

Welcome to Fellowship

We are happy that you have made a connection with our church, and we are excited about the opportunity to make an investment in your spirit and soul.

This Next Steps class is designed to reinforce four essential Christian life topics:

- Gospel
- Community
- Serve
- Commitment (Church Membership)

We want to help you become a “Learner, Leader and Multiplier” in your Christian life, and the sessions in this study contain essential information that will move you in that direction.

Our prayer is that the time you spend associated with our church will inspire in you an ever growing love for Jesus and for the people around you (Matthew 22:36-40).

Let the journey begin.....



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Next Steps - Gospel

Session One

THE PROBLEM

Sin. It's an uncomfortable word. Sin harms our relationship with God and our relationships with other people. It's so deeply ingrained in all of us, we can't stop sinning.

You may resist being branded as a sinner. That's understandable. But the truth is, it's a brand no honest person can avoid. A sinner is anyone who knows the difference between right and wrong and chooses to do wrong. On purpose. Sound like anyone you know?

Jesus taught that sin separates us from God, but that God's willingness to forgive reconnects us. So it was important to Jesus that men and women faced and embraced their status as sinners so they would recognize their need for forgiveness.

When Jesus talked about sin, he made it so all-inclusive that nobody could escape. He raised the standard so high that nobody made a passing grade. Then he turned right around and insisted that God was on an endless pursuit to restore his relationship with sinners. The transaction that made this possible was a personal admission of guilt and a request for forgiveness. So, while being branded a sinner is uncomfortable, Jesus taught that it is necessary. Sinners need forgiveness, Forgiveness is the means by which humanity is restored to a right relationship with the heavenly Father.

VIEW VIDEO: "THE BLOOD"

(Available in church app or through links emailed to you)

THE SOLUTION

When Jesus began his public ministry he came to the Jordan River to be baptized by John the Baptist. When John saw him he declared,

“Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”

John 1:29.

We believe Jesus was the Lamb of God who picked up and carried away the sin of the world. That's great news for you. Here's why. You don't have to forgive yourself; yourself has already been forgiven.

The sin you've tried to make up for, pay for, and find redemption for has already been made up for, paid for, and redeemed. It happened two thousand years ago when the Lamb of God took away the sin of the world - including your sin.

Through Christ, God has “canceled” your sin debt. When you place your faith in Christ, your sin is forgiven. Your debt is canceled. You don't owe God and you don't owe you. God did what you could not do. Jesus took your sin and carried it away. Forgiveness is a gift God made available to everyone. But like any gift, it must be received. Every faith tradition offers an answer to the question of what to do when we can't forgive ourselves. But only one person ever offered himself as the answer to that question. Jesus.

Through Christ, God removed all the barriers to us being adopted into his family. Here is where the confusion often begins for many Christians. Having initiated a relationship with God by faith rather than performance, their inclination is to manage their relationship with God according to the old system - the performance system. They attempt to earn what he's already given: favor. They quit thinking like family and begin performing like contracted labor. Old habits die hard.

You have been saved “by grace.” God’s forgiveness was, or hopefully soon will be, received as a gift. God does not view you through the filter of your performance. He views you through the filter of a father-to-child relationship. You didn’t earn your way into God’s good graces. You don’t have to perform to stay there.

FAITH

Jesus called upon his followers to believe in him. Not his ideas. Him. This theme is reflected in what is arguably the most popular statement in the New Testament:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believed in him shall not perish but have eternal life.
John 3:16

From start to finish, the mission of Jesus was Jesus.

Following Jesus requires faith. Specifically, it requires one to place his or her trust in Jesus. Not the teachings of Jesus — the person of Jesus. Christianity does not require blind faith. Christianity is an informed faith. At the center is an event attested to by eyewitnesses who, by their own accounts, lost faith when Jesus died, but regained it when he rose from the dead. The foundation of Christianity is not a list of “believe thats”, but a single “trust in”.

Christians don’t believe Jesus rose from the dead because the Bible says so. Christians believe that Jesus rose from the dead because Matthew and John, eyewitness, said so. Christians believe because Luke, a first-century doctor, claimed to have thoroughly investigated the events surrounding the life and crucifixion of Jesus and concluded that Jesus rose from the dead. Christians believe that Jesus rose from the dead because Peter believed he did. Christians believe because James, the brother of Jesus, claims it was true.

Like every religion, Christianity requires faith. Specifically, Christianity requires faith in a person. This is why for anyone investigating Christianity, the first question that must be answered is, Who is Jesus?

JESUS

Who is he? What makes his life and teachings so unique? What sets him apart? Why do millions of people from cultures all over the world continue to follow him?

Jesus is the central figure of the Christian faith. His influence goes beyond religion. In John 14:6, Jesus said,

“I am the way and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.”

John 14:6

Salvation for any person is found through Jesus and Jesus alone.

John 1:1-2 says,

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God...”

John 1:1-2

He is both human and divine...God and man at the same time.

“We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair

when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.”

Romans 3:22-26 NLT

Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

John 14:6

VIEW VIDEO: “JOURNEY TO SALVATION”

(Available in church app or through links emailed to you)

REVIEW & FILL IN THE BLANK

1. A _____ is anyone who knows the difference between right and _____ and chooses to do _____.
2. Forgiveness is the means by which _____ is restored to a right _____ with the heavenly _____.
3. Through Christ, God has _____ your sin _____.
4. The foundation of Christianity is not a list of “_____”, but a single “_____”.
5. Salvation for any _____ is found through Jesus and _____ alone.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

What do you associate with the word sin?

Do you believe you need forgiveness? Why or why not?

Is there any belief or cause you are willing to die for / live for?
