

# THE PROVIDENCE SCRIPTURE CATECHISM

AN INTRODUCTION TO  
BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

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## INTRODUCTION

### What is Catechesis?

#### Transmission of the Faith & Preparation for the Christian Life

What is Catechesis? Well for most people it just sounds like something Roman Catholics do. If you grew up in an active Roman Catholic family you probably went to CCD at some point. For many evangelical Christians, anything that sounds Roman Catholic does not sound very interesting either. To many people's surprise however the term comes from the New Testament word *κατηχέω*, which simply means to instruct or inform. In Luke 1:4 when Luke is introducing his Gospel to Theophilus he says, "so that you may know for certain the things you were taught." The word translated as "taught" is the same Greek word. And in Luke 1:4 it actually refers to a body of systematic teaching in the Christian faith. Early on, the Church developed a process for instructing children of the faithful and new converts in the basic beliefs and expectations of the Christian faith. This process became known as catechesis and such documents became known as catechisms. So many of us may also describe it as discipleship.

There is still a difference between the two historically. It is best to think of catechesis as a subset of discipleship. All catechesis is discipleship, but not all discipleship is catechesis. While discipleship encompasses the entirety of the Christian life, catechesis is designed to be an initial training in the foundations of the Christian life. We become a disciple through baptism, whether as an adult convert or as a young child that is born to believing parents. Being a disciple means we are made a part of Christ's church and in that sense, we are "in Christ." But that does not necessarily mean we will ultimately be saved. That requires an ongoing life of repentance and faith. Jesus and the New Testament writers, as well as the Didache (containing the earliest catechism of the church) all make clear that salvation comes to those who finish the race in faith. For this reason, discipleship is meant to be life encompassing. The entire life of the baptized convert is a pilgrimage of faith where we are called to persevere in until the end (Matt. 10:22 & 24:13).

The entire ministry of the Church is structured around an ongoing process of discipleship. Discipleship is the perpetual nurture and nourishment in the Christian faith. Contrary to popular opinion, discipleship is not just a training course at the beginning of our Christian life that we leave behind. Discipleship is according to the New Testament the ongoing life rhythms of the Church that shape and form spiritual life. Luke defines these regular life rhythms of discipleship in Acts 2:42: "They were devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." These four things are the core practices that define the life of the earliest church and what it meant to be a disciple. What is this regular pattern of discipleship meant to do? It is meant to evoke a constant call to faith and repentance. The disciplined life then is that of ongoing nurture of the spiritual life toward Christ in repentance. It is not just basic training starting out our spiritual life but repentance that is practiced in the community around the preached word and the sacraments.

So what then is the purpose of catechesis? When the Church first began, most of the converts were Jewish folk who had been raised on the Hebrew Scriptures. In Acts we see mass conversions of thousands of listeners, all being baptized together. But Jesus at the same time had already told them that they would be witnesses for him not only in Jerusalem and Judea, but also in Samaria and to the utter parts of the earth. So as the Church spread, they quickly found themselves touching the gentiles with the Gospel. This was both challenging and exciting (Acts 10). But they quickly discovered that the gentiles did not have the foundation in the scriptures, the faith, and morality that Hebrew converts took for granted. They had to be trained from the bottom up. So very quickly the early church found itself in need of developing short compact training in the expectations for the Christian life. The earliest known document of this type is known as the Didache or “The Teaching of the Twelve” of which some parts are adopted in this catechism. Basically the early Church needed to make sure that a gentile convert knew exactly what was expected of a Christian and what they were getting themselves into. This is particularly important for adult converts because in the ancient world, as for the most part still today, children by default are raised in the religious affiliation of their parents. But the adult convert would naturally have a pagan and anti-Christian worldview. Catechesis was a compact and intense form of training in the Gospel and the basic Christian life. It clarified what the implications for the convert was and what it meant to take up one’s cross and bear it. It demonstrated the sacrifice and abandonment of worldly lusts in exchange for the kingdom of God. When we look at an ancient baptismal catechism like the first six sections of the Didache, one is not presented with a sleepy cultural Christianity that unenthusiastically shows up to a church building once a week for its religious inoculation. What we find is a sober, serious and vigilant faith that saw itself at war with the flesh and the world. As a good friend of mine has said, “If you think the Christian faith is easy, then you are not taking it seriously.” The community that gave us the Didache took their faith extremely serious. The document comes from either Judea or Syria and was composed by Jewish Christians sometime in about 50 to 70 A.D. To give you a picture of its importance, the last of the apostles, John, died just after 98 A.D. Thus it is a very important window into the faith, practice, and catechesis that was performed in the apostolic era. Catechesis then is preparation for the disciplined life and participation in the Church. Especially in relation to adult converts, it is also an evangelistic tool that helps the potential convert embrace real Christianity and not a watered-down generic knock-off.

As sad as it is to say, what I just called the “watered-down generic knock-off” of the Christian faith is quite prevalent today. Compared to the age of the early Church, the modern church has become particularly infatuated with our image and how we are perceived in the world. We are obsessed with being “sensitive” and “relevant.” This is a stark contrast from the faith once delivered to the saints that we find in the New Testament, the Church fathers and Reformers. Our generation, especially within evangelical circles, has been so overcome by worldliness that we will do almost anything to get people into church. What is called “political correctness” in the social sphere is called “seeker sensitivity” in the religious. And this has forced us to change our practices and unfortunately for many churches, the message too. The earliest Church on the other hand stood out for its countercultural stance. It was unconcerned with popular opinion. As an example, many modern churches open up the Lord’s Table to everyone so as not to “offend” while the early apostolic faith was quite politically incorrect in how it

dismissed the un-baptized before serving the Supper. In fact the sanctity of the table was held so tightly that the early Church was at times accused of cannibalism because outsiders heard they were privately eating flesh and blood of someone named Jesus. The Didache for instance says in 9.5; “But no one shall either eat nor drink from you’re Eucharist except the one who has been baptized into the name of the Lord. For the Lord spoke concerning this: “You shall not give what is holy to the dogs.” Hardly seeker sensitive! And yet the first four centuries of the Church proved to be some of the most prolific regarding mission and disciple making. So in the Didache, like much of the early Church’s process of catechesis, making a disciple at any cost was never the goal. To make a disciple who does not take seriously the Gospel is to not make one at all. So unlike our constant modern temptation to make the Gospel more “relevant” and palatable, the early Christian faith like what we find represented in the Didache would rather an individual reject the true Gospel than accept a false one.

### *The Scripture Catechism*

With the exception of a few excerpts from the Didache and the Apostles’ Creed, the rest of this catechism comes from sacred Scripture, the Bible. As a minister in the Reformed Church tradition, one may wonder why I have not chosen to just use the wonderfully pastoral Heidelberg Catechism. Well there are several reasons for that. First of all, the Heidelberg is a cherished document that was extremely useful in its day. But in its day Europe was already Christian. Much like the Jewish converts of the Apostle's day, people already had a strong religious vocabulary. Our cultural context has much more in common with the Greco-Roman culture that the Apostles preached in. There is a great deal of similarity between their pre-modern pagan context and our post-modern western context. The average person now has very little biblical and religious capital to work with. Most people do not know the Bible well at all. Thus we cannot start by presupposing the religious foundation that people had in the age of the Reformation. Furthermore, the Reformation catechisms were not technically designed for evangelism in the strict sense. Most people in Europe to one degree or another considered themselves Christian. While these do call us to repentance and faith, they were still more aimed as sorting out good doctrine and practice from bad. Therefore the lack of biblical knowledge, and the orientation toward polity and dogmatic disputes, the Reformation Catechisms are less useful in the evangelization of new converts and Christian children today (the average Christian home is far less biblically literate today too).

I am not suggesting that we dispense with them of course. I love the Heidelberg and use it in my ministry all the time. But I have found the need for something a step lower and more rudimentary. What I felt was that we need something that will address a couple needs at once. First, like any catechism, it should prepare someone for the basic Christian life. It needs to set out the basic expectations for what it means to be a disciple. Second, we needed something that was directly focused on the historic Christian Gospel and not cluttered by 16th century dogmatic disputes. It is not that they are not important. They are just distracting when trying to present the basic message of the Gospel. Unlike the Reformation catechisms which are basically structured around systematic theology, the early catechisms like the Didache were much more basic. First of all they assumed the preaching of the Gospel, the so-called *kerygma*. This was the core

content of the Gospel message, namely the doctrine of Jesus and his work to save sinners. After this, as in the Didache sections 1-6, it moved to basic instruction, or what was called *didache*. This was the basic training in the Christian life, in repentance and the moral obedience that is required of a disciple. The question answered by the *kerygma* is the person and work of Jesus, what he has done for sinners. The question answered by *didache* was how the person who embraces that message is expected to respond.

There are those today who would like us to think that *kerygma* and *didache* are opposed. But nothing could be further from the truth. The “teaching” or “instruction” in the Christian life that falls under the rubric of *didache* always assumes the *kerygma*. This Scripture catechism is meant to present the Christian faith in a sense “in its own words.” By using Scripture, the reader can get to the core Gospel message without much commentary. It presents the Gospel and a Christian worldview by presenting a selection of key scripture texts in succession. For this reason it has been organized under these two main categories. The first half is twelve lessons on the *kerygma*. The second half and remaining twelve lessons deal with preparation for living the Christian life in the Church. This is the *didache* or “instruction” section, which includes some excerpts from the Didache.

Third, the lack of biblical literacy necessitates using Scripture itself rather than the question and answer format of some of the Reformation catechisms. Scripture itself is far more neutral than the documents of one tradition or another because it is the inheritance of the entire church, not just one denomination or tradition. For instance, if I want to begin a dialogue with a Mormon or other cult member who comes to my door, a Protestant Catechism is not something that we can dialogue over. And this is true also for the many nominally religious un-churched people out there that think of themselves as Christian but show no real knowledge of discipleship. By developing a road map made up primarily of Scripture it allows us two advantages: First it gives us a logical framework for discussing the Gospel and what it means to be a Christian; Second it is laying a foundation for basic biblical literacy at the same time.

Fourth, we needed an easy blueprint for Gospel witness that is not a canned manipulative sales pitch, oversimplified bullet points, or spiritual laws. I do recognize that God can and does use these even in a pinch. And yes God has also been known to use even a jackass, but I would submit he was forced to because the prophet he wanted to use was being a bigger jackass than the jackass. These things have had their place, but by and large they minimize the Gospel because they oversimplify it too much. When we preach the Gospel, we are not merely preaching a message but a worldview, a way of interpreting reality. When we preach the Gospel, we are calling people to begin interpreting their entire reality through the God-man who was incarnated by a virgin, lived a perfect life, died a criminal’s death, was resurrected and now sits at the right hand of the Father God ruling. All history and life is summed up in the Christ event. Handing someone a tract or giving them a five point sales pitch will not wrest anyone of their already pagan worldview even if they embrace Jesus on the spot. Bad worldviews only change over time. Being a disciple is to be a pagan thinker in detox. We are all recovering pagans in our thought life. The proclamation of the Gospel is meant to unravel false worldviews. The best missionaries move into the relational sphere of a person or people group and begin a dialogue. In so doing, their worldview is challenged over time. Coming to faith in Christ is a dialogical process that engages the mind. What we needed was a blue print for discussion, for having such dialogue.

Finally, the reason for a Scripture catechism was also to create a more neutral tool for various Christian traditions to use. By rooting this document primarily in Scripture and with the aid of two of the most important extra-biblical texts (the Didache and the Apostle's Creed) it offers a universal tool for evangelism, catechesis, and discipleship. Those in more fundamentalist traditions will likely ask why use the Didache and the Apostle's creed at all and not only use the Bible. I understand this concern but it is a naivete that fails to see the progressive development of our understanding of the Bible. The Bible clearly teaches the doctrine of the Trinity, the deity of Christ and other major doctrines. The problem is that there are no single nice-n-tidy proof texts for them. These major doctrines must be taken as a whole. Further the generations that gave us creeds like the Apostle's and Nicene creeds are in fact the same generations that ultimately canonized the New Testament. If you slight the generation that gave us the creed, you slight the generation that gave us the canonized New Testament. They arrived at these creeds because of their close reading and acceptance of the New Testament. In regard to the Didache, much of this material is also found in Matthew's Gospel (though the Didache is older). So it would seem to some that I should just catalogue similar material from Matthew? Perhaps so, but then I felt I would be doing scripture injustice by piecing together the sayings of Jesus myself which I do not feel I have the authority to do. It, in a sense has already been done in the Didache which saw wide use in the early church. So I felt it best to stick with that. In the Didache 1-6 what we find is a catalogue of Jesus' commandments and sayings. It seems that the early church took Jesus' command to teach all that he commanded (Matt. 28:19-20) quite literally. As you shall see, these six sections of the Didache (found in Part II 2 & 3) will prove to be extremely helpful in setting out the ethical expectation of the basic Christian life.

### *What are the Goals?*

Francis Kelly in his excellent little book on catechesis defines catechesis in the following way: "Catechesis is the transmission of God's Word to invite people to personal faith."<sup>1</sup> I love that definition. He goes on to explain, "Transmission puts the emphasis on our listening to and acceptance of God's Word as the fundamental dynamic of catechetical ministry. This ministry is a service to God's Word and the faith of the people." Another way for me to put that is that catechesis is one application of the ministry of the Word in the Church. The central ministry of the Word in the Church is the gathering on the Lord's Day to hear Scripture preached and celebrate the sacraments. But the early Church understood that to get the most out of that rich experience, converts needed to be prepared for it. They needed to develop a foundational understanding of the Gospel that included a vocabulary and big theological ideas. This was all the more necessary in a time when it would be more than a thousand years before private printed copies of the bible would be found in every Christian home. So catechesis is an application of the Church devoting itself the "apostles doctrine" (Acts 2:42).

Since our goal is transmission of the biblical faith for the purpose of invitation, Kelley is right to point out how this above all, requires faithfulness to that message. Far from the insipid

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<sup>1</sup> Francis D. Kelley, *The Mystery We Proclaim: Catechesis for the Third Millennium*, (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, 1999), 44.

poppy blather of health and happiness that parades itself as the Gospel today, the message to be presented in catechesis is to be a countercultural one, the Gospel of Jesus itself. As I mentioned of the Didache and early Church above, they would prefer someone reject the true Gospel than accept a false one. A false Gospel is the quickest way to build false assurances so that the unwary are ultimately damned. At least those who reject the true Gospel have the opportunity to still repent and embrace the real Gospel. But those who embrace a false Gospel hold onto its false assurances while the hope of the true Gospel passes them by.

Because catechesis creates a dialogue of “invitation” it is far better suited to sharing the Gospel in our modern culture. This does not mean we have to do formal classes, though some people seeking religious experiences may just sign up for that. But more importantly, this scripture catechism creates a discussion blueprint for the average Christian to enter into discussion with friends and neighbors about the Gospel. By using the discussion model of catechesis it creates a non-threatening dialogue where questions can be asked, doubts can be fielded and most of all, a person can experience warm Christian dialogue without feeling pressured or judged. For this reason Kelly reminds us, “we have to remember that faith is above all a gift of God. We can invite people to faith, but we cannot force their acceptance. We have to be patient to let God work in the hearts of those we serve.”<sup>2</sup> This dialogical approach is the antithesis of those confrontational evangelistic approaches that use leading questions and sales tactics. Such measures are acts of desperation by Church traditions that have become so distanced from larger society, that they have to resort to absurd means. They lack all credibility and usually push away otherwise spiritually interested people. Thus true transmission of the Gospel message must be genuinely an invitation, not manipulation. Any method of sharing the Gospel that uses force, even an unnoticed manipulation, is not consistent with the Gospel itself. It makes the evangelized serve the agenda of the evangelist rather than serve that person the way Christ serves humanity in the Gospel.

Francis Kelly also lays out five major goals in the catechetical process. And while I am not a big fan of alliteration, these are not forced, but really hit on the mark. He lists them as follows:

1. Conversion
2. Community
3. Content
4. Contemplation
5. Commitment

*Conversion.* The central and fundamental message of the Gospel is “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” (Matt. 3:2). These are the first words recorded in Matthew of John the Baptizer’s message. Jesus preached this. The Apostles preached this. Repentance as we have already said above is a life encompassing process of turning our mind, will, emotions, and affections toward God. It requires first the belief that God exists and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him (Heb. 11:6). Conversion in the biblical sense describes the life that

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* 46.

has recognized its sin through the power of the Holy Spirit and is reorienting his or her life Godward. In this way the biblical ideas of repentance and conversion are coextensive. They are not two things, but one. They are one process and one journey of faith.

The term “conversion” has gotten a bit misused and misunderstood in our day. It is not that it has been totally redefined, but just truncated. For most of the Church in the west today, conversion is that point in time when a person professes Christ and embraces the Gospel. It is usually coupled with a “conversion experience.” Certainly there is a small part of this that is true. Indeed there is a historical point in time when people are baptized and become a member of earthly and physical body of Christ. But we also know that many people who are baptized, not only some as children but also many as adults, do not experience true saving faith till some time later. And others may never experience it at all. But we have no control over that. We can only preach faithfully. Only God knows the thoughts and intents of the heart. And for this reason, over the last couple centuries, there has grown up a theology of “conversionism” that naively seeks to have a “pure” church where there are only true believers. This conversionism has done this by basically mistaking a salvation experience (like a confession of Jesus, “making a decision” or “praying the sinner’s prayer”) with true saving faith. Certainly many true Christians still find Jesus this way. But unfortunately this has developed into creating false assurances where Christians begin to trust in those experiences and works rather than in Jesus himself. What I mean by this is that because of a faulty view of conversion many begin to have assurance of their salvation because they “prayed the sinner’s prayer” or had some other conversion experience rather than an ongoing trust in Christ. This is a dangerous theological pitfall that plagues a large part of evangelical Christians today. And ironically as much as evangelicals protest the idea that a person can be saved by mere ritual like baptism, trusting in having prayed a prayer or some experience is exactly the same thing. It is not biblical repentance and conversion.

So while we may still talk of the day a person “came to Christ” we never want to see the event as absolute. Only the day Jesus hung on a cross and then was raised from the dead is vicarious and absolute for our salvation. Biblical repentance and conversion does have a point at which it begins, but it continues throughout our life. So it may be much better for us speak of “the day that we began our journey with Christ.” This is because conversion is so much more than the day we discovered the Gospel. God is gentle and works in our lives gradually and so I have known many people whose thinking about the Gospel did not change in a moment, but gradually over time. This is because we are entering into a covenant relationship with Christ, a marriage of sorts. And so we can illustrate conversion best in the following question: Which is more important, the “I do” you say on your wedding day, or the “I do” you say every day after? The Christian life and conversion are the same way. The day the Christian stops saying “I do” to God, is the day that their Christian pilgrimage comes to an end. This is precisely the point of Jesus parable of the seeds sown on different kinds of ground (Mark 4:1-20). True faith is an enduring and persevering faith. The role of the Church is to be a nurturing mother of faith for God’s children. So catechesis’ primary goal is as Kelley said, and “invitation” and that invitation is to conversion. But as we have noted, catechesis is preparation for the discipleship life. It does not merely call us to conversion initially, but it prepares us to be continually called to conversion through the ongoing nourishing ministry of the preached word, the sacraments, the community and prayer. So whether we are using this catechism with one of our baptized children, one of the

many un-catechized adult Christians today that do not properly understand the Gospel who may join your church, or as a pure evangelism tool, the goal in catechesis is always conversion.

*Community.* As we have said, catechesis prepares the disciple for life in the church. One of the things that plagues the church today is the individualistic independence that pervades our culture. Faith is understood as a private affair. So even in Churches with very conservative theology, people are often herded in shoulder-to-shoulder to hear an inspiring message and then herded back out an hour and twenty minutes later to hardly think of each other at all till next week. That is not the Christianity of the New Testament. Christians are called to share the “life together” which is a more literal rendering of “fellowship” in Acts 2:42. Learning doctrine is not a private affair, but a communal one. Catechesis then not only prepares for life in the community, but it happens in community with at least one or more other Christians.

*Content.* We cannot forget the content. Catechesis is a uniquely Christian activity different from all other religions. The Gospel has been passed down to us in the New Testament. We do not teach anything novel. We preach as Paul said, what we have received. And that teaching we have received in the form of the Bible. God has come in both time and space and has made known to man his will. This is called “special revelation.” It is not us who went searching for God, but is as Abraham Herschel said, “God in search of man.” He made himself and his will known to us and now calls us to “obey the Gospel” in repentance and faith (2 Thess. 1:8). The content of our catechesis needs to be the core Gospel message and what it means to be a Christian. The proclamation of the Gospel in any form, whether preaching in the assembly, catechesis, or talking with a friend over lunch has the goal of passing on of the Gospel message. It is as Paul himself said, “I pass on to you that which I myself have learned.” People are meant to learn the Gospel from other Christians. The Gospel commission is to both be disciples and to make disciples.

*Contemplation.* Contemplation may be a big “C” word for prayer but Kelly is right to bring it up. His point is that often the faith is communicated in primarily moralistic and intellectual ways. We live in an inwardly spiritual age, and while this has its liabilities, it does remind us that man is at his most basic level is spiritual. All his strivings are in some way an outworking of his inner spiritual longings, whether he knows it or not. In a world where the Church is constantly put back on its heels, we often fall prey to using apologetic and defensive responses toward challenges to the Gospel. But what is far more winsome and attractive is a loving and unthreatened posture toward those who resist our message. A prayerful and contemplative posture goes a long way in this. As we share the Gospel through catechesis we are not just transmitting information, but the Christian faith. It is a call to commune with God in prayer.

*Commitment.* Finally the Gospel is about commitment. Our world is one of broken commitments. But the Gospel calls us to something greater. Catechesis is about calling a person to commitment to Christ. It is not a mere call to pronouncing a commitment, but to living one. The Gospel commitment is like a marriage commitment that must endure the tribulations of faith in this life. But again, catechesis prepares us to become part of a community where we are loved, supported and held up in that commitment. We are not asked to go it alone. We are called to dwell in Christ and within his body where we have fellow pilgrims along for the journey.

## *Using this Catechism*

In this catechism you may also quickly see that it lacks all originality on my part. It is very simple. It is taken mostly from key texts of Scripture that tell the Gospel story and explain it themselves. I wanted the Scriptures, as much as possible, to speak for themselves. It is then the job of the catechist to facilitate discussion around the Holy Scripture selections. This leads right into the teaching philosophy of the catechism. There are a lot of new introductory courses that have been developed today to engage people in dialogue. Many of these have been very effective. Their basic approach is to set up a series of common questions. But it has the drawback of dictating the questions to the disciple rather than inspiring it within them. This is what we find advantageous about a selection of key scriptures. They become discussion pieces that inspire questions rather than dictate them. We will include questions and answers to help facilitate, but the ultimate goal is to let Scripture do its job to create vibrant Spirit lead discussion.

The first thing we need to address is who this catechism should be used by. At times in the history of the church there have been special or professional catechists. In this model, as people interact with the Christians, they would then be directed to a catechist and handed off. This has worked well in some instances but I do not think it is the best use of the gifts and skills in the Church. There are certainly those who are far more gifted to teach complex doctrinal ideas. But at the same time the task of sharing the Gospel falls to every Christian. So this has been designed as a blueprint or roadmap for gospel witness and dialogue for every Christian. It lays out a plan for every believer to have a framework in which they can share the Gospel with their friends and neighbors who are inquiring.

Part I, which deals with the basic Gospel message, is made to be used in many ways. Large key sections of text are used so that the catechist can go as deep or as simple as need be based upon the occasion. Also one may also use random selections based upon the needs at the time. Perhaps one does not have that much time and so over a few meetings wants to present the most basic Gospel story, then one could just use part I lessons 1-7 which cover Creation, Fall, Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection. The seven sections that follow (8-14) are selections from Romans, which unpack that basic story. By the time you get through all of part one, most will have a good idea of the Gospel and also a good idea of whether or not they want to embrace it. This will determine whether you go on to Part II, which prepares the person for life in the Church.

When using this catechism, I highly urge that the catechist use prayer. If the context does not easily allow for it, perhaps like an impromptu discussion with a stranger, pray silently to one's self for God to increase the seed planted in the discussion. But, the best way to use this is with a structure and a plan. Endeavor to meet on a normal basis and pray momentarily before each discussion. This does more than asking God's blessing, which is most important, but it has the secondary use of modeling Christian submission to the Father through prayer. Nothing could be a more practical demonstration of the Gospel and conversion than seeing a Christian pray.

Finally, both the Lord's Prayer and the Apostle's Creed are included. If you are doing this in a formal manner, a primary goal is to memorize both. The Apostle's creed lays out the doctrinal foundation for all Christians. The doctrines discussed in the Creed are the proverbial

hills “to die on.” It is these doctrines that separate orthodox Christian belief from cult groups and the like. It should also be noted that Lord’s Prayer, being only about 20 seconds long was not merely a prayer in the earliest church, but an outline for prayer. Each petition sets out a major topic for approaching God in prayer. I highly recommend that you use it in this way. This makes the difference between it being just a rote prayer that is rattled off without thought, or a framework for focusing on our communion with God.

## DOING THE LESSONS

The catechism can be used for both personal and group use, but is primarily designed to be used by two or more people. The approach is semi-midrashic, which is discipleship through question and answer. Thus it is best used with a knowledgeable Christian as the leader (catechist) who is guiding one or more disciples (catechumens) through a discussion.

The assumption is not that anyone will ever get it all the first time around. The more important thing is to dialogue around the Gospel, which naturally leads into more questions. As questions are formulated they create better opportunities for memory and tradition. The study questions are a guide to the salient points. But they should not be slavishly adhered to in a way that would squash the student's natural questions. The answers the student receives to her or his own questions will more naturally be remembered. The questions are a guide to the main points of the texts. They are in no way exhaustive. The catechist needs to ultimately be sensitive to his audience. How one uses them with a group of teens and a group of middle agers will be different. The goal is ultimately to discuss the biblical texts.

1. ***Creedal Memorization*** - Begin Memorizing the Lord's Prayer, the Apostle's Creed and the Ten Commandments (see appendix) right away or as soon as possible. If you are training new converts or undisciplined Christians, then start reading and memorizing right away. If you are using it for telling someone about the Christian faith, then you will want to use your discretion on when you introduce memorizations. You do not want to "force" your creed on them. You want them to embrace it with their own sense of "I believe" when they are ready.
2. ***Pray*** - Pray with your catechumen or group if it is appropriate. If the person studying with you does not consider them a Christian, and you want to pray, definitely ask permission to pray and respect their beliefs as you do.
3. ***Public Reading of Scripture*** - The Scriptures are not meant to be read in isolation, but always with the Church. They are the heritage of the Church. Before each lesson, read the scripture text as a group. (It is best if it has also been read and reflected on prior to meeting.)
4. ***Questions to Facilitate Discussion*** - It is best to begin by asking the catechumen(s) if there is anything that stood out to them. Begin discussing the text using the questions provided if necessary.
5. ***Repentance*** - This is the ultimate goal of all Bible study. The preaching of the Gospel is a call to repentance. Repentance is the recognition of your sin, confession of it, and the action of forsaking it at a habit of life. This is only accomplished through confrontation with the word of God. At all points along the way in this study, the goal of the leader is to lead in repentance. You are to model it by confessing your own faults which will naturally lead those whom you catechize to self reflect and begin to examine their own life.

6. ***Follow Up*** - There is a great deal of information here. Again the goal of catechizing is developing an ongoing Gospel discussion that will transform an unrepentant life into a Christ pursuing repentant one. Upon completion you will need to use your discretion on what to do after you have completed it. If you feel it really was challenging to them, you may want to go back through it from the beginning again. If the catechumen(s) seems to have really understood it and to be ready for more, I highly recommend you move on to the Heidelberg Catechism, which will build their theological understanding more fully.

PART I.  
THE GOSPEL  
(*kerygma*)

## 1. A Habitation for Man (Gen. 1:1-2:3)

Gen. 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was without shape and empty, and darkness was over the surface of the watery deep, but the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the water. 3 God said, "Let there be light." And there was light! 4 God saw that the light was good, so God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light "day" and the darkness "night." There was evening, and there was morning, marking the first day.

Gen. 1:6 God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters and let it separate water from water. 7 So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. It was so. 8 God called the expanse "sky." There was evening, and there was morning, a second day.

Gen. 1:9 God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place and let dry ground appear." It was so. 10 God called the dry ground "land" and the gathered waters he called "seas." God saw that it was good.

Gen. 1:11 God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: plants yielding seeds according to their kinds, and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds." It was so. 12 The land produced vegetation—plants yielding seeds according to their kinds, and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. God saw that it was good. 13 There was evening, and there was morning, a third day.

Gen. 1:14 God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them be signs to indicate seasons and days and years, 15 and let them serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth." It was so. 16 God made two great lights—the greater light to rule over the day and the lesser light to rule over the night. He made the stars also. 17 God placed the lights in the expanse of the sky to shine on the earth, 18 to preside over the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw that it was good. 19 There was evening, and there was morning, a fourth day.

Gen. 1:20 God said, "Let the water swarm with swarms of living creatures and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." 21 God created the great sea creatures and every living and moving thing with which the water swarmed, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth." 23 There was evening, and there was morning, a fifth day.

Gen. 1:24 God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: cattle, creeping things, and wild animals, each according to its kind." It was so. 25 God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the cattle according to their kinds, and all the creatures that creep along the ground according to their kinds. God saw that it was good.

Gen. 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness, so they may rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move on the earth."

27 God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.

Gen. 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it! Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that moves on the ground.” 29 Then God said, “I now give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the entire earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the animals of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” It was so.

Gen. 1:31 God saw all that he had made—and it was very good! There was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day.

Gen. 2:1 The heavens and the earth were completed with everything that was in them. 2 By the seventh day God finished the work that he had been doing, and he ceased on the seventh day all the work that he had been doing. 3 God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it he ceased all the work that he had been doing in creation.

## Questions

1. What do you think is the big idea of this story?
2. Why do you think God created the world? Was it for himself, or was it for man?
3. What do you think the imagery of God creating light and dispelling darkness says about the character of God?
4. What does it mean when it the story says that God made man in his image? Why would God make man in his image? What things did this mean man and God have in common?
5. What is the importance of God delegating dominion over the earth to mankind? What does this say about how God viewed man?
6. Was there anything lacking in the world God gave them? Did they have everything they needed, or did they have the right to feel shortchanged or want something more?
7. The creation mandate was to “Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it! Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that moves on the ground.” What did it mean to “rule over.”
8. Why does vs. 31 say that everything that God created was “very good.”

## 2. The Creation of Man (Gen. 2:4-25)

Gen. 2:4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created—when the LORD God made the earth and heavens. 5 Now no shrub of the field had yet grown on the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on

the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground. 6 Springs would well up from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground. 7 The LORD God formed the man from the soil of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. 8 The LORD God planted an orchard in the east, in Eden; and there he placed the man he had formed. 9 The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow from the soil, every tree that was pleasing to look at and good for food. (Now the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil were in the middle of the orchard.) 10 Now a river flows from Eden to water the orchard, and from there it divides into four headstreams. 11 The name of the first is Pishon; it runs through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 (The gold of that land is pure; pearls and lapis lazuli are also there). 13 The name of the second river is Gihon; it runs through the entire land of Cush. 14 The name of the third river is Tigris; it runs along the east side of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates.

Gen. 2:15 The LORD God took the man and placed him in the orchard in Eden to care for it and to maintain it. 16 Then the LORD God commanded the man, “You may freely eat fruit from every tree of the orchard, 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will surely die.”

Gen. 2:18 The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a companion for him who corresponds to him.” 19 The LORD God formed out of the ground every living animal of the field and every bird of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them, and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. 20 So the man named all the animals, the birds of the air, and the living creatures of the field, but for Adam no companion who corresponded to him was found. 21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep, and while he was asleep, he took part of the man’s side and closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the part he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said, “This one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.”

Gen. 2:24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and unites with his wife, and they become a new family. 25 The man and his wife were both naked, but they were not ashamed.

### **Questions:**

1. What do you think is the big idea of this story?
2. Why do you think God created mankind? What did he get out of the relationship?
3. Sacred Gardens like Eden are a common image in and Ancient Near East. What do you think is significant about God placing man in the garden to tend and keep it for him?
4. God told the man he could eat of every tree of the garden except the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Why? Was there anything unique about this tree? If the world was so “good,” why did God forbid them from eating of this one tree?

5. Why did God promise them that, “for when you eat from it, you shall surely die?” Is this a metaphor, real physical death, spiritual death, or both?
6. Why do you think the story here ends with the words “the man and his wife were both naked, but they were not ashamed?”
7. How does this state of being naked and unashamed contrast with the world we now live in?
8. What kinds of shame do you deal with and how has it affected you, both good and bad?

### **3. The Fall of Mankind into Sin (Gen 3:1-24)**

Gen. 3:1 Now the serpent was more shrewd than any of the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Is it really true that God said, ‘You must not eat from any tree of the orchard?’” 2 The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit from the trees of the orchard; 3 but concerning the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the orchard God said, ‘You must not eat from it, and you must not touch it, or else you will die.’” 4 The serpent said to the woman, “Surely you will not die, 5 for God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will open and you will be like divine beings who know good and evil.” 6 When the woman saw that the tree produced fruit that was good for food, was attractive to the eye, and was desirable for making one wise, she took some of its fruit and ate it. She also gave some of it to her husband who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. 8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God moving about<sup>21</sup> in the orchard at the breezy time of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the orchard. 9 But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” 10 The man replied, “I heard you moving about in the orchard, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.” 11 And the LORD God said, “Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” 12 The man said, “The woman whom you gave me, she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it.” 13 So the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman replied, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.”

- 14 The LORD God said to the serpent,  
     “Because you have done this,  
     cursed are you above all the wild beasts  
     and all the living creatures of the field!  
     On your belly you will crawl  
     and dust you will eat all the days of your life.
- 15 And I will put hostility between you and the woman  
     and between your offspring and her offspring;  
     her offspring will attack your head,  
     and you will attack her offspring’s heel.”
- 16 To the woman he said,

“I will greatly increase your labor pains;  
with pain you will give birth to children.  
You will want to control your husband,  
but he will dominate you.”

- 17 But to Adam he said,  
“Because you obeyed your wife  
and ate from the tree about which I commanded you,  
‘You must not eat from it,’  
cursed is the ground thanks to you;  
in painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.
- 18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you,  
but you will eat the grain of the field.
- 19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat food  
until you return to the ground,  
for out of it you were taken;  
for you are dust, and to dust you will return.”

Gen. 3:20 The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all the living. 21 The LORD God made garments from skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. 22 And the LORD God said, “Now that the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, he must not be allowed to stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” 23 So the LORD God expelled him from the orchard in Eden to cultivate the ground from which he had been taken. 24 When he drove the man out, he placed on the eastern side of the orchard in Eden angelic sentries who used the flame of a whirling sword to guard the way to the tree of life.

## Questions

1. What do you think is the big idea of the story?
2. What is the serpent here? Is he a real snake, the personification of evil, or who the Bible calls Satan?
3. Assuming that he is Satan (that is how most Jews and Christians have always understood the serpent) why do you think he is not mentioned by name?
4. Why do you think that the first thing the serpent does is to cast doubt on God and his word to Adam and Eve? What did this serve to accomplish?
5. When the serpent tells the woman that she will not die, but that here eyes will be opened and will become divine and knowing “good and evil,” is he telling the truth, a lie, or half truth?
6. When the story says that the woman saw that the fruit was “desirable,” what does this imply usually precedes our sin and disobedience to God?

7. What is the sin that the couple commit here? Is it just a faux pas of eating a bad apple, or is there something deeper? (Hint: What does this say about how much they trust God and his word?)
8. Do you think we today do better at trusting God and his word, or are we worse at doubting God today?
9. According to the story, who was responsible for bringing sin, death and misery into the world, the serpent, God, or the man and the woman?
10. When God expelled them from the garden where God dwelt, what did it suggest about man's relationship to God after sin entered the world?
11. What part of yourself do you see in this story, if any?

#### **4. The Promise - (Genesis 15:1-7 & 17:1-27)**

Gen. 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram! I am your shield and the one who will reward you in great abundance." 2 But Abram said, "O sovereign LORD, what will you give me since I continue to be childless, and my heir is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 Abram added, "Since you have not given me a descendant, then look, one born in my house will be my heir!" 4 But look, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but instead a son who comes from your own body will be your heir." 5 The LORD took him outside and said, "Gaze into the sky and count the stars—if you are able to count them!" Then he said to him, "So will your descendants be." 6 And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.<sup>3</sup> 7 The LORD said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess."

Gen. 17:1 When Abram was 99 years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am the sovereign God. Walk before me and be blameless. 2 Then I will confirm my covenant between me and you, and I will give you a multitude of descendants." 3 Abram bowed down with his face to the ground, and God said to him, 4 "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer will your name be Abram. Instead, your name will be Abraham because I will make you the father of a multitude of nations. 6 I will make you extremely fruitful. I will make nations of you, and kings will descend from you. 7 I will confirm my covenant as a perpetual covenant between me and you. It will extend to your descendants after you throughout their generations. I will be your God and the God of your descendants after you. 8 I will give the whole land of Canaan—the land where you are now residing—to you and your descendants after you as a permanent possession. I will be their God."

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<sup>3</sup> Verse. 6 is the ESV translation.

Gen. 17:9 Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep the covenantal requirement I am imposing on you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. 10 This is my requirement that you and your descendants after you must keep: Every male among you must be circumcised. 11 You must circumcise the flesh of your foreskins. This will be a reminder of the covenant between me and you. 12 Throughout your generations every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, whether born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not one of your descendants. 13 They must indeed be circumcised, whether born in your house or bought with money. The sign of my covenant will be visible in your flesh as a permanent reminder. 14 Any uncircumcised male who has not been circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin will be cut off from his people—he has failed to carry out my requirement.”

Gen. 17:15 Then God said to Abraham, “As for your wife, you must no longer call her Sarai; Sarah will be her name. 16 I will bless her and will give you a son through her. I will bless her and she will become a mother of nations. Kings of countries will come from her!” 17 Then Abraham bowed down with his face to the ground and laughed as he said to himself, “Can a son be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?” 18 Abraham said to God, “O that Ishmael might live before you!”

Gen. 17:19 God said, “No, Sarah your wife is going to bear you a son, and you will name him Isaac. I will confirm my covenant with him as a perpetual covenant for his descendants after him. 20 As for Ishmael, I have heard you. I will indeed bless him, make him fruitful, and give him a multitude of descendants. He will become the father of twelve princes; I will make him into a great nation. 21 But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this set time next year.” 22 When he finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.

Gen. 17:23 Abraham took his son Ishmael and every male in his household (whether born in his house or bought with money) and circumcised them on that very same day, just as God had told him to do. 24 Now Abraham was 99 years old when he was circumcised; 25 his son Ishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised. 26 Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised on the very same day. 27 All the men of his household, whether born in his household or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

### **Questions:**

1. Why is it important that it says “the Word of the Lord came to Abram in 12:4? What is “the Word of the Lord” and what does it suggest to us about how we know God?
2. What is the promise that God makes to Abram in 12:1-7?
3. Verse 12:6 says Abram “believed the Lord.” What does it mean to “believe the Lord” and why is that important for our relationship to God?
4. Verse 12:6 also says that because he believed God, it was “counted to him” as righteousness. What does it mean to be “accounted as righteous?”

5. In Genesis 17 God reiterates the promise to Abram, changing his name also to Abraham. List and discuss some of the things that God promises here.
6. Why does it say in verses 23 & 27 that all of Abraham's "household" were circumcised? Why did the sign of circumcision extend to the whole household and not just him?
7. The sign of circumcision was to be performed on every male child regardless of whether the child understood it. What did this sign (sacrament) point to? Since only males were circumcised, was the promise only to the males?
8. Did circumcision point to Abraham's personal faith or his family's faith, or did it point God's promise? Why?

### **5. The Incarnation - (John 1:1-36)**

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God. 2 The Word was with God in the beginning. 3 All things were created by him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. 5 And the light shines on in the darkness, but the darkness has not mastered it. 6 A man came, sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that everyone might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify about the light. 9 The true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was created by him, but the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to what was his own, but his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who have received him—those who believe in his name—he has given the right to become God's children 13 —children not born by human parents or by human desire or a husband's decision, but by God. 14 Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his glory—the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father. 15 John testified about him and shouted out, "This one was the one about whom I said, 'He who comes after me is greater than I am, because he existed before me.'" 16 For we have all received from his fullness one gracious gift after another. 17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came about through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God. The only one, himself God, who is in closest fellowship with the Father, has made God known.

John 1:19 Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 He confessed—he did not deny but confessed—"I am not the Christ!" 21 So they asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not!" "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No!" 22 Then they said to him, "Who are you? Tell us so that we can give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

John 1:23 John said, "I am the voice of one shouting in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord,' as Isaiah the prophet said." 24 (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) 25 So they asked John, "Why then are you baptizing if you are not the Christ, nor

Elijah, nor the Prophet?” 26 John answered them, “I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not recognize, 27 who is coming after me. I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandal!” 28 These things happened in Bethany across the Jordan River where John was baptizing. 29 On the next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is the one about whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who is greater than I am, because he existed before me.’ 31 I did not recognize him, but I came baptizing with water so that he could be revealed to Israel.”

John 1:32 Then John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending like a dove from heaven, and it remained on him. 33 And I did not recognize him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘The one on whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining—this is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ 34 I have both seen and testified that this man is the Chosen One of God.”

John 1:35 Again the next day John was standing there with two of his disciples. 36 Gazing at Jesus as he walked by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!”

## Questions

1. What do you think is the big idea of this story?
2. Who is the “Word” and what is this story about?
3. The opening words by the apostle John are: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God. 2 The Word was with God in the beginning.” They reflect the words of another story we have already discussed. Which one and why?
4. Why is it important for the writer to emphasize that “the Word” created the world (John 1:3 & 14)? What does it say to us about him?
5. In vs. 12 it says that for all who “received him” he “gave them the right to become the children of God.” Are not all people the children of God? What does he mean here? And why does embracing Jesus give us the “right to become God’s children.”
6. What does it mean when it says, “the word became flesh and took up residence among us?” Why did God do this?
7. The law (Ten Commandments) is God’s standard of right and wrong for humans. Vs. 17 says the law came through Moses but that “grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” What is grace and why is it so important to us as humans?
8. John the prophet shouted, “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” What did this imply about the Jesus? What was his task in this world and who would benefit from it?

9. What part of this story means most to you?

## **6. Crucifixion (John 18:1-19:37)**

John 18:1 When he had said these things, Jesus went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley. There was an orchard there, and he and his disciples went into it. 2 (Now Judas, the one who betrayed him, knew the place too, because Jesus had met there many times with his disciples.) 3 So Judas obtained a squad of soldiers and some officers of the chief priests and Pharisees. They came to the orchard with lanterns and torches and weapons.

John 18:4 Then Jesus, because he knew everything that was going to happen to him, came and asked them, “Who are you looking for?” 5 They replied, “Jesus the Nazarene.” He told them, “I am he.” (Now Judas, the one who betrayed him, was standing there with them.) 6 So when Jesus said to them, “I am he,” they retreated and fell to the ground. 7 Then Jesus asked them again, “Who are you looking for?” And they said, “Jesus the Nazarene.” 8 Jesus replied, “I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, let these men go.” 9 He said this to fulfill the word he had spoken, “I have not lost a single one of those whom you gave me.”

John 18:10 Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, pulled it out and struck the high priest’s slave, cutting off his right ear. (Now the slave’s name was Malchus.) 11 But Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword back into its sheath! Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?”

John 18:12 Then the squad of soldiers with their commanding officer and the officers of the Jewish leaders arrested Jesus and tied him up. 13 They brought him first to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. 14 (Now it was Caiaphas who had advised the Jewish leaders that it was to their advantage that one man die for the people.)

John 18:28 Then they brought Jesus from Caiaphas to the Roman governor’s residence. (Now it was very early morning.) They did not go into the governor’s residence so they would not be ceremonially defiled, but could eat the Passover meal. 29 So Pilate came outside to them and said, “What accusation do you bring against this man?” 30 They replied, “If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you.”

John 18:31 Pilate told them, “Take him yourselves and pass judgment on him according to your own law!” The Jewish leaders replied, “We cannot legally put anyone to death.” 32 (This happened to fulfill the word Jesus had spoken when he indicated what kind of death he was going to die.)

John 18:33 So Pilate went back into the governor’s residence, summoned Jesus, and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” 34 Jesus replied, “Are you saying this on your own initiative, or have others told you about me?” 35 Pilate answered, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own people and your chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?”

John 18:36 Jesus replied, “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my servants would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish authorities. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.” 37 Then Pilate said, “So you are a king!” Jesus replied, “You say that I am a king. For this reason I was born, and for this reason I came

into the world—to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”  
38 Pilate asked, “What is truth?” When he had said this he went back outside to the Jewish leaders and announced, “I find no basis for an accusation against him. 39 But it is your custom that I release one prisoner for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews?” 40 Then they shouted back, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” (Now Barabbas was a revolutionary.)

John 19:1 Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged severely. 2 The soldiers braided a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they clothed him in a purple robe. 3 They came up to him again and again and said, “Hail, king of the Jews!” And they struck him repeatedly in the face.

John 19:4 Again Pilate went out and said to the Jewish leaders, “Look, I am bringing him out to you, so that you may know that I find no reason for an accusation against him.” 5 So Jesus came outside, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, “Look, here is the man!” 6 When the chief priests and their officers saw him, they shouted out, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Pilate said, “You take him and crucify him! Certainly I find no reason for an accusation against him!” 7 The Jewish leaders replied, “We have a law, and according to our law he ought to die, because he claimed to be the Son of God!”

John 19:8 When Pilate heard what they said, he was more afraid than ever, 9 and he went back into the governor’s residence and said to Jesus, “Where do you come from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. 10 So Pilate said, “Do you refuse to speak to me? Don’t you know I have the authority to release you, and to crucify you?” 11 Jesus replied, “You would have no authority over me at all, unless it was given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of greater sin.”

John 19:12 From this point on, Pilate tried to release him. But the Jewish leaders shouted out, “If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar! Everyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar!” 13 When Pilate heard these words he brought Jesus outside and sat down on the judgment seat in the place called “The Stone Pavement” (Gabbatha in Aramaic). 14 (Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover, about noon.) Pilate said to the Jewish leaders, “Look, here is your king!”

John 19:15 Then they shouted out, “Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!” Pilate asked, “Shall I crucify your king?” The high priests replied, “We have no king except Caesar!” 16 Then Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus, 17 and carrying his own cross he went out to the place called “The Place of the Skull” (called in Aramaic Golgotha). 18 There they crucified him along with two others, one on each side, with Jesus in the middle. 19 Pilate also had a notice written and fastened to the cross, which read: “Jesus the Nazarene, the king of the Jews.” 20 Thus many of the Jewish residents of Jerusalem read this notice, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the notice was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. 21 Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The king of the Jews,’ but rather, ‘This man said, I am king of the Jews.’” 22 Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”

John 19:28 After this Jesus, realizing that by this time everything was completed, said (in order to fulfill the scripture), “I am thirsty!” 29 A jar full of sour wine was there, so they put a sponge soaked in sour wine on a branch of hyssop and lifted it to his mouth. 30 When he had received the sour wine, Jesus said, “It is completed!” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

John 19:31 Then, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies should not stay on the crosses on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was an especially important one), the Jewish leaders asked Pilate to have the victims’ legs broken and the bodies taken down. 32 So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men who had been crucified with Jesus, first the one and then the other. 33 But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. 34 But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and blood and water flowed out immediately. 35 And the person who saw it has testified (and his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth), so that you also may believe. 36 For these things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled, “Not a bone of his will be broken.” 37 And again another scripture says, “They will look on the one whom they have pierced.”

## Questions

What do you think is the big idea of this story?

1. Why is it important that the writers mention real people and place names like the “Kidron Valley” and “Caiaphas” the high priest? What does this tell you about how the writer experienced these events?
2. When the chief Priests come to take Jesus he refers to himself exactly the way God identified himself to Moses “I am he” (18:6) and they all fell to the ground. What do these words and the soldiers falling to the ground tell us about Jesus?
3. Jesus scolds Peter to put away his sword then said “Am I not to drink the cup the Father has given me? Whom does Jesus see as ultimately responsible for his coming crucifixion and what is his attitude toward it?”
4. Jesus is executed as a political dissident but he tells Pilate, “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my servants would be fighting...” What does this tell us about Jesus, the Gospel and the Church in relation to the world?
5. Pilate asks a common question today, “What is truth?” Jesus on the other hand says in 18:39 “For this reason I was born, and for this reason I came into the world--to testify to the truth” What is this truth Jesus is talking about?
6. Discuss governor Pilate’s fear when first hearing that Jesus was the Son of God and his greater fear when Jesus said, “You would have no authority over me at all, unless it was given to you from above?”

7. Discuss the irony surrounding Jesus whom John has identified as God, the son of God and the messiah of the Jews being paraded around in a crown of thorns and then crucified with the title “king” over his head?
8. What is the meaning by Jesus’ final words, “It is completed?” What is “It?”
9. What part of yourself do you see in this text, if any? Has your attitude toward Jesus at some point ever been hateful like the priests Annas and Caiaphas, or have you been just ambivalent and self-serving like Pilate?

### **7. The Resurrection (John 19:38-20:31)**

John 19:38 After this, Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus (but secretly, because he feared the Jewish leaders), asked Pilate if he could remove the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission, so he went and took the body away. 39 Nicodemus, the man who had previously come to Jesus at night, accompanied Joseph, carrying a mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing about seventy-five pounds. 40 Then they took Jesus’ body and wrapped it, with the aromatic spices, in strips of linen cloth according to Jewish burial customs. 41 Now at the place where Jesus was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden was a new tomb where no one had yet been buried. 42 And so, because it was the Jewish day of preparation and the tomb was nearby, they placed Jesus’ body there.

John 20:1 Now very early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been moved away from the entrance. 2 So she went running to Simon Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved and told them, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!” 3 Then Peter and the other disciple set out to go to the tomb. 4 The two were running together, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent down and saw the strips of linen cloth lying there, but he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter, who had been following him, arrived and went right into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen cloth lying there, 7 and the face cloth, which had been around Jesus’ head, not lying with the strips of linen cloth but rolled up in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, came in, and he saw and believed. 9 (For they did not yet understand the scripture that Jesus must rise from the dead.) John 20:10 So the disciples went back to their homes. 11 But Mary stood outside the tomb weeping. As she wept, she bent down and looked into the tomb. 12 And she saw two angels in white sitting where Jesus’ body had been lying, one at the head and one at the feet. 13 They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” Mary replied, “They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have put him!” 14 When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

John 20:15 Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?” Because she thought he was the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will take him.” 16 Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni” (which means Teacher). 17 Jesus replied, “Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father. Go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” 18 Mary Magdalene came and informed the disciples, “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them what Jesus had said to her.

John 20:19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the disciples had gathered together and locked the doors of the place because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” 20 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 So Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. Just as the Father has sent me, I also send you.” 22 And after he said this, he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven; if you retain anyone’s sins, they are retained.”

John 20:24 Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he replied, “Unless I see the wounds from the nails in his hands, and put my finger into the wounds from the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe it!”

John 20:26 Eight days later the disciples were again together in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” 27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and examine my hands. Extend your hand and put it into my side. Do not continue in your unbelief, but believe.” 28 Thomas replied to him, “My Lord and my God!” 29 Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are the people who have not seen and yet have believed.”

John 20:30 Now Jesus performed many other miraculous signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

## Questions

1. What do you think is the big idea of this text? What is the main point?
2. The disciples thought Jesus’ body had been stolen at first, but in vs. eight it says that the other disciple (John the writer of this Gospel) when he looked into the tomb, “he saw and believed?” What did he believe and why did it matter? Why does it matter that he believed?
3. Jesus reveals himself after his resurrection to Mary? Why is it so very important that he says to her “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” What does this tell us Jesus accomplished in his death and resurrection?
4. Why is it important that John points out that the disciples were gathered together on the first day of the week?

5. When Jesus appears to the disciples he says “Peace be with you. Just as the Father has sent me, I also send you.” What does this mean that the disciples of Jesus are supposed to be doing?
6. Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit into them. Are there any other stories in the Bible where God breathes his spirit into man? What does this tell us about the Church?
7. Thomas expresses a feeling that is common today: “Unless I see it... I will never believe it!” Are there ways you see yourself in Thomas?
8. Why do you think the story of Thomas is so important? What is the point of it?
9. John’s account of the resurrection talks a lot about belief. Discuss the importance of the summary statement in 20:31: “But these are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” What does it mean to “have life in his name?”

### **8. Mankind on Trial - (Romans 1:16-2:8)**

Rom. 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God’s power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel from faith to faith, just as it is written, “The righteous by faith will live.”

Rom. 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth by their unrighteousness, 19 because what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, because they are understood through what has been made. So people are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks, but they became futile in their thoughts and their senseless hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for an image resembling mortal human beings or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.

Rom. 1:24 Therefore God gave them over in the desires of their hearts to impurity, to dishonor their bodies among themselves. 25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creation rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

Rom. 1:26 For this reason God gave them over to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged the natural sexual relations for unnatural ones, 27 and likewise the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed in their passions for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

Rom. 1:28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what should not be done. 29 They are filled with every kind of unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, malice. They are rife with envy, murder, strife, deceit, hostility. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, contrivers of all sorts of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 senseless, covenant-breakers, heartless, ruthless. 32 Although they fully know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but also approve of those who practice them.

Rom. 2:1 Therefore you are without excuse, whoever you are, when you judge someone else. For on whatever grounds you judge another, you condemn yourself, because you who judge practice the same things. 2 Now we know that God's judgment is in accordance with truth against those who practice such things. 3 And do you think, whoever you are, when you judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself, that you will escape God's judgment? 4 Or do you have contempt for the wealth of his kindness, forbearance, and patience, and yet do not know that God's kindness leads you to repentance? 5 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourselves in the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment is revealed! 6 He will reward each one according to his works: 7 eternal life to those who by perseverance in good works seek glory and honor and immortality, 8 but wrath and anger to those who live in selfish ambition and do not obey the truth but follow unrighteousness.

## Questions

1. In Rom. 1:16 the Apostle Paul says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes," What does he mean by the word "Gospel" here. Reflect together on how it offers salvation to "everyone who believes" here and how John's Gospel was written so that we might "believe."
2. In 1:17 he quotes Habakkuk 2:4 saying, "The righteous by faith will live." What does it mean to be "righteous" and what does it mean to live by "faith?"
3. In verses 18- 20 he says that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven and that all mankind is "without excuse." What is God's wrath? What is he wrathful about? And why is it important that we have no excuse?
4. In verse 28, what does it mean to not "acknowledge God with our mind?" Why does God find this displeasing?
5. Read verses 29-31 lists examples of sinful behaviors that God hates. Notice they not just the big things we think of as sin like theft, murder and other criminal pursuits. They are things that we all do all the time like covetousness, envy, strife, deceit, hostility, gossip, slander arrogance, etc. Which of these are you guilty of personally?

6. In Romans 2:1 Paul then says, “Therefore you are without excuse, whoever you are, when you judge someone else. For on whatever grounds you judge another, you condemn yourself, because you who judge practice the same things.” Now he more directly says that all of us are without excuse before God. Why?
7. Why does Paul ask in 2:3 if we really think we will escape God’s judgment?”
8. What does he mean in 2:4 when he says that God’s “kindness leads you to repentance?”
9. What does it mean to be, “storing up wrath for yourselves in the day of wrath?”
10. Discuss the contrast between “eternal life” and “wrath” in 2:6-8.

**9. All have Sinned - (Romans 3:9-26) Exodus 12:1-51; Exodus 20:1-17;**

Rom. 3:9 What then? Are we better off? Certainly not, for we have already charged that Jews and Greeks alike are all under sin, 10 just as it is written:

- “There is no one righteous, not even one,  
 11 there is no one who understands,  
 there is no one who seeks God.  
 12 All have turned away,  
 together they have become worthless;  
 there is no one who shows kindness, not even one.” (from Psalm 14:1-3)  
 13 “Their throats are open graves,  
 they deceive with their tongues,  
 the poison of asps is under their lips.” (from Psalms 5:9 & 140:3)  
 14 “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.” (from Psalm 10:7)  
 15 “Their feet are swift to shed blood,  
 16 ruin and misery are in their paths,  
 17 and the way of peace they have not known.” (from Isaiah 59:7-8)  
 18 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” (from Psalm 36:1)

Rom. 3:19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 20 For no one is declared righteous before him by the works of the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin. 21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God (which is attested by the law and the prophets) has been disclosed— 22 namely, the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. 24 But they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. 25 God publicly displayed him at his death as the mercy seat accessible through faith. This was to demonstrate his righteousness, because God in his forbearance had passed over the sins previously committed. 26 This was also to demonstrate his

righteousness in the present time, so that he would be just and the justifier of the one who lives because of Jesus' faithfulness.

### Questions

1. What is "sin?" What is meant by this word?
2. Paul says in both 3:9 and 3:23 "all" have sinned. Why is this important?
3. In verse 3:10 Paul says, "There is no one righteous, not even one." Why is righteousness important to God? Why is it important to us that no man, not a single one is considered righteous before God?
4. What does the Apostle mean when he says, "There is no fear of God before their eyes"?
5. Paul begins to talk about the "law" here? What is he referring to? (read reference Exodus 20:1-17 if necessary)
6. What does he mean in 3:19 by the statement that, "the whole world may be held accountable to God?" What does it mean for God to hold the entire world accountable? Will there be anyone who does not have to answer to God?
7. Why does Paul say in 3:20, "no one is declared righteous before him by the works of the law"?
8. Paul also says in 3:20, "for through the law comes the knowledge of sin." What is the knowledge of sin? And what does the role of God's law play for us as humans who have sinned, often without knowing it?
9. What does he mean when he says that, "God in his forbearance has passed over the sins previously committed? What is God's forbearance" What does it mean to "pass over sin" (refer to Exod. 12:1-51 if needed)

### **10. Faith and Justification - (Romans 4:1-5:5) Gen. 12-17; Hebrews 11: 1-40; Galatians 3:1-29**

Rom. 4:1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh, has discovered regarding this matter? 2 For if Abraham was declared righteous by the works of the law, he has something to boast about—but not before God. 3 For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." 4 Now to the one who works, his pay is not credited due to grace but due to obligation. 5 But to the one who does not

work, but believes in the one who declares the ungodly righteous, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Rom. 4:6 So even David himself speaks regarding the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 7 “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; 8 blessed is the one against whom the Lord will never count sin.”

Rom. 4:9 Is this blessedness then for the circumcision or also for the uncircumcision? For we say, “faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness.” 10 How then was it credited to him? Was he circumcised at the time, or not? No, he was not circumcised but uncircumcised! 11 And he received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised, so that he would become the father of all those who believe but have never been circumcised, that they too could have righteousness credited to them. 12 And he is also the father of the circumcised, who are not only circumcised, but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham possessed when he was still uncircumcised.

Rom. 4:13 For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would inherit the world was not fulfilled through the law, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. 14 For if they become heirs by the law, faith is empty and the promise is nullified. 15 For the law brings wrath, because where there is no law there is no transgression either. 16 For this reason it is by faith so that it may be by grace, with the result that the promise may be certain to all the descendants—not only to those who are under the law, but also to those who have the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all 17 (as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”). He is our father in the presence of God whom he believed—the God who makes the dead alive and summons the things that do not yet exist as though they already do. 18 Against hope Abraham believed in hope with the result that he became the father of many nations according to the pronouncement, “so will your descendants be.” 19 Without being weak in faith, he considered his own body as dead (because he was about one hundred years old) and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. 20 He did not waver in unbelief about the promise of God but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God. 21 He was fully convinced that what God promised he was also able to do. 22 So indeed it was credited to Abraham as righteousness.

Rom. 4:23 But the statement it was credited to him was not written only for Abraham’s sake, 24 but also for our sake, to whom it will be credited, those who believe in the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25 He was given over because of our transgressions and was raised for the sake of our justification.

Rom. 5:1 1 Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of God’s glory. 3 Not only this, but we also rejoice in sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance, character, and character, hope. 5 And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

## Questions

1. In this passage, Paul talks about being our “justification” (4:25) “declared righteous” (4:2) and being “credited” as righteous (4:3-5). What is meant by the term

justification? Why is it important to us who are all guilty and without excuse before God? (You may want to refer to Gen. 12-17.)

2. Paul quotes Psalm 32:1-2 “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; 8 blessed is the one against whom the Lord will never count sin.” How does this further help us understand justification? What is meant by, having our “lawless deeds forgiven?” What does it mean for God to not “count sin” against us?
3. In 4:3-5 Paul makes a contrast between “works” and “faith/belief” Who will be justified, the one who works or the one who believes?
4. What does it mean to “walk in the footsteps of the faith” (4:12)? Is faith a one-time thing like saying a prayer or getting baptized, or is it something more?
5. Paul says in vs. 15, “For the law brings wrath, because where there is no law there is no transgression either.” What is the law able to do? What is it unable to do?
6. What does it mean to be “fully convinced that what God had promised he was able to do” in vs. 21? Would you describe yourself as “fully convinced” that God is faithful and keeps his promises?
7. In verses 24-25, why was Jesus given over for crucifixion? Why also then was he resurrected?
8. Who are the people that are justified (declared as righteous before God)? How do they obtain this “grace” spoken of in 5:1-2?
9. What does it mean to “have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ?” (5:1) How did Jesus make this possible? What does this imply about our posture toward God without Jesus?

#### **11. The Two Adams & Substitution - (Romans 5:6-21) 1 Corinthians 15:20-28; Gen 3:1-24**

Rom. 5:6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 (For rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person perhaps someone might possibly dare to die.) 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, because we have now been declared righteous by his blood, we will be saved through him from God’s wrath. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, since we have been reconciled, will we be saved by his life? 11 Not only this, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation.

Rom. 5:12 So then, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all people because all sinned— 13 for before the law was given, sin was in the world, but there is no accounting for sin when there is no law. 14 Yet death reigned from Adam until Moses even over those who did not sin in the same way that Adam (who is a type of the coming one) transgressed. 15 But the gracious gift is not like the transgression. For if the many died through the transgression of the one man, how much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man Jesus Christ multiply to the many! 16 And the gift is not like the one who sinned. For judgment, resulting from the one transgression, led to condemnation, but the gracious gift from the many failures led to justification. 17 For if, by the transgression of the one man, death reigned through the one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ!

Rom. 5:18 Consequently, just as condemnation for all people came through one transgression, so too through the one righteous act came righteousness leading to life for all people. 19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of one man many will be made righteous. 20 Now the law came in so that the transgression may increase, but where sin increased, grace multiplied all the more, 21 so that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace will reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Questions

1. There is a lot of confusion today about what God saves us from? Some think he saves us from hell, from suffering, from Satan, or from our personal problems. What does Paul say justification through Christ saves us from according to Romans 5:9?
2. What is God's wrath?
3. Paul says in 5:8, "But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Do you think it is important that Paul pointed out that Christ's death was an expression of God's love for us?
4. Rom. 5:10 refers to us as "enemies." to God. What does it mean to be God's enemy? (may need to refer back to Rom. 1:16-2:8?)
5. What is reconciliation? What does it mean to be reconciled to God? What is the objective act Christ does to make this possible. What is the subjective thing he calls us to do to receive that reconciliation?
6. How does sin enter the world according to Paul in Rom. 5:12? Who brought sin and evil into the world according to the Bible, God, Satan, or Adam? What were the consequences for all humanity, of sin entering the world? (may need to refer back to Gen. 3:1-24)

7. Discuss the contrast between “grace” on the one hand and “condemnation” on the other. What is grace? What is condemnation?
8. How then is the “abundance of grace” and “the gift of righteousness” (5:17) made available to all mankind?
9. According to 5:13 and 5:20, why was the law (the Ten commandments) given?
10. Discuss the contrast between what was received from the first man Adam and his transgression, from the last Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ? (may need to refer to 1 Corinthians 15:20-28)

## **12. Freed From Sin - (Romans 6:1-23)**

Rom. 6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to remain in sin so that grace may increase? 2 Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with him through baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too may live a new life.

Rom. 6:5 For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be united in the likeness of his resurrection. 6 We know that our old man was crucified with him so that the body of sin would no longer dominate us, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 (For someone who has died has been freed from sin.)

Rom. 6:8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that since Christ has been raised from the dead, he is never going to die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10 For the death he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 So you too consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Rom. 6:12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its desires, 13 and do not present your members to sin as instruments to be used for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead and your members to God as instruments to be used for righteousness. 14 For sin will have no mastery over you, because you are not under law but under grace.

Rom. 6:15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Absolutely not! 16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or obedience resulting in righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves to sin, you obeyed from the heart that pattern of teaching you were entrusted to, 18 and having been freed from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness. 19 (I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh.) For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free with regard to righteousness.

Rom. 6:21 So what benefit did you then reap from those things that you are now ashamed of? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now, freed from sin and enslaved to God, you have your benefit leading to sanctification, and the end is eternal life. 23 For the payoff of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## Questions

1. Paul begins in 6:1-2 with, “Are we to remain in sin so that grace may increase? 2 Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it?” What is he afraid that people will mistake about the free gift of grace? Is this still applicable today?
2. What role does baptism play in our salvation? According to Paul here, is it only a symbol, or is it important to our relationship to Christ and his body (the church?)
3. In vs. 6 Paul says, “We know that our old man was crucified with him so that the body of sin would no longer dominate us, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.” What does it mean, that “our old man was crucified with him? When did that happen? Why did he crucify our old man according to this verse?
4. What does Paul mean in 6:10 where he says “the death he died, he died to sin once for all?”
5. In 6:12 Paul says, “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its desires” Why does he give Christians this command. Do you think Christians are susceptible to still being lead astray by sin?
6. In vs. 16 Paul makes a general statement, “you are slaves of the one you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or obedience resulting in righteousness.” We usually think of pursuing sin as freedom, but Paul here treats it as a slave master.
7. In vs. 17, what is “the pattern of teaching you were entrusted to?” What is this? Why is it important that we continue in it?
8. In verse 18 Paul speaks of being “freed from sin” and becoming “enslaved to righteousness.” What does it look like to be “enslaved to righteousness?” What is the benefit?
9. What is “sanctification” mentioned in 6:19 & 22? What does Paul identify as the “end” or benefit of sanctification in 6:22?
10. Reflect on the contrast between the “payoff for sin” and the “gift of God” in 6:23. What is a payoff? What is a gift?

### 13. Justified and Sinful - (Romans 7:1-25)

Rom. 7:1 Or do you not know, brothers and sisters (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law is lord over a person as long as he lives? For a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of the marriage. 3 So then, if she is joined to another man while her husband is alive, she will be called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she is joined to another man, she is not an adulteress. 4 So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you could be joined to another, to the one who was raised from the dead, to bear fruit to God. 5 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful desires, aroused by the law, were active in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we have been released from the law, because we have died to what controlled us, so that we may serve in the new life of the Spirit and not under the old written code.

Rom. 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Absolutely not! Certainly, I would not have known sin except through the law. For indeed I would not have known what it means to desire something belonging to someone else if the law had not said, "Do not covet." 8 But sin, seizing the opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of wrong desires. For apart from the law, sin is dead. 9 And I was once alive apart from the law, but with the coming of the commandment sin became alive 10 and I died. So I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life brought death! 11 For sin, seizing the opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it I died. 12 So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good.

Rom. 7:13 Did that which is good, then, become death to me? Absolutely not! But sin, so that it would be shown to be sin, produced death in me through what is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful. 14 For we know that the law is spiritual—but I am unspiritual, sold into slavery to sin. 15 For I don't understand what I am doing. For I do not do what I want—instead, I do what I hate. 16 But if I do what I don't want, I agree that the law is good. 17 But now it is no longer me doing it, but sin that lives in me. 18 For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. For I want to do the good, but I cannot do it. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but I do the very evil I do not want! 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer me doing it but sin that lives in me.

21 So, I find the law that when I want to do good, evil is present with me. 22 For I delight in the law of God in my inner being. 23 But I see a different law in my members waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that is in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

## Questions

1. Why does Paul use this example (7:1-3) of how a woman, when her husband dies, is freed to marry another. What is he saying about the normal Christian in relationship to sin?
2. What does the law have power to do over us? (see 7:4-12)
3. Why does he say in vs. 12 that, “the law is holy, and the commandment holy, righteous, and good”? Is the law the problem or is it something else?
4. In vs. 14 Paul who is a Christian and an Apostle says, “For we know that the law is spiritual—but I am unspiritual, sold into slavery to sin.” If Paul, the writer of most of the New Testament refers to himself as “unspiritual” and “sold into slavery to sin,” what does that say about the rest of us?
5. In verses 15-19 Paul tells how he does the things he tries not to do and then also does not do the things he is supposed to do. What does this tell us about the normal Christian life? Will it be easy to resist sin? Will we be able to completely avoid sin, even if we don’t want to?
6. In verse 20 it says, “Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer me doing it but sin that lives in me.” What does this tell us about our identity in Christ? Where does it come from? Is it from my ability to not sin, or is it credited to me from somewhere else?
7. In 7:23 Paul refers to, “a different law in my members waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that is in my members.” What is this law? Where does it come from? What has the Church historically called it?
8. Paul prays, “Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me for this body of death?” What is his answer to this petition in verse 25?
9. What does this overall section tell us to expect about sin in the life of the Christian, and the Church? If someone tells you that you can live a totally sinless life by “trying harder” or by some spiritual experience, should you believe them?

## 14. Freedom in Christ - (Romans 8:1-23)

Rom. 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the life-giving Spirit in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. 3 For God achieved what the law could not do because it was weakened through the flesh. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and concerning sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4

so that the righteous requirement of the law may be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh have their outlook shaped by the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit have their outlook shaped by the things of the Spirit. 6 For the outlook of the flesh is death, but the outlook of the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the outlook of the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to the law of God, nor is it able to do so. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, this person does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is your life because of righteousness. 11 Moreover if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will also make your mortal bodies alive through his Spirit who lives in you. 12 So then, brothers and sisters, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh 13 (for if you live according to the flesh, you will die), but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery leading again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, “Abba, Father.” 16 The Spirit himself bears witness to our spirit that we are God’s children. 17 And if children, then heirs (namely, heirs of God and also fellow heirs with Christ)—if indeed we suffer with him so we may also be glorified with him. 18 For I consider that our present sufferings cannot even be compared to the glory that will be revealed to us. 19 For the creation eagerly waits for the revelation of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility—not willingly but because of God who subjected it—in hope 21 that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage of decay into the glorious freedom of God’s children. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers together until now. 23 Not only this, but we ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we eagerly await our adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

## Questions

1. What does it mean to be “in Christ Jesus” (8:1) and why is it important that there is “no condemnation for them”? Where does condemnation (God’s judgment) come from?
2. What is the Holy Spirit, and what is his role in the life of the Church?
3. What does it mean to “walk in the Spirit?” Look at 8:1-9 and compare and contrast life lived in the flesh to living life in the Spirit.
4. An “outlook” on life is a world view, a way of seeing and interpreting the world around you. What is your worldview? Do you think it is an “outlook shaped by the things of the flesh” or is it one “shaped by the things of the Spirit?”
5. In 8:9 Paul says, “Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, this person does not belong to him.” There are some today who will tell you that you can be a Christian and

not have the Spirit and want you to seek a second experience. Based upon the words of 8:9, should you believe them? Why/not?

6. In 6:6 we learned that “our old man was crucified,” with Christ. Now in 8:13 Paul tells us to “put to death the deeds of the body, and you shall live?” What does it mean to put to death the deeds of the body? What do we call this? (look back at Rom 2:4 for Paul’s term) And if we are justified by faith, why does he say that living is contingent upon this?
7. In 8:15 Paul contrasts the “spirit of slavery” with the “Spirit of adoption.” What are they both? What does adoption mean for the Christian and the Church’s relationship to Christ?
8. What does it mean to be “sons” or “children of God?” (8:17-21)
9. What is meant by the “redemption of our bodies” in 8:23? What hope and promise does this hold out to us as Christians who suffer in the present age?

PART II.  
THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE  
(*Didache*)

## **15. The Repentant Life of a Disciple**

(Matt. 3:2, 3:11, Rom. 2:4, 2 Cor. 7:10, & Romans 12:1-2, 1 Cor. 11:28-32)

### *The Gospel Call to Repentance*

Matt. 3:1-2 In those days John the Baptist came into the wilderness of Judea proclaiming, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”

### *Baptized into a life of Repentance*

Matt. 3:11 “I baptize you with water, for repentance, but the one coming after me is more powerful than I am—I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

### *The Goodness of God Leads to Repentance*

Rom. 2:4 Or do you have contempt for the wealth of his kindness, forbearance, and patience, and yet do not know that God’s kindness leads you to repentance?

### *True Sorrow and Rejection of Sin Leads to Salvation*

2 Cor. 7:10 For sadness as intended by God produces a repentance that leads to salvation, leaving no regret, but worldly sadness brings about death.

### *A Living Sacrifice*

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

### *Self Examination*

1 Cor. 11:28 A person should examine himself first, and in this way let him eat the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For the one who eats and drinks without careful regard for the body eats and drinks judgment against himself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and sick, and quite a few are dead. 31 But if we examined ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned with the world.

## *Confession of Sin*

James 5:16 So confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great effectiveness.

### **Questions**

1. Why do you think that the words “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near!” are the very first words John the prophet announces when starting his public ministry? Why do you think it was important for the Gospel writer (Matthew) to record this?
2. According to Matt. 3:11 says “I baptize you with water *into* repentance. Many Christians often are lead to believe that repentance is the moment we come to faith in Christ. But as a disciple we are baptized into a life of repentance. Why does this make a difference?
3. Sometimes the Church has emphasized God’s wrath and judgment in an unbalanced way with his love. Reflect on God’ character traits we often take for granted that lead us to this life of repentance in Romans 2:4.
4. In 2 Cor. 7:10 Paul says that, “sadness as intended by God produces a repentance that leads to salvation,” How does “repentance” lead to salvation? How does this also relate to Romans 8:13 where Paul tells us to “put to death the deeds of the body, and you shall live?”
5. What does Paul mean in Romans 12:1 where he calls Christians to present their bodies as a “living sacrifice,” “holy and pleasing to God which is your reasonable service?” What should this look like in the life of the Christian and the church?
6. We does it mean to “examine” one’s self in 1 Corinthians 11:28?
7. We know from both the New Testament and early Christian literature that the Lord’s Supper was practiced at the very least every Lord’s Day (Sunday) when the Church gathered and often more. What does this imply about the importance of the practicing of repentance and self-examination on a normal basis? How often do you think God wants his people repenting?
8. In 1 Corinthians 11:31-32, why does Paul say it is so important that we “examine ourselves” (practice repentance)? What does the practice of examining and judging and examining ourselves provide?
9. How do you think that self-examination and repentance helps us in our attitude toward other people? Do you think the world would be a little better off if we focused more on correcting our own evils rather than those of others?

## 16. The Two Ways

(Didache sections 1-3)

1.1 There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between these two ways. 1.2 Now the way of life is this: First, you shall love God who made you. Second, your neighbor as yourself. But whatever you do not want do be done to you, do not do to another. 1.3 Now the teaching of these words is this: You shall bless the ones who curse you, pray for your enemies and you shall fast for those who persecute you. For what profit is it if you only love those who love you. Do not the gentiles do the same? But you shall love those who hate you and therefore you shall not have an enemy. 1.4 Abstain from worldly and bodily lusts. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other, and you will be complete. If someone compels you to go one mile, go with him two. If one takes you're coat, give him also your shirt. If one takes from you what is yours, do not ask for it back. For you are not allowed to. 1.5 Everyone asking of you, give it and do not ask for it back; For the Father wills to give to everyone from his own abundance. Blessed is the one who gives according to this command. For he is blameless. But woe upon the one who receives! If on the one hand one has need and he receives, he shall be blameless. But the one who does not have a need shall give an account as to why he received it and for what reason. But when coming into judgment, he shall be examined regarding what he did and he shall not be released from there, indeed not until he has paid the last penny. 1.6 But it has also been said concerning this: "Let your mercy-gift sweat in your hand until you know whom to give it.

2.1 But the second commandment of the teaching *is this*: 2.2 You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not sexually defile children. You shall not practice sex outside of marriage. You shall not steal. You shall not practice magic. You shall not mix potions. You shall not murder a child by abortion, nor shall you kill that which is born. You shall not desire anything that is you're neighbor's. 2.3 You shall not swear an oath falsely. You shall not bear false testimony. You shall not speak evil. You shall not bear a grudge. 2.4 You shall not be double-minded, Nor shall you be double tongued. For a double-tongue is the snare of death. 2.5 You're word must not be false or unreliable but followed through by action. 2.6 You shall not be a greedy person, neither avaricious, nor hypocritical, nor malicious, nor arrogant. You shall not be party to a scheme against your neighbor. 2.7 You shall not hate any man. Some you will rebuke, for others you will pray, and some you shall even love more than your own soul.

3.1 My child, flee from every sort of evil and anything resembling it. 3.2 Do not become easily angered, because anger leads to murder, neither *be* jealous, nor argumentative, nor quick tempered. Because from all these murder is birthed. 3.3 My child, do not be lustful because lust leads to sexual immorality, neither *use* sexually explicit speech, Nor having a wandering eye. Because from all these adultery is birthed. 3.4 My child, do not be a fortuneteller, because this leads to idolatry. Neither *be* an enchanter, nor an astrologer, nor a magician. Do not even desire to see them, because from all these idolatry is birthed. 3.5 My child, do not be a liar because lying leads to theft, neither a lover of money, nor self glorifying, because from all these things theft is birthed. 3.6 My child, do not be a complainer, because this leads to blasphemy, neither

independent, nor arrogantly minded, because from all these things blasphemy is birthed. 3.7 But be gentle, because the gentle shall inherit the earth. 3.8 Be patient, merciful, innocent, quiet, kind, and always honor the words you have heard. 3.9 Never exalt yourself, nor allow yourself to become arrogant. You shall not join your soul with the lofty, but you shall associate yourself with the just and humble. 3.10 And whatever things happen to you, receive as good, knowing that apart from God, nothing comes to pass.

## Questions

1. We live in a world that treats all opinions as absolutely equal, no matter how right or wrong. For the writer of the Didache, there are only two, God's way, and everyone else's. How does this outlook of the "Two Ways" compare with Paul's "life in the flesh" verses "life in the Spirit" in Romans 8:5-16? What significance does this outlook have for the Church today?
2. According to the author, what is the way of life? How does one pursue it?
3. The two great commandments are to love God and to love neighbor. Jesus said, that "All the law and the prophets depend on these two commandments? Why?
4. The writer of the Didache took Jesus' command to "teach all that I commanded" quite literally and listed his commands in close succession. Discuss the rest of the commands in each of the above sections 1-3. Look at them in detail and discuss ways in which they would be applied in life now.
5. How does observing these commands listed above relate practicing a life of repentance? Are these things that require practice in everyday life and relationships?
6. How does the commandments in "The Way of Life" relate to Romans 8:13 where Paul tells us to "put to death the deeds of the body, and you shall live?"

## 17. The Two Ways

(Didache sections 4-6)

*Didache* 4.1 My child, remember night and day the man who speaks the word of God to you and honor him as the Lord himself. For wherever the Lord's authority is proclaimed, there the Lord is present. 4.2 Seek daily the fellowship of the saints in order that you may persevere through their words. 4.3 You shall not cause divisions, but you will strive to bring reconciliation between those who quarrel. 4.4 You shall judge rightly and you shall not show favoritism when reproving trespasses. 4.4 You shall not waiver whether or not. 4.5 Do not be someone who extends the hand to receive but shrinks back when time to give. 4.6 If you have something from *the work of your hand*, you shall pay a ransom for your sins. 4.7 You shall not have second thoughts when giving,

nor shall you complain when giving, because you shall know who is the good paymaster of the reward. 4.8 You shall not turn away the one in need, but you shall share all things with your brother and you shall not claim anything as your own. For if you shall share together in what is imperishable, how much more what is perishable? 4.9 Do not withhold your hand *of correction* from your son or daughter, but from their childhood, you shall train them to fear God. 4.10 You shall not sharply command your male slave or female slave out of your resentment, especially those who place their hope in God also, because perhaps *in time* they may be caused to not fear God who is over both *of you*. 4.11 But you who are slaves, submit yourselves to your master, in reverence and respect as a testimony of God. 4.12 You shall hate everything that is hypocritical and unpleasing to the Lord. 4.13 You must not forsake the commandments of the Lord, but you must keep what you are receiving, neither add *to it* nor take away *from it*. 4.14 In the church you shall confess your trespasses and you shall not come to your prayer with an evil conscience. For this is the way of life.

5.1 But the way of death is this: First of all it is evil and fully cursed; murder, adultery, lust, sexual licentiousness, theft, idolatry, magic, sorcery, extortion, false witness, hypocrisy, duplicity, deceit, pride, malice, independence, greed, filthy speech, jealousy, audacity, arrogance, and boastfulness, 5.2 persecutors of those who are good, haters of the truth, lovers of falsehood, those not knowing the reward of righteousness, nor engendering good, nor judging rightly, Those who lie awake *at night scheming* for evil rather than for good, who are a stranger to gentleness and patience, lovers of frivolous things, seekers of revenge, refusing mercy to the poor, not working for the cause of the oppressed, neither knowing their maker, murderers of children, even destroyers of what God has made, those rebuffing those in need, oppressors of the afflicted, advocates of the rich, perverted judges of the poor, and utterly sinful. Oh child, may you be delivered from all these things.

6.1 See that no one leads you astray from this way of the teaching, because such a one teaches you in opposition to God. 6.2 If you are able to bear the entire burden of the Lord, you shall be complete. But if you are not able, do what you are able. 6.3 Now concerning food: Bear what you are able. But pay close attention to meat offered to idols, because it is the worship of dead gods.

## Questions

1. In 4.1 it says, “My child, remember night and day the man who speaks the word of God to you and honor him as the Lord himself. For wherever the Lord’s authority is proclaimed, there the Lord is present.” Why does the writer suggest that it is important to respect the man preaching the Word of God to the Church when gathered? What is the connection between the proclamation of God’s word and God himself?
2. Why does 4.2 say, “Seek daily the fellowship of the saints in order that you may persevere through their words”? What is the connection between persevering in the faith and our “fellowship with the saints.” Is it possible to persevere without them?

3. In 4.13 the writer says, “You must not forsake the commandments of the Lord, but you must keep what you are receiving, neither add *to it* nor take away *from it*.” Also in 6.1 he says, “See that no one leads you astray from this way of the teaching.” We live in a trendy world where fads come and go. But in the ancient world, your worldview and outlook was dictated by tradition. What is that tradition which they are receiving? Why are they commanded, “You must keep what you are receiving?”
4. In 4.14 the writer sums up “The Way of Life” as confession of your trespasses. Why is this so important and how does it relate to the life of repentance?
5. In 5.1 we read the “Way of Death.” Honestly reflect on this litany of sins and ask yourself which one’s you may be guilty of and under God’s wrath for?
6. One of the sins listed is, “stranger to gentleness and patience.” Does this describe you?
7. Among the many evil sins in the list, he also lists “lovers of frivolous things.” Another way to say this is “lovers of unimportant things.” Are there things you devote a lot of your time and emotional energy to that actually are very unimportant other than to entertain you? Are you shocked that God finds such pursuits damning?
8. There is a lot here about justice and seeking the welfare of your neighbor and the poor. What are the ways you think you have failed to seek justice for those less fortunate, or even your neighbor?

## **18. The Sacrament of Baptism**

(Matt 28:19-20; Eph. 4:4; Col. 2:11-15; 1 Pet. 3:18; Acts 16:14-15; Acts 16:31-36 & 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Genesis 17; Didache section 7)

### *The Mission of Making Disciples*

Matt. 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

### *One Baptism*

Eph. 4:4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you too were called to the one hope of your calling, 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

### *Baptism is a Means of Grace*

Col. 2:11 In him you also were circumcised—not, however, with a circumcision performed by human hands, but by the removal of the fleshly body, that is, through the circumcision done by Christ. 12 Having been buried with him in baptism, you also have been raised with him through your faith in the power of God who raised him from the dead. 13 And even though you were dead in your transgressions and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he nevertheless made you alive with him, having forgiven all your transgressions. 14 He has destroyed what was against us, a certificate of indebtedness expressed in decrees opposed to us. He has taken it away by nailing it to the cross. 15 Disarming the rulers and authorities, he has made a public disgrace of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

1Pet. 3:18 Because Christ also suffered once for sins,  
the just for the unjust,  
to bring you to God,  
by being put to death in the flesh  
but by being made alive in the spirit.

19 In it he went and preached to the spirits in prison,  
20 after they were disobedient long ago when God patiently waited in the days of Noah as an ark was being constructed. In the ark a few, that is eight souls, were delivered through water. 21 And this prefigured baptism, which now saves you—not the washing off of physical dirt but the pledge of a good conscience to God—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

### *Baptism Extends to the Whole Christian Family*

Acts 16:14 A woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, a God-fearing woman, listened to us. The Lord opened her heart to respond to what Paul was saying. 15 After she and her household were baptized, she urged us, “If you consider me to be a believer in the Lord, come and stay in my house.” And she persuaded us.

Acts 16:31 They replied,<sup>112</sup> “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household.” 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him, along with all those who were in his house. 33 At that hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and all his family were baptized right away. 34 The jailer brought them into his house and set food before them, and he rejoiced greatly that he had come to believe in God, together with his entire household. 35 At daybreak the magistrates sent their police officers, saying, “Release those men.” 36 The jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, “The magistrates have sent orders to release you. So come out now and go in peace.”

## Questions

1. In Matt 28:19-20 Jesus commands the Church to make disciples of all nations. There are two essential practices in doing so. The first is baptizing them and then teaching them all that Jesus commanded. What is a disciple? Is every one of them always “saved?” Why Is Baptism placed first in the order and teaching what Jesus commanded second? Is the Church only for people who can “understand” or is discipleship a gradual understanding of the Gospel?
2. Jesus commands the Church to baptize by confessing the Trinitarian formula here (“in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit”). Who is making a profession of faith here, the individual or the Church? Why does it make a difference in how we understand the preaching of the Gospel and the Church?
3. In Eph 4:4-5 what is the “one body” that has the “one spirit?” Why does Paul emphasize “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all? (See also 1 Cor. 12:12-13)
4. What was circumcision and what role did it play in the Old Testament covenant with Abraham? (See Romans 4:11) In Col 2:11-15, why does Paul liken circumcision and baptism here? What do they both point to?
5. In 1 Peter 3:18-19 it makes clear that salvation was accomplished by Jesus’ death in suffering for sins. But in 3:20 it says that baptism “now saves you.” How is it that both Christ and baptism saves us? Reflect on Peter’s analogy of Noah’s Ark in 3:20.
6. What is a “means of grace?” What is its role and how does it differ from grace itself? What are “means?”
7. In Acts 16:14-15 it says of the woman Lydia that her whole “household” was baptized. Why do you think the early Christians like Paul baptized the entire family, not only children, but slaves and servants too? What do you think this tells us about the Gospel’s approach to the family? (refer to Genesis 17, especially verses 23-27)
8. In Acts 16:33 it says, that “he and all his family were baptized right away.” How much of the Gospel do you think that he and this entire family really understood on the first night he encountered it? What does this tell you about baptism and discipleship? What does this suggest about parents and their responsibility to disciple their children?

## 19. The Worship, Gathering and the Marks of the Church

(Acts 2:42, Heb. 10:25, Didache 4, Luke 24:1, Didache 14, & Rev. 1:10,)

### *The Four Marks of the Church*

Acts 2:42 They were devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

### *Assembling with The Body Is not Optional*

Heb. 10:25 not abandoning our own meetings, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and even more so because you see the day drawing near.

*Didache* 4.2 Seek daily the fellowship of the saints in order that you may persevere through their words.

### *The Lord's Day*

Luke 24:1 Now on the first day of the week, at early dawn, the women went to the tomb, taking the aromatic spices they had prepared.

Rev. 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day when I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,

*Didache* 14.1 When gathering on the Lord's Day *instituted* by the Lord himself, *and* having already confessed your sins as a community so that your sacrifice may be pure, you shall break the bread loaf, and celebrate the Eucharist. 14.2 And every person harboring resentment with one of the community members shall not gather together with you until they have been reconciled lest he defile the sacrifice of your worship. 14.3 For this is what was said by the Lord: In every place and time, offer to me a pure sacrifice; For I am the great king, says the Lord; And my name is great among the nations.

## Questions

1. In Acts 2:42 Luke describes four things that characterized the early Church. What are they and why are they important? How often does it say they practiced them?
2. In Hebrews 10:25 and the Didache 4.2, what is the main reason given for assembling together regularly?
3. Why does the writer of Hebrew warn against abandoning meeting together?

4. Why does the writer of the Didache insist on daily fellowship with the saints?
5. What is the Lord's Day? Why did the Church choose that day to meet together?
6. According to the Didache 14.1-3 what are the practices that the Church devoted themselves to on the Lord's Day?
7. What does the Didache 14.1-3 have in common with Acts 2:42?

## **20. Prayer**

(Didache 8.2-3) Matt. 6:9-13

*Didache* 8:2 Thus you shall pray:

Our Father who is in heaven,  
 Hallowed be your name,  
 You're kingdom come,  
 You're will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
 Give us today out daily bread,  
 And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.  
 And do not lead us into temptation,  
 And deliver us from the evil.  
 Because yours is the power and the glory forever.

*Didache* 8.3 Thus you shall pray three times per day

### **Questions**

1. Why do we pray "Our Father" and not "My Father"?
2. Why do we address him in heaven and why do we say "Our Father, who art in heaven?"
3. Why do we pray for the Kingdom of God to come? What will God bring with it?
4. Why do we pray "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven?"
5. Why do Christians continually pray, "forgive us our debts (sin)?"
6. Why do we continually practice forgiving those who sin against us?
7. Why do we pray that God not lead us into temptation? What is meant by this?

8. Why do we pray, “deliver us from the evil?”
9. Why do we continually ascribe all power and glory to God? Do we often try to take it for ourselves?

## **21. The Lord’s Supper**

(1 Corinthians 11:23-34) Romans 7:15-20

1Cor. 11:23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night in which he was betrayed took bread, 24 and after 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, he also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, every time you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For every time you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. 27 For this reason, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 A person should examine himself first, and in this way let him eat the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For the one who eats and drinks without careful regard<sup>10</sup> for the body eats and drinks judgment against himself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and sick, and quite a few are dead. 31 But if we examined ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned with the world. 33 So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. 34 If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that when you assemble it does not lead to judgment. I will give directions about other matters when I come.

### **Questions**

1. We have lost a deep sense of tradition in our modern culture. Why is it important when Paul says “For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you?”
2. When the bread is broken what does Jesus mean when he says, “This is my body, which is for you”? What does the bread refer to and symbolize?
3. When offering the wine, what does Jesus mean when he says, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood? What does the blood symbolize and refer to?
4. Jesus says “do this in remembrance of me.” Why does he say this? Is this just a personal remembering or is it more than that?
5. What does it mean when Paul says, “For every time you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes”? How is the Lord’s Supper a proclamation of the Gospel message? Discuss what a “visible word” is.

6. What does it mean to drink the cup in an “unworthy” or worthy manner? Does it mean you must be without sin in your life? (Reflect on Romans 7:15-20 if necessary)
7. What does it mean in vs. 28 and vs. 31 to “examine self”? What is self-examination and why is it so closely tied to the Lord’s Supper? (refer back to lesson 14 “the Repentant Life of a Disciple” if necessary.)
8. If the Lord’s Supper was practiced at least every Lord’s Day and possibly more according to Acts 2:42, how often should the disciple be self-examining?

## 22. The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
the Maker of heaven and earth,  
and 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, dead, and buried;  
He descended into the spirit world.\*  
The third day He arose again from the dead;  
He ascended into heaven,  
and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;  
from thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit;  
the holy catholic church;  
the communion of saints;  
the forgiveness of sins;  
the resurrection of the body;  
and the life everlasting.  
Amen.

\* The Greek word here is “Hades” which in the ancient world referred to the underworld of the dead where there was both a place for those awaiting eternal rest and also another what we would now call “hell” for those awaiting eternal judgment. The translation was modified in keeping with original usage to prevent misunderstanding that Jesus went to be tormented in hell.

## Questions

1. Why does the creed begin with “I believe”? Why is this important to the Christian faith?
2. Why does this belief begin with the three persons of the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?
3. What is important about Jesus being born of a virgin, Mary, and suffering under the Roman governor Pontius Pilate? What does this tell us about how the early Church saw the person of Jesus?
4. What is important about Jesus’ crucifixion, death, and burial?
5. What are the reasons that it is important to confess that Jesus arose from the dead on the third day?
6. What significance does the confession “He ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty,” still have for us today?
7. Why do we still confess “the holy catholic church?” What does the word catholic mean?
8. Why does the creed end with the following list: “the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting?”

## 23. Spiritual Gifts And Equipping the Church for Service

(Eph. 4:7-16)

Eph. 4:7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. 8 Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he captured captives; he gave gifts to men.” 9 Now what is the meaning of “he ascended,” except that he also descended to the lower regions, namely, the earth? 10 He, the very one who descended, is also the one who ascended above all the heavens, in order to fill all things. 11 It was he who gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God—a mature person, attaining to the measure of Christ’s full stature. 14 So we are no longer to be children, tossed back and forth by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching by the trickery of people who craftily carry out their deceitful schemes. 15 But practicing the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Christ, who is the head. 16 From him the whole body grows, fitted and held together through every supporting ligament. As each one does its part, the body grows in love.

## Questions

1. Why is it important that Paul teaches that spiritual gifts are given and to be developed in every member of the Church?
2. What role do evangelists, pastors, and teachers fulfill in the church. What are they there for?
3. Many people think the role of pastors and teachers is to do the ministry for the rest of the Church. But what does Ephesians 4:12 mean when it says they are to “equip the saints for the work of the ministry?” What does it mean to “equip”? What is “the work of the ministry?”
4. What does it mean to “build up the body of Christ (4:12)?
5. What does it mean in 4:13 to “obtain the full unity of the faith” Look at what follows in 4:13.
6. Paul envisions matured disciples who are not easily detoured like children in 4:14. What does he want us to be aware of? How does the equipping the saints help prevent this kind of error?
7. What does Paul mean in 4:15 by “practicing the truth in love?”
8. In 4:16 Paul talks about how the whole body grows together as “each one does its part.” What is “each one” and what does it look like to do our own part?

## 24. Endurance in the Faith

(Eph. 6:10-18 & Didache 16.1-8)

Eph. 6:10 Finally, be strengthened in the Lord and in the strength of his power. 11 Clothe yourselves with the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens. 13 For this reason, take up the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand your ground on the evil day, and having done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm therefore, by fastening the belt of truth around your waist, by putting on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 by fitting your feet with the preparation that comes from the good news of peace, 16 and in all of this, by taking up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 With every prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit, and to this end be alert, with all perseverance and requests for all the saints.

*Didache* 16.1 Watch over your life. Do not let your lamps go out, neither be unprepared but be ready. For you do not know the hour when your Lord comes. 16.2 But you shall gather frequently seeking those things benefiting your souls. For the time of your faith will not profit you unless you are found perfect in the end. 16.3 In the last days false prophets and corruptors will multiply even turning sheep into wolves and love shall be turned to hate. 16.4 For as lawlessness increases, they shall hate, pursue and even persecute one another. Then shall appear the world deceiver doing signs and wonders as if the son of God himself, and the world shall be delivered into his hand, and he shall do abhorrent things such as has never been done. 16.5 Then all the world of mankind will come under the fire of judgment and many will be caused to fall away from the faith and perish. But the remnant of the faithful will be saved by him who was cursed. 16.6 Then shall appear the signs of the truth: First the sign of the opening of the heaven; next the sign of the sound of the trumpet; and third the resurrection of the dead. 16.7 But not of all, but as it has been said, "The Lord shall come and all his saints with him!" 16.8 The world shall see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.

## Questions

1. Why does God want us to be "strengthened in the Lord?" What role does this play in our daily spiritual lives?
2. What is the "armor of God" here? Is Paul talking about some kind of spiritual force field or is it a metaphor for living the life of a disciple?
3. This passage is often cited for the purpose of "spiritual warfare." But how do we wage that warfare? Do we wage it by wrestling with forces of darkness, or by wrestling with God and his truth?
4. The writer lists parts of the armor here but connects them with key aspects of basic Christian discipleship. List these and ponder each in turn
  - Belt of truth -
  - Breastplate of righteousness -
  - Fitting for your feet -
  - Shield of faith -
  - Helmet of salvation -
  - Sword of the Spirit -
5. He ends with an admonition to stay "alert" and practice "perseverance" in 6:18. What is the relationship between "perseverance" and spiritual warfare? Are they the same thing?
6. Reflect on the relationship between Eph 4:7-18 and the *Didache* section 16.

7. Summarize what the writer of the Didache means by 16.1.
8. Why does the writer of the Didache deeply admonish the disciples to “gather frequently seeking those things benefiting your souls”?

## MEMORY

### **The Lord's Prayer**

*Didache* 8:2 Thus you shall pray:

Our Father who is in heaven,  
Hallowed be your name,  
You're kingdom come,  
You're will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today out daily bread,  
And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.  
And do not lead us into temptation,  
And deliver us from the evil.  
Because yours is the power and the glory forever.

### **The Apostles Creed**

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, and 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, dead, and buried;  
He descended into the spirit world.  
The third day He arose again from the dead;  
He ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence  
he shall come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the  
forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.  
Amen.

## The Ten Commandments

Ex. 20:1-17

Exod. 20:1 And God spoke all these words, saying:

2 “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

3 “You shall have no other gods before Me.

4 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

7 “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

8 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

12 “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

13 “You shall not murder.

14 “You shall not commit adultery.

15 “You shall not steal.

16 “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

17 “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.”