



**Gospel for Life**



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# REDEEMING HOPE

## GOSPEL FOR LIFE Grounding and Rooting

Redeeming Hope exists as a family of faith that follows Jesus and helps others find Him by living all of life as missionaries of hope. Part of seeing this vision become reality is seeing others begin to find and follow Jesus for themselves.

Gospel for Life is designed to help ground and root new followers of Jesus in the essentials of the Gospel. It is meant to be a simple, group-based discussion that lasts 30-45 minutes and have prep-up work before each upcoming session. All that is required is to have a Bible, a pen, and this guide.

### INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Gospel for Life! We are glad you have joined in and are looking forward to growing together in community over the next five weeks together.

Some people say all religion is the same- in a way they are- telling us we need to do more things in order for God to accept us and find peace. This typically means following more rules, doing more good deeds, enlightening or pilgrimaging to a certain geography, emptying ourselves, attending enough worship services, or giving the right amount of money. If you have been in a religious environment you know how untrue this is- the more you do the more burdened you actually feel. Jesus speaks a different message, an alternative to religion.

This is why we are here together- to discover for the first time or to be reminded of the basics of Jesus' message and how it permeates and changes our view of everything- our time, our relationships, our work, our resources, our marriages and our planet. We want to see from the Scriptures what God actually says happens when you choose to believe in and follow Jesus and then cultivate a life that follows Jesus.

We find that when we follow Jesus and His teachings, things begin to change in how we see God, see ourselves, see others, and see His creation. Over the next five weeks, we are going to explore how Jesus radically reorients us. His Good News has real impact in our day to day lives in meaningful ways. Our topics are:

His Message	We have access to the Good News of Jesus
I Am His	We have a new identity in Jesus
We Are His	We have a new family in Jesus
Everything is His	We have a new vision for our things in Jesus
The World is His	We have a new mission for our lives in Jesus

## SESSION FORMATS

The format of each session is designed to prepare each participant to guide someone else through the session, as they are being guided through. It is designed to be simple. At the end of these sessions each person will be prepared to walk a friend, family member, co-worker or neighbor through the sessions naturally helping someone to discover the gospel, inviting them to trust Christ, grounding them in the basics of the gospel and helping them to grow in Christ as a disciple.

Each session follows this simple format broken into three parts:

### **PART 1: Connect**

Each session begins with a few minutes to connect over a meal or drink and ask what the highs and lows of each person's week was and see how everyone did with the prep work. Sharing lows lays a foundation of prayer to God, sharing highs lays a foundation of thanksgiving to God. Your group hosts will be leading this time.

### **PART 2: Discover**

The session continues as the content is interactively taught by a group host.

### **PART 3: Three Questions (if larger group)**

At the end of each session the larger group goes through the three formation questions as a group or in micro groups (2-5 guys/girls)- What, How, Who. Each group is assigned a facilitator who takes prayer notes on "How" and "Who" and sends them out to the group via text or email.

### **PART 4: Review Prep-Work for Next Session**

The Gospel is the true story about Jesus, who is God, stepping out of eternity, into human history, to solve the problem of brokenness, reuniting us with God, giving us Himself, and ushering in a completely new way of life that ends in perfection and glory with Himself.

## BEYOND GOSPEL FOR LIFE

The goal of Gospel for Life is that we will have a clear understanding of the gospel and be prepared and encouraged to live out of our new reality as followers of Jesus in natural and organic ways. Therefore our encouragement after the sessions is to do a few things:

1. Commit to being baptized (*if you have not yet been baptized as a follower of Jesus*)
2. Join a local family of faith and attend their weekly gatherings (*if you are not yet connected with a local church*)
3. Commit to a small group of people who you will meet and follow Jesus with weekly

These simple steps will be helpful to remind you of the grace of the gospel and give you a context to live your life in light of the Good News of Jesus in practical ways.

If you desire to identify with Redeeming Hope as your church family, then we would encourage you to meet with Josh and find out more. Josh's number is 301.404.0253.

# SESSION 1: HIS MESSAGE

*We have access to the Good News of Jesus*

## PART 1: CONNECT

What is your name + What brings you here?

## PART 2: DISCOVER

### INTRODUCTION

In this lesson we are going to discover Jesus' message and how it is different than religion. As we will learn in Session 5 "The World is His" this lesson can be broken into three sessions with someone who is spiritually curious or discovering Jesus' message for the first time.

Does everyone have a bible? If not, you can download the free phone app called ESV Bible. Take a minute to do that or pull out your Bibles and turn to Luke 15.11.

Just like all of us have a story, Jesus message is a story: the story of Scriptures that tell of Jesus and his message which also parallels our story:

There was a beginning and a creating- CREATION (Genesis 1)

There was a breaking and ways I tried saving- BROKENNESS+IDOLS (Genesis 3)

There is a restoring through His redeeming- REDEMPTION (1 Corinthians 15.1-5)

There is hope in His returning- RENEWAL (Revelation 21)

His story parallels our story in a similar way: creation (good), fall (brokenness), redemption (Gospel), and growth (continuing work).

A story Jesus' told of two sons is one of the best ways for us to understand His gospel message, how it connects with our lives and how it is drastically different from religion. We'll start with the first part of the story.

### CREATION

First we are going to learn how all of us have a beginning, a creation account that includes good, true and beautiful things that were present at our beginning.

Can someone please read Luke 15.11-12?

What sticks out to you about these verses? (*Ask secondary questions to continue the group conversation. After a few minutes of conversation and observations about this verse guide the group to the big idea...*)

Just like the younger son who was born into abundance, we all have a beginning with good, true and beautiful things that were part of our story. We find the beginning of God's story in Genesis 1 as he created all things and our first parents to be in a perfect relationship with Him, one another, with ourselves and the earth.

Take a minute to write down or consider your story: what were some of the good, true and beautiful things that you were created with or were present at the beginning of your story? I'll begin. (*Give time for people to write or consider*)

## FALL

Next we are going to discover how all of us have experienced brokenness in our story- whether we have done wrong or been wronged. Let's continue Jesus' story of the two sons.

Can someone please read Luke 15.13-19?

What sticks out to you about these verses? *(Ask secondary questions to continue the group conversation. After a few minutes of conversation and observations about this verse guide the group to the big idea...)*

Just like the younger son who journeyed into reckless living we all have brokenness in our story where we have sinned against someone or have been sinned against. This all stems from our first parents in Genesis 3 when they rebelled against God. Since then humanity has suffered from the echo of the crash in the garden.

Take a minute to write down or consider your story: what were some of the brokenness that you have experienced through your life? I'll begin. *(Give time for people to write or consider)*

Often because of the pain of the brokenness we have experienced, we find habits/addictions or idols/gods to numb the pain, which always creates more brokenness and the need for more gods. The entire story of God's children after the garden crash, and all through the Old Testament we see a story of them looking to some god for satisfaction other than their Creator.

What "god" do you think could have been motivating the father's son in the story? Why would he want to leave and live the way he did?

Take a minute to write down or consider your story- what were some of the gods that you have experienced through your life? I'll begin. *(Give time for people to write or consider)*

It is difficult to be honest about the brokenness and gods in our lives but to truly discover Jesus' message we have to come to the reality of how profoundly in need we are. Ephesians 2 describes our condition as dead in sin. Though there is certainly good in every created person, because of sin in our lives we have no way of dealing with our gaps and turning from our gods unto ourselves.

## REDEMPTION

Next we are going to discover Jesus' message of grace- Let's continue Jesus' story of the two sons.

Can someone please read Luke 15.20-24?

What sticks out to you about these verses? *(Ask secondary questions to continue the group conversation. After a few minutes of conversation and observations about this verse guide the group to the big idea...)*

Just like the younger son who turned back to his father, we have the opportunity to turn from the sin, pain and idols in our lives back to our Creator where we will be embraced, loved, accepted and satisfied.

But how can this be, what do we have to do to earn it? Do more good works? Live an improved life? Go to church more? Give more? This is Jesus' message and how it is different from every other religion in the world. Our father in heaven receives us back with all of our imperfections, past flaws, current struggles without cost or payment because his perfect son paid for us through his life.

Can someone please read Romans 5.6-11?

What sticks out to you about these verses? How is what is described in these verses and in this story different than works based religion?

Take a minute to write down or consider your story- what did God uniquely rescue you from? Have you identified with Jesus, turning from your brokenness/gods and trusting that His death for you allows you to run back to the Father's arms free, forgiven? I'll begin. *(Give time for people to write or consider)*

## GROWTH

Can someone please read Luke 15.25-32?

What sticks out to you about these verses? What god is the older brother struggling with? Who are you more like- the older or younger brother? Which brother is reconnected with his father?

Take a minute to write down how God is continually growing you in your life? *(Give time for people to write or consider)*

If you have not identified with Jesus would you consider beginning that journey with him this week by turning from your brokenness/gods and trusting His death and resurrection bring you back to the Father's arms?

We are now going to break out into our groups. In your groups share more of your stories and allow space for anyone who has questions about believing or understanding Jesus' message. Break the larger group out into one guys group and one girls group.

## PART 3: THREE QUESTIONS

The larger group now goes through three questions. It may be beneficial to break into micro groups (2-5 guys/girls) to ask three simple questions based on the lesson. Each group should assign a facilitator who takes prayer notes on "How" and "Who" and sends them out to the group via text or email:

**WHAT** truth was highlighted to you and is there anything you need to confess and turn from?

**HOW** is the Lord inviting you to take a simple measurable step of obedience this week?

**WHO** has the Lord brought into your life to share the gospel with and help grow as a disciple

## PART 4: PREP-WORK FOR NEXT SESSION

1. Complete the My Identity in Christ section on the following pages.
2. Complete the New Patterns section on the following pages.



## MY IDENTITY IN CHRIST

2 Corinthians 5:17 says...*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”*

We all have some bad “tapes” running through our heads that keep us in bondage to an old life that is filled with guilt and condemnation. Comprehending the Good News of a new identity in Christ is one key to understanding the freedom of the message of Jesus and as we explore what it looks like to follow Jesus.

*\*Study guide adapted from Living Free in Christ, by Neil Anderson*

## I AM SECURE IN CHRIST

Romans 8:1	I am not...	
Romans 8:28	I am...	
Romans 8:31-32	I am...	
Romans 8:35,38-39	I cannot be...	
2 Corinthians 1:21, 22	I have been...	
Colossians 3:3	I am...	
Philippians 1:6	I am...	
Philippians 3:20	I am...	
2 Timothy 1:7	I have not been...	
Hebrews 4:16	I can find...	
1 John 5:18	I am...	

## I AM SIGNIFICANT IN CHRIST

Matthew 5:13,14	I am...	
John 15:5	I am...	
John 15:16	I have been...	
Acts 1:8	I am...	

I Corinthians 3:16	I am...	
2 Corinthians 5:17ff.	I am...	
John 20:21	I am...	
Romans 12:4-5	I am...	
Ephesians 2:10	I am...	
Galatians 5:16	I can...	
Philippians 4:13	I can...	

## I AM ACCEPTED IN CHRIST

John 1:12	I am...	
John 15:15	I am...	
Romans 5:1	I have...	
I Corinthians 6:17	I am...	
I Corinthians 6:19,20	I have been...	
I Corinthians 12:27	I am...	
Ephesians 1:1	I am a...	
Ephesians 1:5	I have been...	
Ephesians 2:18	I have...	
Colossians 1:14	I have been...	
Colossians 2:10	I am...	

## MY NEW LIFE PATTERNS

Our new identity in Jesus and experience of good news in his kingdom begins now!

This means we can actually live a new changed life by the grace of the Good News and the Holy Spirit's empowering presence. God's grace provides us with both heart motivation and power to walk daily experiencing new choices, actions, and habits – privately and publicly. More and more we are enabled to live like Jesus with increasing love for God and people as we help others follow Jesus. Here are just a few biblical passages that describe our new patterns for kingdom living here and now. These new patterns honor and reflect Jesus our King and flow joyfully out of the grace we have received in him. This is part of our daily rhythm as Christ-followers- identifying how Jesus wants to transform us, confessing, repenting and remembering in faith that we are a new creation.

Read Ephesians 4-6 and Matthew 5-7

As you prepare to read and reflect on these Scripture passages, pause and ask Jesus to speak to you about one area of your life he wants you to “put on” or “put off” privately or publicly?

Journal here:

# SESSION 2: I AM HIS

## *We have a new identity in Christ*

### PART 1: CONNECT

What was one low and one high of your past week?

How did it go with the prep-work from last week? What stuck out most to you?

### PART 2: DISCOVER

#### INTRODUCTION

In this lesson we are going to discover the basics about who God is and our new position before Him (Justified) who we are in Him (Identity) and how He continues to transform our lives over a lifetime to be like Him (Sanctification). Remember these sessions are designed to be simple and adaptable so you could help a friend, neighbor or co-worker to explore and become rooted in Jesus and His message through this simple discovery process.

Does everyone have a bible? If not, you can download the free phone app called ESV Bible. Take a minute to do that or pull out your Bibles and turn to Psalm 30.4-5.

#### WHO IS GOD?

First we are going to talk about some of the basics about who God is. We all have different ideas in our mind about who God is. Most of those views are shaped from when we are very young and often those views are shaped by the “authority” figures in our lives.

What is your view of God? (*Give time for people to write or consider*)

God's character is deep, complex, vast and mysterious and there are many passages of Scripture that help us to see who He is. Psalm 30.4-5 is one that shows us one of the beautiful paradoxes of God's character that we understand in light of the Good News of Jesus.

Can someone please read Psalm 30.4-5?

What sticks out to you about these verses? What stands out? What is hard to understand? (*Ask secondary questions to continue the group conversation. After a few minutes of conversation and observations about this verse guide the group to the big idea...*)

We also know from the collective counsel of the Scriptures that God is one and God is three persons (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). The first chapter of Ephesians carries rich language that shows us this reality.

Can someone please read Ephesians 1:1-14?

What sticks out to you about these verses? Where do you see The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit mentioned in this passage?

Based on what we just read, how does Psalm 30 and Ephesians 1 change your view of God? What did you notice is different?

## WHAT IS OUR POSITION BEFORE GOD? JUSTIFIED.

We all have lies that run through our minds every day- where the enemy of our souls tells us we are unworthy- feelings of shame and condemnation often accompany these thoughts. I would like to share a few of mine. *(Guide shares examples from his or her personal life.)*

When we have turned from the ways we have rejected God as our Savior (our sin) and to Christ (through faith) our position or standing before God is forever altered. We are found to be justified. Justification means to be declared innocent. It's a courtroom-type word, meaning that a Judge has determined that we are innocent of all charges. We are innocent because Jesus took the blame for our sin! There is a great section in the book of Romans that helps us to see the effect of this reality.

Can someone please read Romans 8.31-39?

What stands out to you?

What does this teach us about our relationship to God when we sin? When we run away from Him? What can separate us from His love? *(Ask secondary questions to continue the group conversation)*

## WHAT IS OUR IDENTITY BEFORE GOD? RIGHTEOUS.

One of the most common misconceptions about our position in Christ is that we think we are seen as a sinner. However, once we have trusted Christ as Savior we are seen as a saint, a holy person, as righteous or right in His eyes, regardless of our current or future behavior. 2 Corinthians 5 gives us a picture of this reality.

Can someone please read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.

What sticks out to you about these verses? What is hard to understand? *(Ask secondary questions to continue the group conversation)*

We see in 2 Corinthians 5 that when we believe in Jesus, we are immediately a new creation. We have been reconciled to God, and now we have a mission to help others believe and be reconciled to God as well. God does not hold our sins against us, but rather gives us a new legacy. In verse 21, we see that Jesus (who is perfect) became the embodiment of all of our sin, so that we (who were once sinful) could be credited His perfection to our account. Our identity is rooted in righteousness because of Jesus' work on our behalf.

When we are justified before God because of Christ we are also given this new identity or standing before God as righteous. You should have seen this reading through and completing the prep-work.

Take out your prep-work. Did anything stand out to you in the "My Identity in Christ" worksheet? *(Ask secondary questions to continue the group conversation)*

## HOW DO WE LIVE NOW? BECOMING WHO WE ALREADY ARE.

Not only are we declared innocent (justified) by Christ's death and resurrection and not only are these incredible promises true of us in Christ, but then Holy Spirit is sent to dwell within us to transform us into the image of Jesus over a lifetime. This is a big word called Sanctification - God working in us to transform our actions to reflect who we are already found to be in Him. We are new creations, but the process of living like new creations takes a lifetime. We see the promise of this in Romans 8.

Can someone please read Romans 8.9-11?

What sticks out to you about these verses? *(Ask secondary questions to continue the group conversation)*

Not only are we transformed by the Spirit's power in our lives but we are transformed ongoing by the grace of the gospel. This happens when we continually remember all that Christ did for us, allowing the truth of who we are in Him to strengthen and grow us to real, sustainable life change. We see a clear understanding of how grace and obedience play out in Titus 2.

Can someone please read Titus 2:11-12?

What sticks out to you about these verses? What teaches us to renounce ungodliness in our lives?

Therefore we are not our own but belong to Him, we are His. We are justified by Him, being sanctified by Him through His Spirit, and motivated by His grace. The question remains: how does this happen? The big answer is that He uses a number of means to do this but it all begins by creating space to be with Him, remembering everything about Him, allowing everything about Him to inform everything about us. This is called abiding, and Jesus talks about how central abiding with Him is in the Christian's life in John 15.

Can someone please read John 15:4-5?

What sticks out to you about these verses? What does it mean that Jesus is the vine and we are the branches?

How do we grow in Christ? What does abiding in Christ practically look like in the course of my week?

### **PART 3: THREE QUESTIONS**

The larger group now goes through three questions. It may be beneficial to break into micro groups (2-5 guys/girls) to ask three simple questions based on the lesson. Each group should assign a facilitator who takes prayer notes on "How" and "Who" and sends them out to the group via text or email.

**WHAT** truth was highlighted to you and is there anything you need to confess and turn from?

**HOW** is the Lord inviting you to take a simple measurable step of obedience this week?

**WHO** has the Lord brought into your life to share the gospel with and help grow as a disciple

### **PART 4: PREP-WORK FOR NEXT SESSION**

1. Read the Overview of Water Baptism on the following pages
2. Read the Overview of the Lord's Supper on the following pages
3. Read the Vision for Clarksville on the following pages.

# Overview of Water Baptism

After Peter proclaimed the gospel of Jesus, Acts 2:41-47 says:

"Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

Rigid institutionalism, empty religious tradition, controversy and confusion often characterizes far too many Christians today when it comes to the sacraments of the church. However, reacting against these by neglecting something good that Jesus intends for us to practice is not the answer either. We can learn from Scripture and follow the Spirit while practicing the sacrament of water baptism with heart and meaning so that it really strengthens us and portrays the good news of grace. Preaching makes the gospel audible, sacraments make it visible, and God uses both! We set forth this document to help everyday ordinary followers of Jesus grasp the why...what...when...who...and how of water baptism. We long to see this sacrament practiced with joy in loving obedience to Jesus and aligned with his word. This guide is set forth to instruct followers of Jesus who are doing the baptizing as well as those being baptized. The format is as follows:

**Why baptize**

**What is baptism**

**When do we baptize**

**Who can baptize**

**How is baptism done**

**Why baptize**

## WHY BAPTIZE

We baptize because it's part of Jesus' commission to us. The timeless commission of Jesus to us is seen in Matthew 28:18-20:

"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age"

The central command in this passage is "make disciples of all nations". Connected to this process of making disciples are baptizing and teaching. This commission and these practices were not limited to just one cultural context of the original apostles and the early church. Jesus has all authority and he wants this done among "all nations". And Jesus promises His presence with us as we continue to carry out His commission and these practices "until the end of the age." As we proclaim the gospel and make disciples, we also practice baptizing in water each one who personally receives this gospel of grace by faith.

## WHAT IS BAPTISM

Scripture teaches that water baptism is a visual portrayal of a believer being personally united with Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection. Baptism publically pictures one's initiation into Christ by faith. This individual is then to be received by the church community who is in covenant with Jesus as their Lord and Savior. When someone is baptized, he/she makes a public profession of being forgiven, dead the old life under sin, and now alive to life with God the Father, by the Spirit, through the work of Jesus (Romans 6:1-11; Acts 2:38). It is the living God in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who we identify with in water baptism (Matthew 28:18-20).

## WHEN DO WE BAPTIZE

We believe the preponderance of Scripture demonstrates that baptism is for a person who professes faith in Jesus. That is, it is best to wait to baptize an individual until he/she personally repents and trusts in Jesus who is proclaimed in the gospel. Here are just a few biblical examples:

“And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit...So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:38-47).

“And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family” (Acts 16:31-33).

“Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized” (Acts 18:8)

Teaching believer's baptism almost always raises additional questions such as...What about infants and small children of believing parents?

We believe infants of believing parents should wait to be baptized until they come to personally repent and trust Jesus. God has always saved us by grace through faith apart from any meritorious works or ceremonies we do. This was true throughout the Old Testament as well as the New Testament (Romans 4). But, when should a person receive the outward sign of faith? Abraham received the outward sign of circumcision after he believed and then circumcised his children before they were old enough to believe. This sign continued through the old covenant.

While there is continuity between the old and new covenants, there are also some areas of discontinuity between these covenants. For example, the old covenant included promises of a particular area of physical land, and it was a covenant with one nation that one came into merely by physical birth. The new covenant is different than this. One particular area of discontinuity is who should now receive the outward sign of being part of the covenant people of God. The old covenant sign of circumcision is now replaced in the new with the outward sign of water baptism (Colossians 2:8-15). In the old, one had only to be born physically. In the new, one should be born again spiritually to receive the outward sign of being part of the covenant community. Knowing the Lord by faith, being forgiven, and having his Holy Spirit are conditions of being part of God's new covenant people – his church body (Jeremiah 31:31-34; John 1:12-13; Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:23-29). That is why we teach that infants of believing parents should wait to be baptized until they come to personally repent and trust Jesus.

If infant children are not to receive the outward sign of baptism as being part of the new covenant people of God until they personally believe on Jesus, then the question remains....How are children of believing parents in the covenant community to be viewed? Certainly they are not to be viewed as pagan children.

Scripture gives us some clues to help us. Jesus welcomed and blessed small children when parents brought them to him (Mark 10:13-16). As Paul instructs the Corinthians about an issue they faced, we also pick up insight about children of believers. When at least one of the parents in a family comes to faith in Jesus, I Corinthians 7:12-16 describes that marriage and family as no longer being a spiritually “unclean” family with a believer in it, but rather it is a believing household with unbelievers still in it. It is now considered a set apart believing household (“holy,” no longer spiritually “unclean”). While each unbelieving person will still need to exercise personal faith, there does appear to be an acknowledgement that children are under the blessings of a parent who is standing in grace by faith in Jesus. Therefore, rather than baptizing infant children of believing parents, we practice parent-child dedication as a church community. This allows believing parents to publically dedicate themselves and their child unto the Lord for his purposes in front of their church family and friends. This gives the covenant community of church friends an opportunity to hear this public dedication and to affirm their commitment to support and stand with these parents in the weeks, months, and years to come as they rear their children to believe and follow Jesus.



Another question often raised is...What about those sprinkled as infants who now believe in Jesus? How do we relate together as true believers given differing views on water baptism? We practice, teach, and encourage believers baptism. That still begs the question...Can someone be a fully functioning part of Redeeming Hope if they were baptized as an infant and are now genuinely trusting Jesus Christ for salvation? The answer is yes. Although we would encourage them to be baptized as a believer, we do fully accept these believers into our church family provided that they reject the notion that there is anything meritorious before God accomplished in their infant baptism. As long as that individual professes that their salvation is by grace alone, by faith alone, in Christ alone we welcome them (Romans 5:1-5; Ephesians 1:13-14; 2:8-9). We hold this position because Scripture is much clearer about practicing love and unity among believers in Jesus and his gospel than it is about the timing of water baptism (John 13:31-35; 17:20-23; Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 2:11-22; 4:1-6; Philippians 1:27). In this same spirit of unity, we ask that these friends in Christ refrain from teaching infant baptism among us to help protect the unity of this body.

## WHO CAN BAPTIZE

At Redeeming Hope, we empower all believers to participate in baptizing their friends and family with someone from our staff or pastoral/elder team once someone professes faith in Jesus Christ.

## HOW IS BAPTISM DONE

There is great freedom to personalize each baptism for the person or persons being baptized. However, many of us feel better prepared by having guidelines that help us capture the essence of biblical teaching in simple ways when baptizing another. Here are recommendations for before, during, and after water baptism.

### Before a baptism:

- Read or remember from Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:29-47; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 6:1-11 that...
  - you are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.
  - you are NOT saved by your own good works or ceremonies, including water baptism.
  - you will be personally and publicly identifying with Jesus in baptism as an outward sign of the inward reality of your faith in him alone for salvation.
  - you will be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit (i.e. one God in three persons)

### During a baptism:

- Story - share part of your salvation story and why you want to be baptized. *[note: Some persons may prefer to have someone else read or tell their story on their behalf. This is perfectly acceptable since public speaking should not become a barrier for those desiring to be baptized; also the story shared need not be too long, but excerpts of the most significance part of the story can be shared]*
- Summary – what is included when baptizing?
  - *[While standing in the water the dialogue goes like....]*
    - “Are you trusting Jesus Christ alone for your salvation?”
    - “Based on the profession of your faith in Jesus Christ, I now baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
  - *[Now immersed backwards under the water, while holding your nose; then it is proclaimed when back up from the water...]*
    - “Buried in the likeness of His death, raised to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus.”

### After a baptism:

- Celebrate

Things remember before a baptism:

1. Prepare to share part of your story about your faith in Jesus (see Preparing MY story worksheet for guidelines). You may prefer to have someone read or tell part of your faith story on your behalf.  
[Suggestion ahead of time: write it out/talk it out & select the part you want to share or have someone share on your behalf; Note: We recognize that some of us have had negative church experiences in our past and that's part of our story. If you do mention something about this, we ask that you refrain from naming specific churches or denominations.]
2. Bring towel & change of clothes.
3. Be sure to wear appropriate clothing. Remember, shirts cling to your skin and undergarments after getting out of the water.
4. Discuss whom you might want to baptize you along with a staff member, pastor, or elder from Redeeming Hope. You are free to request someone else coming along with you.
5. You might want to arrange for someone to photograph or videotape your baptism.
6. Arrive early

## Overview of the Lord's Supper (\*adapted from John Piper's sermon "Why and How We Celebrate the Lord's Supper" 8/13/2016)

Paul gives specific instructions and clarity on the Lord's Supper (also known as Communion or The Eucharist) in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34:

"But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not. For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. 33 So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—34 if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

We believe that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the Lord in which gathered believers eat bread, signifying Christ's body given for His people, and drink the cup of the Lord, signifying the New Covenant in Christ's blood. We do this in remembrance of the Lord, and thus proclaim His death until He comes. Those who eat and drink in a worthy manner partake of Christ's body and blood, not physically, but spiritually, in that, by faith, they are nourished with the benefits He obtained through His death, and thus grow in grace.

I will try to give a biblical foundation for this understanding of the Lord's Supper under six headings: 1) the historical origin; 2) the believing participants; 3) the physical action; 4) the mental action; 5) the spiritual action; and 6) the sacred seriousness.

### 1. The Historical Origin of the Lord's Supper

The Gospels of Matthew (26:26ff), Mark (14:22ff), and Luke (22:14ff) all report the Last Supper that Jesus had with his disciples the night before he died. Each describes Jesus giving thanks or blessing the bread and the cup, and giving them to his disciples saying that the bread is his body and the cup is the blood of the covenant, or the new covenant in his blood. In Luke 22:19, Jesus says, "Do this in remembrance of me." The Gospel of John doesn't report the eating and drinking, but rather the teachings and actions that filled the evening.

As far as we can tell from the earliest records, the church did what Jesus said: They reenacted that supper in remembrance of Jesus and his death. Paul's letters are the earliest testimony that we have, and in 1 Corinthians 11:20, he refers to an event in the life of the church called "the Lord's Supper." It's called "the Lord's Supper" probably because it was instituted or ordained by the Lord Jesus, and because its very meaning celebrates the memory of the Lord's death. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:23-24, "I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'" "I received from the Lord . . ." probably means that the Lord himself confirmed for Paul (who wasn't at the final supper as the other apostles were) that what the others reported about the Last Supper really happened.

So the historical origin of the Lord's Supper is that final supper that Jesus ate with his disciples the night before he was crucified. The actions and meaning of it are all rooted in what Jesus said and did on that last night. Jesus himself is the origin of the Lord's Supper. He commanded that it be continued. And he is the focus and content of it.

## 2. The Believing Participants of the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is an act of the gathered family of those who believe in Jesus, the church. It is not an act for unbelievers. Unbelievers may be present—indeed, we welcome them to be present—there is nothing secretive about the Lord's Supper. It is done in public. It has a public meaning. It is not a secretive, cultic ritual with magical powers. It is a public act of worship by the gathered church. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 11:26, Paul says, “As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.” So there is a proclamation aspect to the supper. Proclamation, not privacy, is the note to strike.

We do not forbid taking the Lord's Supper to someone in a nursing home or a hospital, but that kind of individual celebration is exceptional, not the Biblical norm. Five times in 1 Corinthians 11, Paul speaks of the church “coming together” when the Lord's Supper is eaten. Verse 17b: “When you come together it is not for the better but for the worse.” Verse 18: “For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you.” Verse 20: “When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat.” Verse 33: “When you come together to eat, wait for one another.” Verse 34: “If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment.”

In other words, they were debasing the Lord's Supper by connecting it too closely to their regular supper, and some people had lots to eat and others had nothing. So he said, Eat your own supper at home and come together to eat the Lord's Supper.

And notice the word “church” in verse 18: “when you come together as a church.” This is the body of Christ, the assembly of the followers of Jesus. Those who have turned from idols and trusted Jesus alone for the forgiveness of their sins, and for the hope of eternal life, and for the satisfaction of their souls. These are Christians. So the participants in the Lord's Supper are the gathered believers in Jesus.

## 3. The Physical Action of the Lord's Supper

The physical action of the Lord's Supper is not the consumption of a seven-course meal. It is very simple. It is eating bread and drinking the cup. Verses 23b-25, “He took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, ‘This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’”

Nothing is specified about the kind of bread or the way it is broken. The only statement about what was in the cup is given in one verse each in Matthew, Mark, and Luke: “I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom” (Matthew 26:29; cf. Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18). So it is called “the fruit of the vine.” I don't think we should make a big deal over whether simple grape juice or wine is used. There is nothing in the text that commands or forbids the one or the other.

What we should be concerned about is playful substitutes—say, bagels and coke around a campfire. The Lord's Supper is not a plaything. We should celebrate it with a sense of weightiness—which we will talk about in just a moment.

## 4. The Mental Action of the Lord's Supper

The mental action of the participants of the Lord's Supper is to focus the mind on Jesus and especially his historical work in dying for our sins. Verses 24 and 25: “Do this in remembrance of me.” As we do the physical act of eating and drinking, we are to do the mental act of remembering. That is, we are to consciously call to mind the person of Jesus as he once lived and the work of Jesus as he once died and rose again, and what his work means for the forgiveness for our sins.

The Lord's Supper is a stark reminder, time after time, that Christianity is not new-age spirituality. It is not getting in touch with your inner being. It is not mysticism. It is rooted in historical facts. Jesus lived. He had a body and a heart that pumped blood and skin that bled. He died publicly on a Roman cross in the place of sinners so that anyone who believes on him might be rescued from the wrath of God. That happened once and for all in history.

Therefore, the mental action of the Lord's Supper is foundationally remembering. Not imagining. Not dreaming. Not channeling. Not listening. Not going into neutral. It is a conscious directing of the mind back into history to Jesus and what we know about him from the Bible. The Lord's Supper roots us, time after time, in the nitty-gritty of history. Bread and Cup. Body and blood. Execution and death.

## 5. The Spiritual Action of the Lord's Supper

This is all important. The reason is that unbelievers could do everything I have described so far. Indeed, if the devil could put on flesh, he could do it. Eat, drink, and remember. There is nothing inherently spiritual about that. So for the Lord's Supper to be what Jesus means for it to be, something more must be happening than only eating, drinking, and remembering. Something that unbelievers and the devil cannot do.

Those who eat and drink in a worthy manner partake of Christ's body and blood, not physically, but spiritually, in that, by faith, they are nourished with the benefits He obtained through His death, and thus grow in grace.

Where does this idea of "partaking of Christ's body and blood . . . spiritually . . . by faith" come from? The closest text to support this is in the previous chapter: 1 Corinthians 10:16-18. As I read it, ask, "What does 'participation' mean?"

Here is something much deeper than remembering. Here are believers—those who trust and treasure Jesus Christ—and Paul says that they are participating in the body and blood of Christ. Literally, they are experiencing a sharing (*koinōnia*) in his body and blood. They are experiencing a partnership in his death.

### Partaking of Christ's Body and Blood, Spiritually, By Faith

And what does this participation/sharing/partnership mean? I think verse 18 gives us the clue because it uses a similar word, but compares it to what happens in the Jewish sacrifices: "Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants [a form of the same word] in the altar?" What does sharer/participant/partner in the altar mean? It means that they are sharing in or benefiting from what happened on the altar. They are enjoying, for example, forgiveness and restored fellowship with God.

So I take verse 16 and 17 to mean that when believers eat the bread and drink the cup physically we do another kind of eating and drinking spiritually. We eat and drink—that is, we take into our lives—what happened on the cross. By faith—by trusting in all that God is for us in Jesus—we nourish ourselves with the benefits that Jesus obtained for us when he bled and died on the cross.

When Jesus died, his shed blood and broken body, offered up in his death on our behalf, purchased all the promises of God. Paul says, "All the promises of God find their Yes in him" (2 Corinthians 1:20). Every gift of God, and all our joyful fellowship with God, was obtained by the blood of Jesus. When Paul says, "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" he means: Do we not at the Lord's table feast spiritually by faith on every spiritual blessing bought by the body and blood of Christ? No unbeliever can do that. The devil can't do it. It is a gift for the family. When we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we feast spiritually by faith on all the promises of God bought by the blood of Jesus.

## 6. The Sacred Seriousness of the Lord's Supper

Paul warns that if you come to the Lord's Supper in a cavalier, callous, careless way that does not discern the seriousness of what happened on the cross, you may, if you are a believer, lose your life, not because of wrath, but as an act of God's fatherly discipline. Let me simply read slowly 1 Corinthians 11:27-32 as we move joyfully and seriously to the Lord's table.

"Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner [that is, not trusting and treasuring the precious gift of Christ] will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, [not to see if you are good enough, but to see if you are willing to turn away from yourself trust Jesus for what you need] and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body [that is, without being aware that this bread is not to be treated like a fish sandwich, the way some were doing in Corinth] eats and drinks judgment on himself. [And here is what he means:] That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died [not to be sent to hell; the next verse explains]. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined [that is, some are weak, and ill, and dying] so that we may not be condemned [that is, go to hell] along with the world."

Don't take the Lord's Supper lightly. It is one of the most precious gifts Christ has given to his church. Let's eat it together.

## A Vision for Clarksville

"I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols. Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare..." (Isaiah 42:6-9)

We live in a brave new world, a new cultural and spiritual terrain where things once considered of value are irrelevant, absolute truth is seen as an archaic myth, churches look more like monuments than mission agencies, and the people of God often feel out of place and out of touch with the changing world around them. Many people long for a more dynamic connection to spirituality, but harbor deep suspicions of institutions or organizations. In response to this aversion and their own brokenness, they follow paths of life that take the deepest longing of the soul for God, and seek to satiate their desire with lesser saviors such as health, success, financial security, intellectualism, or religiosity.

None of this is new or surprising to God.

Thousands of years ago, God wrote to His people in a similar position. They are in a strange land, unknown and foreign. They don't speak the language, they are enslaved to captors who have taken them far from home, they are tempted to worship false gods, and they are fearful and hopeless. Yet in the midst of Israel's captivity, God speaks a message of hope and a promise of redemption through Isaiah that is as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago.

In the midst of this brave new world, God tells us He has a mission and we have a part to play in it. He says He has given us to the people in our proximity as a promise to them, a promise that God loves them unconditionally. He has equipped us to be beacons of light that shine brightly in the darkness. We are given the strength and power by God's Spirit to open our own blind eyes to see a closer vision of Gospel truth, and then offer others a peek into the telescope. We are invited to walk out of the dungeon where we ourselves have been enslaved by our own desires and idolatry, and into the freedom Christ offers through His grace while inviting others to come with us. As we do this, God's glory is certain. His calling is sure. His authority is unrelenting. He gives us the gift to believe the Gospel and receive His grace, and then respond to it with a life lived on mission while looking outwards towards our friends and neighbors.

This is why He has placed Redeeming Hope in Clarksville: to create engaging spaces for people who would never step foot inside of a church to **explore** spirituality, to foster environments to **cultivate** disciples, and to **equip** followers of Jesus to share their faith and live life on the front lines of discipleship, mission, and service in their neighborhoods and the world.

There is a new thing happening. Are you ready?

# SESSION 3: WE ARE HIS

*We have a new identity in Christ*

## PART 1: CONNECT

What was one low and one high of your past week?

How did it go with the prep-work from last week? What stuck out most to you?

## PART 2: DISCOVER

### INTRODUCTION

In this session we are going to discover the basics about what it means to be a local expression of Christ's global church in the world in light of the gospel of grace. Remember these sessions are designed to be simple and adaptable so you could help a friend, neighbor or co-worker to explore and become rooted in Jesus and His message through this simple discovery process.

Does everyone have a bible? If not, you can download the free phone app called ESV Bible. Take a minute to do that or pull out your Bibles and turn to 1 Peter 2.5.

### WHAT IS THE CHURCH

When we hear the word "church" different things come to mind for each of us. What comes to mind for you? (*Give time for people to write or consider*)

1 Peter 2.5 gives us one of the richest pictures of what it means to be Christ's church.

Can someone please read 1 Peter 2.5?

What stands out? What is hard to understand? (*Ask secondary questions to continue the group conversation. After a few minutes of conversation and observations about this verse guide the group to the big idea...*)

There are many different metaphors the Scripture uses to describe "the church" (a bride to her groom Ephesians 5.22-29, a body of parts- 1 Corinthians 12.27, part of family- Matthew 12.49, Ephesians 2.19, a house, a living home or temple- 1 Peter 2.5). All these metaphors point to Christ's church as an organism made up of people- not an institution. And though there are certainly elements that include organization, the metaphor we hold to is that of a living people who have been redeemed by Christ himself.

The Scripture speaks of the church as Universal that is made up of a number of local expressions or families. Redeeming Hope is one of the local families or expressions of church. Redeeming Hope is being planted in Clarksville and I want to share a little bit of that story.

### HOW DOES THE LOCAL CHURCH LIVE AND THRIVE?

One of the most beautiful pictures we find of the living church of Jesus is in Acts 2.

Can someone please read Acts 2.42-47?



What sticks out? Where do you see the church connecting and what are they doing in these verses? (*WHERE: temple, house to house, with people in the everyday -- WHAT: teaching, fellowship, meals, praying, sharing resources, meals, praising God, had favor, people were getting saved*)

There is a consistent pattern throughout the book of Acts (which explains and describes the early church) where the people of God gather together for support and encouragement, and then are scattered to move out into the world on mission for God. In fact, the thesis sentence for the entire book of Acts, and how the book is structured, is in Acts 1.8, where Jesus' last words were: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth".

In Acts 1-7, the church begins in Jerusalem. In Acts 8-12, the Gospel is spread to the region of Judea and Samaria. And from Acts 13-28, the Gospel spreads from Antioch to Caesarea. The book of Acts ends with Paul taking the Gospel to Rome and the ends of the earth begin to hear of this Good News of Jesus. Gathering together, then scattering.

This gathered and scattered church is us today. We are a living organism, built for community that is centered around teaching, fellowship, food, favor, and growth. And we come together to be sent out. This means that Gatherings equip us for the environment of the everyday. Smaller communities (Greek = "oikos") form to express the local church in a local context. We call these Groups. The most natural churches form in smaller groups that meet in homes and then come together into a larger gathering where they can be encouraged, taught, be reminded of a shared vision and a shared table (communion).

Our local church expresses Acts 2 as a living and breathing thing by doing three things:

- Helping others genuinely explore faith in Jesus
- Cultivating followers of Jesus
- Equipping others to follow Jesus and live like missionaries

Every member of a church is a missionary. And every environment they find themselves in is a mission field.

Most of our hours are spent with people in our places of work, recreation, and family. Jesus' death and resurrection means every interaction with one of His created children and creation is an opportunity to be available to love and serve those people and opportunities He has brought into our path. This is a life lived in light of the gospel and most of God's activity in our lives happens in the ordinary flow of the everyday.

## THE LOCAL CHURCH VALUES BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

From your prep-work from last session, do you think Baptism is right for you? Do you have any questions about that?

From your prep-work from last session, do you have an understanding of the Lord's Supper and are you prepared and ready to take this serious next step?

## PART 3: THREE QUESTIONS

The larger group now goes through three questions. It may be beneficial to break into micro groups (2-5 guys/girls) to ask three simple questions based on the lesson. Each group should assign a facilitator who takes prayer notes on "How" and "Who" and sends them out to the group via text or email.

**WHAT** truth was highlighted to you and is there anything you need to confess and turn from?

**HOW** is the Lord inviting you to take a simple measurable step of obedience this week?

**WHO** has the Lord brought into your life to share the gospel with and help grow as a disciple

## PART 4: PREP-WORK FOR NEXT SESSION

1. Take a Spiritual Gifts Test online and bring results (<https://www.redeeminghope.org/spiritualgifts>).
  - a. Click the link called " Spiritual Gifts Assessment Link" and sign up for the free spiritual gifts test.
  - b. Go back to the link above and review a definition of spiritual gifts
2. Read the Why Ask These Personal Questions section below
3. Complete the Offering My Time section on the following pages
4. Complete the Offering My Things section on the following pages

### WHY ASK THESE PERSONAL QUESTIONS?

As we will learn in Session 4 “Everything Is His”, worship is a life of offering everything we are and have back to the Lord in response to His laying everything down for us through the cross. This causes us to reimagine and reconsider two specific things that most of us struggle to let go of: our time and our things (possessions).

Please answer the following assessment questions for personal preparation as we learn about a life of worship. The goal is for us to be encouraged and challenged (wherever we are on the spectrum) in order to mature and grow into a lifelong pattern of living sacrificially and generously in light of what Christ has done for us. There will be no expectation or pressure to share the answers to these questions in the large group session. They are to help surface patterns and areas of strength, potential growth and what next steps could be.

## Offering My Time

What are some of your primary gifts and passions?

What areas are you currently offering your time and abilities back to the Lord?

*Think not only in the context of a local church but in all areas of your life (i.e., tutoring children, serving the marginalized, making disciples, using your unique gifts to further God's kingdom, etc...).*

Do you feel you are gifted in these areas?

Are you passionate about these areas or does it feel more obligatory?

What areas within Redeeming Hope are you currently serving or interested in offering your time/abilities back to the Lord in worship?

Are you struggling with any feelings of guilt over "I'm not doing enough"?

## Offering My Things

The purpose of these questions is to get you thinking about how you are offering your resources (possessions and money) back to the Lord in worship.

Have you had experiences with churches or non-profits that have distorted your view of what it means to offer everything we have and are back to him in worship? What are they?

What kind of debt and other financial challenges do you have? Do you have a plan to get out of debt?

What underlying fears or concerns do you have around offering your resources back to the Lord?

What are areas that you are currently offering your resources back to the Lord?

*(i.e., non-profits, local churches, mission organizations, organically as you see need- homeless people, neighbors, friends, etc...)*

Do you feel like you are currently being obedient to offering your resources in ways The Lord has invited you to?

Are you saving and how do you feel it is going?



# SESSION 4: EVERYTHING IS HIS

*We can live an authentic life of holistic worship*

## PART 1: CONNECT

What was one low and one high of your past week?

How did it go as you worked through your time/things assessment questions from last week? What areas of strength or growth were surfaced? (*Go around the circle as each person briefly shares.*)

## PART 2: DISCOVER

### INTRODUCTION

In this session we are going to address some of those questions of time and things, discovering how we are to reimagine everything we have and everything we are to be lived in light of the gospel of grace. We will also look at how to take practical next steps to live a life of holistic worship. Remember these sessions are designed to be simple and adaptable so you could help a friend, neighbor or co-worker to explore and become rooted in Jesus and His message through this simple discovery process.

Does everyone have a bible? If not, you can download the free phone app called ESV Bible. Take a minute to do that or pull out your Bibles and turn to Romans 12.1.

### A LIVING SACRIFICE

Can someone please read Romans 12.1?

What stands out? What is hard to understand? (*Ask secondary questions to continue the group conversation. After a few minutes of conversation and observations about this verse guide the group to the big idea...*)

Worship is presenting our bodies as living sacrifices back to God in every realm of our life, in response to the mercies (grace) of God given to us in the sacrificial death of Christ. In light of the love and mercy that God has poured out to us we find that our lives are to be lived as sacrifices and that we are not owners but stewards of all our time and things.

Verse 2 teaches us how to know how this can practically play out in our lives?

Can someone please read Romans 12.2?

What stands out? What is hard to understand? (*Ask secondary questions to continue the group conversation. After a few minutes of conversation and observations about this verse guide the group to the big idea...*)

Romans 12.2 teaches us we need to test and discern God's perfect and pleasing will. We discover God's perfect and pleasing will through the truth (patterns, principles and instruction) of the Scripture and the leading of the Holy Spirit. There are a number of passages in the Scriptures that also give us patterns and principles about how we are to steward our time and our things. Let's look at a few together:

## WHY ARE WE TO STEWARD OUR TIME AND THINGS?

Paul is writing to his friends and encouraging them to be generous. He says in 2 Corinthians 8.8-9: "I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich."

Where do you see Paul motivating the Corinthians to be generous? What is He looking to as the source of motivation?

## HOW ARE WE TO STEWARD OUR TIME AND THINGS?

### **With Margin: Work + Rest:**

"For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living." (2 Thessalonians 3.11-12)

"For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD" (Exodus 31.15)

After God created, on the 7th day God created margin. Margin has been lost in our culture. Part of us stewarding our time and things before God is to reclaim margin in both. The Old Testament laid out clear instruction to create space to rest or Sabbath (Exodus 20.8). It is so important that it is one of the ten commandments. And we believe this means taking time everyday and weekly to rest remembering it is all His. Holistic rest also means that we ought to have margin financially as we consider and prepare for the future by saving (retirement, college, projects, crisis, pleasure) and paying off debt. Not owing anything and preparing for the future in our time and things means margin, rest, Sabbath.

### **With Simplicity: Discernment in all things**

"For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God" (2 Corinthians 1.12)

Asking the following questions:

Do I need this?

Is this something I can and should say no to?

How will this possession or use of my time bring worth or worship to God?

Is it wise?

Is it beneficial to my family or just me?

### **Towards the Poor and Marginalized**

"If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled" without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." (James 2.15-17)

The Bible is filled with passages about how we are to steward our time and things to care for the poor and the marginalized. Redeeming Hope actively allocates resources to helping the poorest in our area and training believers to be equipped to help the poor and marginalized with their time.

### **Towards the Local Church**

"On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come" (1 Corinthians 16.2)

"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Peter 4.10)

The New Testament is filled with passages about supporting the local church where you attend. We ask that everyone who is a member of our church family pray about giving to Redeeming Hope on a regular basis. For some, this might mean five dollars a month, for others five hundred dollars a week.

### **Towards God's Global Kingdom**

"But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while." (Romans 15.23-24)

The Scripture also encourages believers to give of their time and things organically to nonprofits and special projects.

## HOW MUCH ARE WE TO STEWARD?

When it comes to resources the Old Testament gave instruction to give 10% of the first fruits of whatever was given to us (income, gifts, etc...). The New Testament doesn't mention a percentage but rather that each believer ought to practice an attitude of sacrifice (life interrupting) and generosity (lavishly) as the Lord leads them uniquely. Giving should be done not out of compulsion (guilt-I have to because the basket is coming) or reluctantly (fear-I am afraid I won't be provided for if I give) but rather in faith as an act of worship (I believe all things I have are the Lord's and so I am offering back to Him what is already His). "Where" and "What amount" you give is less important than how you give (the condition of your heart).

## HOW SHOULD I USE MY TIME AND GIFTS?

Romans 12.4-11 teach us of various ways we can offer our time through our gifts.

Can someone please read Romans 12.4-11?

What were some of the results from your spiritual gift test?

All of us have something to offer, what are the ways you can offer some of your abilities in a given month to serve the Lord through our local church?

## **PART 3: THREE QUESTIONS**

The larger group now goes through three questions. It may be beneficial to break into micro groups (2-5 guys/girls) to ask three simple questions based on the lesson. Each group should assign a facilitator who takes prayer notes on "How" and "Who" and sends them out to the group via text or email.

**WHAT** truth was highlighted to you and is there anything you need to confess and turn from?

**HOW** is the Lord inviting you to take a simple measurable step of obedience this week?

**WHO** has the Lord brought into your life to share the gospel with and help grow as a disciple

## **PART 4: PREP-WORK FOR NEXT SESSION**

1. Pray, discuss and take a next step in how you are stewarding your time and things in your local church. Reach out to Josh if you are considering being a part of Redeeming Hope.
2. Complete the My Story, God's Story section on the following pages
3. Watch Three Circles Training Video ([redeeminglyhope.org/3circles](http://redeeminglyhope.org/3circles))



## My Story + God's Story

*(Answer the following questions in a few sentences)*

Growing-up (There was a beginning and a shaping)

What was your family like, what were you interested in? What were the good true and beautiful things God placed in your life through nature or nurture?

Gaps (There were Crashes + Breakings)

How have you been affected by sin (things you have done or participated in or things done to you)? What or who has caused you grief or harm? What are some of the crashes or tragedies that have altered the course of your life?

gods (There we ways I tried the saving)

What ways did you attempt to fill the void, what was your drug of choice? (i.e., alcohol, money, religious performance, success, appearance, good works, sex, power, pornography, narcotics, children, family, relationship)

Grace (There is a God who is redeeming)

How and when did God come to your rescue you? What facet of Jesus' death on your behalf speaks to your new identity (accepted, adopted, justified, redeemed, etc...)? What did He convict you and cause you to repent of?

Grandeur (He is transforming me and I will be completed at His returning)

How is the reality of who you are now in Jesus playing out in your life? What are the areas He is continuing to work out in you and through you?

# SESSION 5: THE WORLD IS HIS

*We live as conduits of Jesus' grace to the World*

## PART 1: CONNECT

What was one low and one high of your past week?

How did it go with writing out your story? Going around the circle each person gives the outline of their story using one word or phrase from each section of the story (Creation, Fall/Idols, Redemption, Restoration).

## PART 2: DISCOVER

### INTRODUCTION

In this session we are going to discover some of Jesus' last instructions for us to live as a conduit of his love and message in the world. Remember these sessions are designed to be simple and adaptable so you could help a friend, neighbor or co-worker to explore and become rooted in Jesus and His message through this simple discovery process.

Does everyone have a bible? If not, you can download the free phone app called ESV Bible. Take a minute to do that or pull out your Bibles and turn to Matthew 28.16-20.

### JESUS' COMMISSION TO HIS FOLLOWERS

Can someone please read Matthew 28.16-20?

What stands out?

Who is he speaking to in this passage and today?

What did the disciples do when they first saw him?

What has been given to Jesus?

What is he inviting us to do/take action?

What does Jesus promise at the end?

In light of Jesus having all authority and because of his pursuit of us at the cost of his life, we are empowered and compelled to go into the world to love the people Jesus has brought into our path or placed on our minds and hearts helping them to take steps to follow Christ.

The two most challenging questions that emerge from Jesus' command are (1) who are we to go to and (2) how can we do this naturally? These are the two greatest roadblocks to Christ followers taking action in what Jesus' calls us to in this passage. It is especially challenging because we have a history in our culture of weird, zealous, speakerphone-toting religious people who are forceful and unloving shouting on street corners.

### WHO SHOULD I GO TO?

Sometimes we think that sharing Jesus and helping others to follow him means we have to approach strangers. Though some will do this, one of the patterns we see in Jesus life and the lives of his first followers is different. They are simply sharing the experience they had with Jesus with the people who their lives intersect with regularly.

The greek word the Scripture uses for people our lives intersect with regularly is someone's "oikos" which simply means household (Acts 16.32). Another way to think of this is your friends, family, co-workers and neighbors...the people you are around the most, who know you the best, who God has connected you with in order to share of your life and experience of Jesus with in natural ways.

We see this in John 1 where Andrew invites his brother Simon Peter and Philip invites Nathanael to come and meet Jesus.

We see this in John 4.39 with the woman at the well who returned home to share her experience with Jesus.

We see this in Acts 10.33 where Cornelius invites his family to come and hear Peter share about Jesus.

We see this in Acts 16.32 where the Philippian jailer invites his family to hear of Jesus and his message of grace.

Take a few minutes to consider this question to help you identify who he has brought into your life:

What individuals or people has the Lord brought into your life, who you have regular interaction with who you have a level of care or concern for or who seem to be open or curious about Jesus or your life in Jesus?

Write out their names and begin praying for them each day. This is the first step to living in obedience to Jesus words in Matthew 28 to live as conduits sharing Jesus and making disciples.

## HOW CAN I LIVE AS A CONDUIT?

Knowing "who" is a key way to begin joining God as He pursues people with his message of restoration. The other challenge is knowing "how". It is one thing to pray for people regularly and grow in friendship with those the Lord has in your life, it is another thing to know what the next step is when you identify they are curious, open or interested in hearing more about Jesus and his message.

I would like to teach you a simple organic process.

1. **Identify Openness:** In order to journey with a family member, friend, neighbor, co-worker, it is important to first see if they are interested or open to discovering Jesus and his message. The following list is not a closed formula but rather a dynamic and open process that prepares you to discern where someone is spiritually and then take a next step of courage through the prompting of the Holy Spirit.
  - **Pray** regularly for the Lord to intersect people in your life who He is drawing to himself and pray for those people by name regularly.
  - **Listen** for people who open up and share their struggles with you.
  - **Confess** a sin or struggle with a person and share how your faith in Jesus and his message has helped you to overcome the situation... "I have really been impatient with my wife recently..."
  - **Share** with your co-workers that you are praying generally for the employees in the office/business to thrive and invite them to join in... "I know how much I need prayer in my life and am committing to praying for the needs of people in our office every day, would you like to join me and can I pray for you for anything?"
  - **Ask** someone their general story/journey over coffee or lunch and then share yours ... "So what has brought you here?"
  - **Reach out** to others who are in a known crisis. Often people are open to spiritual conversations during crisis because they realize they are not in control and are often seeking to understand how to deal with it.
  - **Serve** people in your context, or those who are poor and marginalized, in tangible and helpful ways inviting them to join in, which often will open up spiritual dialogue.

## 2. Share Spontaneously

- Use the My Story/God's Story outline from the prep work in Session 4 (Creation, Fall/Idols, Redemption, Restoration). Know it by heart and be able to share it in a few sentences. Find natural ways to bring up your story and share how Jesus has changed you. You never know how a statement or phrase about Jesus can impact others, especially when it is shared in the context of your personal story and experiences.

## 3. Invite someone into a more intentional environment:

- Gospel Appointments (1-1 Discovery)- When someone is open spiritually and you have been able to share Jesus impact in your life and it seems to spark curiosity or interest, then it is time to take a risk and invite them to discover Jesus, his message, how it is different than religion and how it has changed your life in a more intentional way. This will be nerve-wracking at first, but it can produce incredible fruit.
  - You can begin by sharing something like this: "I have been thinking, we have a lot of discussions about God/Life/Faith recently, I would love to take 30 minutes with you over a beer or coffee to share more about Jesus and how his message has helped me navigate the complexities of life."
  - When you meet, you can share the My Story/God's Story outline in full with them over a half hour, and then share Three Circles with them and then ask, "Why not believe this"
- Discovery Group- An alternative option is to do a general Discovery Group and invite people from the office, neighborhood, friends or family:
  - Use Session 1 - His Message with the parable of the two sons in Luke 15.11-32 as an outline. Meet over 3-4 weeks breaking down each time you meet sharing your story as you help them to discover Jesus and his gospel message.
  - Invitation to repentance and faith: After you go over redemption ask the person to prayerfully consider turning from their sin/idols and begin a journey to follow Jesus by placing him as the most important thing in their life. Ask them, "why not believe this".
  - Next Step: If they say yes celebrate and continue to root them and ground them in Jesus (Sessions 2-5). If they say no but want to continue to meet with you begin meeting in group by reading through the gospel of John and utilizing 3 Questions.

# The End of the Sessions

We are so grateful you have participated in these five sessions. We hope you have been challenged, grounded in Jesus and his message and prepared to practically live your life in light of the gospel.

In session 1 “We are His” we discovered Jesus, his message, how it is different from religion by walking through the parable of the two sons in Luke 16.11-32.

In session 2 “I am His” we looked at Ephesians 1.3-14 and discovered who we are found to be in light of Christ and how we form over a lifetime through grace through growing and abiding with Christ.

In session 3 “We are His” we looked at Acts 2.42-47 and discovered what it means to be a local expression of God's universal church.

In session 4 “Everything is His” we looked at Romans 12.1-11 and discovered how everything we are and everything we have- both our time and things are to be offered back to him in worship in light of him giving us all things through the cross.

In session 5 “The World is His” we looked at Matthew 28.18-20 and discovered how in light of his pursuit of us we are called to live as conduits of Christ's love and message to the world.

## Where from Here?

Below are some next things to consider as you continue on your journey in Christ.

1. Begin engaging your friends by being trained and hosting a set of GFL Sessions yourself.
2. Join Redeeming Hope. You can take the next step in this by scheduling a coffee with Josh in order to get to know you and your family and see how you can be a part of what God is doing in Clarksville.
3. Take these sessions back to your local church or on your journey of following Jesus over a lifetime. There is no pressure to take any next steps. We simply hope these sessions have been encouraging!