

SALVATION

The central purpose of God's Revelation (The Bible) is to show us how He saves us from our sins.

Originally God created man and woman to have a perfect relationship with Him. Man defied God and disobeyed Him, thus destroying his perfect nature with sin. This "fall" into sin by Adam and Eve has had consequences to every human being since. The consequence or wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23) — both physical and spiritual. Therefore, every person needs to be reborn or made spiritually alive by the Holy Spirit. Every person is in need of the saving grace of God through Jesus Christ. Because we are spiritually dead the salvation of any person is therefore, wholly a work of God's free grace, not the result, in whole or in part of human works or goodness. A person receives this free gift through repentance and faith in Christ's Work on the cross.

1. Why do we need to be saved?

Some people assume that they are not much worse than anyone else and so they don't need some special help from God. The problem is they don't realize the truth about their own condition, nor the standard that God has set.

A. What does God's Word say about our condition?

Isaiah 53:6 _____

Romans 3:10-18; 23 _____

Galatians 3:22 _____

I John 1:8 _____

Psalm 51:5 _____

Romans 5:12 _____

B. It is not a pleasant thought but it is the truth. We have sinned in thought, word and deed. We call this the law. The Law of God shows us our sin. God's Law is "be perfect even as I am perfect". When is the last time you heard anyone claim to be perfect? This is the bad news - we have sinned - but there is Good News.

II. The Solution to Sin - The Good News

A. God stands ready and willing to forgive and offer relief from guilt to anyone who would admit their condition. So we do not have to shy away from being utterly honest in admitting our sinful condition. Look at what God says to us:

Matthew 11:28-30 _____

Isaiah 1:18 _____

1 John 1:8-9 _____

Romans 8:1 _____

Psalm 103:11-12 _____

B. How can God forgive sin?

To forgive someone literally means to release that person from an indebtedness. If you are indebted to the bank, before they would forgive your debt you must pay them back. How could we pay back a perfect God who gave us our very lives and then forgives our sins? We couldn't. God's forgiveness means we're released from spiritual debt. But our sins don't just vanish into thin air. They had to be paid for. That is why Christ came. What is the "mechanism" for covering our spiritual debt according to these verses?

1 Peter 2:24 _____

1 Corinthians 15:3 _____

Hebrews 9:22, 10:10-14 _____

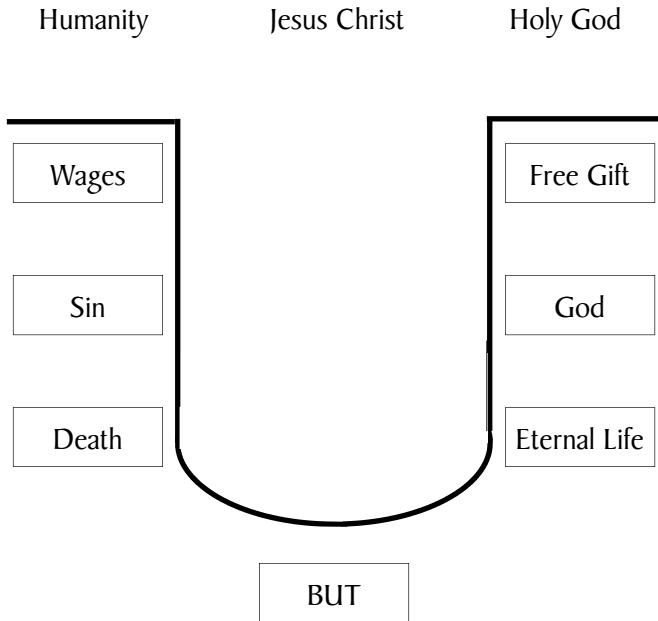
Now consider your own life. Why would you agree that you need God's grace in order to have a relationship with him?

A diagram to help you visualize God's salvation.

Grace may be a somewhat unfamiliar term to you, you've heard it refer to prayer before meals, but aren't exactly sure how to define it. You may have come from a spiritual tradition where the term was used differently than it is used in the Bible. So we all need to understand what grace means from the Bible and solidify our own understanding of how God saved us.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

(Draw a cross under the word Jesus Christ that bridges the chasm between humanity and God.)



How Do We Receive God's Grace?

We receive God's grace through faith alone in Christ's work on the cross.

Biblical faith is not:

1. General belief in the existence of God
2. Merely knowledge that Jesus lived and died On a cross, this knowledge even demons have. *(Luke 4:34)*
3. Merely knowledge of the teachings of the Bible.

Biblical faith is:

Personal trust in the wonderful message of the Gospel (Good News) that God forgives all who believe Jesus' blood shed on the cross pays the penalty of sin for the whole world and specifically for me!

Augsburg Confession (XX, 23) referring to saving faith says, "(Saving) faith does not signify merely the knowledge of the history, such as in the ungodly and in the devil, but signifies a faith which believes not merely the history, but also the effect of the history, namely... that we have grace, righteousness, and forgiveness of sins through Christ."

How do we receive the gift of Saving Faith?

John 1:11-12 _____

Acts 16:30, 31 _____

Romans 10:17 _____

Galatians 2:16 _____

Titus 3:5 _____

(We will talk more about how God bestows faith through
Baptism in the section on Sacraments)

Note: A small group is a great place for life-change and outside your personal family, perhaps the most optimal setting for personal transformation. But groups are imperfect because they are made up of imperfect people. If that is not realized, expectations might be set too high. Remember each group can contribute to your growth if you allow the Holy Spirit to work in you. Every person in your group probably won't become your best friend. That doesn't mean you can't love each other and create meaningful memories over time.

We receive the gift of God's grace by trusting in Christ's work for us on the cross. *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God -- not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8,9)*

Can you describe a time in your life when you gave up trying to obtain God's favor through any accomplishment of your own and rested in the completed work of Christ on the cross for your salvation? _____

What does the Bible reveal about God's "behind-the-scenes" work to prepare for welcoming us into His family of grace?

John 6:44,65 _____

I Corinthians 12:3 _____

Ephesians 1:3-6 _____

FURTHER READING - Luther's Small Catechism

The Apostle's Creed - The First Section...
"I believe in God the Father Almighty"

The Apostle's Creed - The Second Section...
"I believe in Jesus Christ"

The Apostle's Creed - The Third Section...
The Holy Spirit and Faith

SACRAMENTS

Means of Grace

John 17:20, Romans 10:17, Ephesians 2:20,
Titus 3:5, Ephesians 1:19

1. What is a Sacrament?

- A. The Word sacrament does not appear in the Bible; it comes from the Latin word sacramentum which translates into mysterion (mystery) in Greek.
- B. The means (vehicles) God uses to distribute the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection to you, namely the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.

2. Characteristics of a sacrament

A. Instituted by Christ

I. Baptism —

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." Matthew 28:18-20 (See also Mark 16:15,16)

II. Communion —

"And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, this is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." Luke 22:19 (See also 1 Corinthians 11:24)

B. Visible Elements

I. Baptism — water

II. Communion — bread and wine

C. Offers forgiveness of sins

Philippians 4:1 _____

Colossians 2:1-5 _____

Acts 20:36-38 _____

Paul's passions were forever redirected. Relationships, community-building and love became the most important priority. Look at these verses and ask yourself how Paul demonstrated give and take of relationships.

Romans 1:11-12

Romans 15:24, 30-32

Philippians 1:3-11

4. Did Paul ever experience relational disappointment?

See 2 Timothy 4:9-16

After such emotional hurt, why do you think Paul continued to build gracious community? _____

5. Paul built relationships by pressing on and opening up his heart and emotions — not just remaining superficial. How does he show his openness and vulnerability in the following passages?

Romans 7:14-25

2 Corinthians 6:11-13

1 Timothy 1:12-17

SMALL GROUPS

We have learned of the wonderful gifts that God has given to us like the Scriptures, Sacraments, prayer to talk to Him and the Holy Spirit to empower us and help us grow. But He wants to give us even more. He gave us each other and He wants us to know the blessing of community.

In the body of Christ, we serve each other in various ways. This is just how God designed it. For example, we can learn when we listen to gifted teachers. Or when we worship together we enter a dimension of God's grace experienced in no other way. When we sit with members of our small group or with members of those who serve in a particular ministry with us, someone can powerfully remind us of how much we matter to God. Or they can remind us that God is with us when we're going through a tough time and they can pray with us.

We can learn much about authentic Christian community from the Apostle Paul.

Read Acts 7:54-8:3

1. What was Saul's attitude about Stephen's death and other Christians? _____

2. How does Paul describe his heart condition before his conversion?
(See Philemon 3:4-6; Galatians 1:13-14; Acts 22:1-5)

3. Acts 9 records Paul's encounter with the living Christ. What is the evidence of his heart changing through these verses he wrote to young churches?

I. Baptism —
"Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.' " Acts 2:38 (See also Acts 22:16, Galatians 3:27, Titus 3:5, John 3:5)

II. Communion —
"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Matthew 26:28

3. How many sacraments are there?

4. What is Baptism?

A. A divine ordinance for the church to observe until Christ returns.

Look up: Matthew 28:19,20; Acts 2:38;

Acts 10:48, Acts 22:16

B. Baptism is efficacious — meaning it is effective, it accomplishes what God wants it to — namely the washing away of sins.

Romans 6:3,4

Galatians 3:27 - Paul says when we are baptized into Christ we "put on Christ", namely his righteousness

Titus 3:4-7

C. Baptism is water connected to God's Word and Promise

When a person is baptized into "the Name" of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, they enter into a relationship with the Triune God and all His spiritual blessings of grace and forgiveness.

The Greek word for Baptize means not only to immerse, but also to wash (Luke 11:38, Mark 7:3). Water is necessary, but how it is applied is up to individual churches. Water is the external sign of the cleansing which is happening inside.

5. What does Baptism bestow? Please read verses:

A. Baptism bestows what the Gospel gives — forgiveness sins, Acts 2:38, washes away sin, Acts 22:16, sanctifies/cleanses, Ephesians 5:26, regenerates and saves, Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 3:21, Romans 1:16, 17

B. Have you been baptized? If not, what is keeping you from being baptized?

LUTHERAN DISTINCTION: The Roman Catholic church believes that through Baptism grace is bestowed upon the baptized, but they say faith is not necessary to receive the grace. Scripture clearly teaches that through faith in Christ is the only way we receive God's saving grace. *Ephesians 2:8,9.*

The Reformed traditions see Baptism as merely a symbolic, outward sign to be done by a new believer. Scripture teaches, however, that Baptism is more than a mere ceremonial act, but a way in which God washes away sins, Acts

6. Would anyone ever have a need for rebaptism?

A. Those who were unaware they had been baptized.

B. Those who were baptized in a non-Christian church (Mormon, Jehovah Witness, etc.)

7. Why baptize infants?

A. Children are sinful from conception (sin is not a problem of doing but being). The fact that infants die indicates the presence of sin in their lives.

"Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." (Psalm 51:5)

When Growth Isn't Happening - Addressing sin

What is God's expectation on every believer's life and conduct in 1 John 2:4-6 and 1 Peter 1:14-16? _____

As long as we're forgiven in Christ (Romans 8:1), why does it make any difference whether we sin or not?

Combine Psalm 38:51 and 1 John 1:9 into a unified description of how to handle sin in our lives. _____

Growth That Leads to Kingdom Action

In the following passage, Jesus talks about his eternal purpose to build something that will never fail. What is He going to build that will be "hell-proof"? Matthew 16:18 _____

Jesus' charge to the early Christians still holds for us today. How expansive is his plan according to the verses below? Matthew 28:19-20 _____

Acts 1:8 _____

What implications does His plan have on your plans?

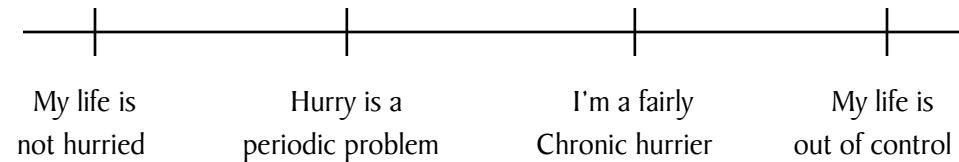
be alone periodically? What are the implications for your personally? _____

How is it possible to obey Ephesians 6:18 in our day and age? _____

What could you do to be more obedient to that verse? _____

For what does David worship God in Psalm 145:1-7? What's the benefit to us when we worship our Creator? _____

Where does your life fall on the following scale:



Ecclesiastes 5:1 admonishes, "Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools..." How does frantic, noisy living cause your life to turn into "the sacrifice of a fool" sometimes? _____

Read Luke 6:12-19 - Notice that Jesus follows a three-step progression in this snapshot of a day in His life. Identify those three steps below:
verse 12 _____
verse 13 _____
verses 17-19 _____

- B. Can a child believe in Christ? Yes! Faith is a gift given by God. Matthew 18:16; Luke 1:15; 41-44
- C. Jesus affirms that the second birth through water and the Spirit is necessary for entering the Kingdom of God. — Read John 3:1-8
- D. Baptism is a form of adoption. Certainly Jesus wanted children in His family. — Read Galatians 3:26-27, Matthew 19:13-15
- E. The faith imparted in baptism must be nourished and fed through reading and hearing the Gospel promises or it's in danger of dying.

8. What happens if a child dies before baptism?

- A. God binds us to Holy Baptism as the revealed means of salvation, but He is not bound to the same means.
- B. In complete confidence we commit stillborn or unbaptized infants who die to the mercy of a loving God. See Luke 1:41-44; Mark 10:13-16
- C. We must resist the temptation to "play God" and make ultimate judgments.

9. What are the benefits of baptism for me today?

- A. Baptism is the source of Christ-like living.
- B. Every day we can remind ourselves the promise of our baptism — that the old Adam/Eve has been drowned.
- C. It reminds us of God's affirmation of our continuing value and worth as His children.

10. Baptism is not a "symbol" but a reality which affirms our acceptance by God. — Read Titus 3:5 and 1 Peter 3:20-22

11. Why do Lutherans have sponsors? Confirmation?

FURTHER READING:

Luther's Small Catechism The Sacrament of Holy Baptism

The Lord's Supper

1. How did Holy Communion begin?

Christ instituted it before His crucifixion.

Read Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:14-20;
1 Corinthians 11:23-25

- A. The four accounts do not agree on details but they don't contradict each other.
- B. The words of institution are exactly the same.
- C. The validity of communion, like baptism, rests on the Word and promise of Christ.

2. What are the names for Holy Communion?

- A. *Holy Communion* — stresses the holiness of this fellowship gathered around Jesus Christ by His Word and command.
- B. *Sacrament of the Altar* — the altar is the focal point of worship; it is our sacrifice of praise, not a sacrifice for sin.
- C. *Lord's Supper* — He is the host who invites us to a special meal.
- D. *Eucharist* — Thanksgiving to God; a means of celebration.

3. What are the major interpretations of communion?

- A. Catholic = transubstantiation

The substance of the bread and wine are changed completely into the substance of Christ's body and blood, there is no bread and wine, only the appearance of them.

Suggested verses to memorize (New life in Christ):

Christ the center	2 Corinthians 5:17
Obedience to Christ	Romans 12:1
The Word	2 Timothy 3:16
Prayer	Philippians 4:6-7

Rely on God's Resources:

His Spirit	1 Corinthians 3:16
His Strength	Philippians 4:13
His Faithfulness	Lamentations 3:22
His Peace	Isaiah 26:3
His Provision	Romans 8:32
His Help in Temptation	Hebrews 2:18

Grow in Christ Likeness:

Love	1 John 3:18
Humility	Philippians 2:3-4
Purity	Ephesians 5:3
Honesty	Acts 24:16
Faith	Hebrews 11:6
Good Works	Matthew 5:16

4. Apply God's Word

- 1st ask: What did it mean to the original hearers?
- 2nd ask: What is the underlying timeless principle?
- 3rd ask: Where or how could I put this into practice in my life?

II. Prayer/Solitude/Worship

What does Luke 5:16 and 6:12-13 tell us about Jesus' prayer life and His need to

Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear it and learn it. (Martin Luther's explanation of the Third Commandment)

- b. Deal with attitudes and behaviors that prevent you from hearing God. (Luke 8:4-15)
- c. Act on what you hear. (James 1:22) Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

2. Study God's Word

(Acts 17:11 NIV) Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

(2 Tim 2:15 NIV) Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

Recommended Study Bibles:

CPH Study Bible

The NIV Study Bible

Thompson Chain Reference Bible

3. Memorize God's Word

- a. It helps me resist temptation. (Psalm 119:11)
- b. It helps me make wise decisions. (Psalm 119:105)
- c. It helps me witness to unbelievers. (1 Peter 3:15)
- d. It strengthens me when I'm under stress. (Psalm 119:49)
- e. It comforts me when I'm sad. (Jeremiah 15:16)

B. Reformed = symbolic

The bread and wine (grape juice) are just symbolic of Christ's body and blood.

C. Lutheran = Real presence

Christ's body and blood are present "In, with, and under" the bread and wine. Christ said, "...this is my body...this is my blood..." In a miraculous, mysterious way Christ gives Himself to us with the bread twice.

4. What is the Lutheran understanding? Real presence?

A. Paul refers to the consecrated elements as "bread" and "wine"; they have not changed into anything else. Read 1 Corinthians 11:26-34.

B. Christ's real presence is the issue since failure to discern His body brings judgment.

C. Holy Communion is a personal and tangible sign of our acceptance and forgiveness by God.

D. Christ is present in the Sacrament by His Word and promise, not by our faith.

5. What are the benefits of communion for me today?

A. The major one: forgiveness of sins — given and shed for you. Matthew 26:28

B. Assurance that Christ continues to accept and cleanse us.

C. Reaffirms that we are no longer under God's judgment.

D. Strengthens our faith in God's promises, our Christian living, and our love for one another.

6. How can I prepare for communion?

A. Do I believe that I am a sinful human being without hope of eternal life except for God's mercy in Christ?

B. Do I believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son (God in the flesh!) and my personal Savior?

C. Do I believe that He is personally present in the Sacrament of Holy Communion with His body and blood?

This "is" my body.

"Is" the Greek *esti* or *est*; never means signify or represents but always means is. When Jesus said, "This (the bread) is My body; this (the wine) is my blood, he directed the disciples attention not to the visible bread and wine, but to that which is given in and with the bread and wine, namely His body and blood. Christ, in a supernatural way gives himself to the one receiving the sacrament.

Consider what Dr. Martin Luther wrote about this in his Large Catechism:

"Though a hundred thousand devils, plus all the fanatics, come rushing up to question how bread and wine can be Christ's body and blood, still I know that all the fanatic spirits and all the scholars heaped together cannot match the wisdom that the divine Majesty has in his little finger. Here stands Christ with the Word, "Take eat; this is my body. Drink of it, all of you, this is the new covenant in my blood". That is where we shall take our stand and watch the futile attempts of those who would play the schoolmaster with God and try to alter what he has spoken."

A. How can this be? Remember that Jesus turned water into wine, created food for thousands at a time, healed the sick and raised the dead. Is anything too hard for Him?

Look up 1 Timothy 4:7,8 in your Bible and write down in your own words what this verse is saying to you _____

The Apostle Paul knew well that Jesus saved Him by grace alone, and the Holy Spirit sanctifies him (makes holy) and yet he talks of a "striving" and "reaching" for something in Philippians 3:12-14. How would you put into your own words what Paul was working so hard to do in his life? _____

In light of what you just wrote, what does verse 16 mean? _____

What do you think Jesus is trying to say about growing as a Christian in John 15:4-5? _____

The Holy Spirit's "Transformers"

A. Consistent Intake of God's Word.

The Bible tells us why God's Word is vital to spiritual growth. Read 1 Peter 2:2. For whom, for what reason should we read the Bible? _____

Some ways to get a handle on the Bible.

I. Hear God's Word

a. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. What does this mean? We should fear (awe) and love God that we may not despise preaching and His

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

(Life's Greatest Opportunity)

You have just learned about the wonderful gifts that God gives to us - Salvation - Scriptures and the Sacraments. Through these gifts, by the power of the Holy Spirit, God grows us up to maturity as devoted followers. Ephesians 4:13 "Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

"I think we should cut down this tree — it's lost all of its leaves."

"The company is in trouble — our net sales have leveled off for the last quarters."

"Jessica is two months old, but hasn't grown beyond her birth weight —
There must be something we can do, Doctor!"

What do the above statements have in common?

They all presume it's in the nature of living things to grow. All living organisms are programmed by their DNA to go through stages of growth until eventually they reach maturity. To be alive, by God's design, is to change and grow. We would rush a child to the hospital if she failed to grow physically. How can we take similar steps to make sure our inner health (spiritual health) continues to grow?

The purpose of this study is to discover that Scripture clearly teaches the truth that only by the power of the Holy Spirit can there be growth towards Christ-like character in us (1 Corinthians 12:3). It also teaches that we have some responsibility in the matter, namely, resisting and removing obstacles that keep us from growing. That tension will be with us until we see God in heaven. But if we commit to press forward (Philippians 3:12-14) by God's grace and power we will marvel at what He transforms us to be.

Parallels - between the Passover and the Lord's Supper

- An unblemished lamb is sacrificed—Jesus is that unblemished Lamb (Exodus 12:5, John 1:29, Luke 23:47)
- None of the lamb's bones were broken—Jesus' bones were not broken either (Exodus 12:46, John 19:31-36)
- The lamb's blood is to be splashed on the door frames to protect the people—Jesus' blood protects us from condemnation for our sins (Exodus 12:7, 22-23, Matthew 26:28)
- Only those who trusted God's promise to spare them by the blood of the lamb were saved from the specter of death—only those who receive the Sacrament in penitent faith receive its blessings (Exodus 12:23, 29-30, 1 Corinthians 11:27-30)
- The Passover reminded the people how God had freed them and brought them fulfillment of God's promises - The Lord's Supper reminds us of how God has freed us from sin, the fear of death, and the devil's power (Exodus 12:24-28, Colossians 1:19-20)
- God commanded his people to continue to observe the Passover to remember His saving acts - whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup, we do so in remembrance of Jesus' sacrifice for us (Exodus 12:24-28, 1 Corinthians 11:24-26)

The Bible teaches that only believers should come to the Lord's Table (1 Corinthians 11:26-28). Therefore, we ask that visitors who come to our church and want to partake of the Sacrament should read our statement of belief found on the back of the worship bulletin. If they have confessed their sins and believe Christ's Words "given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins" and believe Christ is truly present giving himself to us for the strengthening of our faith and forgiveness of our sins then they should receive Holy Communion.

The Benefits and Power of the Lord's Supper

An American veteran from Vietnam is attending his high school class reunion. He considers himself fortunate because he made it back to the states whole — one of his classmates had been killed within a month of arriving there.

The experience has changed him. In high school he had been wild and irresponsible. Now he seemed more settled, mature — perhaps it was the military discipline, perhaps it was the immediacy of death he had faced on a daily basis. He also had learned to take his Christian faith more seriously. He reports to a classmate that while he was “in country”, he developed the habit of receiving Holy Communion whenever it was offered to him, whether in the field or on a base, and by whatever chaplain offered it.

He did it because it comforted him. It assured him of God's grace and he lived with death surrounding him.

What do you think he gained from receiving the Sacrament as often as possible?

Why would receiving the Lord's Supper assure him of God's continuing presence in his life?

Why would that be important to him?

To whom would it not be important?

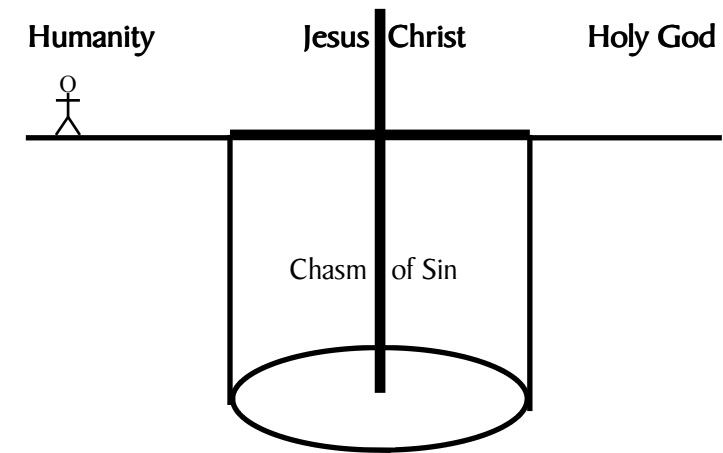
Do you see a problem with taking Holy Communion “from anyone who offers it”? Explain

The purpose of the Lord's Supper is to:

- A. Remember and proclaim our Lord's death until he returns (1 Corinthians 11:26)
 - 1. It reminds us of the reason for his death
 - 2. And the cost of our forgiveness
- B. Assure us again of God's forgiveness for our sins (John 15:5, Matthew 26:28, 1 Peter 1:18-19, Colossians 1:22, 1 John 1:7)

Brainstorm with others what are effective ways to witness to others about Jesus Christ.

Are you able to articulate the Gospel? John 3:16, Romans 6:23



Life's greatest mission is to partner with God in the joy of seeing others saved. He has invited you to join His work. Ask him to lead people to you that you can witness to and build friendships with that God may use you for His redemptive purpose.

In the book Becoming A Contagious Christian the authors list different evangelistic styles. They are:

Servant Evangelism	Showing God's love through service
Confrontational Evangelism	Speaking the truth in love to people that calls them to action
Invitational Evangelism	Come and see. You invite people to church and ministry programs
Intellectual Evangelism	Dialogue with people and answer their questions about the faith
Relational Evangelism	Build friendships with neighbors and co-workers and eventually give witness to your faith

Which style might fit your personality best?

Be An Inviter

Let our lives become inviting. When people see your marriage, let them say, "That's an inviting marriage and relationship." When people see how you handle problems and press through them, let them say, "That's inviting." So when you ask them to come to church, there is credibility.

One out of four people you invite will say, "Yes" when invited. All Jesus asks us to do is sow seeds He will produce growth. Failure is not when they don't respond. Failure is when you don't give them a chance to respond.

Have you ever invited someone to church or tried sharing the Gospel with them and they rejected you? If so, how did it make you feel?

- C. Along with forgiveness, offer us life and salvation (Romans 6:8-9, 8:31-32)
- D. Provide us with victory over sin and hell, and the strength to live daily for Jesus (Romans 8:10, 1 Peter 2:24)
- E. Provide us with an opportunity for Christians to make a solemn public proclamation of our common faith (1 Corinthians 10:17, 11:26)

How would you respond to the following ideas?

If you are a good church member, you don't need to take Holy Communion more than a couple of times a year.

Dr. Martin Luther's Large Catechism

"Those who feel their weakness, really want to be rid of it, and desire a remedy, should regard and use the Sacrament as a priceless antidote against the poison that they carry in them. For here in the Sacrament you receive from the lips of Christ forgiveness of sins, and his forgiveness contains and brings with it God's grace, God's Spirit, and all the gifts of the Spirit..."

"In the Lord's Supper he offers to every one of us the treasure he brought from heaven, a treasure to which he invites us most winsomely also in other passages, as when he says in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." How truly and tenderly he summons and encourages us for our own highest and greatest good."

How can this be? From where does the power come to accomplish these things?

The power lies in the words and promise of Christ.

- A. The Words of Institution are not a "magic formula", but an instrument of the power of God (Hebrews 4:12, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Isaiah 55:11, Matthew 4:4)

“The words are not spoken to a stone or a block of wood but to hearers to whom Christ says, “take and eat, etc”. And since what he offers and promises is the forgiveness of sins, this gift can be taken in no other way than by faith in the Word.”

“The treasure is communicated to us in no other way than through the words “given and shed for you...” Yet, however great the treasure may be in itself, it must be caught up by the Word and handed to us through the Word; otherwise we could never know about it or seek it.”

B. Faith is required to receive the blessing offered in Holy Communion
(1 Corinthians 10:3-5, Luke 1:45, 11:27-28)

SENDING FORTH

Life's Greatest Commission

Jesus stood on a hill with his little band of followers and entrusted to them to carry out the mission that he began — “to seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:10). He said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always to the very end of the age.”

God has a plan to reach the world. And the plan involves you! He wants to use the true miracles of changes lives like yours to explain His plan.

Look up Matthew 5:16. What does this verse tell you to do?

Who are some people God wants you to “shine” for? Write their names below.

There is a way to win friends and influence people, God's way! This is life's greatest mission. Not to be blessed, but to be a blessing.

Read Acts 1:8. What happens when the Holy Spirit comes upon you? _____

Psalm 34:8 says, “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” As a witness, people will see what you are becoming (more loving, joyful, peaceful, other-centered, etc.) and they will see God is working in you. So before you evangelize (or tell your story), you must “Emmanuelize.” Emmanuel means “God with us.” People need to see that God is with you — that you have tasted and experienced God in a real way.

Name some specific ways others can see God at work in your life. _____

There are also other factors in our lives that will help direct us to the ministry where we will be able to make a kingdom difference.

As stated in the beginning of the lesson, **Network** teaches us that service is the goal, not the discovery process or our consultation. Service is for a lifetime, and your unique contribution to the Body of Christ will be to have the Lord “use you” to transform the world through His Church in a way that he had ordained for you from the beginning.

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. (Gal. 5:13)

SCRIPTURES (the Bible)

(Means of

God's Grace)

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16, 17

And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:19-21

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Colossians 3:16

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

John 17:17

From these verses and others, the Bible teaches that God inspired authors to write down His Words and through the Holy Spirit's activity God's Word continues to be life giving. It's ultimate purpose is to show God's plan of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Ultimately it is by faith that we believe that the Bible is in fact God's revelation to us. But our faith is not "blind" faith.

Jesus himself believed the Bible (the Old Testament in his day) was God's Word down to "jot and tittle" (example Matthew 5:17-19, 15:3-9, 22:29, 31-32; Luke 4:16-21, 24:25-27, 44-45; John 5:46-47, 10:35).

The Bible has unparalleled manuscript support (quantity and quality) to ensure accurate transmission of the original texts. The Bible was carefully copied by trained professionals called Scribes.

The Bible can be validated from secular sources as well as archeological studies.

The Bible has credible authors who cared about accuracy (Luke 1:1-4). The fulfillment of prophecy shows supernatural involvement (ex, Micah 5:2 tells of Jesus' birthplace). Last but not least, the Bible has shown remarkable power to transform lives (Hebrews 4:12).

— Do these premises help you in your view of the Bible as God's Word?

The Bible is not just one book but a collection of many books. Yet all these writings taken together speak with unmistakable unity from Genesis 3:15 to Revelation 22:16 that God loves us so much he sent us His Son, Jesus Christ through whom came grace and truth.

The Bible was:

- written over 1,400 years
- over 40 generations
- over 40 authors from all walks of life (kings, farmers, fishermen, doctors, etc.)
- written on three continents (Asia, Africa, Europe)
- written in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek)

The truth of divinely inspired unity allows for a very important hermeneutical (interpretation) principle — that the Scriptures interpret the Scriptures.

But, in fact, God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as He wanted them to be. (1 Cor. 12:18)

It is important to note that although there is diversity in our spiritual gifts, there is no division. Unity in the Body of Christ is not achieved by being alike, but by having the same purpose — *to glorify God and edify others.*

Spiritual gifts are mentioned in various Biblical passages, which **Network** will identify for you. For example, Romans 12 mentions the gifts of encouragement, giving, leadership and mercy. 1 Corinthians identifies apostleship (starting new churches), teaching, helps and administration. **Network** will go through all of the spiritual gifts; what they contribute to the Body of Christ (for example, the gift of administration contributes efficiency, the gift of discernment contributes clarity), and the characteristics of each gift. **Network** uses the *Spiritual Gift Assessment* to help us identify and clarify our unique gifts.

The third part of the servant profile is our *personal style*. Personal style indicated to us how we will serve. *When we serve consistent with our personal style, we feel more confident and fulfilled.* Personal style asks whether we are more people oriented or task oriented, more structured or unstructured. For example, if you are people oriented, you may prefer a ministry with more direct people interaction. If you are more task oriented, the primary content of your ministry should be accomplishing tasks that serve people. If you are a person who prefers the unstructured, your ministry should be generally described, not clearly defined, as your structured counterpart might prefer.

Your servant profile then will consist of your *passion, spiritual gifts and personal style.*

After our servant profile is identified, we will be assisted in our service at Redeemer through the consultation process. Pastor, or the **Network** Coordinator, will discuss your servant profile with you along with other factors that will impact your ministry choice(s). These other factors will include such things as your availability - do you have young children, are you retired, do you travel often in your job? Your spiritual maturity will also be discussed. Are you a seeker, or a guiding believer who has reached a high level of maturity in the faith?

The purpose for serving in the Church is to *glorify God and edify others*. Through our *Passion, Spiritual Gifts and Personal Style*, God uses us for His purposes as members of the Body of Christ. **Network** is a program offered at Redeemer Lutheran Church to help believers understand who God has made them to be and how making their unique contribution in a meaningful place of service that make a *Kingdom Difference* for eternity. The Church needs all of us, not to fill positions within the Church, but because we are all important parts of the Body of Christ. We all have a significant contribution to make.

Network is a three-step process: **discovery** where we learn more about our God-given shape; **consultation** which assists us in finding a meaningful place of service, our “ministry fit” so to speak, and, lastly, **Network** teaches that the goal isn’t the discovery process or the consultation, but **service**, helping believers to be fruitful and fulfilled in a meaningful place of service.

Let’s take a closer look at the discovery process. Our *passion, spiritual gifts, and personal style* are pieces of the puzzle, which makes us all unique. They fit together to form our *servant profile*.

Passion answers the “where” question of our service. It is the God-given desire that compels us to make a difference in a particular ministry. *When you serve in the area of your passion, you are more motivated*. Do you have a passion for family issues like Dr. James Dobson, or service the poor and helpless like Mother Teresa? **Network** will assist you to recognize where your passion lies.

If your passion shows you where you are best suited to serve, your spiritual gifts will help you to know what to do when you serve. Spiritual Gifts are special abilities — divine endowments, if you will. *When you serve in the area of your spiritual gifts, you serve more competently*.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. (1 Cor. 12:7)

What do the following verses teach about the importance of Scripture in the life of a growing Christian?

Psalm 1:2-3 _____

Hebrews 4:12 _____

Psalm 119:9-24 _____

How often should we strive to read God’s Word? (Deuteronomy 17:19)

How would you put in your words the warning in James 1:22-25? What specific ways are you tempted in this area?

How to Get the Most Out of Your Reading

1. Be ready and eager to hear God

Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown." When he said this, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." (Luke 8:8)

How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! (Psalm 119:103)

2. Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you.

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:26)

3. **Confess any sin in your life.**

Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. (James 1:21)

4. **Make notes to yourself in the margin or a journal when you read a passage ask or write out:**

- What does this mean to me?
- How will I be different because of what I read?
- Is there a promise to claim or a sin to confess?
- Is God calling me to act on this?
- What does this tell me about God?

Try these practices with these verses, one each day of the week:

- John 8:31,32
- Luke 14:27
- Romans 8:31,32
- Ephesians 4:1-3
- 1 Chronicles 16:29
- John 4:13, 14
- John 13:34, 35

What is an honest appraisal of your view of the Bible?

Is reading of the Bible more mechanical or to build a relationship with your Heavenly Father?

What difference would it make in your everyday experience to believe the Bible is God's Word?

FURTHER READING:

The Inspiration of Scripture (CTCR document)

[How Reliable is the Bible?](#) - Bible Study from Zondervan Tough Question Series

GIFTS

The Joy of Serving God

*For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works,
Which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Eph. 2:10)*

When was the last time you prayed a "Use me" prayer? Have you ever seriously prayed it? God will answer that prayer. He has all throughout history. He will take you off the display rack, and He'll start using your life at home, in the workplace, in the neighborhood, and in His Church.

He will use your words to encourage people. He will use your mind to inform and counsel people. He will use your heart to show kindness. He will use your hands to serve. And when He does, you'll experience the thrill of being used by God.

Long ago, God made the decision not to transform this world with the wave of a heavenly wand; He decided to transform the world *through His Church* — through you and me. But God tends not to commandeer people to do His will. He tends to let them stay on the display shelf until somebody prays, "Use me, God. Use my life." Then the adventure begins.

In Romans 12:1-2, Paul offers one of the richest calls in all of scripture for Christ-followers to fully abandon their lives to the service of their gracious Master:

Therefore I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.

How does God use us? How can we know where He wants us to serve? What *gifts* do we have to make a difference in His Church? How can we best use our personalities, our passion? These are all very legitimate questions that most of us ask ourselves when we think about serving the Body of Christ and serving our Master.

Administration	Hospitality
Apostleship	Intercession
Craftsmanship	Knowledge
Creative Communication	Leadership
Discernment	Mercy
Encouragement	Prophecy
Evangelism	Shepherding
Faith	Teaching
Giving	Wisdom
Helps	

What factors have hindered your involvement from time to time in the ministry of Redeemer?

Read Matthew 9:36, 37. Imagine Jesus standing outside Redeemer and watching attenders pass by and then says these exact words from Matthew 9 to you. What do you think would be on His mind and heart at that moment? _____

Christ followers recognize the church is the body of Christ. The members are not solitary or independent — they are interdependent. They know they have been gifted by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up the body and furthering the ministry of the church. Therefore, they seek to understand, develop and deploy their God given gifts and talents with the support and affirmation of the church and the glory of God.

STEWARDSHIP

(The Investment of a Lifetime)

Stewardship (Management) must begin by believing that all we have is from God. He owns it all. We are to just manage it wisely until He returns.

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; (Psalm 24:1)

"But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. (1 Chronicles 29:14)

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)

And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. (2 Corinthians 5:15)

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' (Matthew 25:21)

The entry to the joy and adventure of the kingdom comes through the entry of a steward. Our faithfulness delights the heart of our faithful God. Let's look at three ways we can enter into the joy of our master.

INVESTING TIME WISELY

One of the greatest investments you'll make in your life will be the wise use of time.

Read Ephesians 5:15, 16. Why should we use time wisely?

God expects us to use our time wisely and for his glory. Yet we have a tendency to squander it the most.

Let's take an **honest** appraisal of your week.

Quickly write an estimate of how many hours you spend in a typical week at:

School	_____	hours
Work	_____	hours
Sleeping	_____	hours
Family	_____	hours
Church	_____	hours
Entertainment	_____	hours
Recreation	_____	hours
Other	_____	hours
TOTAL	_____	HOURS

Now compare your total to the 168 hours a week you're given each week. Do you feel you're using your time wisely? Why or why not? _____

There is only one you. God only creates originals. God has a purpose and plan for you and He wants to use you for His eternal purpose.

YOU ARE GIFTED

After Jesus ascended into heaven He sent the promised Holy Spirit to empower His followers. The Holy Spirit would call, gather, enlighten and gift the followers of Christ to carry out the mission to "make disciples of all nations." The Holy Spirit gives gifts so we can touch and change the lives of people. Read 1 Peter 4:10. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

The church is the body of Christ and we need everyone of you operating in your gifts so that we can be a healthy functioning church.

These are some questions designed to help you start thinking about how God has gifted you for service in your vocation and the church. The elders would encourage you to go through the entire spiritual gift Network course when it is offered so you can have a fuller understanding of how God might have "wired" you up to be used by Him for his purposes.

What are you passionate about? What do you desire to do that is God-honoring?

If money or time were not a problem, what cause would you devote your life to?

According to Psalm 37:4 and Philippians 2:13 how might you discover your desires?

Here are some gifts mentioned in the Bible. What ones do you think you might have and could use to serve the body of Christ? _____

CHRISTIANS GIVE...

- Generously... They know Christ gave everything, even his life, for them and he owns it all anyway.
- Proportionally... They try to give as high a percentage as possible, recognizing the tithe (10%) as a long established benchmark which may well be exceeded as God blesses.
- Locally... Knowing that they claim their church as the place where the Gospel is preached and Sacraments administered for their spiritual growth, and they receive the benefits of the ministry in that place.
- Cheerfully... Knowing that God sees the heart they don't give begrudgingly out of guilt to an organization — they give as unto God Himself.
- Anonymously... They don't call attention to themselves or expect their offering to gain them some advantage in the church. They know God sees in secret and loves a humble heart.
- Expectantly... Trusting in God's promise of provision, they give anticipating God to use their gifts and work in their lives to provide their needs.

INVEST YOUR GIFTS FOR GOD

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:4)

God has given to the church many special abilities, and it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all. Look around you and you can see that God loves variety in His creation and His church.

SERVANTHOOD

YOU ARE UNIQUE

Read Psalm 139:13, 14. What does the Bible say about God's workmanship? _____

We often think "if only I had more time" then I could get everything done. If you look at Jesus' life, he got not only a lot done, but everything done God sent him to accomplish. And Jesus was never hurried or impatient!

According to the wisdom principle of Proverbs 3:1,2 what should we do if we want to "add" time and peace to our lives? _____

The best time management secret in the world is called "obeying God's commands." If you put God and His Kingdom first there will be plenty of time to complete what you have been put on this earth to do.

What do you think adds to the problem of not having enough time? _____

We usually end up taking on more than what God gives us. So we need to know that "Fruitfulness does not come by adding — it comes by pruning." Pruning involves cutting out whatever is necessary in order to bear fruit.

If you feel like you don't have enough time, what might need pruning in your life?

PLACING GOD FIRST WITH YOUR TITHES

How we invest our treasure is of interest and importance to God. Randy Alcorn says, "Money and possessions are an index of your spiritual life."

Do you agree or disagree with that statement? _____

Jesus simplified it when he said, "Where your treasure is there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). What do you think Jesus was saying by this? _____

What do these passages say about giving?

Genesis 14:18-20 _____

Leviticus 27:30, 32 _____

Malachi 3:8-10 _____

The tithe is 10% of our income. The Old Testament teaches this clearly and Jesus does not rescind it (Matthew 23:23). The New Testament teaching however stresses more the gracious giving out of response to what Christ has done for us.

In Luke 14:33, Jesus lays out for His followers what percentage of our worldly goods He can claim, and what we own. What is your reaction to His teaching in this verse?

Part of what Jesus is saying is if you aren't able to give something away when He asks you to, then you don't own it — it owns you.

What do you think some of the benefits of tithing are?

Deuteronomy 8:18

Psalms 116:12

Malachi 3:10

John 14:15

SAVINGS AND DEBT

Why is the ant a good model of proper money management according to Proverbs 6:6-11? _____

In the passage above, why is failure to save — being a “sluggard” — compared to having an armed man break in?

In this age of easy credit and consumer debt, what does the timeless wisdom of God have to say about how his followers handle our wants, and indebtedness?

Proverbs 21:25-26 _____

Proverbs 22:26-27 _____

Why do you think the Scriptures elevate practices such as saving, avoiding debt and giving to a spiritual level rather than just a simple monetary one? _____

ATTITUDES TOWARD MONEY AND GIVING

What additional lessons about giving can we learn from these passages?

1 Timothy 6:1-10, 17-19 _____

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 _____

2 Corinthians 8:9, 12 _____

Luke 6:38 _____

Matthew 6:3-4 _____

Why would a compulsory giving law (like is practiced in Islam and Mormonism) hinder God's work in the believer's heart according to 2 Corinthians 9:6-9?