Our 12 Core Beliefs

At Christ's Center Church, there are twelve Core Beliefs which have informed the way we live, pray, and minister to our community. They come in four categories:

Beliefs about God

God is a Good Father Jesus Christ is Savior & Lord The Holy Spirit is Active

Beliefs about Mankind

We are Sons & Daughters First Our Sin Separated Us from God We are Redeemed through Jesus Christ

Beliefs about the Church

The Church is God's family on earth

The Church Exists to Glorify God on Earth

The Church Seeks to Expand God's Family on Earth

Beliefs about the Kingdom

The Gospel of the Kingdom is the Only Hope for Mankind

We are Called to Extend God's Kingdom The Kingdom of God is Already & Not Yet

These beliefs are not to be confused with a full statement of faith, which you can find at ChristsCenter.com. Rather, they are guiding truths that we feel God has highlighted for our congregation. They are a part of our history, and a part of the passion we carry today.

About This Workbook

Over the next three months, we will be preaching sermons on each of these Core Beliefs. This workbook (along with the second volume) is designed to be a companion to those sermons, and a daily devotional that explores each of our twelve beliefs in greater depth. We'll have daily scripture meditations, and ideas how to spend time with God each day. You don't have to use it, of course. Many people have their own preferred ways of spending daily time with God. But for those who would like to join us, we think this is a pretty good (and pretty easy!) way to do it.

Each week will begin with some introductory thoughts on the theme at hand, and will then convene to daily meditations by use of the S.W.O.R.D. method (see next page for details.)

Going Deeper

For those who want to go beyond the S.W.O.R.D. Drill and have a little more time, the Going Deeper section can serve as a helpful short Bible study. For this part, you'll want to use your own Bible, highlighters, and journal. The instructions in this section are just suggestions, of course. Sometimes we will encourage you to read the surrounding chapter for proper context, and draw your attentions to various ideas. Sometimes we'll direct you to other resources: articles, discussions, videos, or podcasts that have helped to shape our beliefs. We encourage you to dive in and think deeply.

What is The SWORD Drill?

The SWORD drill is a device for studying the Bible and incorporating it into our soul where it can be readily drawn upon when needed. This process involves the supernatural power of God's Word reaching our heart as opposed to simply giving us head knowledge. This practical tool can be used by anyone. The five steps are defined by the acronym S.W.O.R.D.

S - Scripture

Read the **SCRIPTURE**. Then read it again, only slower. Don't rush through any of it. Let the words sink in. Then, write the verse out. Or if it's too long, write out the part that speaks to you the most.

W - Wait

Read the passage a third time, then **WAIT**. Give your mind and your heart some space to process. What words seem most important to you in this moment? Write those down. Are there any parts that seem to be jumping off the page? Write those down, too.

O - Observe

Okay, now it's time to pay attention not only the words themselves, but to how they are affecting your heart. Ask yourself, "where am I in these scriptures? Where am I in these words?" Can you **OBSERVE** what your heart is doing? Do these words make you anxious? Do they excite you? Are you uncomfortable as you read them? Write down these observations. Be honest with yourself.

R - Request

Now that you've noticed what your heart is doing, it's time to invite the Holy Spirit to help you understand. It's time to **REQUEST** His input; His direction. What is He saying to you? Remember that we are not studying the Bible as if it were a textbook. You are asking for spiritual direction — and letting the Spirit of God, and the Word of God, lead you. So take a few moments and write down how you feel Him leading you.

D - Dedicate

Based on what you've been reading and sensing, **DEDICATE** yourself to following where God is leading. Write down a prayer, or a response to His words. This is about taking action on what God has revealed to you through His Word.

*(The S.W.O.R.D. Drill from Conquer Series Journal: Learn more about the Conquer Series Journal today @ conquerseries.com)

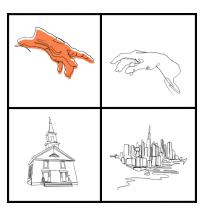
How do I pray The Prayer of Examen?

Review your day and ask:

- When did I sense the Lord's presence today?
- Is there any place where I missed it?
- Where did I feel the joy of the Lord?

Then, thank God for His presence, and ask Him to be with you the next day.

Week 1: God is a Good Father



1 - God is a good Father

- 2 Jesus Christ is both Savior and Lord
- 3 The Holy Spirit is Active
- 4 We are Sons & Daughters First
- 5 Our Sin Separated Us from God
- 6- We are Redeemed through Jesus Christ

The Trinity

As we dive into this examination of our core beliefs, we begin with God Himself. Scripture describes Him as a Trinity. He is one God, but three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We will have something to say about each member of the Trinity, and we begin, of course, with the Father.

What is God Like?

The vast majority of people throughout history have believed that God was real. But who is God in relation to us? Some say He's a force who doesn't interact with us at all, but hovers somewhere over the universe. Others say He's is personal, but unfeeling. Still others think He micro-manages the world and is perpetually anary.

We could spend years studying the many views of God that are out there, but our journey is a specific one. It doesn't matter so much how any one person or group thinks about Him. What does our Master say about Him? How did Jesus talk about God?

Metaphors of God in the Old Testament

The writers of the Old Testament described our relationship with God using many types of metaphors. For example, He is our Shepherd (Psalm 23), our Strong Tower (Psalm 61:3), the Rock of Israel (2 Samuel 23:3), the Light to the Nations (Isaiah 42:6), and our Wonderful Counselor (Isaiah 9:2).

These metaphorical titles all point to very real roles God plays in our lives. They suggest how

Week 1: God is a Good Father

He relates to us. As our shepherd, He tends to our needs. As our strong tower, He protects us. As our rock, He remains faithful and unchanging. He illuminates our path like a light, and He whispers freedom like a counselor.

Of all the beautiful metaphors in the scriptures, Jesus focused primarily on one. When He taught His followers to pray, He did not tell them to say, "Our Shepherd," or "Our Wonderful Counselor." No, the metaphor He used was "Father."

"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name."

Our Father

Father. This was Jesus' favorite way to talk about the first Person of the Trinity. In fact, there are more than 150 instances in the four Gospels where Jesus refers to God as "Father." That is by far more than any other title.

What does the metaphor mean? It means God gives life like a father. He protects like a father. He provides like a father. He loves His children.

Unfortunately, not everyone loves this metaphor. Many of us have had terrible experiences with our fathers, and it makes us nervous to hear the word associated with the maker of heaven and earth.

Fortunately, Jesus makes it clear: God isn't just a Father. He's a GOOD Father.

"Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" (Mt 7:9-11)

Indeed, this is the message of the story of the prodigal son. This God sits on His porch and waits for His children, no matter their crimes. He welcomes us back home, no matter how long we've been gone. He will not take us back as servants. No, that's not enough. He wants us back in His home where we belong.

This week, we'll meditate on some verses that talk about our Father's irrepressible goodness.

God is a Good Father

Sunday	Sermon Notes

Week 1: God is a Good Father

Week 1: God is a Good Father

Monday

Psalm 103:13 Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him	O .
Scripture	
Wait	
Observe	
Request	
Dedicate	

Going Deeper:

Question for journaling: Have you believed the Father is compassionate?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

Tuesday

Morning Meditations
Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Matthew 7:9-11 Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!
Scripture
Wait
Observe
Request
Dedicate

Going Deeper:

Question for journaling: When have I asked for a good gift from God? When have I received it?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Wednesday

Luke 15:20-24 (ESV) And [the younger son] arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

Wait			
Observe			
Request			
Dedicate			

Going Deeper:

Imagine the Father running to you like he ran to His youngest son. Is it hard for you to imagine this scene? What about the image of him patiently correcting the oldest son?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you. Thursday

Morning Meditations
Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

2 Cor 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father ot our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father ot mercies and God ot all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.
Scripture
Wait
Observe
Request
Dedicate

Going Deeper:

When was the last time you allowed Father God to comfort you? Why or Why not?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

nos 1.17. Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Eather of lie

with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.
Scripture
Wait
Observe
Request
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Dedicate
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Going Deeper:

Our Good father only gives good gifts, are there any inferior things you are suddenly realizing aren't a gift from your good father? What would it look like to let go of them?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

Saturday

Morning Meditations Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

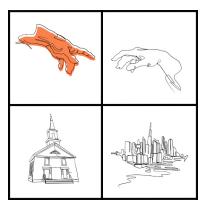
Fournaling Day

O
This week we have focused on some aspects of God's Character, specifically that He is good. Take some time to think through how this shapes your expectations of God as well as His expectations of you.

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

What else has God been teaching me this week?

Jesus Christ is both Savior and Lord



1 - God is a good Father

2 - Jesus Christ is both Savior and Lord

- 3 The Holy Spirit is Active
- 4 We are Sons & Daughters First
- 5 Our Sin Separated Us from God
- 6- We are Redeemed through Jesus Christ

"In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Jn 1:1). With these words, John tells us that Jesus Christ (the Word) was with Father even before the creation of the world, and that He was one with the Father.

In the New Testament, Jesus came close, and we got a clear glimpse of Him. He didn't come down in a cloud of mystery, but in a body made of muscle and skin, bone and fat. He was born to a poor Jewish woman in a forgotten corner of an empire where Caesar was Lord. Little did the emperor know, he was about to be displaced.

Jesus as Lord

When the angel announced Jesus' birth, He called him "Christ, the Lord." In other words, Christ, the King. Christ, the Caesar. Christ, the Mighty Emperor of the Heavenly Kingdom. And this subversive message was not "good news" for the Jews only, but "for all people."

All throughout Jesus' ministry, He drew attention to that truth. He talked openly about "The Kingdom of Heaven," and He was upfront about Himself as the King of that Kingdom. All throughout the New Testament—well over 200 times, in fact—Jesus is referred to as "Lord," which literally means "master" or "sovereign ruler."

This title was not only a challenge to the political rulers of the day, it is also a challenge for us, too. Why? Because we don't live in a nation ruled by a king, and we aren't used to being told what to do. The whole idea that someone else ought to have leadership over us feels downright offensive! And yet, this is precisely what the New Testament demands of us: that we acknowledge the kingship of Jesus, and we live as faithful and obedient subjects in His Kingdom.

Jesus as Savior

He is more than King, of course. He is also the One who saves. Once again we see hints of this even in the announcement of Jesus' birth: "You shall call His name Jesus," the angel said. "For He will save His people from their sins" (Matt 1:21). And He did.

How did He do it? By dying in our place. His sacrifice and resurrection rescued us from sin, death, and the devil. He was the lamb of Judah, who laid down His life for us so that we could live with Him forever.

Though Jesus calls us into relationship with Him, His salvation is not strictly "personal." He doesn't just save us from something ugly. Rather, He saves us into something beautiful: the Kingdom of God. When we put our faith in Christ for salvation, we gain entrance to His kingdom, of which there is no end.

That means that all of us who have called Jesus our Savior must also call Him our King. In other words, obedience to Christ is not an optional upsell for believers. Instead, it is the only proper response to a mighty King who has saved us.

Why this is a Core Value to Us

It's easy to focus entirely on obedience to our Lord while ignoring His salvation, or to focus on His grace and forget His Lordship. If we do, we set ourselves up for either legalism or a false idea of freedom. We don't get to pick and choose which parts of God to believe in. We must accept the whole truth of who He is.

At Christ's Center, we believe we must keep both truths before our eyes: Jesus saved us from sin and death; therefore, He gets to rule us. Our life is His, and our obedience is a grateful response, not a heavy weight. "His yoke is easy, and His burden is light." He's the most wise and loving being in existence. We can trust Him, not only with our sin, but with our lives. And when we do this together, in community, our character begins to look like His. We become more gracious, more humble, more patient and more kind. In short, we begin to look more like Jesus.

Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord

Suna	lay c	Sermon	n Notes	



Luke 2:10-11 (ESV) And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Scripture _____ Wait _____ Observe _____ Request _____ Dedicate _____

Going Deeper: The angel announced that Jesus was both Savior AND Lord of the world. Which one of these "titles" have you gravitated to personally? Have you thought about Jesus as your "Savior" more or your "Lord?" Why do you think that is?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

Tuesday

Morning Meditations
Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

told me all that I ever did." They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."
Scripture
Wait
Observe
Request
Dedicate

Going Deeper: Go back and read Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4. Put yourself in this woman's shoes. She was an outsider; a woman who had been cast off by men and her society. But Jesus' words convinced her that He was not only the Savior of the world, but that he was also HER savior. What was He saving her from?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Morning Meditations

Start with 2 minutes of silence before God



Philippians 2:9-11 (NASB) For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
Scripture
Wait
Observe
Request
Dedicate

Going Deeper:

This verse tells us clearly that Jesus is King over all people. How does His kingship affect you in your daily life? Does it affect the decisions you make, the words you say, and the way you talk God?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

Thursday

Morning Meditations
Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

	his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.
Scripture	
Wait	
Observe _	
Request _	
Dedicate _	

Going Deeper:

Consider some of the sins for which God has forgiven you. Thank God for his grace.

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Friday

Revelation 19:15-16 (NASB) From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF Scripture _____ Wait _____ Observe Request _____ Dedicate ____

Going Deeper: This scripture points to the fact that one day, Jesus—the "King of kings and Lord of lords"—will judge the nations of this world for their crimes. Is this a comforting thought for you, or a scary one? What do you think of this depiction of Jesus?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

Saturday

Morning Meditations
Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Fournaling Day

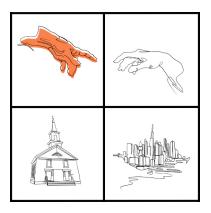
Are there areas of my life that need to be more submitted to the Kingship of Jesus?

What do I tend to hold back?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

What else	e haj	God	been	teaci	hing	me	thij	week!

Week 3: The Holy Spirt is Active



1 - God is a good Father

2 - Jesus Christ is both Savior and Lord

3 - The Holy Spirit is Active

4 - We are Sons & Daughters First

5 - Our Sin Separated Us from God

6- We are Redeemed through Jesus Christ

The Holy Spirit is sometimes referred to as "the Third Person in the Trinity." Maybe that's because Jesus lists Him third when He said to baptize disciples, "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Or maybe it's because the Holy Spirit is mysterious, and talk of Him can make us uncomfortable.

But make no mistake about it: the Holy Spirit is not "God-lite." He is just as Divine as the Father or Jesus Himself. Indeed, He is the Spirit of God on earth, and He is interacting with us all the time.

What does the Holy Spirit Do?

Since the Holy Spirit is God's presence on earth, He does MANY things. For example,

He is our Helper (John 14:26)

He is our Comforter (John 14:26)

He leads us into truth (John 16:13) He convicts us of sin (John 16:7-8)

He fills us with boldness (Acts 4:29-31)

He gives good gifts to edify us and help us minister to others, sometimes in supernatural ways (I Cor 12:7-11)

Those "gifts of the Spirit" have been the source of much dispute. Some Christians believe the gifts of the Holy Spirit have ceased altogether (an idea called cessationism), but we respectfully disagree. Frankly, we have seen too much. Both in our personal lives and in the life of our church, God has shown up. We have seen Him answer prayers and watched Him heal diseases. We have received His prophetic guidance and have felt His perfect peace. These are the works of the Holy Spirit. He hasn't stopped working. He is actively involved in our lives. And we want to be open to ALL of His activity.

Why is this a Core Belief?

In the book of Zechariah, an angel came to a man named Zerubbabel, who was rebuilding the temple of the Lord. It was an extremely difficult task, but the angel assured him of this: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts" (Zech 4:6) We think the same is true for each of us. It is by the Spirit of God, not by our own strength, that we are able to live victoriously in this life. Without His activity, we are utterly powerless..

But when we invite Him into our lives—when we live with His presence—we can accomplish everything He's called us to do. He has commanded us to love our enemies, to bind up the broken, and to rebuild the ruins in our midst . We can't do any of that without Him, but with Him, we can do all things!

It gets better, too. When we walk with the Holy Spirit, we begin to display the character of Christ Himself: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control. These fruits only grow in the soil of a life with the Spirit.

This week, you'll be reading and meditating on a variety of verses about the Holy Spirit. We want to encourage you to embrace these verses, and dig deep. Pray with expectation that He is listening, and that He wants to interact with you.

The Holy Spirit is Active

Sunday	Sermon	Notes

Week 3: The Holy Spirit is Active

Week 3: The Holy Spirit is Active :



John 14:16-17 (ESV) And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. Scripture _____ Wait _____ Observe _____ Request _____ Dedicate _____

Going Deeper: The Holy Spirit is active in a variety of ways, because He is the one who dwells with us. He is our ever-present Helper. When we feel God's presence, it is the Holy Spirit we feel. But we can tend to think of Him as the lesser part of God: perhaps distant, strange, or even embarrassing. How have you viewed the Holy Spirit? Why?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

Tuesday

Morning Meditations
Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Galatians 5:22-25 (ESV) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Scripture _____ Wait ____ Observe _____ Request _____ Dedicate

Going Deeper:

The fruits of the Spirit are traits which grow from the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. When we let Him walk with us and guide us, they begin to grow. What fruit is growing in your life? Where are you lacking?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Wednesday

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 (ESV) Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. Scripture _____ Wait _____ Observe _____ Request _____ Dedicate ____

Going Deeper:

How have you viewed the "gifts of the Holy Spirit?" Why does the Holy Spirit give these gifts in the first place?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

Thursday

Morning Meditations
Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

John 16:12-13 (NKJV) "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth," Scripture _____ Wait _____ Observe _____ Request _____ Dedicate ____

Going Deeper:

When you come to the scriptures, or to the news, or even to social media, how often do you invite the Holy Spirit to guide you into all truth? Why?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation



1 Corinthians 12:8-11 (ESV) For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

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Scripture	
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Wait	
Observe	
Request	
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Dedicate	

Going Deeper:

The Holy Spirit empowers God's people in so many diverse and beautiful ways. Consider how has He gifted you. Now consider how he has gifted people around you in different ways. Take some time to thank the Holy Spirit for these gifts.

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you. Saturday

Morning Meditations
Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

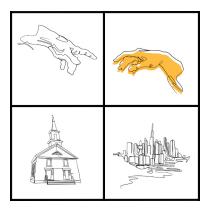
Fournaling Day

Now that we've taken some time to look at some different ways the Holy Spirit is active today, how would you like Him to act in your life? What do you most need from Him in order to be more effective in this life?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

What else	e haj	God	been	teac	hing	me i	thij	week!

Week 4: We are Sons and Daughters First



- 1 God is a good Father
 - 2 Jesus Christ is both Savior and Lord
 - 3 The Holy Spirit is Active
 - 4 We are Sons & Daughters First
- 5 Our Sin Separated Us from God 6- We are Redeemed through Jesus Christ

In the Beginning

When God created the world in Genesis 1, it was all "good." Only one facet of His creation was "very good." That was us. And there was a reason He considered us to be better than the rest: He put Himself into us.

Just as we resemble our parents, and our children resemble us, God handed down some of Himself into human beings. We are made "in His image." From the very moment of creation, we were God's kids, with the ability to love and reject, to create and destroy. He gave us a mind, a will, and emotions. He gave us the chance to choose Him; to choose eternal life in our Father's mansion.

All of these gifts are reflections of God Himself. We are our Father's children. And because He is King, we are royalty in His kingdom. We are princes and princesses, created to bring good things into the world alongside our Father as He restores creation.

What about Sin?

This beautiful heritage can be forgotten, however, because of the prevalence of sin. It's easy to use adjectives like "wicked" every time we talk about humanity. We've all sinned and fallen short of His glory. (We'll talk about that in the next section.) But we believe it's a mistake to think about human beings as a bunch of dirty, rotten, sin factories.

Yes, rebellion is real. But the most important truth about any person is not his or her rebellion. The most important truth about a person is that he or she was created in God's image for a good purpose. Before sin, we were His. We are sons and daughters first.

What difference does it make?

This belief speaks to our problems with identity and value. If we define ourselves exclusively by our sin, we are disagreeing with God. If His love preceded our rebellion, then our identity is, ultimately, found in Him, our Creator and Father. He made us to know Him, to create with Him, and to enjoy Him forever. This is the truest thing about us.

If we are sons and daughters first, we also have intrinsic value. No amount of sin can erase the image of God. Our worth is both immeasurable and irrevocable. That means no matter how far down we fall into the rabbit hole of rebellion, we are still precious to our Dad. He is always waiting on His front porch for our return. Remember, God is a good Father.

The same is true with our neighbors. Whether they know Christ or not—whether they have been redeemed by His blood or not—they are dear to Him. He adores them. They too, were sons and daughters, first.

When we start with this truth, we can push back the urge to divide ourselves into "us" and "them" categories. We are all God's kids, and we have all gone astray. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). For all of us.

Seeing our neighbors through this lens allows us to live as humble and inviting examples of Christ's redemption. We are not standing atop some moral mountain and condemning our communities; rather we are standing on common ground as beloved people in need of God's mercy. We are all sons and daughters. Our Father loves us all. And He longs for us to remember that.

We are Sons and Daughters First

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Week 4: We are Sons & Daughters First

Monday

Ephesians 1:3-4 (ESV) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. Scripture _____ Wait ____ Observe _____ Request _____ Dedicate _____

Going Deeper:

What does it mean to you to be chosen by God? How does this shape your thoughts about who you are?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

Tuesday

Morning Meditations
Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Genesis 1:26-27 (MSG) God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, And, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth."

God created human beings; he created them godlike, Reflecting God's nature. He created them male and female. Scripture _____ Wait Observe _____ Request _____ Dedicate ____

Going Deeper:

What does it mean to be created in His image, "godlike, reflecting God's nature?" Why is it important to God that we know we're made in His image?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Wednesday

John 3:1 (NASB) See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him
Scripture
Wait
Observe
Request
Dedicate

Going Deeper:

Have you ever felt like a stranger in this world? What would it look like to have complete confidence in your identity as a son or daughter?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

Thursday

Morning Meditations
Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Romans 8:15 (NASB) For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"
Scripture
Wait
Observe
Request
Dedicate

Going Deeper:

What would freedom from fear look like? Why is fear defeated by being adopted and knowing our Abba Father?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation



John 1:12-13 (NASB) But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, Scripture _____ Wait _____ Observe _____ Request _____ Dedicate

_	_	
Going	Dee	per.

Am I resting in the reality that it is God's will and desire that I am who I am: a son or daughter?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

Saturday

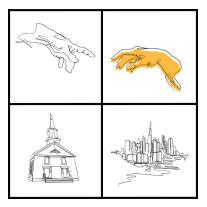
Morning Meditations Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Do I struggle to prove myself to God? Why or Why not? Why is it so important that I know that I am a Son or a Daughter? How does this shape how I live?	
Why is it so important that I know that I am a Son or a Daughter? How does this shape how I live:	. ว
	ve?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

What else	haj	God	been	teac	hing	me	thij	week!

Week 5: Our Sin Separated Us from God



- 1 God is a good Father
 - 2 Jesus Christ is both Savior and Lord
 - 3 The Holy Spirit is Active
 - 4 We are Sons & Daughters First

5 - Our Sin Separated Us from God

6- We are Redeemed through Jesus Christ

In Genesis 1, we see our beginning; in Genesis 3, we see what went wrong. When the enemy introduced sin into this world, he did not take away our value, but he did bring death and inflict excruciating pain. Sin damaged us, and continues to damage us. Indeed, all would have been lost if not for Christ.

It is crucial that we remember this: we really do have an enemy. Satan comes to kill, steal, and destroy. He seeks to undo the works of God, and to lead God's sons and daughters away from Him, and away from our created purpose.

How Sin Separates Us

When Adam and Eve rebelled in the garden in Genesis 3, Eve was confronted with three temptations concerning the fruit. She saw it was "good for food," that it was "pleasing to the eye," and it was "desirable to make one wise."

Those descriptions find an echo in the New Testament, where John describes "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). Satan tempts us through these three vehicles. When we boil these things down, we can make some general conclusions: the lust of the flesh is a desire for experience (especially sexual experience). The lust of the eyes is the craving for material things (especially money). And the pride of life is the desire for prestige, power, or admiration.

Notice that none of those things—sex, possessions, and prestige—are inherently sinful. They can be good and wonderful things. When the enemy comes, he often tempts us to embrace God's gifts in wrong ways; in excess, or the wrong context. He pushes us to disregard what God has told us and embrace our own truth. Rebellion happens when we ignore the Lordship of Jesus, and choose to go our own way. This is how separation happens: God doesn't leave us, we leave Him.

Remembering the Prodigal

Remember how the Prodigal Son story begins? The father doesn't kick his son out of the house; the son chooses to leave on his own accord. Rather than stay in His Father's house, under His father's loving rule, he chooses to leave. To go His own way.

This is what happened with each one of us. Our sin separates us because sin is, itself, separation. Rebellion is a decision to move further from God.

Our modern world says sin isn't a big deal. They say it's only personal. But that's simply not true. When we walk away from God, we become exposed to more and more horrors. Corruption goes from the personal to the corporate. Simple selfishness swells into full scale tragedy. Lying breeds corruption, hatred oppression, violence, and murder. When people walk away from God, they walk away from love. When they reject the Holy Spirit, they reject the fruit of the spirit.

Why is this a core value?

When we treat sin as a light thing, we forget the weight of Christ's sacrifice. Jesus' violent death on the cross was an extreme solution to an extreme problem. His redemption is so beautiful, we can sometimes forget how destructive sin really is.

That natural destructiveness doesn't go away even after Christ redeems us, either. When we disobey God and lapse into old patterns of selfishness, we can still hurt ourselves, and we can still hurt the ones we love. That's why Paul urges us not to go back to our old ways (see Ephesians 2).

We choose to remember this truth both as a warning and as part of our over-arching redemption story. Yes, we are sons and daughters first, but we have tasted the corruption of sin. As C.S. Lewis once put it, "You come of the Lord Adam and the Lady Eve... And that is both honour enough to erect the head of the poorest beggar, and shame enough to bow the shoulders of the greatest emperor on earth" (Prince Caspian). Thanks be to God, our sinful history is not our destiny. Jesus' redemption covers even our most violent, selfish moments. By His stripes, we are healed from them all.

Our Sin Separated Us from God

Sund	lay S	ermon	Notes

Morning Meditations

Start with 2 minutes of silence before God



1 John :8-10 (NIV) If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His word is not in us. Scripture _____ Wait _____ Observe _____ Request _____ Dedicate ____

Going Deeper:

Was it hard to confess your sin when you first came to God? Do you still struggle to confess when you occasionally sin?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

Tuesday

Morning Meditations
Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Romans 6:23 (ESV) For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
Scripture
Wait
Observe
Request
Dedicate

Going Deeper:

Sin is a very unpopular notion in this era, one can find themself blaming: trauma, society, history, etc for one's sin. Have I been willing to be honest with God and myself about the fact that I am responsible for my own sins?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Wednesday

Romans 5:8-10 (NASB) But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. Scripture _____ Wait _____ Observe _____ Request _____ Dedicate _____

Going Deeper: Though we began as victims of Satan in being tempted and drawn into sin, we also made ourselves enemies by aligning ourselves with him in our sins. Have you ever considered the level of love and grace God has extended to us while we were "enemies" as opposed to only victims?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

Thursday

Morning Meditations
Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Isaiah 53:6 (ESV) All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Scripture _____ Wait _____ Observe _____ Request _____ Dedicate _____

Going Deeper:

Is there any place where you are trying to "turn to your own way?" Thank the Lord for taking your iniquity upon himself, and ask Him to grant you repentance.

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Friday

John 3:17-20 (NASB) For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

Scripture

Wait _____

Observe _____

Request _____

Dedicate _____

Going Deeper:

In order that one be free, one must accept reality as it is. God is inviting us to come into the light and let Him show us which of our deeds are good and which are evil. Ask the Lord if there is anything in your life that He wants you to bring into the light.

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

Saturday

Morning Meditations
Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

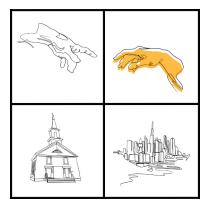
Fournaling Day

In order that one be free, one must accept reality as it is. God is inviting us to come into the light and let Him show us which of our deeds are good and which are evil. Ask the Lord if there is anything in your life that He wants you to bring into the light.

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

What	elje	haj	God	been	teac	hing	me	thij	week!

Week 6



- 1 God is a good Father
 - 2 Jesus Christ is both Savior and Lord
 - 3 The Holy Spirit is Active
 - 4 We are Sons & Daughters First
 - 5 Our Sin Separated Us from God

6- We are Redeemed through Jesus Christ

We have now established that we are God's sons and daughters first, but that sin separated us from our Father, and from our royal purpose. Now, we get to the great news of our redemption.

Our Kinsman Redeemer

In the Old Testament, redemption wasn't the strange, almost ethereal word that it is today. Rather, it had a solid meaning that is clearly demonstrated in the story of Ruth.

Ruth was a Moabite woman who had married an Israelite. When her husband died young, she became a foreign widow, with no civil protections whatsoever. She was suddenly alone, except for her mother-in-law, who could not provide for her. Being a widow was extremely difficult in the ancient world.

Fortunately, there was a solution for women in this position. The Mosaic law stated that a widow could be brought back under the protection of the family by marrying a relative of the deceased husband. It was a costly solution, because the man would have to take on the dead husband's debts, as well as the widow and her children.

In Ruth's case, she found a man who could do just that. Boaz was a relative of her late husband, and a good man. She asked him one night to marry her and become her kinsman redeemer. He said yes. Through his sacrificial generosity, he restored Ruth.

Dr. Sandra Richter summarizes the concept this way: "In Israel's tribal society, redemption was the act of a patriarch who put his own resources on the line to ransom a family member who had been driven to the margins of society by poverty, [or] who had been seized by an enemy

against whom he had no defense, [or] who found themselves enslaved by the consequences of a faithless life. Redemption was the means by which a lost family member was restored to a place of security within the kinship circle." (Sandra Richter, The Epic of Eden: A Christian Entry into the Old Testament)

Christ, Our Redeemer

With that vivid definition, let's consider what Christ did on the cross. He saw that we had rebelled against God, wandering away from Him. Thus, our sin separated us from Him. We were outside the safety of the house of God because of our "faithless life."

So what did Christ do? He chose not to leave us there. Instead, He chose the costly thing. Just as Boaz laid down his resources, so Christ laid down His very life for us. When He went to the cross in our place, Christ atoned for our sin, making a way for us to return after our long separation. We had been willing exiles, alone and unprotected. But Jesus brought us back to the kinship circle; back to our Father's house. We are no longer strangers or enemies. God has adopted us back into the family. We are, once again, His children.

Everything that Was Lost

We believe redemption is not only a personal concept for Christians, but also a corporate one for the church. Redemption stretches far beyond our own hearts. We believe all the things that were lost will one day be made new again. All the broken places will be made whole. Everything that we destroyed, Christ will put back together.

Redemption is an ongoing process. What Jesus began at the cross is still ongoing. He will finish one day. For now, we, His redeemed children, work with Him in the great restoration. We search for our brothers and sisters who are still exiled from God, and we call them home. We tell them Christ has paid a ransom for their return, and the doors of His mansion are open. We announce that, through the blood of Jesus Christ, we are redeemed.

Week 6: We are Redeemed through Jesus Christ

Suno	lay	Sermo	n Note	eg

Monday

2 Corinthians 5:15-17 (ESV) And he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.
Scripture
Wait
Observe
Request
Dedicate

Going Deeper:

Do you see yourself as a new creation? Is there something in your history or your present that makes you feel differently?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

Tuesday

Morning Meditations
Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

John 17:1-3 (NASB) Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. Scripture _____ Observe Request _____ Dedicate ____

Going Deeper:

Ask God if there is any part of your life He would like you to know Him more fully.

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Wednesday

Galatians 4:4-7 (ESV) But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. Scripture _____ Wait _____ Observe _____ Request _____ Dedicate ____

Going Deeper:

You are fully redeemed and an heir of Abba God. Today, at different times, ask Holy Spirit to show you Abba, to help you relate as a redeemed daughter or a son to your Abba, Father.

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

Thursday

Morning Meditations
Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Ephesians 2:4-6 (ESV) But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ-by grace you have been saved- and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, Scripture _____ Wait _____ Observe ____ Request _____ Dedicate

Going Deeper:

You and I do not have to strive in order to be seated in Christ next to Father God. If Christ has redeemed us, we are already seated. Take some time to imagine what that means.

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Friday

Titus 3:4-6 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior"

Scripture			
Wait			
Observe			
Request			
Dedicate			

Going Deeper:

Look at what Jesus is doing in your life right now. He's bringing Mercy, Loving Kindness, Regeneration and Renewal. Meditate on these words.

Afternoon or Evening Meditation

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before the Lord. Revisit today's Dedication (above). Pray it through again, and thank God for hearing you.

Saturday

Morning Meditations
Start with 2 minutes of silence before God

Fournaling Day

This week we have looked at the complete and perfect love God has redeemed us with. We have been fully redeemed. There is no separation. Is there any place you are still hiding from God and others? Ask God what is a step you can take to walk into the light and into intimacy with God and others?

Afternoon or Evening Meditation