are the key ideas we will explore in *Enlightened By The Gospel* and we hope that you will continue on this spiritual journey with us.



This week, focus on your Life-Map. Set aside time to work through the questions and open yourself to ask,
“Heavenly Father, how have you been at work in my life?”

CONGRATULATIONS!

You have finished the first workbook in MilktoMeat.

Now that you have laid a foundation to build on,
you are ready to continue to grow in
Discovering The Way Part 2: Enlightened By The Gospel

You can go to

www.tsfmemphis.org/milktomeat

to order this next workbook
and find out more about MilktoMeat.

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU

If this study has been meaningful for you, or
if you have suggestions on how to make it better,
Send us a note at **connect@tsfmemphis.org**

Digging Deeper

Who Are The Heavenly Beings?

Psalms 103:20* Bless the LORD,
You His angels, Mighty in strength,
Who perform His word, hearing the voice of His word!

Everyone seems to be fascinated with angels. Although the angels are an important group, they are just one class among the “heavenly beings.” Some of the oldest titles given to these heavenly beings are the “morning stars” (Job 38:7) and the “sons of God” (Job 2:1, Genesis 6:2).

One of the titles used of God in Hebrew is the word *elohim* (pronounced el-oh-heem). It is a term that describes God as “THE mighty God of heaven.” In passages from Job, the heavenly beings are referred to as “sons of *elohim*” because they apparently share in His mighty spiritual nature. They are called “morning stars” probably because of their visible radiant splendor (see Daniel 10:5-6).

The most common type Heavenly Being that shows up in the Bible are the *angels*. In both Hebrew and Greek, the words from which we get the term “angel” simply refer to a *messenger* or an *emissary*. These angels are the “heavenly host” or “angel army” that we see in the Old Testament from time to time.

The angels are often referred to as princes, powers, forces that are active in the heavenly realms. There is some rank and order (hierarchy) among these angels. In the Bible we see that the angels are ranked by thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers (Colossians 1:16). We are not sure how these ranks are related, but we should just note that there is an organization and hierarchy in the angels.

There are also specific angels mentioned in the Bible. *Michael* is referred to as “the archangel” and as a “chief prince” and is apparently one of the most powerful of all the angels (Jude 9; Daniel 10:13). *Gabriel* appears as a messenger who comes from his station in the presence of God to deliver news (Luke 1:19, 26).

There are other heavenly creatures mentioned in the Bible. The *Cherubim* are specifically mentioned in the Bible and seem to stand as guardians to God’s presence (Genesis 3:24; Exodus 25:22). We also find the *Seraphim* (Isaiah 6:2-7)

who worship the LORD night and day. There are also the “living creatures” that show up in Heaven in the book of Revelation (Revelation 4:6,8, 9; 5:6, 8, 11).

Satan and Demons

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober and alert. Your enemy the devil, like a roaring lion, is on the prowl looking for someone to devour.

All good and true-to-life stories have a villain, and so does the Sacred Story. In the heavenly realm, most likely before God created our world as it is now, a powerful angelic ruler rebelled against God. Satan, whose name means “the Adversary” is now the great enemy in our Story. In the Bible he is also called the Devil (meaning “the slanderer” Matthew 4:1), the Evil One (Matthew 5:37; 1 John 5:19), the father of all lies (1 John 3:8; John 8:44), the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4), the Dragon (Revelation 12:3), and the Serpent (Revelation 12:9).

Although we know that the Adversary was not created evil, we are not given that much direct information about his origins. We do know for certain that his fall was caused by his *pride* – he apparently thought he was God’s equal or that he could do a better job than God (1 Timothy 3:6). The Adversary is a master deceiver and his mission is very simple: through His deception he comes to steal, to kill and to destroy all that is in line with God – all that is true, good, and beautiful (Revelation 12:9ff, John 10:10). He often accomplishes his work by disguising himself as an “angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14).

Through his deception, the Adversary leads a rebellion and 1/3 of the angelic rulers take his side.

Revelation 12:3–4 Then another sign appeared in heaven: a huge red dragon that had seven heads and ten horns, and on its heads were seven diadem crowns. 12:4 Now the dragon’s tail swept away a third of the stars in heaven and hurled them to the earth.

In this rebellion and fall of Satan, a Great Spiritual War begins between the Powers of Light (God and His allies) and the Powers of Darkness (Satan and his allies). Satan is not equal to God. He is a created being. Nevertheless, God allows Satan’s treachery because He has greater purposes in mind.

These rebellious and fallen angelic rulers become *demons*. These demons, just as their leader Satan, oppose the work of God in creation. Yet they too, like Satan, are merely created beings; they can oppose God’s work, but they do not have the power to defeat Him. This angelic rebellion brought corruption and

chaos into God's universe and threatened to send all creation into chaos. Now, in the present age, we must also realize that Jesus has stripped, shamed, and defeated these dark forces:

Colossians 2:15 He (Jesus Christ) has stripped the rulers and authorities, he has made a public disgrace of them, *triumphing over them by the cross.*

Hebrews 2:14-15 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, he (Jesus) likewise shared in their humanity, *so that through death he could destroy the one who holds the power of death (that is, the devil),* 2:15 and set free those who were held in slavery all their lives by their fear of death.

As we have already heard in the study, these enemies are stripped, shamed, and defeated, but they are not yet deposed. The Enemy still roams about causing chaos but one day he and all his minions will be put away *forever*.

Not all the angels rebelled with Satan. Most of the Angels remained *holy* or *elect* (see Revelation 12:4; 1 Timothy 5:21). This group of angels carries out God's will in the Heavenly realm - they serve him and glorify His greatness (Ps 103:20; 148:2). These Holy Angels are also "ministering spirits" sent to serve God's people (Hebrews 1:14).

Now in the Heavenly realm, a Great War rages between these powers of light and darkness. Both the demons and the holy angels are involved in all things that are going on here on the earth.

Keeping the Angels in Their Place

We should not become overly obsessed about the angels. We should recognize that they are real and present in our world, but we should not let our fascination with such things distract us from our simple and faithful devotion to Christ. We also remember that *the holy angels* are ministering to all of us who are being saved:

Hebrews 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to serve those who will inherit salvation?

What Evidence Supports the Bible’s Reliability?

As we mentioned in the study, there are many threads of evidence that support the Bible’s reliability. This brief discussion gives you a little taste of the information that is available for you to explore. The Bible mentions the Hittites in Genesis 23:10 and until the late 1800’s the “critics” of the Bible denied this “Bible fable” because there was no historical or archaeological proof that the Hittites ever existed. Then in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s historical records and “letters” (clay tablets) from Hittite Kings to Babylonian kings were discovered. The Hittites are now considered to be the third-largest ancient world power!!!

Up until the 1990’s skeptics of the Bible had denied the existence of a literal King David over Israel. Once again an archaeological dig uncovered what is known as the Tel Dan Stele on which is mentioned the “house of David, King of Israel.” These types of examples could be multiplied. Although archaeology cannot prove that the Bible is true, it does give important supporting evidence that the history of the Bible is both reliable and accurate. So far, the findings of archaeology have only verified, and in no case disputed, the accuracy of the history contained in the Bible.

When we look at the New Testament it is also unique among other ancient texts. Take a look at the following chart:

<i>Work</i>	<i>Written</i>	<i>Earliest Copy</i>	<i>Time Span between Original and Copy in years</i>	<i>Copies & Fragments in existence</i>
Homer’s Illiad	900 BC	400 BC	500	643
Sophocles	ca. 400 BC	AD1000	1400	193
Caesar	100-44 BC	AD 900	1000	10
Suetonius	AD 75-160	AD 950	800	8
Pliny the Younger	AD 61-113	AD 850	750	7
Tacitus (minor works)	AD100	AD 1000	900	1
New Testament	AD40-90	AD 125	25	24,000+

Here the ancient copies and fragments of the New Testament that are still in existence are compared with other ancient works. Take a look at the work by Tacitus. There is only one ancient copy left and it is dated at AD 1000 – some

900 years after it was originally written. What does this tell us about the importance and accuracy of that document?

Now compare this with the New Testament. We have over 24,000 copies and fragments in existence with one fragment dating only 25 years after the last book of the New Testament was written. And all of these copies and fragments from different areas of the Ancient World are in 99% agreement over what was actually written. Do you think this evidence allows us to trust that we have what was actually written by the original authors of the New Testament? Even the critics cannot deny that the Bible is unique among all ancient texts.

If you would like to study these issues in more depth, we would recommend the following references:

The Origin of the Bible edited by Philip Wesley Comfort

Nothing But the Truth by Brian H. Edwards

“The Doctrine of the Word of God” in *Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem

Inerrancy by Norman Geisler

<http://www.answersingenesis.org/get-answers#/topic/bible>

Why is The Reality of The Trinity So Important?

In the Bible, we see that there are three persons who are God – God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit. There is One God in *essence*, who exists as three persons. This is hard for us to comprehend because we are so physically minded. But, God is spirit and He is not confined by space as we are. You must also try to understand that the “oneness” of God is mathematically unrelated to the “3” that make up His personality. These are 3 different people, but they are all made of the same essence.

The truth of the Trinity is not something that you will ever be able to comprehend, which is to say, your will never be able to “get you mind around it.” **You can understand the importance and significance of the Trinity**, however. There is a difference between knowing and comprehending. I know that the image on my TV is produced by electrons bombarding a screen. Do I comprehend how this works? Absolutely not! All I know is that when I turn on my TV I can watch movies and shows. This is the way we should approach the Trinity. We can know about it without comprehending it in all of its mystery.

God has always existed as three persons. This means that *He has always existed within Himself as a relationship, a fellowship*. Remember back to our passage in Acts where Paul says,

Acts 17:24-25 The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things. . .”

In this statement, Paul understands that God does not need anything, He is totally self-sufficient. This does not mean that God is cold and harsh and shut off from everything else. Instead, it flows from his existence in a completely satisfying relationship. And this relationship of the Father, Son, and Spirit gives God the ability to love. So, now let's explore the question, “how does the Trinity relate to God being love?”

Love Desires the Beloved

In order to love, we need someone to love. That should be *profoundly obvious!* To love someone means to treasure that person and to serve that person for his good and for his benefit. *God has forever existed not as a single individual who needs others outside of Himself to love and to be loved, but as a unity of three persons who love one another and are loved by one another.* The Father loves the Son, the Son loves the Father, just as the Spirit is loved by the Father and Son and also loves the Father and Son.

In 1 John 4:8 John tells us that “God **IS** love.” He does not say that “God loves,” He says that, “God **IS** love.” *Love defines God's very nature, His very character.* Think about what this means. The Father, Son, and Spirit have never been “alone” they have always and ever experienced life in fellowship, working together, serving one another in all that they do.

This makes God a complete being in and of Himself. This would also mean that He is stable, trustworthy, and “un-needy”—not depending on anything outside Himself. Older theologians referred to this idea as the *eternal blessedness* of God. He lives and loves the life that He lives in and of Himself. God is totally satisfied by Himself and within Himself.

God Wants to Love

As we think on the One True God as the Creator, the Great Author of the Sacred Story, it is important that we understand our Creator's eternal blessedness. If God

is satisfied with all that He is, then as He creates, ***He creates because He wants to, because He desires to.*** When the Father working in Christ through the Spirit created us, he gave us the ability to share and take part in His life so that we too may get a taste of His *eternal blessedness*, His “eternal kind of life.” This has direct significance to our existence. God has created humanity, God created us, because He desires that we share in His blessed, glorious, joyous, and loving type of life. Being caught up in this glorious type of love is the only thing that will fully satisfy our souls. We are here on planet earth to *experience* and *express* the love of God the Father made available to us in Jesus Christ through the work of His Holy Spirit. Remember what Jesus prayed for us all:

John 17:5, 24 (Jesus said,) “And now, Father, glorify me at your side with the glory I had with you before the world was created. ... 17:24
“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they can see my glory that you gave me because you loved me before the creation of the world.”

Bringing this all together, we see that God existing as Father, Son, and Spirit is essential to His love and faithfulness to us. His great desire is to share His love with us so that we may experience His love and express that same quality of love in all that we are and do:

1 John 4:7-11 Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been fathered by God and knows God. 4:8 The person who does not love does not know God, because *God is love.* 4:9 By this the love of God is revealed in us: that God has sent his one and only Son into the world so that we may live through him. 4:10 *In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

4:11 Dear friends, if God so loved us, then we also ought to love one another.

A Few Notes for Facilitators and Teachers

As a facilitator your goal is to move people towards spiritual growth in Christ. We have seven suggestions for you that will help you make the most of your group.

1. You do not have to be a teacher to use MilktoMeat! This is why we think in terms of teachers *and* facilitators. We have developed MilktoMeat over the past 20 years with the help of both our students and teachers/facilitators feedback. We have had many people use MilktoMeat who did not consider themselves teachers (by vocation or gifting), yet they were very effective in leading a group.

If you are a teacher we hope you will *take MilktoMeat and make it your own*. You may have more insight into how to fit the study into the specific makeup and dynamic of your group. MilktoMeat is simply a roadmap. We do believe that the order in which we lay out these topics and sessions is important. However, how they are taught is open to a lot of creativity.

2. Be praying for yourself and your group. Always cultivate a spirit of gratitude, thankful for all that has been given to us in Christ. Ask for wisdom to know what to do and how to do it. In all spiritual growth, *the Holy Spirit is the true teacher and guide*. He comes to lead us to Christ and open our hearts and minds to His Truth. Wherever a few people gather to know Christ more deeply, He keeps company with us through the Spirit. Wherever and whenever willing and hungry students open the Word of God, the Spirit of God will be there to guide, enlighten, and encourage. *You are not on your own*.

3. You should be willing to be “truth seeker” with others as you “wonder” together toward the goal. A great way to facilitate spiritual growth is by prompting people to think deeper or think differently than they currently do. *Asking good questions* is a key part of facilitating this type of growth. Good questions uncover what a person really believes and when necessary, challenges them to change their beliefs to be in line with the Truth. Asking good questions is a good way to *wonder together* (not wander)—seeking the Truth from the Word.

It is very important that you let people know that they have something to contribute. Everyone has unique insights, thoughts, and questions that can help the whole group learn. If everyone participates, discusses, and gives input the group will have a richer experience. *Let them know that you are looking forward to what*

they can teach you out of their reading and interacting with The Word. This will let the group participants feel valued and open the door to real conversation. A good question values the input of others and can open the door to real conversation and communication. Here are some types of questions to think about.

- 1] **Questions that Clarify:** These seek to define and clarify a person's view and opinions. What does that mean to you? How would you define _____?
- 2] **Questions that Illustrate:** These help people move thinking from abstract principles to concrete examples. What do you think _____ looks like? What is an example of what that would look like?
- 3] **Questions that call for Action:** Instead of just thinking about how principles and ideas affect others, make things more personal: How should this change your life? What difference does this make to you? Or you can ask more specifically: How should this change our speech? How should this change our attitude? How should this change our actions?

4. You should have the “big picture” overview of where you are heading so you can always direct the group in the right direction. Remember Milk-to-Meat is developed around the idea of “teaching the truth in the right order.” Just like in math or other subjects, there is a sequence to learning. There are basic truths that need to be internalized before we can move on. You can't teach someone algebra who doesn't know how to add and subtract.

This same principle applies in a similar way in spiritual growth and character formation. Since this study lays a foundation of the truths that every follower of Jesus needs to know and then builds on them, the sequence is important. We want to keep everyone on the main trail, focused on the main ideas of each session.

Each session is based around the outline of major questions and answers. Make sure you have a good sense of this outline as you prepare for each session. The Spirit and conversation in class will guide you in what to focus on.

5. You should keep things moving along and on point, sensitive to the needs of the group. Although we want to “*keep the main thing the main thing*,” there is always room to get on “rabbit trails” and side paths as long as they are relevant to the needs of the group or a member of your group at that time. Remember, it is about teaching the truth in the right order *and at the right time*. Consider this:

Key Realization: We are teaching students, not lessons.

You are not in a race to simply get through sessions. Let the interest and discussion of the group set the pace. Some things will take longer to get through; some things you will be able to move through quickly. The main goal is to understand, receive, and practice the truths you all are learning.

Pray for discernment to know which of those trails should be followed in the moment and which can be postponed for later. Sometimes a question will be asked which will be covered in a future session. In most cases, it is OK to say, “Can we wait to deal with that when we get to it in a couple of weeks?” However, if the question deals with something that the student is really struggling with in the moment, take the time to help them connect with the truth they need to find peace in the moment.

If you survey a few of the sessions, you will soon realize that there is more there than you can probably cover in one session. Since we are emphasizing reading the sessions before class, we have done a lot of explaining in the text. Although there is a lot of information in each session, the outline of main points is fairly simple. *Use the table of contents as your big picture overview to be familiar with the main questions and answers.* Guide your discussion and presentation around those key points allowing the group the freedom to focus on the issues that have grabbed their attention.

6. You should have the humility to say, “I don’t know.” There will be times when you are directly asked a question as a facilitator. You can either field the question or direct it back out to the group, “What does the group think?” You may also be asked hard questions that you don’t know the answer to. It’s OK not to know the answer, and it’s OK to tell the group you don’t know the answer. Saying “Great question, I haven’t thought of that and I’m not sure what the answer is.” You can also say, “I’m not sure but I’m going to try to do some research so I can get an answer for you.” An excellent way to handle the situation is to say, “I am not sure, lets all work on that for next week and see what we can learn together.”

We are always available to help in anyway that we can. If you have a question that you are not sure how to deal with or if you need any guidance at all, you can send us an email at mtmhelp@tsfmemphis.org.

7. You should help cultivate a community that is safe and secure. In our spiritual growth it is important that we have people who are there to help us,

encourage us, and love us. It is especially important whenever you are attempting spiritual growth because Satan will do anything he can to thwart your spiritual development. Having a group that supports you and prays for you is essential to healthy growth.

Be aware of what is going on with your group, sensitive to how the Spirit may be moving and opening areas of insight, discomfort or vulnerability for those in your group. You want to encourage one another as you enter into this journey. Be sure to pray for one another and care for one another, showing mutual support and love for each other. If at all possible allow your group to interact outside of the time designated to study this material. Getting to know, and enjoy one another will help form a bond between participants that will keep them more engaged in the group.

Your group will likely consist of many different people. Some extroverts, some introverts, some shy, and some bold. Part of your goal is to make sure that you provide opportunities for those who are more shy to enter into the discussion. You may have to ask a person specifically what they think for them to begin talking, or for a dominant group member not to answer.

Let people know that what happens or is said in this group is confidential—*what happens in the group, stays in the group.* (It should be clear this does not apply in exceptional cases: If anyone threatens physical harm to themselves or others, it is necessary to report this to the authorities). Gossiping or talking about what other people bring into the group without their consent is grounds for being kicked out of the group.

In all things cultivate an attitude of *humility* and *respect*. The key thing to remember is that *we should all set the goal of having our thoughts, emotions, and desires shaped to be in line with the Truth, Goodness, and Glory of God.* We all have areas in which we need to grow. When someone has a different opinion or viewpoint, be careful to not let the discussion turn into a battle. Rather, respectfully and lovingly engage their ideas, thoughts, and attitudes. But always guide your students away from mere “opinions” and toward Jesus who is The Way, The Truth and The Life.

“Therefore, my dear brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord’s work, *knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*”

~ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:57-5 ~

