



NEW
BELIEVER'S
CLASS

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TEACHER'S WORKBOOK



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OVERVIEW

The New Believer's Class is a 6-week course over what it means to be a follower of Jesus. It is intended for those who are new to following Jesus, or who are exploring the Christian faith. To help along the way, participants will be paired up with a sponsor who will be there to answer questions and walk through the process with them. Our hope is to see people embrace what Christians believe, alongside being formed into how Christians live.

GOALS

INITIATION: CATECHESIS

Our New Believer's Class is intended to initiate new believers into the Christian habitus. Early church leadership considered catechesis to be integral in developing healthy local church communities. Catechism was a way for new believers to "count the cost" of living for Jesus, as well as to prepare for "trials of various kinds." While catechesis must include instruction in foundational beliefs, it should likewise focus on formation and practices, or the Christian habitus. Our hope is to introduce them to what it means to follow Jesus with all our mind, heart, soul, and strength.

IMITATION: SPONSORSHIP

Our New Believer's Class cannot just be information transfer, but a transformed life. This does not happen on our own, but as we walk in faith with others. An essential part of catechesis throughout the history of the church has been the inclusion of sponsors or mentors, who commit to practically show the new believer what it means to follow Jesus. They set an example for the new believer to imitate, as well as give earthy guidance on how to follow Jesus in the here and now. Each new believer will be assigned a mature, godly sponsor who will walk with them through the class and meet with them weekly. This will allow for long-term growth, discipleship, and reinforcement of what is taught in the class.

INTEGRATION: CHURCH LIFE

Our New Believer's Class will integrate new believers into the life and rhythms of the church. Class leadership and the sponsor will assist the new believer in connecting to essential aspects of church life, like Community and Serving. In addition, we want them to understand not just *the Church* but *our church*. We will explain the rhythms and liturgical practices they can expect at Frontline. As a new member of the family of faith, we want them to know the culture of our community: our habits, rhythms, words, values, and ethos. Our hope is to ensure that a month after the class, the new believer is engaged in the life of the church.



DETAILS

WHO?

This class should generally be limited to those who have been a follower of Jesus for less than 2 years, or those who are exploring the Christian faith.

WHEN?

The class will be offered twice a year at each congregation with no cost. Once in the Spring (pre- or post-Easter, depending on Easter date). The other in the Fall (after Labor Day).

GENERAL SCHEDULE

We recommend the class to be offered on Sunday mornings at 9am. This will form a habit that can transition into serving and attending on Sundays. In addition, we recommend a meeting with the sponsor once a week outside of Sundays. This will form a habit that can transition into attending a Community Group.

Teaching - 30 mins
Church Culture - 10 mins
Q&A - 15 mins

TOPICS

1. **The Claims of Jesus** - *Who Is Jesus?*
 - Authority, Exclusivity, Divinity
2. **Responding to the Gospel** - *How Do You Become A Christian?*
 - Faith, Repentance, Baptism
 - *Church Culture:* Community Groups
3. **The Christian Faith** - *What Do Christians Believe?*
 - The Apostle's Creed: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
 - *Church Culture:* Calendar
4. **Spiritual Formation and Habits** - *How Do Christians Worship?*
 - Worship, Prayer, Scripture, Communion
 - *Church Culture:* Liturgy
5. **Obedience of the Faith** - *How Do Christians Live?*
 - People of Peace, People of Chastity, People of Love
 - *Church Culture:* Serving
6. **Salt and Light** - *What Do Christians Do?*
 - Seeking Justice, Embracing Vocation, Practicing Evangelism
 - *Church Culture:* Next Steps



SESSION 1

THE CLAIMS OF JESUS: WHO IS JESUS?

INTRO:

10 mins

Welcome to our New Believer's Class. Throughout the history of the church, when someone began their walk with Jesus, they would go through lengthy training and instruction known as catechesis. This initiation process was intended to give them a foundation of what it meant to be a follower of Jesus. They would learn not only what Christians believe, but how Christians are to live in this world. They would be immersed in the rhythms and practices of the church. And through this process, they would start their life of faith on the right foot.

Over the next few weeks, we are aiming for the same thing. We want to train you in what it means to be a follower of Jesus. We want to give you a snapshot of the Christian life. We will explore questions like: Who is Jesus? What does it mean to be a Christian? How are we to live? What practices are essential to our faith? Our hope is that this class will provide a firm foundation of what Christians believe, as well as how Christians are to live in day-to-day life. This class is a safe space for you to ask questions and openly process the claims of Jesus. There are no dumb questions here. At the end of each week, we will have space for Q&A.

To help you along the way, you will be paired up with a sponsor. This person is a mature follower of Jesus who has committed to walk with you through this process as a guide. They will be here to answer questions and to set an example of what it looks like to follow Jesus in the here and now. Each week, we want you to take some time to meet with your sponsor to further process the class, read Scripture, pray together, ask questions, and learn what it means to be a Christian.

[Make sure everyone knows who their sponsor is.]

TEACHING:

30 minutes

We must start with a question: *who is Jesus?* This is the most important question that we could ever ask. Jesus of Nazareth has impacted the world more than anyone else in history. He is the most important religious figure to have ever lived. From a small village in Israel, Jesus was not born into royalty or notoriety. Rather, he lived the majority of his life in complete obscurity. He taught publicly for only 3 years, and yet the world is forever changed because of his life and teachings.



Who is Jesus? Everyone has to come face-to-face with this question. Which is why every major world religion has some stance on Jesus. There is no neutrality. It doesn't matter what religious beliefs you hold, you have to do something with Jesus. And astoundingly, almost every religion views him positively, recruiting him to their own beliefs and philosophy.

For many, he was simply a good, moral teacher whose teachings we should adopt. For others, he was a revolutionary for the poor and oppressed who set an example for us to follow. Still others saw him as an enlightened philosopher leading the way to self-actualization and nirvana. He has been called a number of things: a Jew, a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Hindu, a Prophet, a Mystic. Both conservatives and liberals, religious and irreligious look favorably on him.

Likewise, in his own day, there were a variety of views on who Jesus was and what he came to do.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." - Matthew 16:13-14

Even John the Baptist, a contemporary of Jesus, pressed him for answers.

Now when John heard in prison what the Christ was doing, he sent a message through his disciples and asked him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" - Matthew 11:2-3

Jesus himself pressed people to deal with who he was. After asking his disciples about what others say of him, he poses this question that is directed to us all.

"But you," he asked them, "who do you say that I am?" - Matthew 16:15

Who is Jesus? Whether you are new to the faith, a skeptic, or a mature believer, everyone has to deal with Jesus. Jesus made a number of claims for himself, about who he was and what he came to do. These claims were so radical that eventually they got him killed. But for those who believed, it transformed their lives.

Who does Jesus say that he is? We are going to look at the words of Jesus himself to see three radical claims he made for himself.

THREE RADICAL CLAIMS OF JESUS

The Claim of Authority

All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. - Jesus [Matthew 28:18]



Jesus radically claimed to have absolute authority over heaven and earth. He had the right to tell people what to do and what not to do. And with such authority, he claimed that he alone knew the way of life and flourishing. Many times, he equated his words with that of God's Word. According to Jesus, his words and teachings were binding on everyone. To follow his teachings would lead to life and flourishing, but to ignore his teachings would lead to death and destruction. All in all, he claimed that he alone had truth.

Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn't collapse, because its foundation was on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and doesn't act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, the rivers rose, the winds blew and pounded that house, and it collapsed. It collapsed with a great crash." - Matthew 7:24-27

But Jesus refuses to allow us to see him as only a great teacher of truth. It is not enough to just agree with his moral philosophy. Rather, Jesus asserts a claim of authority over *us* as individuals. In his authority, Jesus commanded people to leave their livelihoods and professions to follow him. To be his follower, we would have to completely surrender to his will. He calls us to follow him at all costs.

Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple... Every one of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple. - Luke 14:27, 33

This is why Jesus received the title of Lord, which means master or ruler. In his authority as Lord, Jesus has the right to command us as he sees fit. As one Bible commentator notes:

His followers were to obey him and to confess him before men. His disciples came to recognize the right of Jesus to make these totalitarian claims, and in their letters Paul, Peter, James and Jude delight to call themselves his "slaves." - John Stott, Basic Christianity

Who is Jesus? He is the Lord who demands of us absolute obedience and allegiance.

The Claim of Exclusivity

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. - Jesus [John 14:6]

Jesus radically claimed that our eternal destiny is dependent on our relationship to him. According to his teachings, he alone is the way to salvation, or eternal life, as he sometimes put it. There is no other way to have a right relationship with



God except through Jesus. There is no Plan B. Salvation can be found in him alone. If we believe in him and follow him, we receive eternal life.

Truly I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not come under judgment but has passed from death to life. - John 5:24

Contrary to modern attitudes, Jesus rejected the idea that all religions are essentially the same and lead to truth. Rather, Jesus declared that everything exclusively rests on following him. If we reject him, it doesn't matter what other religion or philosophy we subscribe to. We have no hope of eternal life. If we reject Jesus' authority and teaching, we will be rejected by God. But if we receive Jesus, we are received by God.

Therefore, everyone who will acknowledge me before others, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever denies me before others, I will also deny him before my Father in heaven. - Matthew 10:32-33

This is why Jesus received the title of Savior, which means rescuer. He came to give us what no one else could: salvation from sin and death. He came to deliver us from the darkness and brokenness that plagues us.

For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.... Anyone who believes in him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God. - John 3:16, 18

Who is Jesus? He is the Savior who offers us eternal life and a right relationship with God.

The Claim of Divinity

I and the Father are one. - Jesus [John 10:30]

Jesus radically claimed that he was not just a man, but God himself who had come in the flesh. He called himself the Son of God, pointing to his divinity and the unique relationship he had to the Father. Throughout his life and teachings, Jesus continually equates himself with the Father. He claimed to be the self-revelation of God that had come down from heaven. According to Jesus, if we want to know who God is and what he is like, we can look to him and find the answer. To see him, to know him, to honor him is to see, know, and honor the Father.

"Lord," said Philip, "show us the Father, and that's enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been among you all this time and you do not know me, Philip? The one who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say,



'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? - John 14:8-10

This union of man and God in the person of Jesus is known as the Hypostatic Union. Jesus is one person with two natures: divine and human. This is a mystery, but when we honestly approach what Jesus claimed, we see both of these truths meeting in Jesus. He is fully and truly human, and at the same time, he is fully and truly God. He claimed to have come down from heaven and to have existed with the Father before the creation of the universe.

Jesus spoke these things, looked up to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you gave him authority over all flesh, so that he may give eternal life to everyone you have given him. This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent —Jesus Christ. I have glorified you on the earth by completing the work you gave me to do. Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with that glory I had with you before the world existed. - John 17:1-5

His disciples and enemies, his friends and family, all recognized his claim to Godhood. This is the main reason the Jews wanted him dead.

I and the Father are one." Again the Jews picked up rocks to stone him. Jesus replied, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these works are you stoning me?" "We aren't stoning you for a good work," the Jews answered, "but for blasphemy, because you—being a man—make yourself God." - John 10:30-33

His best friend, John, writes this about him:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created.... The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.... No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father's side—he has revealed him. - John 1:1-3, 14, 18

Who is Jesus? He is the God who became a man, worthy of our honor, obedience, and worship.

WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?

Jesus makes some radical claims about who he is. To each and every one of us, Jesus asks a question. "Who do you say that I am?" These are the claims Jesus made for himself, and if we receive Jesus, these are the things we must receive. He refuses to leave us in neutrality.



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CLASS

...People often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. - C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

According to the teaching of Jesus, there are only two ways, only two options. The way of death and the way of life. To reject Jesus and his claims is to follow a path that leads to destruction and judgment. But to follow Jesus and receive him is to walk the path that leads to life and blessing. There is no other option. We either receive him as Lord, Savior, and God, or we reject him. To be a Christian is to choose the Way of Jesus.

Q&A

15 minutes



SESSION 2

RESPONDING TO THE GOSPEL: HOW DO YOU BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

TEACHING:

30 minutes

In his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus ends his teaching by laying before us Two Ways: the Way of Life and the Way of Death. Both paths are before us, and we have to take one. Sitting at a fork in the road is not an option. In fact, we are already on one of these paths, whether we realize it or not.

Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it. - Matthew 7:13-14

How do we know which Way we are on? According to Jesus, it is solely dependent on how we respond to him and his claims. He claimed to be Lord, having all authority in heaven and earth. He claimed to be Savior, the only one who could offer us life and rescue. He claimed to be God himself, the Creator of all things. Jesus made these radical claims about himself, then turns to each one of us and asks: Who do you say that Jesus is?

Christians first and foremost believe that Jesus is who he says he is. They affirm each one of these claims. But here is reality: we can affirm the claims Jesus made about himself, and yet not be his disciple. There is something more that Jesus demands of us. We can declare to be true that Jesus is God and the only way of salvation, and yet not be his follower. As Jesus' brother, James, put it:

You believe that God is one. Good! Even the demons believe—and they shudder. - James 2:19

Demons know more truth about God than any one of us, and they hate him. Knowledge alone is not sufficient. We can't just look at the evidence, arrive at the truth, and then move on. Rather, the good news of Jesus demands a response from us. If Jesus is who he says he is, we have to do something about it. We can't just sit by idly. It is not enough to just hear who Jesus is. We must receive him and follow him. And if we don't, we won't receive the life and blessing and salvation he brings.

So how do we receive Jesus and become his follower? The Bible describes three responses to Jesus that together make up what it means to become a disciple.



THREE RESPONSES TO JESUS

Faith

[Jesus] came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name... - John 1:11-12

We receive Jesus by believing in him, or having faith in him. But what does this mean? Today, we tend to think of faith as taking a leap in the dark, believing in something even when everything points to the contrary. In many ways, it is pretending or choosing to believe something to be true even if you don't believe it to be true. This is what every Christmas movie is about, right? We must believe in Santa Claus... Or in fairies... Or in happy endings... Or in the power of love... Even if no one else does, even if it doesn't make sense, we believe, we have faith.

In our culture, faith is seen as the opposite of reason. With our reason, we look for concrete logic and verifiable evidence, and make a determination based on that. But with faith, we throw our reason away and embrace the impossible. Even though things don't add up, even though there is evidence to the contrary, we choose to believe. We take a leap of faith.

But that is NOT what the Bible means when it talks about faith. In Scripture, belief or faith means trust. And this trust isn't disconnected from reason, but flowing from it. It is recognizing the truth of who Jesus is and trusting in him. And trusting communicates something deeper than just believing something to be true. It is belief, but it is also reliance on the truth. It means believing that Jesus wasn't lying about who he said he was, and it also means depending completely on that reality.

In order to receive Jesus, we must fully trust in him as our only Lord, Savior, and God. When we have faith in Jesus, we are saved and made right with God.

For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. - John 3:16

We don't receive Jesus by working really hard to change our outward behavior. We don't receive Jesus by some prayer or religious rite. We don't receive Jesus by doing more good works than bad works. Because in all of those situations, we are having faith (trusting) in ourselves and our works. Rather, we receive Jesus by looking away from ourselves and placing all our hope in him and his work. This is what it means to have faith.

For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast. - Ephesians 2:8-9



So we receive Jesus by responding with faith.

Repentance

After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" - Mark 1:14-15

If we have truly received Jesus by trusting in him, our lives are going to look different. By necessity, our faith changes the way we think and live. This is what we mean by repentance. Repentance is a change in the way we think and see the world that leads to a change in the way we live. When we repent, our motivations and behavior are different than they were before we trusted in Jesus.

Repentance is the natural result of trusting in Jesus. We can't say that we trust in Jesus, have faith in him, depend completely on him, and yet continue to live as our own Lord, Savior, and God. If we have faith, we will have repentance. They are two sides of the same coin.

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Can such faith save him?... For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead. - James 2:14, 26

It is important to note that repentance is not the same as remorse. It is not simply feeling bad about the wrong things we have done. Repentance involves a decisive turn from one thing to another. It is turning away from our sin and disobedience. It is renouncing our old way of life and the brokenness that came along with it. It is making restitution for the wrongs we have done to others. It is putting away the practices that marked the Way of Death, and putting on the new life that is found in Jesus.

Therefore, I say this and testify in the Lord: You should no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their thoughts. They are darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their hearts. They became callous and gave themselves over to promiscuity for the practice of every kind of impurity with a desire for more and more. But that is not how you came to know Christ, assuming you heard about him and were taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, to take off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires, to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth. - Ephesians 4:17-24

Repentance means functionally living with Jesus as Lord, submitting to his Word in regards to our thoughts, words, and deeds. There is no stone that goes unturned.



In essence, repentance is a matter neither of what we feel nor of what we say. It is an inward change of mind and attitude toward sin that leads to a change of behavior. - John Stott, Basic Christianity

But repentance is not just turning away from something, but turning to something. We turn away from our sin, and we turn toward Jesus. We embrace Jesus as the one more desirable, more satisfying than our sin. Repentance doesn't just involve renouncing sin, but it must include treasuring Christ. And the more we treasure Christ, the more we will turn from our sin.

So we receive Jesus by repenting of our sin.

Baptism

When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles: "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. - Acts 2:37-38

As a sign of our faith and repentance, Jesus gave us the sacrament of Baptism. Baptism is the initial step of the Christian life, the first act of faith and repentance. It is the primary way a person identifies themselves as a follower of Jesus in this world. In the Bible, whenever a person comes to faith in Jesus, they are immediately baptized in water. It serves as a physical sign of their intention to follow the Way of Jesus.

In Baptism, a professing believer makes a public commitment to follow Jesus and is fully immersed in water. This act embodies our new spiritual reality: that we have died to our old way of life, and have been raised to a new life in Jesus.

Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life. - Romans 6:3-4

Furthermore, in Baptism we ask God to give us a clean heart and a good conscience. The waters serve as a picture that our sins have been washed away by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In this Sacrament, God speaks over us that we are his children. It is the way God visibly displays what he has done inside us. And throughout our life, our Baptism is a constant reminder of the promises that God has made towards us, to wash us clean and give us new life.

Christ instituted this outward washing and with it promised that, as surely as water washes away the dirt from the body, so certainly his blood and his Spirit wash away my soul's impurity, that is, all my sins. - Heidelberg Catechism



Every individual who has come under conviction of their sin, desires to repent and forsake their sin, and follow after Jesus in faith and trust is called to the waters of baptism.

So we receive Jesus by following him in baptism.

The Bible never conceived a day where someone could claim to be a follower of Jesus without all three of these responses: faith, repentance, and Baptism.

CHURCH CULTURE:

Each week beginning today, we are going to take a few minutes and talk about the importance of the church in the Christian life. We are going to look at the culture of our church and why we do the things we do. Our hope is to give you a glimpse into the life of the church and how vital it is to the life of a follower of Jesus.

You were not made to live the Way of Jesus on your own. Jesus calls us to step into a community of other believers to experience his grace through them. In the messiness of sharing life, we laugh together, we cry together, we pray together. In true community, we know each other deeply and become a family. The church is not just a Sunday morning event. It is during the six days between Sundays that we start to experience the Church as it was meant to be.

At Frontline Church, we believe the best way to accomplish this community is through what we call Community Groups. These are small, diverse groups that meet in homes all around our city throughout the week. Community Groups are the primary place where you will experience discipleship, care, and mission at Frontline.

We encourage people to connect to a Community Group near them, rather than based on a certain stage of life or commonality. This is for a couple reasons. First, our hope is that Community Groups would be diverse, where people from different backgrounds and stages of life can come together under the banner of Jesus. Second, our hope is that Community Groups would be able to engage the neighbors where they live.

In the next few weeks, we are going to try to get you connected to a group where you can grow and experience this kind of community.

Q&A

15 minutes



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SESSION 3

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH: WHAT DO CHRISTIANS BELIEVE?

TEACHING:

30 minutes

Jesus taught us not just about himself, but about who God is. To receive Jesus, we must receive what he taught about God and this life. There are certain truths we must believe in order to be called his followers. Early in the Church's history, Christians captured these beliefs in what are called creeds. Creeds are belief statements that list out what is essential to believe as a follower of Jesus. The point of these creeds was not to detail *everything* the Bible teaches. Rather, they set the parameters of belief. In other words, when a person steps outside of these beliefs, they can no longer claim to be a follower of Jesus.

One of the oldest and simplest of these creeds is called the Apostles' Creed. The Apostles' Creed seeks to lay out what all Christians believe, no matter their denomination or culture. This is one reason why many traditions recite the Creed during Baptisms. It is a way of receiving new believers into the faith all followers of Jesus hold to. So what do Christians believe?

*I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
Born of the Virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified, died and was buried;
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
Is seated at the right hand of the Father,
And will come again to judge the living and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the one holy church,
The communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting,
Amen.*



THE TRINITY

It is important to note that the Creed doesn't just list out things we believe. It lays before us the God we believe in. Three times, the Creed states: I believe in the Father; I believe in the Son (Jesus); I believe in the Holy Spirit. This belief that God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is a uniquely Christian understanding of who God is, called the Trinity. The Trinity means that there is one God who exists in three persons. You could summarize this belief in 4 statements.

1. There is one God.
2. The Father is God, The Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God.
3. The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father.
4. Each person of the Trinity is equally and eternally God.

While this idea can be hard to wrap our minds around, Christians believe in the Trinity because this is what Jesus himself taught. As one example, Jesus tells us that when we come to faith and are baptized, we are baptized into the name of the Trinity.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. - Matthew 28:19

The Apostles' Creed is organized into three sections around what Christians believe about the three persons of the Trinity.

THREE PERSONS OF THE TRINITY

The Father

The very first thing Christians profess in this Creed is simple yet profound: God is Father.

*I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.*

By calling him Father, we are not saying that God is a Father, or that God is the Father of Jesus (which is true). But because of the work of Jesus, God is our Father, and we are adopted as his sons and daughters. We have now become a part of God's family, and he loves us and relates to us as a Father. But he is unlike any Father we have ever experienced. He does not seek to dominate us or keep us in fear. Rather, as a good Father, he loves us with an unconditional love. He is always present with us to protect us and guide us. He is always seeking the good of his children. He is a good, good Father.



For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father!" - Romans 8:15

Further, our Father is the Almighty Creator. He created everything from nothing, order from chaos. He made everything seen and unseen, in heaven and on earth. He spoke a word, and the universe burst into existence, with burning stars, roaring seas, towering mountains. Everything we see flows from him and his good design. And he made each and every one of us, designing us to be his image, or reflection, in the universe. He created us with our unique personalities, looks, gifts, knowing every hair on our head. He is the Creator of heaven and earth.

The heavens were made by the word of the LORD, and all the stars, by the breath of his mouth. He gathers the water of the sea into a heap; he puts the depths into storehouses. Let the whole earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spoke, and it came into being; he commanded, and it came into existence. - Psalm 33:6-9

This is what we believe about the Father.

The Son

The largest portion of the Creed is dedicated to Jesus. It summarizes the story of his life, death, and resurrection.

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified, died and was buried;
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
Is seated at the right hand of the Father,
And will come again to judge the living and the dead.*

First, the Creed looks at Jesus' miraculous birth. He had no biological father, but was born to a virgin mother by the power of the Holy Spirit. This miracle displayed the uniqueness of his person, that Jesus was fully God and fully man. Though being the divine Creator, Jesus was physically carried in the womb of a human mother. The Almighty Creator became a baby. He didn't pretend to be a human, like Superman. No, he truly took on our humanity in all that entails and lived as a human, yet without sin.

Now since the children have flesh and blood in common, Jesus also shared in these... He had to be like his brothers and sisters in every way, so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest... - Hebrews 2:14, 17



Next, the Creed turns to Jesus' death. After three years of public ministry, he was turned over to the Roman authorities by the religious leaders of the day. They wanted him dead because of the things he taught and claimed for himself. The Roman leader in Jerusalem, whose name was Pilate, oversaw his sham of a trial, where he was condemned to execution through crucifixion. He was stripped, beaten, mocked, and nailed to a cross. And late that day, he died. But Christians believe something miraculous happened in his death, something necessary for our salvation. On the cross, Jesus died the death we deserved, taking the punishment of our sins upon him. He takes our sins upon himself, so that by his wounds we could be healed and rescued.

Yet he himself bore our sicknesses, and he carried our pains; but we in turn regarded him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and we are healed by his wounds. We all went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way; and the LORD has punished him for the iniquity of us all. - Isaiah 53:4-6

Finally, the Creed turns to Jesus' resurrection. On the third day, Jesus rose again from the dead. His body came to life; his heart began beating again. In this, he showed his power over death. After a 40 day period where he appeared to his disciples and continued to teach them, he was lifted up into heaven. And he has promised to one day return in victory when he will judge the living and the dead, defeating his foes and receiving his followers. And forever, he will reign as King and Lord. This is what we believe about the Son.

The Holy Spirit

Finally, the Creed turns its focus to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not a power or idea or feeling. Rather, the Spirit is a person to be believed in. The Holy Spirit is God himself.

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the one holy church,
The communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting,
Amen.*

At first glance, it feels like the Holy Spirit gets slighted in this Creed. That is, until you realize that this whole section focuses on the Spirit and the gifts he brings.

From the creating work of the Father and the rescue work of the Son, [the Creed] turns to the re-creating work of the Spirit, whereby we are actually made new in and through Christ. - J.I. Packer, Affirming the Apostle's Creed

There are two gifts from the Holy Spirit that the Creed specifically highlights. One such gift is the Church itself. When we think of the church, we tend to think of the numerous churches in our city and in our world. You have your Baptist churches



and Catholic churches and Episcopalian churches, and so on. But the Apostles' Creed embraces "one holy church." Why would it mention one church when there are literally thousands of churches in Oklahoma alone?

Because in the Creed, "Church" is not referring to a local gathering of believers, but to all followers of Jesus in all places. So while there are many local churches, there is only one Church, in this sense. The person who receives Jesus today at Frontline and the person who received Jesus a thousand years ago in Europe are part of the same Church, though they have different local churches. To be a follower of Jesus is to be a part of the one holy Church.

And within this one church, we are all connected and united to one another by the Holy Spirit. This is what we mean by "the communion of the saints." We have fellowship with one another, and belong to one another. We are a family because of the Spirit who lives in us. We are brothers and sisters, not just here at Frontline, but with the followers of Jesus in Tulsa and Mexico and Iraq and Africa. We even share this mystical communion with believers who have died and gone to be with Jesus. We are all united, we are all one Church, united by the Holy Spirit.

Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. - Romans 12:4-5

Finally, the Creed highlights our personal salvation as a gift from the Holy Spirit. We come to faith in Jesus because of the work of the Spirit in us. As a result, we receive the forgiveness of all our sins: past, present, and future. And this salvation we have received is not just for now, but looks forward to the day Jesus returns. When that happens, our bodies will be raised from the dead and we will live with him forever. This is what we believe about the Spirit and the gifts he brings.

The Creed summarizes what we believe about the Father, Son, and Spirit, but it doesn't touch on how we are to live. In the coming weeks, we will look at what it actually means to live in the Way of Life.

CHURCH CULTURE:

Throughout the history of the Church, followers of Jesus have used a number of tools to help them remember and rehearse the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Sometimes, this has been expressed in Creeds. Other times, it has been expressed in our church rhythms.

In early centuries, the Church created an annual calendar to rehearse the gospel throughout the year, focusing on different aspects of Jesus' life and work. These are historical seasons that Frontline intentionally tries to engage.

This includes 4 big seasons in the life of the church:



- **Advent:** This season is the four weeks leading up to Christmas, in which we prepare our hearts to remember the birth of Christ for us. We place ourselves where the people of God were before Jesus was born, in hopeful waiting. This also brings longing for the return of Christ to set all things right.
- **Christmas:** The Christmas season begins on December 25 and continues for 12 days. This is a season where we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the union of divinity and humanity in him, and his coming to rescue us.
- **Lent:** This season begins on Ash Wednesday, and continues for 46 days leading up to Easter. During this time, we remember the final days of Jesus, culminating in his crucifixion and death. Some Christians fast for 40 days, excluding the 6 Sundays. Fasting is abstaining from certain foods, social media, or other good gifts to remember Jesus' suffering and to recognize our hunger and thirst for him. In place of these things, one should focus on prayer, service, and almsgiving. Lent culminates in three holy days: Maundy Thursday (remembering the night before his death), Good Friday (remembering his crucifixion), and Holy Saturday (remembering his time in the grave).
- **Easter:** Easter is a 50 day celebration of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. We remember the 40 days in which he appeared to his disciples, his Ascension, as well as his pouring out the Spirit at Pentecost.

Q&A

15 minutes



SESSION 4

SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND HABITS: HOW DO CHRISTIANS WORSHIP?

TEACHING:

30 minutes

The Christian life is not merely concerned with learning true information. It is about living a life formed by Jesus. To truly be a follower of Jesus, we have to walk in the Way of Life. We have all seen people who claim to follow Jesus, but their way of life doesn't match that of our Lord. Jesus doesn't want us to just know about him; he wants to be formed in us.

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... - 2 Corinthians 3:18

This transformation comes in ways we may not expect. We can tend to think that if we learn the right techniques or ideas, our behaviors will follow. But that is rarely how transformation happens. The question Jesus asks most frequently is not "What do you *know*?" but "What do you *want*?" He understood that what shapes our actions is not primarily our thoughts, but our desires. Our desires are the wellspring from which our actions and behavior flow.

But what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and this defiles a person. For from the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, slander. These are the things that defile a person... - Matthew 15:18-20

What drives and guides us is not *the thoughts of our brain*, but *the desires of our heart*. We are driven by our loves. Which is why we all do things we don't want to do. We may know the right thing in our minds, but the heart wins every time. Our heart is like a compass that leads us towards its desire. And so in order to be formed by Jesus means our hearts need to be directed towards him.

So discipleship is more a matter of hungering and thirsting than of knowing and believing. Jesus's command to follow him is a command to align our loves and longings with his—to want what God wants, to desire what God desires, to hunger and thirst after God and crave a world where he is all in all... - James K.A. Smith, You Are What You Love

Our loves must be shaped, not by information, but by habits, by spiritual practices, by the things we do in our every day life. Habits shape and form our



loves. The things we do, over and over again, begin to affect what we desire. And spiritual habits shape our loves toward Jesus.

Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your city gates. - Deuteronomy 6:5-9

The way our heart is moved to love God with all our being is by bringing spiritual practices habitually into every area of our life. It's by practicing the faith in the daily routines of life. These are habits we practice individually and as a community on Sundays. So what are some essential Christian habits that shape our desires towards Jesus?

FOUR SPIRITUAL HABITS

The Habit of Worship

Every human heart worships something. Because worship is loving something as ultimate. We worship what we desire above everything else. For followers of Jesus, all of life is worship. It is finding delight in God in all that we do, when we eat or drink or play or work. Our worship and joy overflows in praise, in song, in action.

I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed. It is frustrating to have discovered a new author and not to be able to tell anyone how good he is; ...to hear a good joke and find no one to share it with. - C. S. Lewis, Surprised by Joy

The Habit of Worship in the Christian life is a pursuit to increase our joy in God and to express that joy in praise. We do this individually, but also together as the Church. Every Sunday, millions of followers of Jesus all over the world gather together to worship. This is not to disregard all of life being worship. Rather, when we gather, we practice worship as a habit. Week in and week out, we gather together to train our hearts to worship God above whatever else stole our attention, our hearts, our worship that week.

Therefore, we should seek to be present whenever the church gathers for worship. And when we gather, we should fully engage. When we sing songs, we should sing



with overflowing joy and praise, not necessarily because we feel it, but because we want to train our hearts to find its joy in God.

The Habit of Prayer

Put simply, prayer is communicating with God. It is speaking to him, talking to him, listening to him. But more specifically, prayer is offering up the desires of our heart to God. Though he already knows our desires, prayer is expressing it. Sometimes we express our love or thankfulness. Other times we ask God to work in specific ways. Sometimes we just sit and hear from him.

Prayer demonstrates our faith in God. Jesus described prayer as a child coming to a father. When we pray, we are proclaiming that our Father is both good and almighty. Jesus taught us to pray like this:

Our Father in heaven, your name be honored as holy. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. - Matthew 6:9-13

In Jesus' prayer, we see the wide breadth of what prayer is: A worshipful conversation with our Father in heaven; a desire to see the will of God done on earth; a request to have enough for today; a plea for forgiveness and deliverance. Prayer encompasses all these things.

The Habit of Prayer is something we should practice daily. The Bible even calls us to pray continually, without ceasing, always walking in conversation with God.

Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. - Philippians 4:6

We also practice this habit as we gather on Sundays. Every week, we unite our prayers and desires with the followers of Jesus around us. We pray for the world and our city. We ask God to move in powerful ways. And as we do, we are training our hearts to live a life of prayer, always relying on God and communing with him.

The Habit of Bible Reading

Because of the teachings of Jesus, Christians believe that God has revealed himself to us in the Bible. The Bible, which is a collection of 66 smaller books, is the Holy Book of the Christian faith. It is God's Word to us. In the Bible, we learn who God is and what he has done. Since this is God's Word, the Scriptures have the highest authority for followers of Jesus. Through reading and meditating on the Bible, God speaks to us and shapes the way we see the world.

The instruction of the LORD is perfect, renewing one's life; the testimony of the LORD is trustworthy, making the inexperienced wise. The precepts of



the LORD are right, making the heart glad; the command of the LORD is radiant, making the eyes light up. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the LORD are reliable and altogether righteous. - Psalm 19:7-9

The Habit of Bible Reading is something every Christian should strive to incorporate in their walk with Jesus. The Bible itself encourages us over and over again to meditate on the Word day and night. The longest Psalm in the Bible is dedicated to reading and allowing the Scriptures to shape us and change us. And in reading the Bible, we actually hear from and commune with God.

On Sundays, we engage this spiritual practice together. We read the Bible together, and hear the Bible explained and applied to us in a sermon. As we dive into the Bible on Sundays, we not only learn what God has said to us, but we train ourselves to build our lives on the words he has spoken to us.

The Habit of Communion

To strengthen our faith and nourish our souls, Jesus gave us the sacrament of Communion, also called the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper. We celebrate this faith-meal each Sunday at Frontline. For those who have taken the initial step of faith and repentance in Baptism, this sacrament is a means to remember and receive the love and grace of Jesus anew.

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. - 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

The bread is a tangible symbol of the broken body of Jesus for us. The wine is a tangible symbol of the shed blood of Jesus. Each week, as followers of Jesus eat the bread and drink the wine, we actually commune with Jesus and feast on his presence. But further, as we practice this habit together, we have fellowship and union with one another.

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, since all of us share the one bread. - 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

Each of these habits are crucial for shaping our desires and longings for Jesus. As we walk in these practices, it actually shapes the way we see God and the way we live in this world.



CHURCH CULTURE:

These spiritual habits are practiced each Sunday in our liturgy. Our liturgy is the intentional order of our worship services. It is the way we shape and form our hearts together towards Jesus. Here are some common elements of our worship liturgy to look for and receive this Sunday.

Call to Worship: - Beginning each of our services, the Call to Worship is an invitation to the feast of grace, to receive help from the presence of God. Through the reading of Scripture, we hear the voice of God calling us to worship him.

Worship in Song: - Worship in Song is an expression of our love and desire for God. In our singing, we remember God, see his glory, and delight in who he is.

Confession and Assurance: - In the Confession and Assurance, we confess our sins and our need for grace with one voice, followed by a proclamation of the forgiveness we have received through the sacrifice of Jesus. It teaches us how to repent, confess, and remember the gospel throughout our life.

Intercession: - During intercession, we pray for God's justice and goodness to be poured out on Christians, non-Christians, leaders, cities, and nations. Intercession teaches the believer how participate in the mission of God through prayer.

Welcome and Greeting: - We model the peace and hospitality of Christ by welcoming one another. It should be similar to the way a family greets one another. Welcoming and Greeting is a reminder that we are the family of God, and love is the law of God in his house.

Worship through Giving: - We give to the church as stewards of God's resources. Worship through Giving is a participation in mission, worship, and warfare. We are warring against the greed and materialism in our own hearts.

Preaching of the Word: - Preaching is the Gospel-centered and Spirit-filled exposition and application of God's word. This is a means to grow us and remind us of the good news of Jesus.

The Lord's Supper: - In the Lord's Supper, believers partake of the bread and wine, remembering the broken body and shed blood of Jesus. The Lord's Supper is the feast of grace and repentance.

Benediction: - The Benediction is a pastoral impartation of grace upon the people. It is often a passage of Scripture that is read as a charge over the people of God before they are sent from the gathered body. The Benediction blesses the people of God as they are sent on mission.

Q&A

15 minutes



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SESSION 5

OBEDIENCE OF THE FAITH: HOW DO CHRISTIANS LIVE?

TEACHING:

30 minutes

As we have seen the last few weeks, Jesus held before us Two Ways, Two Paths on which we can live our life. He calls his followers to have a certain way of life that was unlike anything the world had ever seen. They would not follow the Wide Path, the way of the world, the way they lived before meeting Jesus. Instead, they would follow what he called the Way of Life, the Way of Blessing. And the way we take matters. It is not enough to simply call Jesus our Lord. Rather, believers in Jesus have to actually follow him in the way that he lived.

Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?" Then I will announce to them, "I never knew you. Depart from me, you lawbreakers!" - Matthew 7:21-23

Now it is true that the Bible teaches we can never be made right with God by our works, by how good we are, by trying really hard. That will get us nowhere since that shows our trust in ourselves and our own efforts. Instead, we are only rescued by faith alone in Christ alone. It is solely by trusting in Jesus that we can be delivered from the Way that leads to Death. Yet our faith cannot stand alone. We cannot have true faith, and have a way of life that looks like it did before we met Jesus. Rather, true faith in Jesus produces obedience and good works.

While they do not in any way merit or earn salvation, good works are the natural outworking of true faith. Without obedience, without a changed life, without actually following Jesus on the Way of Life, our faith is dead and useless. Jesus' brother, James, puts it this way:

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Can such faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, stay warm, and be well fed," but you don't give them what the body needs, what good is it? In the same way faith, if it doesn't have works, is dead by itself.... For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead. - James 2:14-17, 26



If we are followers of Jesus, we will have a way of life that looks something like Jesus. It won't be perfect, but it will be markedly different from our old way of life. When we enter the waters of Baptism, we proclaim that our old life is dead and buried, and now we are raised into a new way, a new life marked by Jesus. And this new way is not just aimed at outward actions, but something deeper. The way of Jesus is not about conforming our behavior; it is about character and virtue. Without this inward change, we could not truly say we are followers of Jesus.

The one who says, "I have come to know him," and yet doesn't keep his commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word, truly in him the love of God is made complete. This is how we know we are in him: The one who says he remains in him should walk just as he walked. - 1 John 2:4-6

In all his teachings, but especially in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus lays out for us what it looks like to walk on the Way of Life. Jesus describes the character that his followers are to have. He describes the sort of people his followers will be.

THREE VIRTUES OF CHRISTIANS

People of Peace

Jesus calls his followers to be people of peace. Instead of being driven by anxiety, anger, or strife, we are to be led by the peace Jesus gives. In him, we release any control we think we have over the world, and simply trust him. This impacts us in a couple ways.

Anxiety. Anxiety is something we all deal with. We are constantly be driven by our worries, by what we will be, by what things could go wrong. And many of us labor with all our own strength to keep control. But in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus faces our anxiety head-on. He offers us a peace that saturates all of life, calming our anxieties and leading us out of worry and into trust.

So don't worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. Therefore don't worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. - Matthew 6:31-34

Followers of Jesus can patiently trust the goodness of our Father. He is a good Father who will take care of us. He always provides what we need, whether it be food or drink or clothing. Our anxiety doesn't change whatever circumstances we are facing. As Jesus said, our worries don't add a single moment to our life. Rather, we are to be marked by a peaceful presence that trusts our Father in each and every circumstance. Can you imagine the kind of people we would be if we weren't controlled by our anxieties?



Reconciliation and Forgiveness. The peace of Jesus doesn't just affect our anxieties, but our relationships. Jesus calls his people to put away all strife and anger. According to Jesus, our anger and insults towards others are no better than the act of murder.

You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, Do not murder, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Whoever insults his brother or sister, will be subject to the court. Whoever says, 'You fool!' will be subject to hellfire. - Matthew 5:21-22

We should relentlessly pursue reconciliation in all our relationships. As much as is possible with us, we should live at peace with all people. Accordingly, Jesus said that his followers would be marked by radical forgiveness. To forgive means to release others of their wrongs towards us and pursue the good of the other. We don't hold grudges, because God has forgiven us fully and freely. In fact, over and over again, Jesus connects our forgiveness towards others with the forgiveness we have received from God.

For if you forgive others their offenses, your heavenly Father will forgive you as well. But if you don't forgive others, your Father will not forgive your offenses. - Matthew 6:14-15

We live as people of peace because of who Jesus is. Jesus had many opportunities to worry and spiral out in anxiety. But he trusted his Father and committed all things to him. And even though we were the ones who wronged God and turned from him in sin, he pursues us with reconciliation and forgiveness. In each and every circumstance, we should be the kind of people that pursues peace.

People of Chastity

Jesus calls his followers to be people of sexual fidelity. Jesus leaves no stone unturned. He lays claim over every part of our lives, including our body and our sexuality. He reserves the right to tell us how, when, and with whom we can have sex. It is important to state that we are all broken sexually, and there is no amount of sexual purity that can make us right before God. We are not rescued by sexual purity, but by faith in Jesus. Yet in the midst of our sexual brokenness, Jesus gives grace *and* calls us to follow him in a new way of life.

Chastity. Christians are to conform their sexual practices and desires to the teachings of Jesus. Jesus upholds that sex is a good gift of God, which is to be enjoyed only in accordance with his purposes. Sex is solely to be experienced in the context of marriage between a man and a woman. And within marriage, there is to be complete sexual faithfulness to a spouse. Outside of this context, we should not engage in sexual practices with anyone.



In our sexualized culture, the thought of chastity is unthinkable. We should be able to express our sexual desires however we want. But as followers of Jesus, we trust that Jesus can satisfy the deepest longings of our heart in ways that sex never could. Because sex makes a terrible god.

In chastity, a Christian marriage looks different, because it is based, not on our sexual fulfillment, but on our commitment to one another and to Christ. Likewise, single followers of Jesus aren't looking to hook up or to express themselves sexually, but are seeking to remain faithful to Jesus in their singleness.

Lust. But again, Jesus doesn't want to simply address our external behavior. He is after our hearts. As with anger, Jesus wants to tackle our sexual unfaithfulness at its root. He corrects not only our sexual behavior, but also our lustful hearts and wayward sexual desire.

You have heard that it was said, Do not commit adultery. But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. - Matthew 5:27-28

Followers of Jesus don't prey on others or eye their bodies to serve us and give us pleasure. People are not objects for us to use as our sexual desire sees fit. Rather, in Jesus, we begin to see others as God sees them. We relate to other believers as mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, sons, daughters. We guard our eyes, our hearts, and our thoughts from the indulgence of our sexual appetites.

We can live in chastity because Jesus himself did. Jesus lived a celibate, single life, and yet was the most fulfilled human being to ever live. He did not need sexual intimacy to make him whole. He refused to surrender to the god of Sex, but freely gave himself to God the Father. In the same way, his followers should be a people of sexual fidelity.

People of Love

Jesus calls his followers to be people of love. Love drives us to radically serve and work for the good of others, regardless of how they have or will treat us. Christians should be marked by loving the unlovable, having compassion on the least likely. Because God himself has loved us when we were unlovable. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus shows us how this radical love changes the way we respond to those who wrong us and stand against us.

Non-retaliation. First, Jesus addresses how we should love those who attack us and hurt us and wrong us. In our culture, it is common to seek revenge, whether that look like violence or the silent treatment. If someone hurts us, we have every right to hurt them back. But Jesus insists on a different way. Instead of retaliating, we should respond with self-sacrifice and love.



You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I tell you, don't resist an evildoer. On the contrary, if anyone slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. As for the one who wants to sue you and take away your shirt, let him have your coat as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to the one who asks you, and don't turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. - Matthew 5:38-42

Jesus is not telling us to go out and seek harm. Rather, we should have such a posture of love that, even if someone defrauds us or commits some evil against us, we would respond with grace and service and compassion. Our first reaction should not be to get even, but to sacrifice ourselves for the good of others.

Enemy Love. In addition, Jesus tells us that we should love those who hate us, who are our enemies, who persecute us. This is not just someone who wrongs us once, but someone who stands opposed to us in every way.

You have heard that it was said, Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven. For he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward will you have? Don't even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what are you doing out of the ordinary? Don't even the Gentiles do the same? - Matthew 5:43-47

The love of the Father compels us to love our enemies and pray for them. Our love should look more like our Father than the world around us. We should seek to do good to all, even those who oppose us.

Jesus displayed this Way of love perfectly. As religious leaders slandered him and friends betrayed him, he always responded with compassion. And ultimately, he sacrificed himself for his enemies because of his deep love for them. As Christians who have received the love of Jesus, we respond with love for others.

CHURCH CULTURE:

The Way of Jesus changes how we engage Sundays. It is not just a time to come and be entertained. Rather, we are creating a space that is hospitable and displays the love of God to a lost and hurting world. That is why we encourage followers of Jesus to serve at our church on Sundays. We hope that as we walk in peace and love, others would hear the gospel, worship Jesus, and get connected to the church. But it is also for us. As we regularly sacrifice our time and talents in service to others, we are shaped and formed to be more like Jesus.



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CLASS

Whether you love to be in front of people or prefer to work behind the scenes, there is an opportunity to serve. We invite you to partner with us for the gospel. Your sponsor will talk to you about how you can get connected to serve on a Sunday.

Q&A

15 minutes



SESSION 6

SALT AND LIGHT: WHAT DO CHRISTIANS DO?

TEACHING:

30 minutes

When Jesus lived on this earth, he established a new way of life. And this new way was not intended to create an isolated community. Rather, Jesus desired for his rule and reign, his kingdom, to go out from his people and transform the whole world. Some religious communities are known for their retreat from the world. To achieve peace or enlightenment or purity, these communities distance themselves from others to maximize their own spiritual journey. But instead of escaping from the world, Jesus commands his followers to engage the world as they follow him. They are not to separate from the world, but to immerse the world with the good news of Jesus.

Some view Christianity as a religion that is all about what happens when we die. Jesus came to provide a way to escape the horrors of hell and enter the bliss of heaven. His message is simply a Get-Out-Of-Hell-Free card. It is a form of afterlife insurance. Embrace Jesus or something bad will happen to you when you die.

While Jesus surely emphasizes our need for personal salvation, his mission was much broader than this. He did not come to simply rescue some people from their sin, and give them an escape from this doomed and cursed world. Instead, he came on a mission to redeem the whole world, all creation, from the curse. He came to right every wrong, to fix all that had been broken because of our sin. And he begins this redemption with his followers, as he rescues them from their sin and rebellion. But it doesn't end there. He continues this redemption into the world through his followers. He calls his disciples to participate with him in this rescue mission.

The Bible is not about the rescue of humans from the world but about the rescue of humans for the world, and indeed God's rescue of the world by means of those rescued humans... — N. T. Wright, Surprised By Hope

This is why Jesus called his disciples the salt and light of the world. His followers, as the salty-brightness of the world, were to be his agents of transformation and redemption.

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It's no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket,



but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. - Matthew 5:13-16

Those who follow Jesus are called the salt and light of the world. They bring the flavor and truth, the taste and brightness of Jesus to the world. As we walk in the Way of Jesus, we stand in stark contrast to Way of the World around us. Through the Church, the darkness of the world is pushed back by the light of the kingdom of God. In other words, following Jesus is not just about preparing us for what happens when we die. Jesus has given us a mission here and now, to see his kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. We do that in a few ways.

Seeking Justice

In his life and ministry, Jesus had a special concern for the poor and vulnerable. He did not just preach and teach, but he actively sought to alleviate the suffering of those around him. His ministry is marked by numerous healings, including lepers who were considered outcasts by society. He miraculously fed those who were hungry. He gave honor and dignity to women that was unparalleled in his day. And he encouraged his followers to be radically generous to the poor.

Don't be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Make money-bags for yourselves that won't grow old, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. - Luke 12:32-34

As the salt and light of the world, followers of Jesus are compelled to seek the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. We are to seek justice in our world. Jesus commands us to care for those around us who are hurting and suffering, just like he did. We are to speak for the vulnerable and oppressed. Wherever we see wrongs, wherever we see the will of God not done on earth as it is in heaven, we should pray and actively work to see the kingdom of God come.

Alongside this, we seek justice by being generous and sacrificial in giving. In the New Testament, we see a priority set on giving to the local church to advance the mission of God in the world. The early church used these funds to meet needs in the church and in broader society. Throughout the Bible, we hear a constant call to remember the poor and needy, the widow and orphan. To ignore the poor among us would be inconsistent with the Way of Jesus.

Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained from the world. - James 1:27



Embracing Vocation

For the first 30 years of Jesus' life, he lived in complete obscurity. He wasn't famous. He didn't have a teaching or healing ministry. He lived a life that seemed completely ordinary. He worked as a carpenter. He took care of his mother. Nothing flashy. And yet, even in these early years, he lived a fulfilled life to the glory of God his Father.

In our culture, we avoid lives of obscurity. We want to be successful and popular. We want to do something flashy and praiseworthy. When we think of engaging our world with the good news of Jesus, we can tend to think this mission depends solely on ministers and pastors. But according to Jesus, we all have a part to play in ordinary, day-to-day life.

In Scripture, we see that each of us are given various callings, or vocations. These can include our jobs, our marriage, our singleness, our parenting, our church. These vocations are massively important for advancing the kingdom. In all our vocations, we are to see them as part of a larger picture: an avenue for the kingdom of God to come on earth as it is in heaven. These are the ordinary ways that God works through us to bring the Way of Jesus into the world.

Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people, knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord. You serve the Lord Christ. - Colossians 3:23-24

Whether we are a medical professional or a fast-food worker, whether we are single or married, old or young, we are called to be the salty-brightness of the world wherever we find ourselves. We are called to build the kingdom of Jesus.

Practicing Evangelism

The world is being renewed and redeemed as more people come to embrace Jesus as Lord and follow him. The good news of Jesus is something we are to share as his followers. Since the early days of the church, the gospel has rapidly grown. The Way of Jesus has infectiously spread far and wide across the whole world. And this has been the mission of the church: to see the good news of Jesus invade every tribe and tongue and nation, starting with our very own neighbors.

Jesus commissioned his disciples to go into all the nations to share the good news of who he is and what he has done.

Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." - Matthew 28:18-20



NEW BELIEVER'S CLASS

Followers of Jesus are called to make disciples by sharing the good news they themselves have received and embraced. Jesus is the only hope for a broken world, and we want to hold up the light and beauty of who he is and what he has done. As we live in relationship with our family and friends and neighbors, we talk about Jesus and the hope we have in him. We point them to his life, death, and resurrection. We invite others to walk in the Way of Jesus with us.

This gospel announcement cannot be separated from how we live. As we live in the counter-cultural way that Jesus taught, it brings salty-brightness to the world.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light... Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day he visits. - 1 Peter 2:9, 12

REDEMPTION OF THE WORLD

As the salty-brightness of the world, Jesus is using his church to bring about the redemption of all creation. We are to partner with him to see his kingdom come and his will be done. We aim to see more and more people embrace the Way of Jesus. And one day, Jesus will come again to fully bring his kingdom and justice, to right every wrong, to restore what has been broken. And he will be victorious.

Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away. - Revelation 21:3-4

CHURCH CULTURE:

Where do we go from here? First, over the next few weeks, we want you to continue to meet with your sponsor. Continue to grow, ask questions, and learn what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Second, for some of you, the next step will be attending a membership class and pursuing membership. In this class, you will learn, not just about the Way of Jesus, but who we are at Frontline Church. Membership is a commitment to a local church in order to love, serve, and follow Jesus together. And it is an important framework for continuing our walk with Jesus.

Finally, we want to thank you for being a part of this class. As a gift, we wanted to give you a Bible.

Q&A

15 minutes



NEW
BELIEVER'S
CLASS

