

THE BASICS

How To Live Out Your Faith

**EVERYONE'S
WELCOME**

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WELCOME

Whether you're new to faith or you've been a follower of Jesus for a while now, this resource will serve as a starting point for understanding what it means to live in a relationship with God as a follower of Jesus.

Cross Point is a place where everyone's welcome. We live that way as a church because it's the example Jesus set for us – His good news was, and is, for ALL people. And this group is a place where everyone's welcome too. It will be made up of people with different backgrounds, life experiences and personalities...the things that make each of us unique. We're glad you're here and look forward to hearing the story of your faith journey.

This group is a great place to ask questions. The study and conversation will clarify what it means to be a follower of Jesus, and we'll explore how the Bible, prayer, worship, community and serving others can help you grow in your faith. We can't wait to walk this journey together!

CHOICES MAKE DECISIONS

Life is made up of all sorts of choices: Nike or Adidas, Starbucks or the local coffee shop, Chipotle or Taco Bell...well, that decision is a no-brainer: it's always Chipotle. We're bombarded with choices every day, so much so that there are times we don't even realize we're making the choices.

When you Google the word choice the definition you find is, "An act of selecting or making a decision when faced with two or more possibilities."

You're here because either you recently made a decision to follow Jesus or you decided you want to know more about what it looks like to follow Him. This may be a brand new decision or one you've been thinking about for a while. Either way, it's a good thing that you want to know more about who Jesus is and what it means to follow Him.

QUESTION

Do you remember a difficult choice you've had to make in your life?

Describe the process you went through to make that tough call.

NOBODY'S PERFECT

One of the greatest things about following Jesus is that He accepts us as we are. He knows that nobody's perfect. We live in a broken world filled with broken people. But the world hasn't always been that way. When God created our world, it was perfect. There was no hurt, brokenness or defiance. He put Adam and Eve into this perfect world – two humans who lived in an ideal relationship with God.

Adam and Eve had a life filled with choices. They could choose whatever they wanted: what to eat or where to go. But arguably their most important choice was whether or not to trust that God wanted the very best for them.

God gave them the freedom to choose a relationship with Him. The only thing God asked of them was not to eat from a certain fruit tree. The fruit from that tree was forbidden. And it was forbidden for a reason: their protection. God knew that their eyes would be opened to good and evil, and He didn't want them to have to bear that burden.

God is love, but He doesn't force His love on us. Real love doesn't demand to be loved in return. Real love is a choice. God loved Adam and Eve. They were faced with a choice to follow God's way or go their own way. Because Adam and Eve chose to go their own way and disobey God, sin entered the world.

Sin is simply turning away from God's desire with our actions, attitudes or thoughts. Now sin may be a hard word to swallow. It can conjure up some feelings of negativity and insecurity, the overwhelming pressure to get everything right. The word sin may even stir up memories of angry preachers shouting at you on the street corner about your life decisions.

QUESTIONS

What do you associate with the word sin?

How do you respond to the consequences of having done something wrong?

God couldn't ignore Adam and Eve's sin. They disobeyed what God asked of them, and with their disobedience came heavy consequences. Now their lives would include pain and toil and death. But still God chose to have mercy on Adam and Eve. He loved them despite their bad decision and developed a merciful plan to restore their relationship with Him that ultimately included sending His son Jesus.

"For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins."

Romans 3:23-24

The harsh truth about us is that we're all sinners. Even honest and good people sin. There's no way we can get around it. Nobody's perfect. We each have the opportunity to choose between right and wrong, and sometimes we make poor choices that result in sin. There's nothing we can do on our own to remedy that situation. We are 'infected' with this disease called sin and are spiritually separated from God.

Because He is holy, God can't ignore our sin, and because He is just he can't dismiss our sin. Our sin has to be dealt with, and that's why we need to be saved – another one of those words that you may have complicated, churchy associations with. Simply put, we need to be rescued from our sin, and we can't do it ourselves. We can't bridge the chasm between holy God and sinful us on our own. So God sent Jesus to bridge the gap for us.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 6:23

“God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.”

John 3:17

The Bible says that the penalty for sin is death – eternal separation from God – that’s what we deserve. But there’s good news. God sent His son Jesus into the world to restore the broken relationship that our sin has caused.

Jesus wasn’t just a good person or a great teacher, He was God in the flesh. And Jesus loved hanging out with people like us...people who were far from God and far from perfect.

QUESTION

How does the fact that Jesus enjoyed hanging out with sinners make you feel?

Jesus knew, because of our sin, we need forgiveness in order to know God. Rather than dismiss our sin, He sentenced himself and took our sin on Himself. Jesus lived the perfect life that we couldn't – He was sinless. He didn't deserve to die, but He willingly took our sin on Himself on the cross and died so that we could be forgiven. Jesus' sacrifice made it possible for us to have a relationship with God. And when He rose from the grave He proved He had defeated sin and death.

“But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing.”

Galatians 3:13

“There is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity — the man Christ Jesus.”

1 Timothy 2:5

“But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.”

Romans 5:8

God put His love for us into action when He sent Jesus to die for us. But God still doesn't force His love on us, and just like Adam and Eve, we can choose to receive His love or go our own way.

We can choose to respond to His love when we turn to Him in faith and give our lives to Him. Giving God your life starts with repenting, which is apologizing for and turning away from your sin and, by faith, trusting Jesus for your forgiveness. We don't have to try to be good enough to earn God's approval. Jesus died so that we could be forgiven and live in a relationship with God. He only asks that we believe in and follow Him.

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Romans 10:9

“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

John 3:16

Repentance without faith turns into legalism – obeying just because that’s what we are told to do. Faith without repentance turns into a belief in Jesus but not doing what He says will be best for us. We need both in order to see true changes take place in our hearts. And isn’t that what we all want – to see things change for the better in our lives?

When we repent and have faith, God comes into our lives by His Holy Spirit to change us from within and begin the process of making us more like Jesus – becoming the best version of ourselves. God’s Holy Spirit helps us follow Jesus’ example in our lives – to love like He does, show compassion, and serve those around us as we follow Him.

“This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!”

2 Corinthians 5:17

“And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago.”

Ephesians 1:13b

Jesus never told us we had to be perfect before we decided to follow Him. In fact, as we continue our journey to follow Jesus, we will still make mistakes. It's inevitable. And when we do, we can ask for forgiveness again because God's grace and forgiveness never run out. There's nothing we can do to outrun His love and forgiveness for us. We're never too far gone.

WE'RE NEVER
TOO FAR GONE.

QUESTIONS

What do you think of when you hear the word repentance?

Have you ever had to repent of something?

When did you decide to repent and follow Jesus? If you haven't made that decision what's keeping you from choosing to follow Him?

Being a follower of Jesus is all about a relationship with God. As we follow Jesus and deepen our relationship with Him, our hearts will become more like His so we can live a full and abundant life with Him – a life filled with purpose and compassion.

“You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Philippians 2:5-11

Over the next few weeks, we will take some time to talk about what it looks like to follow Jesus in our everyday lives. There’s no perfect method that works for everyone. Everyone’s journey to follow Jesus will look a little different. But through reading the Bible, prayer, worship, community and serving others, we will discover more about what it means to live life as a follower of Jesus.

QUESTIONS

What attribute of Jesus's character do you most admire and why? (love, compassion, humility, selflessness)

What are some practical ways to follow Jesus in your life?

What will make it easy to follow Jesus? What will make it challenging?

THE BIBLE

One of the first pieces of advice that people give you when you make a decision to start a relationship with God is this: “You need to read the Bible.” Easier said than done, right? The Bible can be pretty intimidating and can stir up all kinds of questions. Why should I read the Bible? Where do I start? How do you pronounce all those names? What do the chapter and verse numbers mean? What if I don’t relate to or understand what I read? If you have wondered about any of these things, you’re not alone. We’ve all been there. This session will help bring some clarity to those questions as well as give you some practical ways to overcome them and to dive into reading the Bible.

Which one (or more) of the following statements would describe how comfortable you are with the Bible?

- a. What’s the Bible?**
- b. I remember a few Bible stories from when I was a kid.**
- c. I’ve read the Bible some but don’t feel like I know it well.**
- d. I go to the Bible for answers when I need guidance.**
- e. I have an active faith and read the Bible on a regular basis.**

The Bible is one of the world's oldest and most popular books. It's a collection of ancient documents and letters which were written over the course of hundreds of years. Sometimes you'll hear the Bible referred to as Scripture. The word Scripture generally refers to any sacred or religious writing. The Bible is divided into testaments, books, chapters and verses which helps you know where you are as you read.

GENESIS - MALACHI

MATTHEW - REVELATION

OLD TESTAMENT

NEW TESTAMENT

The first half of the Bible, Genesis through Malachi, is called the Old Testament. It tells the story of life before Jesus and looks forward to His arrival on Earth. The second half, Matthew through Revelation, is called the New Testament and describes Jesus' life, ministry, and mission.

God inspired people to write the words that make up the Bible. That means when we read the Bible, we are hearing from God. The Bible was given to us through God Himself and it's the primary way He speaks to us, which is pretty amazing when you stop to think about it! It is unchanging and always true. Even though the Bible was written thousands of years ago, it remains relevant to us today.

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

QUESTION

What questions do you have about the Bible?

WHY READ THE BIBLE

The main reason followers of Jesus read and study the Bible is not to just know more information, even though that's a good thing. The most important reason for reading the Bible is to get to know God better and to understand how He wants us to live our lives. God designed us and He knows how we can get the most out of life. The Bible is the 'playbook' to help you become the best version of you. When you read the Bible with an open heart and submit yourself to its instruction, you'll experience the rich and satisfying life Jesus promised.

There are a lot of different ways to engage with the Bible and many different tools and resources that can help you make reading Scripture a meaningful part of your daily life. It can be overwhelming to get started, but the important thing to remember is to take it one step at a time. You don't have to read a whole book or even a whole chapter in one day. You can start by reading a verse or two, observe what it says, ask God to show you what He wants you to understand from the passage and how He wants you to apply it to your life.

Here are some approaches that might be helpful:

- When you're getting started studying the Bible, you'll want to find a translation of the Bible that is easy to read and understand. All the Scripture in this study is from the New Living Translation. It's a very accurate and readable translation of the Bible. Other good options to start with are the New International Version or the Voice translation.
- You can start reading the Bible anywhere, but it might get confusing if you jump in randomly. While Jesus lived on Earth, He had a group of close friends called disciples. Two of the disciples – Matthew and John – recorded their accounts of Jesus' life and teaching. Two other writers – Mark and Luke – also wrote down what they heard and observed about Jesus' life. These are the first four books of the New Testament. These four books are called the Gospels, and they are a great place to start reading the Bible.
- You can utilize technology and download an online reading plan to help you stay consistent. The free YouVersion app or youversion.com is a great tool to access the Bible from your mobile device. It has a variety of reading plans available. You could also check out shereadstruth.com or hereadstruth.com. These resources offer several daily reading plans to choose from – everything from a verse a day to extensive Bible studies.

QUESTIONS

Do you follow a plan for reading the Bible?

Which one of these steps is the most comfortable for you?

So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.

Romans 10:17

Reading the Bible isn't the only way to engage with it. You can also listen to the Bible. Before mass publishing made it possible for people to have access to their own copy of the Bible, people would gather to hear the Scripture read aloud. A benefit of hearing the Bible read out loud is that it can provide a different perspective.

Another way to incorporate the Bible into your life is to study it. Doing this takes reading one step deeper. Studying the Bible gives perspective in your life and allows you to see how you can apply the Scripture to your life. You can use other books, commentaries or sermon podcasts to help you study the Bible.

When you find a verse that really applies to your life or a situation you are going through, you can meditate on it. To meditate simply means to read it over and over to let it sink into your heart. After meditating on it for a while, you can try memorizing it. When you memorize Scripture you start to internalize it. Then it's always available to you when we find yourself in moments when you need peace, comfort and wisdom about what choices to make.

QUESTIONS

What is the easiest way for you to engage the Bible? (read, listen, memorize, meditate and study)

Which methods have you tried when engaging the Bible? (read, listen, memorize, meditate and study)

Do you have a favorite verse in the Bible that you meditate on or have memorized?

As important as it is to read and study the Bible on your own, it's also helpful to have some people you can discuss your Bible reading with – a community group to talk about the Bible and study with together. When you surround yourself with friends to read and discuss the Bible with, you'll gain insight from their perspectives as well as accountability to keep reading and to follow through with the things God prompts in your life. Find a community group, follow the same Bible reading plan together and talk about what God is saying to you through the Scripture.

QUESTIONS

What keeps you from reading the Bible?

What have you learned about reading
the Bible?

An important thing to remember when reading the Bible is to read it with a humble, open heart. The best way to continue to develop a deep love and close relationship with Jesus is to get to know Him by reading more about Him in the Bible. The more time you spend reading the Bible, the more you will start recognizing God's voice as He speaks to you through His Word.

PRAYER AND WORSHIP

When you want to get to know someone, you spend more time with them. You ask them questions, listen to their stories, share a meal or go for a walk together. The same is true when you want to learn more about Jesus...you spend time with Him.

Life can be busy. We're pulled in multiple directions every day, but we have the opportunity to choose how we spend our time. Should I watch my favorite TV show? Read a book? Have dinner out with my friends? The possibilities are endless, but your time is not.

QUESTION

What are some of the things you like to do in your free time?

The choice to spend time getting to know Jesus is a truly important one you can make each day. In the last session, we explored the importance of getting to know Jesus through reading His Word, the Bible. Another way to spend time with Jesus is by talking to Him in prayer.

Prayer is simply having a conversation with God. It's talking to God from your heart and listening when He speaks or prompts you. It's more than just asking God for what you want; it's also asking what He wants for your life...inviting God be a trusted voice in your life.

God speaks to us in a variety of ways. He speaks most directly to us through the Bible, but He also speaks to us through other people, like a pastor, counselor or godly friend. And He can speak to you through prayer.

QUESTION

Who are some of the most trusted voices you listen to in your life?

Life can be difficult. In prayer we seek to know the heart of God. We pray to discover His wisdom. Through prayer we gain strength for living.

Prayer is our way to reach out to God and ask Him for help. But let's be honest, prayer can be intimidating if you don't know what to say. You're not alone in feeling that way! Even Jesus' disciples asked him to teach them to pray. So here are some things to consider:

When you pray, you can be yourself. Don't worry about sounding poetic or perfect. Just talk to God. Thank Him for what He's done in your life. Admit your faults. (He already knows about them, and He loves you no matter what!) It's a good thing to ask for help and admit your need for and dependence on Him.

There's no set formula for creating rhythms in your prayer life, but there are some simple plans you can follow. Here's one example: Start by thanking God. Thank Him for what He has done in your life and for how He loves and cares for you. Thank Him for answering prayers. Thank Him for Who He is – a good Father, our Creator, the almighty, sovereign God. When you start your prayers by thanking God, it focuses your heart and mind on Him and all the ways He's blessed you.

QUESTION

What are some of the things you can thank God for in your life?

Often when talking with God, you may become more aware of your own shortcomings and sin. God invites us to confess our sin. To confess means to agree with God that you've fallen short of His best for you.

If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

1 John 1:8-9

Confessing and repenting are things you may find yourself doing often along your journey as you follow Jesus. We're all sinners forgiven by a gracious God through faith in Jesus. And this side of Heaven, we will always fall short and need to confess our sin and repent.

When we repent – that is, commit to turn from our sin and follow Jesus – it allows us to grow closer to Him. We don't repent just to follow rules. We repent because we want to follow Jesus and be more like Him. When we acknowledge we need help to live in a way that pleases God, God gives us the strength we need through the power of the Holy Spirit in us.

"And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago."

Ephesians 1:13b

So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires.

Galatians 5:16-17a

QUESTIONS

What is the difference between repenting and saying, “I’m sorry”?

How do you think others respond when we repent? How do you think God feels when we repent?

Next, after you confess, ask God for help in your life. God is all-knowing, which means He's already aware of what you need and want before you ask. But when you ask God to help with your needs you continue to create a dialogue between you and God. That dialogue helps you grow closer to Him because you are expressing your need for Him.

Prayer isn't just presenting requests to God for yourself, it's also about asking God to intervene on behalf of others. In the Bible, Jesus prayed for others all the time. Jesus always put others' needs before His own. To follow Jesus' example and be more like Him means we care for others and pray for the best for them.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

Philippians 2:3-4

QUESTIONS

What are some things you are asking God to help you with?

What are some things you can ask God to help others with?

In addition to talking to God about what you want for your life, ask God what HIS plans and desires are for your life, and then end your prayer time by surrendering to God. When you ask God about His plans for your life, you are putting your trust in Him and His plans for you.

*Let me hear of your unfailing love each morning, for I am trusting you.
Show me where to walk, for I give myself to you.*

Psalm 143:8

While God always answers our prayers, sometimes it's a good thing that He doesn't just do whatever we ask Him to do. He sees the big picture, and He knows what's best for us. Sometimes He says, "No," to our prayers, which can be hard for us to understand. We immediately want to know why something did or didn't happen the way we had prayed it would. But God asks us to trust that He has the big picture in mind, and His love for us never changes. Sometimes when He says, "No," it's for our good. Sometimes God's answer is, "Wait," and sometimes He says, "Yes." Regardless of what the answer might be, He always hears us and always answers.

Giving God control of your life and trusting that He wants the best for you is a choice you make. This choice isn't always easy because giving up control seems counterproductive (and a little scary). But, when you surrender control and trust Jesus, He does things in your life that you never could have imagined.

QUESTIONS

Where have you struggled giving things over to God?

Have you ever given something to God and seen Him do something in your life that was better than you could have imagined?

Be intentional about spending time with God. Find a time of day that allows you to spend a few uninterrupted moments with God every day. Maybe it's having your first cup of coffee each day with Jesus. Or maybe it's a few minutes at lunch or at the end of the day. Choose a time that works for you. And then find a place to pray where you're free from distractions.

QUESTION

Do you have a quiet place where you don't get distracted? If so, where is it?

Communication is important in every relationship, and it's no different in your relationship with God. Having consistent, quality time talking with Him creates a closeness in your relationship with Him. God invites you to be honest in your conversations with Him. He wants to hear from you, and He wants to speak to you. There is no limit to how many times you can talk to God throughout the day, so don't be afraid to talk with Him about the simplest of things. If it matters to you, it matters to God.

QUESTIONS

Do you have a set prayer routine? If so, what is it? (If you don't, it's okay. It's never too late to start.)

What is one thing the group can be praying for you about?

WORSHIP

Worship is not just a term reserved for religious services. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “A person will worship something, have no doubt about that.... That which dominates our imaginations and our thoughts will determine our lives, and our character. Therefore, it behooves us to be careful what we worship, for what we are worshipping, we are becoming.”

Emerson’s right – people worship all kinds of things. It may be a hero, wealth and fame, escapism, or even your favorite sports team. Lots of things can become your ‘god.’ Everyone has something that they value above all else. It’s what you think about, what you daydream about, what you fix your attention on the most.

QUESTIONS

What is the most important thing in your life?
How do you know it's the most important thing
to you?

Was there a time in your past when you gave
too much time and attention to something?
What was it?

For a follower of Jesus, worship is valuing and honoring God. It is both inward and outward. Inner worship is a matter of the heart...what our heart longs for and desires. John Piper says, "You can do as many deeds as you want and go to as many church services as you want and never be worshipping if it is all external and nothing is happening in your heart toward God...true worship is a valuing or a treasuring of God above all things."

So while worshipping God is more than just attending a church service on Sunday, coming together with other believers to praise God on Sundays in church is an important part of our worship. Rearranging your life to be present each week to sing, pray and hear from God is essential for a follower of Jesus. When you set aside this hour in your week to worship God and invite Him to speak into your life, you are putting yourself in position to grow and flourish in your faith. There's something special that happens in the connection we feel with others and the collective practices we participate in when we all come together and worship.

And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

Hebrews 10:25

Music plays an important role in our worship experience as Christ followers. Over and over in the Psalms and other places in the Bible we are instructed to sing to the Lord. Singing praises to God is not the only way we worship, but it is one of the ways we worship. It's something God asks us to do because praise brings us into the presence of God. But worship goes deeper than just singing...worship is what we do when we get there, that is, into the presence of God. The songs we sing remind us of things we believe are true about God, and they give us an opportunity to express our hearts to God and respond to His love and grace in our lives. Singing is one way to value and treasure God in your heart.

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice — the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.

Romans 12:1

Our worship to God isn't just reserved for Sundays. There are a lot of different ways we can worship. God created us all with different personalities and spiritual temperaments which make us gravitate towards various practices and ways to express our feelings. We worship God when we love others, give of ourselves and resources, serve others, spend time surrounded by the beauty of nature, develop our minds and learn about Him. These are all examples of pathways to worship. Some other pathways through which we can connect with God include solitude and silence, contemplation, time with loved ones, and meaningful traditions. There is no one-size-fits-all practice of worship, but when you identify pathways and practices that you connect with, you'll find personally meaningful ways to worship God.

QUESTIONS

How can you live a worshipful life?

Which pathways allow you to feel most connected to God?

COMMUNITY AND SERVING

Something we say pretty regularly at Cross Point is that “Life is better together.”

God is a relational God. He is in perfect relationship within Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And He created us as relational beings. When God created everything around us He said, “It is good.” There was only one thing in all of His creation that He said was not good. He said it was not good for man to be alone. And so He created Eve to share life with Adam. God created us to live in relationship with others, and He created us to live in relationship with Himself.

Being relational doesn’t mean you’re always surrounded by people: it means you have relationships in your life and that you choose not to live life alone. ‘Relational’ is a word often associated with extroverts. Extroverts, by their nature, are more relational because they love being surrounded by people. They ‘recharge their batteries’ within a group of people. Introverts, on the other hand, recharge best by being alone, but even introverts need the support and community that comes through relationships.

QUESTIONS

Do you consider yourself an introvert or extrovert? Why?

How many hours do you spend in a given week with other people? How much alone time do you need during the week?

What emotions do you experience when you're alone for an extended period of time?

Jesus modeled what it looks like to live life relationally connected to a small group of friends. He had a group of 12 guys He shared life with. They traveled together, ate meals together, and lived their daily lives together. They listened to His teachings and then they talked about the content with Him and with each other. People in the early church met together in a large group in the Temple to worship, but then they met together in small groups in each others' homes to share life. They ate meals together, learned more about God together, and prayed together.

Most people think of a physical building when they hear the word church or they associate it with something people do on Sundays. But church is much more than a building or a service you attend on the weekend.

QUESTIONS

What do you think of when you hear the word church?

What have been your past experiences with church (if any)?

Communities are groups of people who share a common interest or activity. You can find community in a sports league, in a group of parents that have kids the same age, a group of friends who all share the same interests or hobbies. The church is another example of a community – it's a community of people who follow Jesus.

Cross Point is a large church that is a collection of smaller groups we call Community Groups. Community groups are small groups of 8-10 people who meet weekly to talk about God and how to live out their faith in Jesus. The goal of Community Groups is authentic community – a group committed to loving, encouraging and serving one another and allowing God to be in the middle of it. Authentic community happens when a group of people know you, your faults and imperfections, the good and bad, and love you for who you are.

QUESTIONS

What does an authentic community of people look like to you?

Have you ever been a part of a community where you were loved unconditionally and encouraged? What did that community mean to you?

So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”

John 13:34-35

QUESTION

How do you feel like you can love others unconditionally like Jesus loves us?

Being part of a community group can truly be life-changing, because it creates an environment where you can grow in your relationship with Jesus with friends who surround you, keep you accountable and love you through whatever life brings your way. Community groups are an important part of following the life Jesus modeled for us. Jesus had a community He studied with and shared His life with, and we should too.

SERVING

Even people who are not followers of Jesus admire how compassionate He was toward all people. Jesus demonstrated his love and compassion for everyone by serving them. He built relationships with people by showing care and compassion for them. He loved them, He served them, and He talked to them about following Him.

We have the opportunity to follow Jesus' example and serve others every day. Whether it's our family, friends, coworkers, neighbors, teachers or even an acquaintance at the gym, you can show them love by serving them in practical ways. Maybe it's an encouraging note, buying them a cup of coffee, picking up your dirty clothes, loading the dishwasher, helping a neighbor with a project...the possibilities are endless. When you serve someone first, you begin to build trust with them, and trust is a key element of all relationships.

QUESTIONS

What are some practical ways to serve those around you? (family, friends, co-workers etc)

Has anyone ever served you by doing a random act of kindness? How did that make you feel?

Jesus served individuals and large groups of people by meeting their needs. He healed people, and He blessed the children. He showed kindness to a woman caught in sin, and He taught us about a loving, compassionate Heavenly Father. One of the most memorable small acts of service was when Jesus served his disciples by washing their feet. But the most significant act of service Jesus performed was dying on the cross for our sins. And Jesus asks us to follow His example by serving others with the same kind of self-sacrificing love that He served with.

We can serve others inside and outside our church. Serving inside the church creates opportunities for us to stretch and grow in our faith. These moments are great because they allow us to serve those who walk into the church – some who know and follow Jesus and some who may not know Jesus. When we show people this love and care, it's an extension of God's love for all of us.

QUESTIONS

Have you ever served on a volunteer team within the church? What results did you see from being a part of the team?

When you serve others how does it make you feel?

Serving takes on a whole new dimension when you understand 'spiritual gifts.' Every follower of Jesus has been given at least one spiritual gift. Spiritual gifts are more than just talents or strengths. They are given to each individual by the Holy Spirit and are unique to the way God wired us from the inside. When we follow Jesus, we have the opportunity to dive into these spiritual gifts to serve the church.

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all...A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other...It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.

1 Corinthians 12:4,7,11

We grow spiritually when we serve others with the gifts God gave us. When we use our gifts to serve others, we benefit. A surrendered life aligned with one's spiritual gifts is how God best uses us as individuals and as the church. Understanding and embracing your wiring, your temperament and then serving in your giftedness will give you a sense of fulfillment and purpose. You'll realize why God put you here on this planet, and you'll look forward to the next time you get to serve.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:14-27 and Romans 12:4-8.

These Scriptures teach us about the variety of spiritual gifts. We all have different gifts because if we were all the same, we wouldn't need each other. Just like the different parts of our bodies work together to form one complete body, each individual Christ-follower has a unique gift to contribute to 'the body of Christ', the church.

QUESTIONS

How is the church like a body?

Why are spiritual gifts important if the body is going to be effective?

Have you ever taken a Spiritual Gifts test? If so, what were your results?

You can begin to discover your spiritual gifts by taking this quick online spiritual gifts survey.

giftstest.com

When it comes to serving in the church, it can be hard to know where to start. A good place to begin is by asking yourself 2 questions: “What am I passionate about?” and “How am I gifted?” Do you love children and have the gift of helping? Then serving in Cross Point Kids could be a great fit for you. Are you great at organizing things and have the gift of leadership? We need you in the parking lot! When you serve with passion and use your spiritual gifts, you fulfill God’s larger purpose while meeting the needs of others. The church and individuals flourish when everyone serves in the area of their spiritual giftedness. Who doesn’t love a win-win situation?

QUESTIONS

Where do you feel like your spiritual gifts can help you serve others?

What are some of your passions that could be linked to help serve others?

For opportunities to serve at Cross Point go to www.crosspoint.tv/getinvolved

WHAT'S NEXT?

You've spent the last 4-5 sessions learning some practical steps to help you in your journey as you follow Jesus. Now you have the opportunity to put what you've learned into practice. Although your journey to follow Jesus will be similar to others it won't be exactly like anyone else's. These steps will look different for everyone and that's OK.

BAPTISM

Once you've made the decision to follow Jesus, an important next step is being baptized. Baptism is an outward expression of an inward decision. It's a way to show others you've decided to follow Christ. The way we observe baptism at Cross Point is called immersion, which simply means that you're lowered into and then raised back out of the water. This action is a way to identify symbolically with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Baptism is a way to take your faith public – it's something that Jesus tells His followers to do and an example He set for us all. For more information about baptism or to sign up, you can visit crosspoint.tv/baptism.

COMMUNITY GROUPS

You can't become the best version of yourself, by yourself, and that's where Groups come in. You need to find people you enjoy spending time with who will encourage you to grow in your faith. But it can be a challenge to find great friends who are also pursuing God.

We understand that finding true friendships can be an overwhelming and intimidating task. It's hard to know where to start. For many people, when you hear "groups," you immediately panic, thinking it means you're going to have to show up to a stranger's house, sit in a circle, and talk about your feelings with people you don't even know. So awkward! We get it. And we promise to help you navigate the whole process until you find the group that is the perfect fit for you. You're not going to get stuck in a group you don't enjoy and can't get out of, you don't have life all figured out to come, and our group leaders are well trained to help create a comfortable environment for you to build relationships and grow in your faith. In the 15 years we've been doing this, what we've seen is that those who are willing to be intentional in finding spiritual community have gained life-long friendships and have grown substantially in their faith.

So here's what to do next:

1. Go to crosspoint.tv/group. There you'll see a list of groups based on location and interests.
2. When you find a group you'd like to try, click "Join a Group"
3. Your group leader will contact you to personally walk you through everything you need to know to get started.

Experience what it feels like to know and be known by people who genuinely care about you flourishing in your relationship with God.

SERVE

Jesus loved and served people, and He invites His followers to do the same. Pray about where God would want you to serve while using your spiritual gifts and get connected to start serving. Being a part of a serving team is a great way for you to grow your faith and find your place and purpose at Cross Point. A staff member at your Cross Point location can help you get connected to a serving team that you have passion for and feel God has gifted you to serve.

A great place to start is to click the 'Get Involved' link at crosspoint.tv.

Go to crosspoint.tv/get-involved and start exploring how you can use your gifts to serve inside the church. You can also explore serving opportunities outside the church locally and around the world at crosspoint.tv/do-good.

