



Second **STEPS**

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Introduction to Second Steps

In First Steps, believers were introduced to the foundations of the Christian faith, with emphasis on discovering Jesus and the Gospel and growing our relationship with Jesus through basic spiritual habits. Through First Steps, believers would have gained a basic understanding of who Jesus is, their salvation in Christ and practical steps to begin their journey with Jesus.

Beyond the foundational lessons in First Steps, believers need to continue on their journey of spiritual formation. As such, Second Steps aims to further help believers grow in relating to God personally, be involved in their community in Christ and live wisely, knowing what they can look forward to at the end. In addition, these lessons will build believers to have biblical perspectives and live out their faith in practical life issues like decision making, purpose in life, relating to others and finances.

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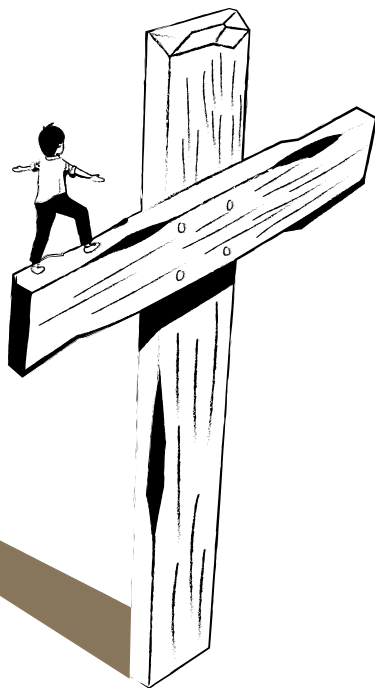
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SESSION 1

How do I grow in intimacy with God?

Have you ever laid in a pool and closed your eyes for a few minutes? When you open your eyes, you discover that you are no longer in the exact spot where you started. You drifted.

In relationships, it's easier to drift apart than to stay close to one another. Good relationships do not just happen, they take effort. This is true not only for our human relationships but also with our relationship with God. So why do we need to grow in our relationship with God and how do we do so?



“Intimacy is the experience of really knowing and being known by another.”

THE HEART OF CHRISTIANITY: Relationship with God

Many have the impression that Christians are characterised by what they visibly can or cannot do: “Christians have to go to church on Sundays, Christians are not allowed to lie, cheat or steal, Christians must not be promiscuous etc.” While these may reveal some moral values or priorities Christians hold on to, they do not reflect the heart of what these values are built upon.

Christianity goes beyond a list of rules and regulations. At the heart of Christianity is a loving Heavenly Father who sent His one and only Son as a sacrifice to restore a relationship with us. The mighty Creator God values us so much that He initiated a loving relationship with us through Christ! But even after we have made the decision to put our trust in Him, we have a part to play in reciprocating and cultivating this relationship. In relating to God closely, we also start to be transformed into His likeness and take on His moral attributes.

Colossians 2:6-7

⁶ So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

By choosing to follow Christ as Lord, we embark on a lifelong journey to live in Christ, be built up in Him and be strengthened in our faith in Him. As we go through life being intimately connected to God, we get to experience a peace that transcends all understanding in times of turmoil, deep joy even in moments of sorrow, and sheer delight and purposefulness in knowing and following the One who created us.

HOW CAN I GROW IN INTIMACY WITH God?

Intimacy is the experience of really knowing and being known by another. An intimate friend is someone we feel very close to and knows us at a deep level.

Developing an intimate relationship with God involves us knowing God more, going through life experiences with Him and learning to trust Him more.

Undergirding the basic spiritual habits covered in First Steps (Prayer, Reading the Word, Worship etc.), the following are some important foundations that help us grow in intimacy with God.

1. Living in Christ Daily

Our Christian life is not a sprint, but a marathon. To last in this race till the end, we must remain in Christ daily. Just as branches must be connected to the vine to be healthy, so too must we remain connected to Christ and be in communion with Him. Similarly, as the branches are dependent on the vine for nutrients and sustenance, so too are we dependent on Christ in our daily lives.

John 15:4-5

⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵ “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Spiritual habits such as reading the Bible, praying and worshipping God are vital in helping us to live in Christ daily. In our busy lives, we may find it challenging to do this regularly. Yet, we must not underestimate its importance. Even Jesus withdrew to quiet places to be with God (*Mark 1:35*).

Rather than practising these spiritual habits as mere rituals or items we need to “tick” off our to-do list, set aside time for silence and solitude to meditate on God’s words. Pray and listen to Him and reflect on what the Holy Spirit is speaking to us about.

“Settle yourself in solitude and you will come upon Him in yourself.”

■■■ THERESA OF AVILA

Here are some *other practical suggestions* on how we can intentionally live in God’s presence daily:



Start our day with a “Good morning Jesus” prayer – Ask for God’s presence to be with you and start your day choosing to rely on Him.



End each day with a prayer of thanksgiving – Express your gratitude to God for the day, whether it has been a good or challenging one.

Reflect: What are some challenges you face in connecting to God on a daily basis? What are some practical actions you can take to help yourself live in Christ daily?

2. Choosing to Trust Christ in All Circumstances

Intimacy with someone goes beyond knowing about the person, it is also trusting him or her. In fact, trust is at the very heart of intimate relationships! Part of growing in intimacy with God involves us learning to trust God more, in all circumstances.

Being a child of God does not automatically exempt us from experiencing pain, trouble, and challenges in this world. Jesus Himself acknowledged that we would experience trouble in this world (*John 16:33*). In the Bible, we see examples of godly men who suffered. Job was a man of integrity but lost almost everything. The early church believers endured ridicule, persecution and for some, even martyrdom, for standing firm in their faith. Even our Messiah Jesus was not spared! He was shamed, beaten, and hung on the Cross in excruciating pain.

While each of our experiences will be different, there will come a point in our relationship with God where our faith will be challenged by external circumstances. We may not understand why we are experiencing this difficulty. We may question God's goodness and wonder if He is truly with us and for us. It is in such valley moments where we have to exercise faith and choose to trust in the Father who loves us and demonstrated us love for us on the Cross. Our pain does not negate His grace, shown through the Cross, for us.

Hebrews 11:6

⁶ *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

Often, God uses these challenging moments to mould us in Christlikeness and deepen our intimacy with Him. As we lean in to trust in God's love and goodness, He reveals more of Himself to us. As the old hymn writer said, "they who trust him wholly find him wholly true." Just as the Psalmist in *Psalms 73* finds his faith and assurance in God even in troubled moments, we too can focus on God and anchor ourselves upon Him as our strength no matter what comes our way.

Psalms 73:25-26

²⁵ *Whom have I in heaven but you?*

And earth has nothing I desire besides you.

²⁶ *My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion forever.*

Reflect: Challenging moments in life can either build or erode our intimacy with God, depending on whether we choose to respond in faith or otherwise. What is your typical response when something bad happens in your life? How can we have a more God-centred perspective?

3. Hungering after God

In many ancient religions, the pagan gods were perceived as distant, capricious, and unknowable. Their followers saw the relationship as transactional and related to them in fear. This is sharply contrasted with the God of the Bible who revealed Himself to us and showed His desire to relate to and dwell amongst His people.

As children of God, we can draw close to Him. Not only that, the Bible also encourages us to hunger after God and to seek more of God as we know Him. God will surely reveal Himself to us if we would take time to seek Him earnestly!

Jeremiah 29:13

¹³ *You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*

In *Psalms* 27, King David's beautiful prayer portrays a heart of worship that desires God's presence more than anything else. It is no wonder that he was called a "man after God's own heart".

Psalms 27:4

⁴ *One thing I ask from the LORD,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.*

In a world full of distractions, we may find ourselves hungering after things, experiences, and relationships more than God. This leaves us feeling distant from Him. If we find ourselves on spiritual auto-pilot mode all the time, rarely tuning in to listen to God and oblivious to what God is doing in our lives, perhaps it is time for us to pause and pray. Pray that God will rekindle a desire in us for Him.

Reflect: What are some reasons that cause me to lack hunger for God and the things of God? Are there certain false beliefs I have about God or myself that need to be corrected?



Similarly, as the branches are dependent on the vine for nutrients and sustenance, so too are we dependent on Christ in our daily lives.



CONCLUSION ▼

Oswald Sanders once said, “Once the joy of intimacy with God has been experienced, life becomes unbearable without it.” There is no greater fulfilment this earthly life can bring than to know God and to walk with Him, through the good, the bad, and the mundane. It is only by His grace that we as created beings can even be allowed to draw close to the glorious King. For that we greatly rejoice, and endeavour to never take our God for granted.



REFLECT ▼

How would I describe my relationship with God today?

Do I often feel closer or farther away from God? Why?



RESPOND ▼

What is one actionable step I can take to build my intimacy with God?

What is one thing my mentor or Life Group can help me with in my relationship with God?

Additional Resources

- Journey with Jesus: Book of Mark Devotions (tinyurl.com/MarkDevotions)
- My Utmost for His Highest Devotions by Oswald Chambers (tinyurl.com/amazon-myutmostforhishighest)

SESSION 2

What is God's purpose for my life?

Do you want to know what is God's purpose for your life? Most people would answer 'yes' as we search for meaning to our days. As believers, this search for meaning cannot take place apart from God. Meaning is found in Him, our Creator.

As we seek to understand God's purpose for our lives, it is easy for us to become fixated on finding out exactly what God wants us to do in the immediate future or even years down the road. We may fear missing out on God's direction for us. We want to make decisions with wisdom and assurance that God will be pleased. How do we go about discerning what God wants us to do?

Many are the plans in a
person's heart, but it is the
Lord's purpose that prevails.

Proverbs 19:21



TRUST God WHO IS OUR GUIDE

Before we explore what are God's purposes for His people, we must start with learning to trust the giver of purpose. Walking with God and discovering His purpose is a lifelong pursuit to be done in faith. While we may experience anxiety or doubt when it comes to the future, we can be assured that God longs to be our guide as we choose to walk in His ways. He is our good Shepherd who leads us to the right paths. As His sheep, we follow our loving Shepherd, taking each step in obedience to Him.

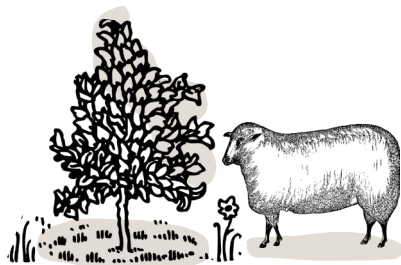
Psalm 23:1-3

¹ *The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.*

² *He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,*

³ *he refreshes my soul.*

*He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.*



God may not always give us a detailed blueprint of the future. Often, He may only show us the next step. This way, we learn to walk by faith and not by sight. We learn to continually seek God, commune with Him and actively listen to His voice every step of the way.

It is normal for us to have preferences on what we want for our lives and future. But there will be times God leads us in a different direction. While this does not mean that we do not plan at all, we can have assurance that God knows exactly where He is leading us. We can also trust that His purpose for our lives is greater than the plans we have for ourselves. When things do not turn out according to our plans or preferences, we learn to submit to God, trusting He knows best.

Proverbs 19:21

²¹ *Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.*

Ultimately, God is in control regardless of our life circumstances. As we learn to walk in obedience to God's purpose for our lives, He reveals more of where He is leading us specifically. In the process, we learn to tune in to Him in a loving and trusting relationship.

“Does it make sense to pray for guidance about the future if we are not obeying in the thing that lies before us today? How many momentous events in Scripture depended on one person's seemingly small act of obedience! Rest assured: Do what God tells you to do now, and, depend upon it, you will be shown what to do next.”

■■■ ELISABETH ELLIOT

Reflect: How do we feel when we think about the future? Are we confident and assured or anxious and fearful? Is there anything about our future that we need to entrust and surrender to God?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT God's PURPOSE FOR OUR LIVES?

The Bible contains God's timeless truths and reveals His purpose for our lives. While you may not necessarily find specific plans for your future clearly laid out in the Scriptures, these broad principles summarise what God has revealed to us and expects of us.

1. Become more like Jesus

God's purpose for us is to become more and more like Jesus. This consists of a transformation of our inner heart attitudes and is seen through our outward behaviour. Through the Bible, we come to understand who God is and who we are in relation to Him. As we walk with Him, we are to put off our old sinful habits and selfish ways and put on the new self. This new self ought to reflect the sacrificial love, humility, and righteousness of Christ.

Ephesians 4:22-23

²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Transformation from our old selves to the new is a hallmark of the Christian. God is making us to be in the likeness of His Son, Jesus (*Romans 8:29*). This transformation of our inner character, which is expressed in how we live, takes place over time but does not cease so long as we continue in humble surrender before Jesus.

Growing in Christlikeness can be challenging and even painful at times! It is like a gardener who prunes his plants so that it can bear more fruit. He does so by cutting away dead wood and living tissues so the vine can grow even more. This pruning brings forth new life. Similarly, God chooses to prune us through difficult times in our lives so that we can be moulded into His likeness and become even more fruitful.

John 15:1-2

¹ I am the true vine,
and my Father is the
gardener. ² He cuts off
every branch in me that
bears no fruit, *while*
every branch that
does bear fruit
he prunes so that
it will be even
more fruitful.



In an age of instant gratification where we want to see results quickly, we might expect the same for spiritual maturity. For clay to turn into stone and stone to become a precious jewel, time is needed. Perhaps fake jewels can be made in a short time, but Christian growth has no shortcuts. As God works in our hearts, we surrender to Him and patiently wait for our character transformation to take place.

Amy Carmichael was a missionary in India who faithfully devoted herself to rescuing girls from a terrible life of slavery and shame. One day she arranged for her children to visit a goldsmith to see him at work refining gold. Sitting beside a small charcoal fire, the goldsmith was refining the gold in a traditional way. His small, home-made furnace consisted simply of two common red curved roof tiles, with one tile over the other like a lid.

To purify the gold, the refiner first ensured the fire was hot. He then dropped a lump of ore into the heat and waited. After some time, he lifted the gold out with a pair of tongs, let it cool and examined it closely. He then placed the gold in the furnace again and blew the fire hotter than it was before. The process went on and on; the fire grew hotter and hotter.

“How do you know when the gold is purified?” someone asked.

The refiner smiled and replied, “When I can see my face in the gold, then it is purified.”

In the same way, God’s purpose for our lives is to purify us so that we reflect who He is. God looks at our thoughts, hearts, character, emotions, inner motivations and decisions and desires to mould us daily, if we allow Him to.

Reflect: When we look at our own lives, are we becoming more and more like Jesus daily? What are some areas of your life that you need God to continue to transform you in?

2. Be Sent to Share the Gospel

Before knowing Jesus, we were lost in our sin and lack meaningful purpose in our lives. Now, God has given us the greatest mandate to live for, the mandate of proclaiming what Jesus has done and how he has saved us from our sin. We are called to be the sent ones.

Acts 10:42

⁴² *He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as Judge of the living and the dead.*

John 20:21

²¹ *Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."*

At this point in *John 20*, the disciples were hiding in fear of the Jewish leaders after Jesus had died. Knowing that, the resurrected Jesus appeared to the disciples. He assured them that he was sending them, just as the Father had sent him.

Similarly, we may feel fearful like the disciples. Perhaps we feel that we do not know enough to tell others about Jesus. Maybe we are afraid that we do not know how to answer others' questions about God or the Bible. While these concerns are real and valid, God assures us that He is with us even as He sends us out.

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. *And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*”

While we can grow to know more or become more skilful at sharing about what Jesus has done for us, the more important question is whether we recognize what we have first received in Christ. A grateful heart towards what Christ had done for us would compel us to share the gospel with others, even in our inadequacies.

Sharing the gospel to others involves more than just words. It involves showing the grace and character of our God through our lives. As we become more and more like Jesus, we represent and display the goodness and greatness of Jesus to the watching world, telling them of the beauty and the power of the gospel.



Are we becoming more and more
like Jesus daily?

Matthew 9:37-38

³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “*The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.*” ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

The harvest is not that of grains, but one of the souls of people, of those who are deeply loved by God and whom Jesus also died for. The Bible is clear that many yearn to know the Good News, but there are not enough messengers.

The question for us today is this – *Will we take up God’s call to be a worker in His harvest field? Will we make His priority of reaching the lost a priority and purpose of our lives as well?*

Reflect: It may come as a surprise to you that one of God’s purposes for our lives is to proclaim the Gospel. It may look different from what you have imagined. How are you faring as a witness where God has placed you in? What can you do to better engage and connect to those far from God?



CONCLUSION ▼

Mankind's search for purpose in life largely stems from our need to feel validated, significant, and valued. Through the Cross, God has already demonstrated how valuable, significant, and loved we are. As His children, we no longer need to be or do something to feel like our lives have purpose. Instead, we can live out God's purposes for us as His children and experience joy, peace and fulfilment.



REFLECT ▼

What are your motivations when you seek God for your purpose in life? Are your motivations from a heart that desires to do His will or are you seeking answers largely for self-actualisation?

What if God does not clearly reveal a specific path or plan for your life? Are you content to rely on what God's Word has already revealed and simply follow God in faith?



RESPOND ▼

Take time to prayerfully reflect on your personal desires, goals, or dreams for your life. How far are they aligned with God's? Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and take time to listen to what God is speaking to you about.

SESSION 3

How do I make biblically wise decisions with God?

Have you ever gone into a huge supermarket and felt overwhelmed by the sheer volume of choices presented to you? Fortunately, choosing what to buy in a huge supermarket may not have a huge long-term impact on our lives. Unfortunately, we experience the same feelings of being overwhelmed when faced with making important life decisions, especially when choices abound.

What course should I study? What should my career path be? Who should I marry? What school should I send my kid to? What should I do upon retirement?

These life crossroads may not look that different from those that non-believers have to make.

What then guides us as believers in making these decisions? What does the Bible teach us about navigating and making these decisions? How do we live out our Christian identity through godly decision making?

WHY DO WE NEED TO MAKE BIBLICAL DECISIONS?

Christ-followers are to follow Christ. As children of God, we no longer live like the world, value the things of the world and make decisions purely based on our hearts' desires. As *Romans 12* puts it, we are to be transformed and to discern what God's will is, and to obey it. Since Jesus is our Lord, we rightly look to Him for direction as we make decisions.

Romans 12:1-2

¹ Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is —his good, pleasing and perfect will.

The kind of decisions we make and how we make them can also serve as powerful testimonies of the goodness and greatness of God in our lives to others. As we follow God's ways, it naturally sets us up to be different from the world. God's name can be glorified through our obedience when we choose to make godly decisions which may puzzle or sometimes seem illogical to the watching world.

1 Corinthians 10:31

³¹ So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

“Knowing the Bible helps us know
the God of the Bible.”

WHAT IS A BIBLICAL DECISION?

Before understanding what a biblical decision is, a distinction first needs to be made between moral decisions and life choices.

Moral decisions have clear boundaries because God has laid out in His Word on what He deems as right and wrong. For example, it is clear from the Bible that we are not to lie, steal, cheat, look at another lustfully, slander others, engage in obscene and coarse speech etc. Such moral positions are rooted in the character of God. E.g. because He is a God of truth, He does not cheat.

On the other hand, life choices may not always be so clear-cut. The Bible may have clearly drawn boundaries on God's values in certain areas but may not be entirely specific on the choice we are to make. For example, the Bible clearly directs believers to marry fellow believers, yet does not tell us who exactly we are to marry. Nevertheless, the Bible contains wisdom and principles to guide us when it comes to various life choices.

1. A biblical decision aligns with God's Word

A biblical decision will never go against what God's Word has already revealed to us. God's Word acts as both an initial and the primary test of whether a choice is biblical or not. It acts as a lamp that guides us on the way forward and builds us up so we can live in God's ways in obedience.

Psalm 119:105

¹⁰⁵ *Your word is a lamp for my feet,
a light on my path.*

2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶ *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

We will experience points in our lives where we need to make important decisions. Rather than scrambling to study and read the Bible to find out what God's Word says only at that moment, we can start reading, understanding, learning and obeying God's Word right here and now. God's Word is not just a tool that we turn to when we need direction in life. His very words are alive and give us life.

Reflect: The key to making biblical decisions is a heart that trusts God wants the best for us even when we may not understand why. To what extent do you trust God's Word and allow it to be the authoritative truth in your life?

2. A biblical decision is made with the right heart posture

In our decision-making, God is also concerned about the posture of our hearts. The heart is deceitful above all things (*Jeremiah 17:9*). When it comes to things that are important to us, we may find it hard to truly lay down our preferences especially when it is contrary to God's ways. Biblical decision making begins with a willingness to submit ourselves to God's will and to humbly follow His direction, even if we may not like it.

We can learn from Jesus Himself, who submitted to the Father's will in the Garden of Gethsemane just before His death on the Cross. Even Jesus struggled. But ultimately, He chose to yield to God.

Luke 22:42

⁴² Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.

Here are some questions we can prayerfully reflect on to discover the state of our hearts:



Will I choose to obey God no matter what He reveals or am I looking for the answer I want?

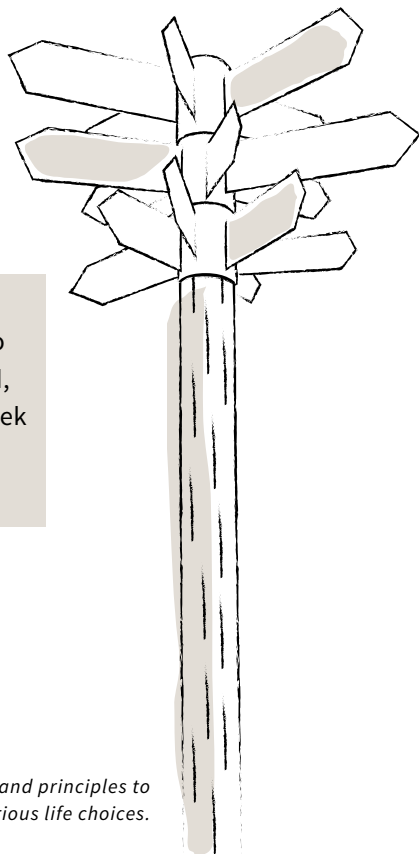


What are the motives driving my decision? Are they God-honouring?



Am I going to God to gain His approval on a decision I have already made or am I open to hear His leading in this matter?

Reflect: How do you make decisions with God? Are there instances where you involved Him just to gain acceptance of what you have already decided, or negotiated with Him, or made excuses not to seek Him, or completely ignored His voice and leading? Why do you think you did so?



The Bible contains wisdom and principles to guide us when it comes to various life choices.

HOW TO MAKE A BIBLICAL DECISION?

There is no one-size-fits-all formula that can help us make a biblical decision since each of us are unique, come from varying contexts and have different life experiences. Having said that, these are some broad guiding principles that can help us in the process.

1. Find out what the Bible says

Does the Bible contain any instruction or practical wisdom with regards to this particular decision you are making? Take time to meditate on the relevant Bible passages and ask the Lord to speak to you.

If you do not know where in the Bible to find answers from, seek help from your mentor or Life Group community. Be careful not to simply Google Bible verses and take single verses out of context to apply to your situation. While we seek God's revelation for our crossroad, we should be careful to interpret God's Word accurately instead of manipulating it to suit our purposes.

Most importantly, after knowing what the Word says, we are to obey it. The reality is we may discover that what God's Word says may be contrary to what we personally desire. When this happens, we will struggle. We may be tempted to ignore God's truth, pretend it says something else, or create justifications for ourselves. Besides knowing what the Bible says, we can spend time in prayer to allow the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts to align our will to His.

James 1:22

²² *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*

Ultimately, knowing the Bible helps us know the God of the Bible. His Word reveals His ways and the character that underpins them. As we choose to obey God's Word, our journey to making decision leads us closer to Him.

2. Spend time to pray and listen to the Holy Spirit

God speaks to us through His Word and also through our prayer time. As we seek Him earnestly, God can choose to reveal His leading and direction to us. However, prayer is not a time to demand answers (especially the one we hope for) and we should not get too disappointed if we do not hear a specific word from God. Prayer recognises our humble position and seeks God who is able. God will act in His time and in His ways, and our responsibility is to ensure that we are ready and obedient to listen to His voice.

3. Seek godly counsel

No matter how mature we are as believers, we all need advice from others. Those who are truly wise would be open to godly counsel and value the input of their trusted friends. If we sincerely want to follow God in making biblical decisions, we should not be afraid to open up to others so they can point out any potential blind-spots or areas of consideration we may have neglected.

Proverbs 15:22

²² *Plans fail for lack of counsel,
but with many advisers they succeed.*

We can turn to fellow believers whom we trust and are walking in obedience to God. The more openly we share to them about our decision-making process, the more they are able to speak into our lives meaningfully. As we involve our godly community in this, we trust that God can speak to us through them.

In Hope Singapore, we believe in mentoring, where a mentor and mentee are committed to an intentional disciple-making relationship, centred on the Gospel. Mentors facilitate their mentees to grow to be disciples of Jesus whose lives are surrendered to Him. Mentors also guide mentees in making biblical decisions through honest dialogue. If you would like to have a mentor to journey with you and help you grow in your walk with Christ, speak to your Lifegroup leader.

There is a growing tendency to think the Christian faith is an individual or solo experience as it is just “between me and God.” It will inevitably be a humbling process to reveal our brokenness to another. Yet, it is in the seeking of godly counsel and in mentoring that we can walk in the wisdom and faith of our predecessors. As we confront new challenges of today, we tap into such trusted companions, trusting that all of us are sharing in a journey that is led by God, towards walking in His ways.



CONCLUSION ▼

It can be potentially nerve-wrecking to make important life decisions with long-term consequences. Fear of making the wrong decision may haunt us. Anxiety over whether we are doing what is best may plague us. For Christians, our greatest comfort and assurance is knowing that our Father in Heaven longs to guide us in His love and always has our best interests in mind. When we make decisions with God, in obedience to Him with our hearts fully surrendered to His will, we know we are ultimately in good hands.



REFLECT ▼

What are some areas of your life you may find difficult to obey God in the decision-making process? Why?

Out of the three practical guidelines in making a biblical decision, which do you find most difficult. Why?



RESPOND ▼

Is there an important life decision you have to make soon? What are some steps you can take to help yourself make a biblical decision?

Additional Resources

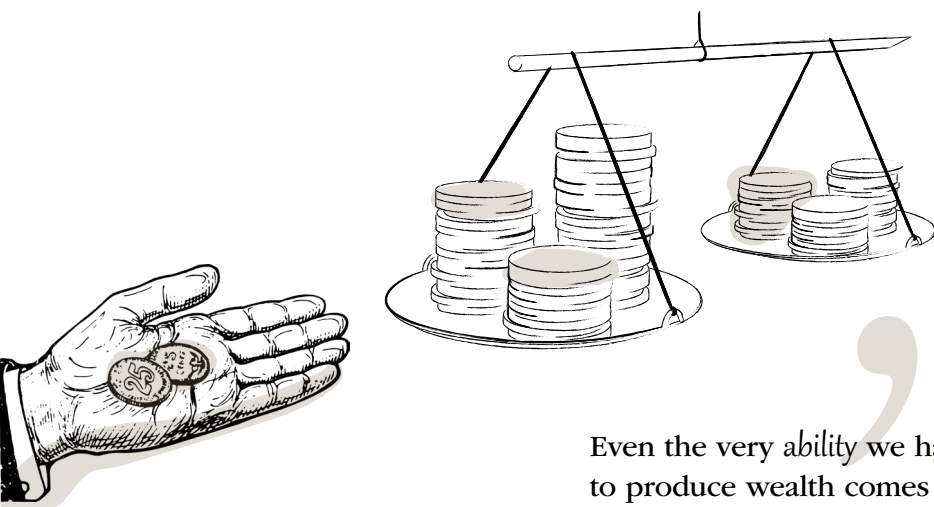
- Discovering and Doing God's Will (tinyurl.com/discoveringanddoinggodwill-pdf)
- Mentoring Guide (tinyurl.com/MentoringGuideForMentors-pdf)
- Role of a Mentor and Mentee (tinyurl.com/mentormentee-pdf)

SESSION 4

Why should I give to God?

Once, a little boy excitedly gave his father a chocolate bar, exclaiming “Look what I bought you Daddy!”. His father chuckled, gave him a big hug and said, “Thanks son for buying me a chocolate bar with the money I gave to you.”

This story well represents how we can view money in the light of our relationship with God. In this lesson, we will learn how believers, on the basis of their relationship with God, can choose to view money and apply biblical principles with regards to the practices of money.



Even the very ability we have
to produce wealth comes from
God Himself!

MONEY: God's WEALTH GIVEN TO US

1. We trust God our Provider

God created the world and everything in it, including us. As the ultimate source, He is the first owner of everything.

1 Chronicles 29:11-13

¹¹ *Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power
and the glory and the majesty and the splendour,
for everything in heaven and earth is yours.*

*Yours, LORD, is the kingdom;
you are exalted as head over all.*

¹² *Wealth and honour come from you;
you are the ruler of all things.*

*In your hands are strength and power
to exalt and give strength to all.*

¹³ *Now, our God, we give you thanks,
and praise your glorious name.*

Psalms 24:1

¹ *The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;*

Though God is the Creator, He is also a generous giver who loves us and provides for our every need. His greatest display of generosity was that on the Cross, where He gave His one and only son Jesus to die for our sins.

Romans 8:32

³² *He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him
up for us all—how will he not also, along with him,
graciously give us all things?*

From creation, God has given Man life in all its fullness and diversity. This includes our time, talent and treasures, things that God has graciously entrusted and provided for us. Some of us may believe that the financial resources we have are the fruit of our labour. We may have slogged hard to get to where we are today. But even the very ability we have to produce wealth comes from God Himself!

Deuteronomy 8:17-18

¹⁷ *You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.”* ¹⁸ *But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.*

Since God is our Provider, we both play our part to work, which He has commanded, and also place our trust in Him who provides. We are not beholden to earn our wealth solely on our own, because as a loving and good Father, God has promised to take care of our needs. Instead of worrying about what we need, we can look to God, trusting in His providence.

Matthew 6:28-33

²⁸ *“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin.”* ²⁹ *Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these.* ³⁰ *If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?* ³¹ *So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’* ³² *For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.* ³³ *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

2. We love God and not wealth

The world's pursuit of wealth is relentless. People spend their entire lives making money to buy things and experiences that grow old, eventually leading them to chase after newer ones. Without realising it, the money we own eventually owns us. Our possessions begin to possess us. The Bible calls all this meaningless.

Ecclesiastes 5:10

¹⁰ Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless.

As Christ-followers who are devoted to walk in His ways, our view and use of money matters because it reveals what our heart is beholden to. God must remain our only Lord and Master, not money.

Matthew 6:24

*²⁴ No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve both God and money.***

1 Timothy 6:7-10

⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹ Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Reflect: Think about how you save and spend money. What does it reveal about your view on money? How does being a believer change the way you view and relate to money?

3. We follow God's ways in how we use money

Since God has provided for us and given us the ability to produce wealth, we are responsible to faithfully use money in accordance with our identity in Him. We use God's treasures in God's way, for God's purposes and glory.

When we look at the world, we may be tempted to live like them: accumulating wealth, striving for more possessions and doing whatever it takes to improve our standard of living. But as believers who experience God as our Provider and understand His generosity, we learn to live with open hands, remembering that everything has come from God. We also use what God has given to us wisely and generously. One day, even if some of our possessions or finances are taken away, we remember and trust in God's sovereign providence.

Practically, we remember God's provision and generosity through two means. Faithful tithing and generous giving.



Faithful Tithing

WHAT IS TITHING?

Tithing refers to the act of giving back a tenth of what God has first given to us because the tithe belongs to Him.

Leviticus 27:30-33

³⁰ *A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord.* ³¹ *Whoever would redeem any of their tithe must add a fifth of the value to it.*

³² *Every tithe of the herd and flock - every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod - will be holy to the Lord.* ³³ *No one may pick out the good from the bad or make any substitution. If anyone does make a substitution, both the animal and its substitute become holy and cannot be redeemed.*

WHY DOES GOD WANT US TO TITHE?

• Tithing teaches us to depend on God

Humans are forgetful and God knows it! In fact, it is most easy for us to forget God when life is sailing smoothly. Material security is one of the most common reasons why people forget God. God first commanded the Israelites to tithe so that they will remember that He is with them, and He is the one who enabled them to produce the wealth that they have. In the same way, we learn the practice of tithing in the Old Testament, upholding the same lesson that indeed, all we have came from Him.

Through tithing, we acknowledge that God is our Provider. However much we may earn, the tithe, which belongs to God and is set apart for Him (*Leviticus 27:30-33*) serve as a constant reminder of his provision, lest we become proud. When we tithe faithfully, regardless of the amount we have or the circumstances that we are in, we are declaring in faith that we are depending on God, not money.

Deuteronomy 8:11-17

¹¹ *Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day.* ¹² *Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down,* ¹³ *and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied,* ¹⁴ *then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.* ¹⁵ *He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock.* ¹⁶ *He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you.* ¹⁷ *You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.”* ¹⁸ *But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.*



When we tithe faithfully, we are
declaring in faith that we are
depending on God, not money.



• Tithing resources God's work

So what is the tithe used for? The Bible tells us that the tithe is given as an inheritance for the Levites for their full-time contribution in the tent of meeting. In the modern context, the tithe is used as an allowance from God to the church workers who are contributing full-time to the church. The tithe is also used to finance various ministry activities in the church.

Numbers 18:21-24

²¹ I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the tent of meeting. ²² From now on the Israelites must not go near the tent of meeting, or they will bear the consequences of their sin and will die. ²³ It is the Levites who are to do the work at the tent of meeting and bear the responsibility for any offenses they commit against it. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. They will receive no inheritance among the Israelites. ²⁴ Instead, I give to the Levites as their inheritance the tithes that the Israelites present as an offering to the Lord. That is why I said concerning them: 'They will have no inheritance among the Israelites.'

Tithes received at Hope Singapore are used to resource the mission of the church in the areas of discipleship, outreach and care. You can read more about how you can tithe here:

hopesingapore.com/give

Reflect: What are your views on tithing? What are some reasons which can hinder you from tithing regularly? How can you overcome them?

Generous Giving

WHAT IS GIVING?

Do you know that giving is different from tithing? While the tithe belongs to God, and we present our tithes in recognition and remembrance of His provision, what we give to God is a voluntary offering in generosity.

When we give to God, we reflect a heart of gratitude towards what God has blessed us with – be it the food on the table, the people in our lives, our jobs, or any other blessings we receive. We can also give because of God's goodness and faithfulness in our lives. When we give, whether to the church body collectively or to the people of God individually, our generosity is a mirror of God's generosity towards us.

HOW SHOULD I GIVE?

• With Faith

God is pleased when we give in faith. Our faith giving glorifies and honours Him as it expresses our acknowledgement of His kindness to us.

Luke 21:1-4

¹ As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury.

² He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. ³ "Truly I tell you," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. ⁴ All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

• With a Cheerful Heart

God delights in a cheerful giver. Instead of giving grudgingly, we can give cheerfully. We can share in God's joy of being able to give and be a blessing to others.

2 Corinthians 9:7

⁷ Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

• Generously

God is a generous Giver. He even gave His one and only son Jesus, to die for our sins and give us new life. As God's children we learn to give generously as God does!

1 Chronicles 29:14

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

• With a Pure Heart

God looks at our heart when we give. Therefore, as we give, to the church body and to God's people, we should give with a heart that seeks to honour God. We give not to gain affirmation from man or to feel good about ourselves, but we give to please God alone.

Matthew 6:2-4

² So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.



CONCLUSION ▼

Why should we, who have little, need to give to God, who is the Creator of all things on earth? Ultimately, the one who benefits most from practising the biblical habits of tithing and giving is ourselves. Our giving reveals who or what we treasure – God or the material things of this world. Our giving reminds us that our trust is in God alone and we merely faithfully manage what God has placed in our hands. We can give because God first gave so generously to us through Jesus.



REFLECT ▼

Do you struggle to acknowledge that your money, even your ability to make money, was first given by God? Why?

Which do you find more difficult: tithing or giving? Why?



RESPOND ▼

Give thanks to God for the ways He had provided for you. If you have a particular need, commit it to the Lord in prayer, trusting He cares for you.

Start tithing to God this month and look for opportunities to give to God and His people generously.

Additional Resource

- Grow Class: “Is Tithing Still Relevant Today?” (grow.hopesingapore.org.sg)

SESSION 5

What does it mean to live in the empowerment of the Holy Spirit?

There was a story told of a Welsh woman who lived in a remote area a long time ago. She decided that it was worth the trouble and the cost to have electricity installed at her home. Several weeks after the installation, the power company noticed that she had barely used any electricity. They sent an electrician to her house to find out if she was having any problems. “Is there a problem?” he asked. “Oh, no”, she responded. “I’m quite satisfied. Every night, I turn on the electric lights so that I can see how to light my lamps using the candles”.

As silly as the woman in the story sounds, we can be prone to do likewise in our relationship with God. God has graciously given us the Holy Spirit, the ultimate power source, to empower us in godly living. But many times, we foolishly rely on ourselves to change our bad habits and grow to become a better person. Unfortunately, our attempts are usually futile and do not effect lasting inner transformation.

Fortunately for us, God has graciously given us the Holy Spirit, knowing that we need His empowerment for godly living and works of service.

THE Holy Spirit: God's GIFT TO US

Before Jesus went to the Cross and departed from Earth, He specifically told His disciples about how He would send the Holy Spirit to enable them and be with them. Jesus knew that His physical absence would leave the disciples feeling fearful, weak and uncertain. While Jesus may not be physically present with the disciples anymore, the Holy Spirit will be with them to guide, empower and sanctify them.

John 14:16-17a

¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth.

John 16:7

⁷ But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.



Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit as a “gift” to His disciples who will give them power to witness.

Acts 1:4-5

⁴ On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

True enough, Jesus' promise came to fulfilment on the day of Pentecost. On that day, the Holy Spirit filled the disciples in a powerful way, enabling them to speak in other tongues. With the empowerment of the Spirit, Peter preached boldly about Jesus, resulting in the conversion of three thousand people that very day (Acts 2:40-41).

Acts 2:1-4

¹ When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

In the same way, the Holy Spirit is with us today, to enable us to navigate the temptations, distractions and challenges of the world so that we can live God-honouring lives and to stay true to what God has called us to.

*Our God is a Father who loves
to give good gifts to His children.*



WHAT IS THE Holy Spirit's EMPOWERMENT FOR?

1. Walk by the Spirit in the transformation of our lives

Have you ever tried your very best to change a bad habit or character weakness, only to fail again and again? In our attempts to do so, we may experience frustration, a sense of helplessness and even feel like giving up at times. Sheer will-power and determination are not enough for us to live a Christian life and to obey God.

As we walk with God, we will experience battles between our fleshly desires (e.g. lust, greed, selfishness, pride etc.) which are contrary to God's word and the desire to walk according to God's ways. In these moments, we need to depend on the power of the Holy Spirit to choose to do what is right in God's eyes. Even in times of weakness or great temptation, the Holy Spirit can enable us to obey God.

Galatians 5:16-17

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

As we rely on the Holy Spirit and allow Him to work in our lives, He transforms us to become more like Jesus and to bear the fruit of the Spirit in all areas of our lives. We may not always immediately see character transformation, but the more we choose to walk by the Spirit, the more the Spirit works in us to transform our inner being to become more Christ-like over time.

Galatians 5:22-23

²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self control. Against such things there is no law.*

The devil will always be attempting to distract and destroy us with the ultimate goal of drawing us away from God's presence and love.

There may be occasions in our Christian journey where we stumble and fall, resulting in us feeling defeated. However, we can be assured that as we turn to God in prayer, He can strengthen us with power through the Holy Spirit to enable us to keep walking in faith.

Ephesians 3:16-17

¹⁶ *I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.*

Reflect: What are some areas of my life which I truly need to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to grow in?

2. Build the body of Christ using the gifts of the Spirit

Besides transforming us into Christ-likeness, the Holy Spirit also empowers us with spiritual giftings to build the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit sovereignly decides the spiritual gifts to distribute to an individual and the Bible records the variety of gifts the Spirit gives. However, what is important is that while there are different gifts, all are given for the same purpose of building up the Church.

1 Corinthians 12:7-11

⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.

¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

As we all have different spiritual giftings, each of us need to be involved in building the Church so that everyone else can be edified and the Church can be built holistically. We humbly acknowledge our role to play in the Church with the spiritual giftings the Holy Spirit has entrusted to us and rely on Him to serve faithfully.

1 Peter 4:10

¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

3. Fulfil the Great Commission in God's redemptive plan

As God's people, we have also been called to partner with Him to fulfil the Great Commission by making disciples and sharing the Gospel to pre-believers. The thought of sharing about God to our pre-believing family members or friends may appear daunting, especially if we are unsure about their level of receptivity. We may also think that we are not ready or experienced enough as a believer to disciple another believer.

Thankfully, God did not ask us to do His work on our own. He has given us power through the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel boldly, to lead and guide us in wisdom as we disciple the people under our care, and to live an authentic Christian life which can witness to His goodness and love.

Acts 1:8

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

When we allow the Holy Spirit to lead and empower us, we can trust that He is doing His work in the hearts of people. This frees us from worrying about whether we have made a difference to their lives. In the end, we yield ourselves as God's vessels to touch lives, but acknowledge that it is Him alone who can change hearts and draw people back to Him. We put in our best human effort, but leave the rest to the Holy Spirit in humble surrender, trusting that He will move.

John 16:8

⁸ When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment

HOW DO WE LIVE CONTINUALLY IN THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE Holy Spirit?

For believers already baptised in the Holy Spirit, we need to learn to live continually in the Spirit's empowerment on a daily basis.

(For believers who are yet to be baptised in the Holy Spirit, you may refer to First Steps and ask your mentor or leader more about it.)

1. Walk in partnership with the Holy Spirit

As much as the Holy Spirit imbues us with power from on high, He is not merely a power source we ought to plug into, but a person in the Trinity we need to relate to. Just as we relate to God the Father and Jesus Christ, we also need to learn to keep in step with the Spirit.

Galatians 5:25

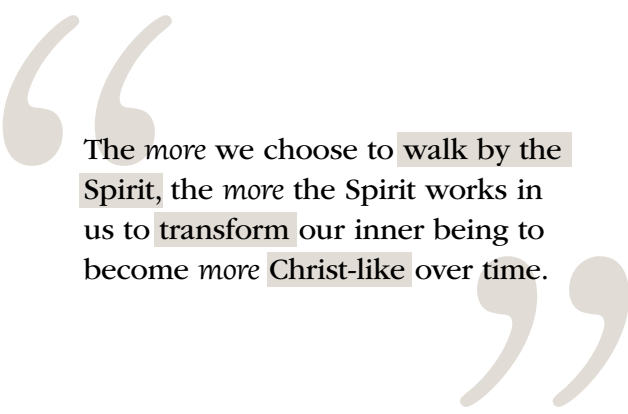
²⁵ *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*

Practically, this means that we are first aware that the Holy Spirit is living in us and longs to lead and guide us in our everyday lives. Throughout the day, we can take short pauses to tune in to the Holy Spirit through prayer. We can ask the Holy Spirit to empower us when we feel tempted or when we face challenges throughout our day.

2. Choose to yield to the Holy Spirit's work in our lives

As we walk in partnership with the Holy Spirit, there will be moments where we hear the Spirit's voice, promptings or even warnings. Though the Holy Spirit desires to lead us in God's ways, He will never overtake our will forcibly. This means that we are still responsible for choosing whether to obey the Spirit's promptings or not.

At times, we may face an intense struggle between our fleshly desires and the Spirit's leading. It is in such moments where we have to make a choice to not yield to our fleshly desires, but to the Spirit. When we choose to yield to the Spirit's work in our lives, we are taking concrete steps in obedience towards eventual Christ-likeness. Conversely, if we continually choose to ignore or disobey the promptings of the Spirit, we will eventually find ourselves increasingly distant from God.



The more we choose to walk by the Spirit, the more the Spirit works in us to transform our inner being to become more Christ-like over time.



CONCLUSION ▼

Do I really need the Holy Spirit's power in my life? Even after understanding what the Holy Spirit's power is for, we need to first come to a humble acknowledgement that by our own efforts and will, we will not be able to live in God's ways or to do His work. The Holy Spirit's empowerment is only meaningful to us when we truly desire to live in obedience to God's word and to play a part in God's grand redemptive work.

As we look inward honestly, we do not need to despair or feel discouraged about our faults, weaknesses or even past mistakes. Instead, we find assurance in the fact that God has graciously given us the Holy Spirit, to journey with us and aid us in godly living, especially when we know we cannot. The Holy Spirit also enables us to serve God and experience the wonder of being a part of God's redemptive work both locally and globally.

Additional Resource

- Refer to First Steps Lesson 9 "What does it mean to be empowered by the Holy Spirit?"



REFLECT ☺

How much do I rely on the Holy Spirit, instead of my own willpower and determination to change?

To what extent do I recognise the role of the Holy Spirit and relate to Him in my life?



RESPOND ☺

What are some ways I can practically keep in step with the Spirit on a daily basis?

In my witness to pre-believers and service to God, what is one thing I can do to rely more on the Holy Spirit?

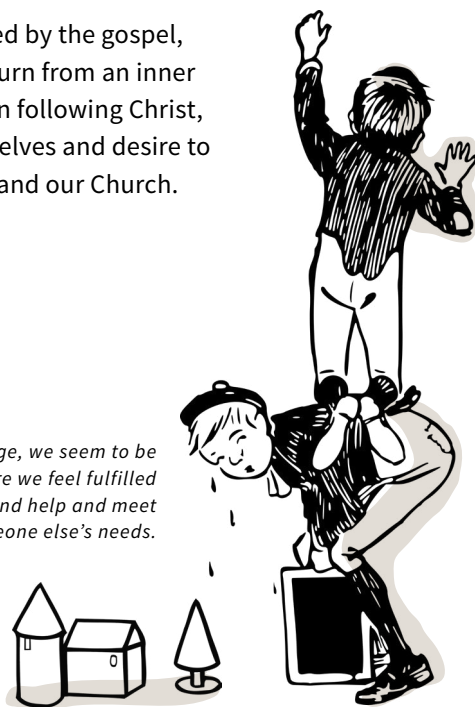
SESSION 6

Why and How can I serve the local Church?

“Can you help Mama?” the one-year-old child beams with pride when he is given the chance to be involved, even in the simplest of chores – dropping his used clothes in the laundry basket, putting his toy back on the shelf. Even from a young age, we seem to be wired in a way where we feel fulfilled when we get to extend help and meet someone else’s needs.

As believers who have been transformed by the gospel, our motivation to meet others’ needs turn from an inner fulfilment to an others-centred focus. In following Christ, we are challenged to look beyond ourselves and desire to serve those God has placed around us and our Church.

Even from a young age, we seem to be wired in a way where we feel fulfilled when we get to extend help and meet someone else’s needs.



WHY SERVE THE LOCAL Church?

1. Christ Role Modelled a Life of Sacrificial Service

When Jesus was on Earth, He exemplified a life of humble and sacrificial service, to the extent of giving His very life on the Cross for us.

Philippians 2:7-8

⁷ *rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.*

⁸ *And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!*

Jesus modelled servanthood for His disciples during the Last Supper by washing their feet. In those days, this was an unthinkable act! Feet washing was a job reserved for the lowliest of servants. But Jesus got on his knees. He knew it was not about Him, but about loving His disciples. Jesus both showed and taught His disciples to serve one another. As followers of Christ, we have the opportunity to do the same.

John 13:12-15

¹² *When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them.* ¹³ *“You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am.* ¹⁴ *Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.*

¹⁵ *I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*

Ultimately, we are able to look beyond ourselves and serve others because of what we have already received in Christ (*Ephesians 2:8-10*). We serve not so that we can be saved. But we serve because we have been saved. The reality of our faith is demonstrated by our service unto others.

James 2:14-17

¹⁴ *What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?*¹⁵ *Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food.*¹⁶ *If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?*¹⁷ *In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*

2. God Uses the Church for His Purposes

In God’s redemption plan for the world, He could have chosen to work primarily through various means - influential global leaders, well-recognised international organisations or even successful nations. But God chose to work primarily through the Church!

Ephesians 3:10-11

¹⁰ *His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,*¹¹ *according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

The Church is the people of God, called to preach the gospel, make disciples of all nations and bring glory to God. God invites us to partner Him in building His Church. As our Lord Jesus served willingly, we too must make a decision to serve the Church that He died for.

Serving the Church allows us to discover the giftings God has graciously given to each of us. All of us are uniquely created by God such that we can play our part in building up the Church. What a beautiful picture it is to see individuals with diverse abilities and talents coming together as one to serve the Church!

1 Peter 4:10

¹⁰ Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

3. Serving is Part of Our Journey in Growing in Christlikeness

We learn best by doing. When we serve the Church, we discover more about ourselves – our preferences, character flaws and motivations. As God uses us to meet the needs of others and to build the Church, He is also growing us to become more like Jesus. We love more like Jesus, think of others beyond ourselves and give sacrificially to meet their needs.

Ephesians 5:1-2

¹ Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Reflect: Being powerful and sovereign, God could have chosen many other ways to fulfil His redemption plan. Why do you think God chooses to use the Church, made up of sinful individuals like you and me, for His purposes? How does that make you feel?

HOW CAN I SERVE THE LOCAL Church?

How do I begin to serve the Church? Some of us look at the seasoned worship leaders, preachers and even those around us who seem so talented and experienced in serving in the church and feel small. What can I really give when I'm not as talented or experienced as others?

1. Serve with the Right Heart Attitude

In God's eyes, the heart of the matter is really the matter of the heart. Beyond the actual skills and talents we can contribute, God desires for us to have the right heart attitude and motivations behind serving. Who we are is more important than what we do.

In Jesus' words, the greatest commandment is to love God and then to love those around us. Christlike service is motivated by love and gives sincerely, without expecting anything in return.

Matthew 22:36-39

³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

1 Corinthians 16:14

¹⁴ *Do everything in love.*

It always feels good when others appreciate or affirm us for our service. But what if we don't always get that? The reality is that many times, our service to others or the church can go unnoticed. Instead of feeling discouraged, we remember that our aim is to please God, rather than man. We serve out of gratefulness to what God has graciously done in our lives. God sees our heart and service, and that is more than enough for us.

1 Corinthians 10:31

³¹ *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

Reflect: What do you think are some poor attitudes we can have in serving God? How can you guard yourself against it?

”

Serving the Church allows us to discover the giftings God has graciously given to each of us.

2. Practical Suggestions

• Start from the Life Group God has placed us in

An immediate way you can serve is to be involved in the Life Group that God has placed you in! There are a variety of roles you can contribute in during Life Group. They include roles such as the Chairperson, Games Leader, Testimony Facilitator, Holy Communion, Worship Leader etc. Speak to your Life Group Leader to find out how you can support him/her by serving in your Life Group.

In addition to these Life Group roles, you also play an important part in meeting the needs of your Life Group members. Be genuinely interested in their lives. Find out how you can support or encourage them. Pray for them. Better yet, ask the Lord how you can be a vessel of His love to your brothers and sisters.

As Mother Theresa wisely said, we can all “do small things with great love”.

• Seek opportunities to join a ministry in the church

You may also consider serving by joining a ministry in the church. Think about the skills that God has given you. How can you use these to build up the church?

Alternatively, speak to your Life Group Leader and discuss how you can use your unique abilities to contribute. Go to [**hopesingapore.com/contribute**](https://hopesingapore.com/contribute) to see the list of available ministries you can consider.



CONCLUSION ▼

Through Jesus' life, we learn that love is characterised by humble service unto others. As people who have been redeemed by the love of Christ, we are now compelled by that very same love to serve those around us. God invites us to come alongside Him to build His Church.

It is the Church whom He died for. It is the Church that will carry out His redemption plan for humanity. What an amazing privilege it is to be able to play a part in God's grand plans for the Church!



REFLECT ▼

How does Christ's humble and sacrificial service impact and inspire you?

What are some unique strengths or abilities God has given to you? Give thanks for them and ask the Lord for ideas on how you can serve.



RESPOND ▼

How can you serve the people in your Life Group and be a blessing to them?

Is there a ministry in the Church you can contribute to with your skills and talents?

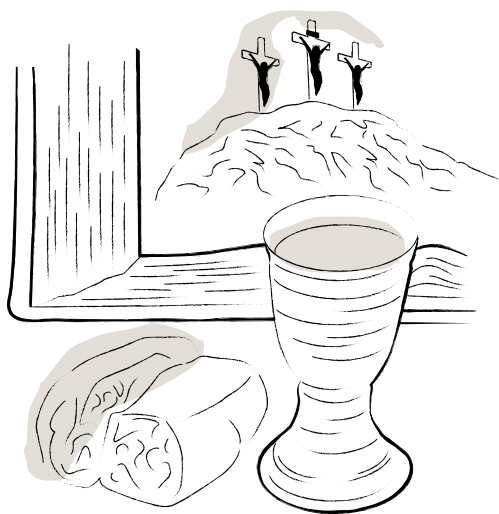
Additional Resources

- Contribute Class (grow.hopesingapore.org.sg)

SESSION 7

What is the significance of the Holy Communion?

On the night before Jesus was betrayed and crucified, He instructed His disciples to remember His impending death and resurrection by observing the Holy Communion. During the Holy Communion (also known as ‘The Lord’s Supper’), believers typically take a cup of red-coloured drink and a bread (or wafer) together. This session will help you understand why we partake in the Holy Communion together as a community of believers and what the bread and cup symbolise.



WHY DO WE TAKE THE Holy Communion?

Jesus died on the Cross to pay for the penalty of our sins and rose again three days later. When we repent of our sins and put our trust in Jesus, we receive His forgiveness and a new life in Him. But this is not all! Jesus also promised that one day, He will come back for us. The Holy Communion is a significant time that the community of believers specially set apart in order to remember the death and resurrection of Jesus as we wait for His return. The Holy Communion can be taken whenever believers gather, commonly in a congregational service or during Life Group gatherings.

Luke 22:17-20

¹⁷ After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸ For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

¹⁹ And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

²⁰ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

WHAT DOES THE BREAD AND THE CUP MEAN?

Believers typically take a cup of red-coloured drink (usually grape juice) and a piece of bread (or a wafer). The bread symbolises the body of Jesus that was sacrificed for us. He was beaten, whipped and pierced because of our sins. The cup represents the blood that Jesus shed when He gave His life to pay for our sins. Hence in taking the Holy Communion, we are reminded that though we are sinners, we have been forgiven through what Jesus has done on the Cross. In addition, we also proclaim in faith that Jesus will be coming back for us.

1 Corinthians 11:26

²⁶ *For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

HOW SHOULD WE TAKE THE HOLY COMMUNION?

1. With a Sincere and Grateful Heart

Jesus gave thanks when He had the Last Supper with His disciples. The thanksgiving prayer signifies that the Lord's Supper is to be taken with a grateful heart. As we partake in the Holy Communion we participate in it sincerely with a heart of thanksgiving as we remember what Jesus has done for us on the Cross.

Matthew 26:26-29

²⁶ *While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."*

²⁷ *Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you." ²⁸ This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."*

The Bible also encourages us to take the Holy Communion seriously and sincerely, instead of treating it lightly or carelessly. As we remember what Jesus had done for us on the Cross, we can also pause to do a “heart check” on ourselves: Do we value Christ’s work on the Cross for us? Are we actively walking in Christ and abiding in Him every day? Do we believe that Christ is coming back for us one day?

2. As a Community

Besides remembering the Cross as we take the bread and the cup, we also remember that we are taking Communion with fellow believers. When we came to place our faith in Jesus who died for us, we have been baptised into – joint into the Body of Christ. That Body of Christ is the Church! Every time we take the bread and the cup, we identify ourselves not just as an individual with a personal spiritual life. We are part of a community of believers with a shared faith experience. We remember we have brothers and sisters in the faith – a spiritual family.

Hence, the Communion meal is a community ritual and thus should not be taken alone. In the original practice, a loaf of bread was actually broken and divided among participants and partaken together, serving as a symbol of fellowship and togetherness among the believers. Therefore, as we take the Holy Communion, we should consider if there is any brother or sister we have unresolved issues with and seek to reconcile with him or her to preserve the unity of the Body of Christ.



The Communion meal is a community ritual and thus should not be taken alone.

1 Corinthians 11:27-29

²⁷ So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.

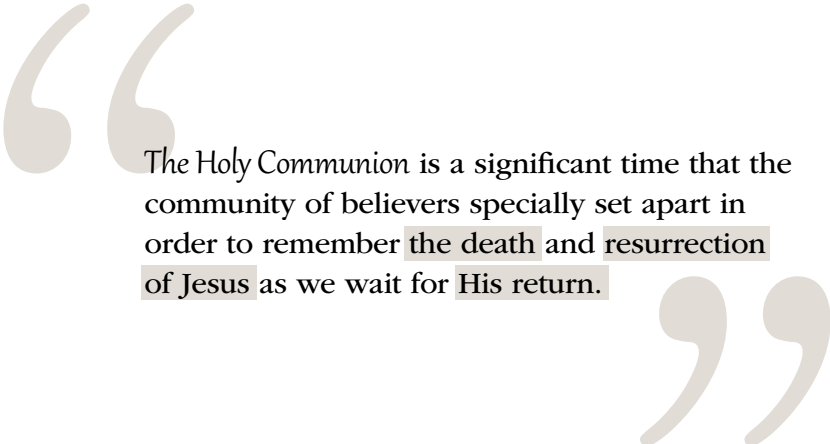
²⁹ For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.

3. As Often as Possible

We are encouraged to take the Holy Communion as often as possible, whenever we gather as a community of believers. Jesus instituted the ritual for the believers because humanly we are prone to wander and be forgetful. Jesus wants us to remember what He has done because one day He will return for us.

Acts 20:7a

^{7a} On the first day of the week, we came together to break bread.



The Holy Communion is a significant time that the community of believers specially set apart in order to remember the death and resurrection of Jesus as we wait for His return.



CONCLUSION ▼

Beyond a mere ritual, the taking of the Holy Communion is a sacred act that celebrates Christ, His Church, and His eventual return. It enables us to live as grateful people, in remembrance of the past work of Christ and in anticipation for His glorious return in the future.



REFLECT ▼

Do I know what the Holy Communion symbolises?

Have I participated in the Holy Communion meaningfully?

How should I respond to the differences or conflicts I have with others in the family of God when taking the Communion elements?



RESPOND ▼

Take a minute to remember what Jesus has done for you before taking the Holy Communion this week together with other believers.

Additional Resource

- Worship song - “Remembrance” by Matt Redman

SESSION 8

How do I live right with others?

Joy, patience, kindness, gentleness. Envy, anger, pride, bitterness. These are just some words that can describe the relationships we have with people. As we live in the world and interact with others, we are bound to experience them. Particularly in conflict, the second set of descriptions comes close to our hearts. Sin is one of the main causes of conflict among people. Clearly, sin did not just affect our relationship with God but also with people.

As Christians, following Christ can bring about a transformation to the relationships around us. In Christ, we can live in right relationships with people, whether they are fellow brothers and sisters or pre-believing family members, colleagues, and friends.

For some of us, we may have been hurt by others during conflicts. We may even still be experiencing pain and broken relationships. This could feel almost impossible. What then are the biblical principles that guide us in living right with others? How should we handle conflict and broken relationships?



IMPORTANT VIRTUES FOR LIVING RIGHT WITH OTHERS

1. Love

The phrase “Love God, love people” best encapsulates how God wants us to relate to Him and those around us. By saving us from our sin, our relationship with God is restored. Beyond that, God also desires for us to restore and to enjoy loving relationships with people He has placed in our lives.

Matthew 28:37-39

³⁷ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’

³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

While commonly thought of as a feeling, God had showed us on the Cross that love is an action and commitment towards the good of the one who is being loved. Beyond claiming to love, God demonstrated it through sending His one and only Son Jesus to die on the Cross for our sins.

Romans 5:8

⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

In everyday living, we may feel that it is difficult to love some people around us. Perhaps they may have hurt us before, said unkind words to us, or just rubbed us the wrong way. The famed Christian author C.S. Lewis shared a piece of advice for those feeling this way:

“Do not waste time bothering whether you ‘love’ your neighbour; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him.”

■ ■ ■ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

More importantly, love is a hallmark of a true disciple of Jesus. We relate to those around us in love, just like how Jesus did: by serving them, being kind and compassionate to them, looking to their interests before our own and building them up with our words.

1 John 4:11-12

¹¹ *Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.* ¹² *No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.*

2. Humility

Pride is a destroyer of relationships. Conversely, those who are humble tend to be better communicators, have more empathy for others and are quicker to admit their responsibility in a conflict. Beyond that, we are to follow the example of Jesus, who humbled Himself to become man in order to serve and save us.

Philippians 2:3-7

³ *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.*

Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,

⁴ *not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.* ⁵ *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ*

Jesus: ⁶ *Who, being in very nature God,*

did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷ *rather, he made himself nothing*

by taking the very nature of a servant,

being made in human likeness.

In most conflict situations, our tendency is to first be critical and point out the weaknesses and faults of others. But here, the Bible teaches us to be self-aware and acknowledge how our weaknesses have also contributed to the situation. Regularly examining ourselves helps us to relate to others in humility, instead of assuming that we are better or “more right” than the other person.

Matthew 7:3-5

³ “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴ How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?

⁵ *You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.*

Typically, we may not view ourselves as proud people. Here, it is helpful to prayerfully ponder on the following questions and ask the Holy Spirit to search our hearts to see if we may have harboured pride in our hearts when we relate to others:



Do I try to win arguments or disagreements at all costs?



Do I tend to speak first, rather than listen?



Do I admit it when I am in the wrong?



Do I apologise and seek forgiveness?



Do I value the other person’s opinion?



Do I speak rudely or unkindly to the other person?



Do I allow the other person to point out my mistakes or faults?



Do I tend to get defensive in conversations?

3. Forbearance

Another biblical virtue that is often neglected in relationships is the virtue of forbearance. It is part of the fruit of the Spirit (*Galatians 5:22*). To forbear is to hold back, exercise patience and restrain towards another. God personally shows us forbearance by His long-suffering love towards us, delaying rightful judgement so that we can repent.

Ephesians 4:1-2

¹ As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

What does having forbearance look like? It may be that we do not easily take offence or lash out at others once we feel wronged. It may also mean that we choose to overlook minor offences instead of retaliating. At other times, it may look like patient endurance, bearing with another in love.

In a world that advocates fighting for our rights and standing up for ourselves, the virtue of forbearance may seem odd and illogical. We may even feel shortchanged or unjust when we choose to forbear. However, as God's people, we can do so as we trust that God is our judge. He will ultimately right the wrongs on our behalf as we choose to live right in our relationships.

Reflect: Which of these three virtues (love, humility and forbearance) do you think you need to grow in the most? Why?

HANDLING RELATIONAL CHALLENGES

1. Be Willing to Extend Forgiveness

One key biblical principle the Bible teaches with regards to handling relational challenges with others is forgiveness.

- **We forgive because God first forgave us**

Someone once said that “everyone thinks forgiveness is a lovely idea until he has something to forgive”.

Fortunately for us, we have received forgiveness from God for our sins even when we did not deserve it. Because of that, we must be willing to choose to forgive those who have hurt or wronged us.

Ephesians 4:32

³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

For believers, forgiveness is not an option, but it is expected of us. Just as our Heavenly Father has graciously extended His forgiveness and mercy to us, we are to do the same to people around us. Choosing to forgive also liberates us from harbouring bitterness and resentment in our hearts.

Matthew 6:14-15

¹⁴ For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

If you are struggling in your heart to forgive someone, perhaps you can take time to contemplate and consider this: *how much have you been forgiven by God? What are the inexcusable sins you have committed against God which He has paid for on the Cross?*

A deep realisation of the immeasurable grace God has extended to us will in turn enable us to extend the same grace to people whom we struggle to forgive.

• **We choose to forgive and entrust judgement to God**

Hurt people hurt people. When we are hurt, we feel that we have the right to “punish” the offender or find ways to make him pay for his wrongdoing. We may do so by giving the person the silent treatment, responding curtly or coldly to him, or even reacting aggressively.

The Bible teaches us to forgive and relinquish our right to seek redress or punishment, by trusting that God will judge each person for his deeds. Instead of taking things into our own hands, we look to God who is just and will administer justice at His appointed time.

Romans 12:19

¹⁹ *Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.*

- **We trust God to heal our hurt and pain**

We do not underestimate the hurt and pain that broken relationships can cause us. In fact, we acknowledge that it can be so real and many of us struggle with it, sometimes for a long time. While extending forgiveness to the offender is the right thing to do, doing so does not immediately take away the pain in our hearts.

As we bring our hurt and pain to the Lord, we can ask Him to heal and restore our hearts. We take comfort in the fact that Jesus Himself endured hurt and pain from the betrayal of those closest to Him, and rejection from the very people He came to save. Jesus understands and He empathises with us.

Isaiah 53:3

³ *He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.*

*Like one from whom people hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.*



*As we bring our hurt and pain to
the Lord, we can ask Him to heal
and restore our hearts.*

Allow the God of all comfort to comfort us in this journey as we navigate the complex emotions and pain we experience in our relational challenges. Just as we entrust our lives to Him, we also surrender and trust that the Lord will heal us and fill our hearts with His unending love and amazing grace.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

³ *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,* ⁴ *who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.*

Reflect: Is there someone in your life you are struggling to forgive? What are some personal obstacles you face in forgiving this person? Commit them to the Lord in prayer.

2. Seek to Make Peace and Reconcile

The willingness to extend forgiveness is an important first step. Beyond that, the Bible also teaches us to be peacemakers and seek reconciliation in broken relationships. We are not just to maintain peace in difficult relationships by minimising contact, putting up a front or suppressing our emotions. Instead, we are to do whatever we can to make peace with others and if possible, seek reconciliation in the relationship.

Matthew 5:9

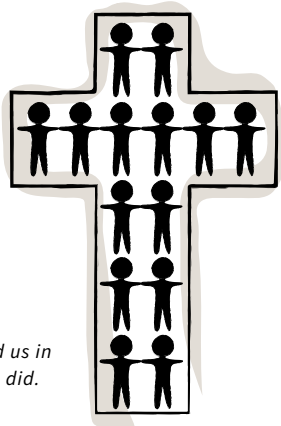
⁹ *Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.*

Romans 12:17-18

¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Making peace and reconciling a difficult relationship is easier said than done. We must also acknowledge that doing so could be a process that takes time. In any case, we can be encouraged that we are able to do so only by the grace and mercy that we have first received from Christ.

How do we know if we have truly forgiven someone? Thomas Watson, a seventeenth century preacher, wisely concludes, we can know we have forgiven “when we strive against all thoughts of revenge; when we will not do our enemies mischief, but wish well to them, grieve at their calamities, pray for them, seek reconciliation with them, and show ourselves ready on all occasions to relieve them.”



We relate to those around us in love, just like how Jesus did.



CONCLUSION ▼

God created us for relationships – with Him and with others. Though sin has negatively affected how we relate to one another, part of God’s redemptive work in our lives involves Him healing and restoring these relationships.

Navigating relational challenges in our lives can be messy, heart-wrenching and possibly emotionally draining. As God’s dearly beloved, we can look to the Cross, the perfect picture of love and reconciliation and draw strength from Him as we work out these relational challenges. Finally, we remember that just as we have first received His love, we too are called to walk in the way of love, by living it out in the relationships God has given to us.

Ephesians 5:1-2

¹ Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.



REFLECT ●

Is there a particular person in your life that has caused you great pain, whom you struggle to forgive? What is God speaking to you about with regards to this person through this lesson?

Do you have a strained relationship with someone? What is God speaking to you about with regards to this person through this lesson?



RESPOND ●

God may be speaking to you about a challenging relationship in your life. Take time to pray, reflect and talk to your mentor to work through this relational challenge. Through this process, trust that the Lord is doing His transformative work in your heart.

SESSION 9

Why does Missions matter?

John Stott, a famous Christian author once said, “we must be global Christians with a global vision because our God is a global God.” Christianity became the global religion it is today because faithful believers across history intentionally took the message of the gospel across different cultures, nationalities and borders. They knew that Jesus longs for people all over the world to restore their relationship with God. Often, these believers did so at great personal cost, going out of their comfort zones and for some, even laying down their very lives for missions. So, what is missions and why does it matter?



WHAT IS MISSIONS?

Missions can be defined as “the specific work of the Church and organisations in the task of reaching people for Christ by crossing cultural boundaries.”

Famous missionaries who have crossed cultures to preach the gospel include Hudson Taylor, an early pioneer in China missions, William Carey, who translated the Bible into India’s main languages and Jim Elliot who died reaching out to an Ecuadorian tribe.

Some associate the word “missions” with courageous believers leaving their homes, going to a faraway land and living simply to preach the gospel to the locals there. With such an image, few of us would picture ourselves involved in missions! While that can be one way of participating in missions, missions is more than that.

In Latin, “missio dei” or the mission of God, refers to mission as part of God’s divine identity. While we often refer to missions as an activity that the Church undertakes, it actually reflects the very heart of God. As imitators of God, missions is also a part of our identity.

Ephesians 5:1 (ESV)

¹ Therefore *be imitators of God, as beloved children.*

Throughout the ages, God works to redeem and reconcile fallen man back to a relationship with Him. As His people, missions is where we play a part in the larger story of God’s ongoing redemptive work globally.

WHY DOES MISSIONS MATTER?

1. Missions is the Heart of God

In Scripture, God revealed Himself as one who has been relentlessly pursuing humankind in love ever since we turned away from Him. As we trace the biblical story from Genesis, God chose Israel through Abraham to be His nation, a people representing Him to the world. Israel was blessed to be a channel of blessing to all nations. Right from the Old Testament times, God already had the intent to reconcile the nations, not just Israel, back to Him.

Genesis 12:1-3

¹ *The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.*

² *"I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;*

*I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.*

³ *I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.*

Israel's continual rebelliousness and disobedience towards God resulted in it not being able to be used by God as His witness to the surrounding pagan nations. Yet God was persistent in carrying out His redemptive work in mankind. As a result, we see how God sent Jesus to be an atoning sacrifice for our sins in the New Testament.

1 John 2:2

² *He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but **also for the sins of the whole world.***

John 3:16

¹⁶ *For **God so loved the world**, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

God's love extends to all people, nations and cultures. It has been His plan all along to save humanity, wanting all to come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:9

⁹ *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, **not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.***



We must be global Christians with a global vision because our God is a global God.

■■■ John Stott

2. Missions is the Responsibility of the Body of Christ

After Jesus' death and resurrection, He specifically entrusted the task of bringing the good news of salvation to all nations to His disciples.

Mark 16:15

¹⁵ *Go into the world and **preach the gospel to all creation.***

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸ *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."¹⁹ Therefore go and **make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

In obedience to His commands, the disciples bore witness to who Christ was through word and deed, bringing the message of salvation wherever they went. Persecution of the early church Christians did not stop them from proclaiming the gospel. Instead, it enabled the gospel to be spread far and wide, to various people groups.

Acts 11:19-21

¹⁹ *Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews.²⁰ Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and **began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus.**²¹ The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.*

The Apostle Paul reminds believers that it is our obligation, as people who have experienced the transformative work of Christ in our lives, to bring good news to those who have not heard. Not only that, Paul took great pride in being able to share the gospel message, for its ability to bring salvation to all.

Romans 1:14

¹⁴ *I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish.*

¹⁵ *That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.*

¹⁶ *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile*

Ultimately, it is God's love that compels us to love people of another nation and culture so as to help them encounter Him personally. All must have an opportunity to hear the gospel and we are responsible to bring the message to them, wherever they are in the world.

Romans 10:14-15

¹⁴ *How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?* ¹⁵ *And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"*

Reflect: "Missions is for the mature Christians or those who are gifted and talented." "Missions is for the young who have the energy and do not have the responsibility of caring for kids and aged parents." What do you think of these statements? Why?

HOW CAN I BE INVOLVED IN MISSIONS?

We are all called to be involved in missions, whether we serve at home or abroad. Whichever life station we are at, there is always a part of God's global work we can contribute to.

1. Pray for God's Work in the Nations

While not all of us would be directly involved in ministering to locals in a foreign land, we can always find out specific needs of missionaries, churches or nations and intercede for them according to God's will.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he exhorts them to always keep on praying for other believers, as well as for the gospel to be preached fearlessly.

Ephesians 6:18-19

¹⁸ *And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.* ¹⁹ *Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel.*

Other possible **prayer points** include:



Pray for God to send people into the missions field (*Luke 10:2*)



Pray for opportunities for the gospel message to be proclaimed in the nations (*Colossians 4:3*)

2. Befriend Foreigners Residing Here (Missions at our doorstep)

Globalisation has brought many foreigners to our shores. Some of these foreigners may have never gotten a chance to hear about Christ in their nation. As we interact with these individuals in our workplaces, schools or neighbourhood, we can be intentional to befriend them, love them like Jesus would and share the gospel to them at an opportune time.

3. Give Generously

Another practical way for us to be involved is to give financially to support the global work of missions. We can use our financial resources to be a blessing to other nations for the advancement of God's kingdom.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

⁶ Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷ Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

*We can use our financial
resources to be a blessing!*



4. Go for Missions

Part of Hope Singapore's mission is to plant churches that proclaim and live out the gospel in Singapore and all over the world. As such, we have daughter churches over 170 locations across more than 30 countries. These churches spread across Asia, Africa, Middle East, Americas and Oceania.



LONG-TERM MISSIONS

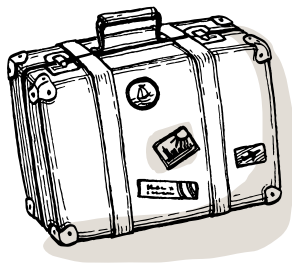
As part of Hope's vision of fulfilling the Great Commission by planting churches, members are encouraged to start local Life Groups wherever they go. These include relocation due to studies, work or other reasons. Members who have been given a specific missionary calling to a certain locality are also encouraged to tent-make as they start a Life Group in the new location.



SHORT-TERM MISSIONS

To contribute to God's work among the nations, you can also consider going on short-term mission (STM) trips to support our daughter churches in their discipleship and outreach efforts. These STM trips serve as a good exposure for those exploring missions or wanting to be involved in missions on a short-term basis.

On such STM trips, we can take time to appreciate how Jesus' saving message relates to them. When we go and we see, God may place a burden in our hearts to minister to these people around the world.





CONCLUSION ▼

The Book of Revelations paints a beautiful picture of the end, where every tribe, nation and tongue will bow before the Lord in worship.

Revelations 7:9-10

⁹ After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice:

*“Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”*

As John Piper remarked, “missions exist because worship doesn’t.” We get involved in missions because we are commanded to. Not only that, we partner God in missions because He is worthy. The name of Jesus is worthy to be worshipped among all nations. He alone deserves all the glory from His creation. To this end we labour, looking forward to that glorious day where all will bow before Him.



REFLECT ☺

How do I view missions?

What can I do to develop
a heart of compassion
for the nations?



RESPOND ☺

What is the role God
wants me to play
right now in His
global missions work?
How can I be involved?

Additional Resource

- Grow Class: Unpacking Missions - The Heart of God (grow.hopesingapore.org.sg)

SESSION 10

What can I look forward to at the end of my Christian life?

“

Begin with the *end* in mind.

”

We are often motivated to stay on task and to persevere through challenges when we can picture the exciting endpoint we look forward to. This is not just true for those running a marathon or embarking on a new project, but also in our relationship with God.

Everyone dies eventually. But in certain cultures, we shy away from talking about death as it seen as a taboo topic. We feel uncomfortable talking about death as many view it as “the end” of everything. Is physical death truly the end for believers? What is the exciting end point believers can look forward to at the end of our lives?

WHAT DOES the Bible SAY ABOUT THE END?

1. We will be with Jesus for all eternity

Believers who put their trust in Jesus and follow Him all the way till the end of our lives can be assured that physical death is not the end. After our death on this Earth, we will be reunited with Jesus and live an eternal life in His presence forever.

John 3:16

¹⁶ *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that **whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.***

What does eternal life mean? It simply means living forever and ever, with God. Life continues for believers even after our physical death because Jesus' death and resurrection on the Cross has paid the penalty of our sin. Instead of being separated from God forever, we are now alive in Christ and can live with Him forevermore!

This is what is commonly known as the “blessed hope”. While others may fear death or feel uncertain about what awaits them after death, God's people can face it confidently. In fact, we can look forward to the glorious and joyful reunion with God who loves us after we pass away from Earth.

1 Peter 1:3-5

³ *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time*

2. Jesus will return and judge the world

Jesus has promised that he will return again for His people. It is often referred to as the second coming of Christ. This return is not a symbolic one but will be a real event that is physical and visible, just as Jesus came and walked on the Earth some 2000 years ago. Jesus' return to Earth will also signify the end of the age.

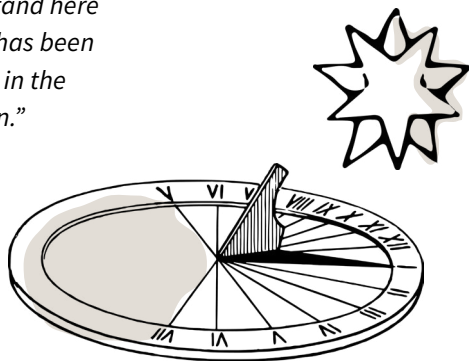
2 Peter 3:10

¹⁰ *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.*

No one will be able to miss it because Jesus will return in victory. The angels told the disciples that Jesus would return to earth in the same way He ascended to heaven.

Acts 1:11

¹¹ *"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."*



Christ's return will be completely unexpected and therefore believers are called to be watchful.

Many have tried to predict when the end of the world will come but to no avail. Though Christ's return is definite, only God knows exactly when and how it will happen. It will be completely unexpected and therefore believers are called to be watchful.

Mark 13:32

³² *But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*

When Jesus returns, all will have to stand before Him in judgment. Believers will be asked to give an account of our lives to Him. In the judgment towards our sins, we can have confidence in our salvation as we have already put our trust in Jesus and His redeeming work on the Cross. Beyond that, judgement also pertains to how faithfully we have followed Jesus in our lives on earth. God will reward us in accordance to our faith and obedience to Him.

2 Corinthians 5:10

¹⁰ *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

Not only will Christians be judged, but those who do not follow Jesus will also be judged and receive the punishment for their sin. All who choose to reject God's offer of salvation through Christ will face condemnation for their sins and separation from God, just as they chose. This is what is commonly known as "hell", where the wicked experience punishment and torment.

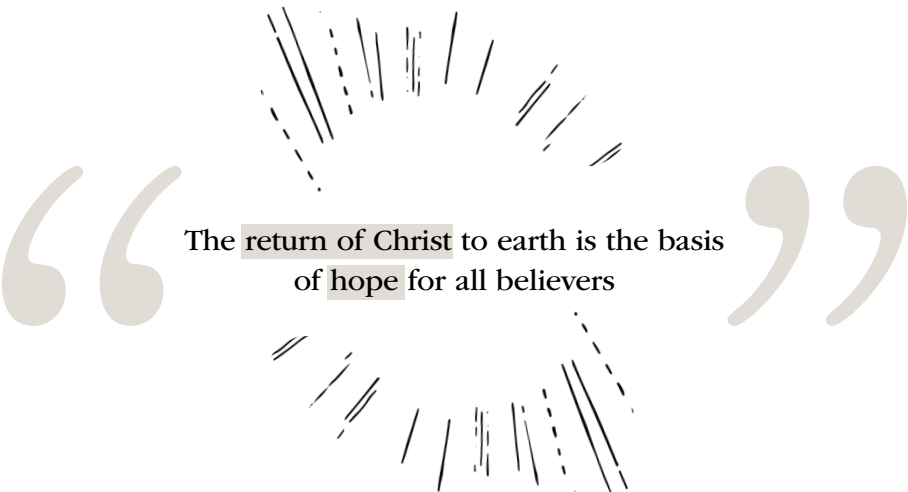
2 Peter 3:7

⁷ *By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.*

3. There will be a new heaven and new earth

Reading headlines of what is happening around the world today often leave us feeling disillusioned - wars, violence, injustice, poverty, divisiveness. Sometimes we may even get desensitised to the pain and suffering others experience. Other times, it makes us wonder whether things will ever get better.

The good news is that when Jesus returns, He will make all things new and restore everything to the way that God has created. In this new heaven and new earth, sin and the effects of sin will be completely eradicated. There will be no more tears, pain, and suffering. Instead, there will be healing and restoration. There will be great joy as we experience God's presence and glory and dwell with Him forever!



The return of Christ to earth is the basis
of hope for all believers

Revelation 21:1-4

¹ Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

This wonderful picture of what awaits us at the end gives us confidence, comfort and great hope amidst the temporal troubles and challenges we may face in our lives on earth. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus is coming back for us, and He will make all things new. Hallelujah!

Reflect: Do you fear death? Why? How does knowing our blessed hope change your perception about death?

HOW SHOULD I LIVE NOW WITH THE END IN MIND?

1. Be watchful in how we live

Instead of living carelessly, we are called to live expecting and ready for Christ's return. Jesus repeatedly reminds the disciples of the need to be watchful because His return is going to be unexpected.

Matthew 24:42-44

⁴² Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Sometimes we go through life on a spiritual autopilot mode. Other times we get distracted by the busyness of life and the days just pass us by. Yet the Bible cautions us to live wisely because our days on earth are numbered.

Psalms 90:12

¹² Teach us to number our days,
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Ephesians 5:15-16

¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

It may be helpful to take time to pause and ask ourselves these questions from time to time: *How am I making use of my time every day in a way that honours God? To what extent am I abiding in Christ and living a holy life, knowing that I must give an account to Christ one day? How willing am I to surrender and live for God's purposes instead of my own?*

2 Peter 3:11-13

¹¹ *Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives* ¹² *as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.* ¹³ *But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.*

2. Proclaim the Gospel

The Bible makes a clear distinction between two different groups of people that Jesus will judge when He returns. They are those who belong to God because they put their trust in Jesus and those who will perish for choosing sin and life apart from Jesus.

The thought of our loved ones being condemned to an eternity of punishment and separation from God may be frightening, but it also reminds us that God has called us to proclaim the gospel to them. Without Christ, they are marching towards a Christless eternity, where they will be forever separated from His loving presence.

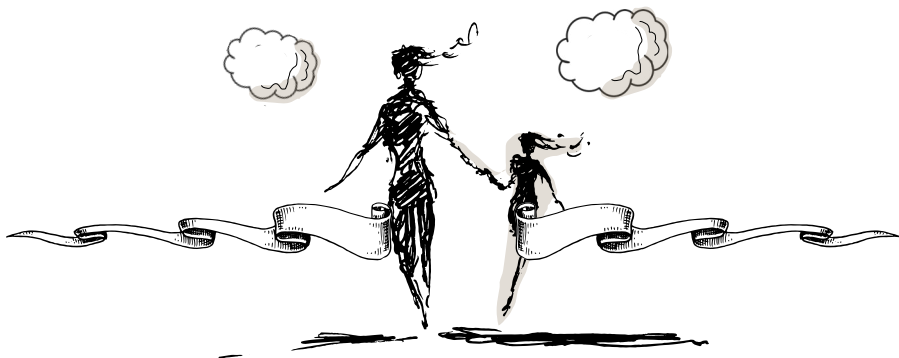
While this is a sobering reality, we take heart that God is loving and compassionate and has already offered His gift of salvation to all who will receive it. Knowing the certainty of the end and judgement, we should lead our lives purposefully on earth to share the good news of Jesus with the people that He has placed around us.

2 Peter 3:9

⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

3. Persevere with hope till the end

In the long race of the Christian life, temptations, hardship and challenges will come our way. Sickness may come, grief will surely be felt. Not only that, those who follow God will face increasing opposition and persecution for our faith before Christ returns. Unfortunately, some will choose to fall away or walk away from Christ.



Matthew 24:10-14

¹⁰ *At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other,* ¹¹ *and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.*

¹² *Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold,* ¹³ *but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.* ¹⁴ *And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*

For us to last the race till the end, we need to choose to persevere by fixing our eyes on Jesus, standing firm in our faith and being certain of the hope we have at the end. The return of Christ to earth is the basis of hope for all believers and it is the reason that we can stand firm even in the toughest of times.

Hebrews 12:1-3

¹ *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,* ² *fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.* ³ *Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*



CONCLUSION ▼

Death is inevitable for all, but it does not have the final say for us, as beloved children of God. In fact, what awaits us after death is our reunion with Christ, which will be a day of rejoicing! While our troubles on this earth may seem aplenty at times, when we look to our blessed hope in Christ, we find strength to press on. It will be worth it when we meet our Lord and Saviour Jesus face to face. It will be worth it when we persevere and hear God tell us “My good and faithful servant.”



REFLECT ▼

How do I feel about Jesus coming back again? How can I prepare and ready myself for his return?

What are some challenges that I might face in persevering till the end when Jesus returns? Pray together for God to strengthen you through the Holy Spirit.

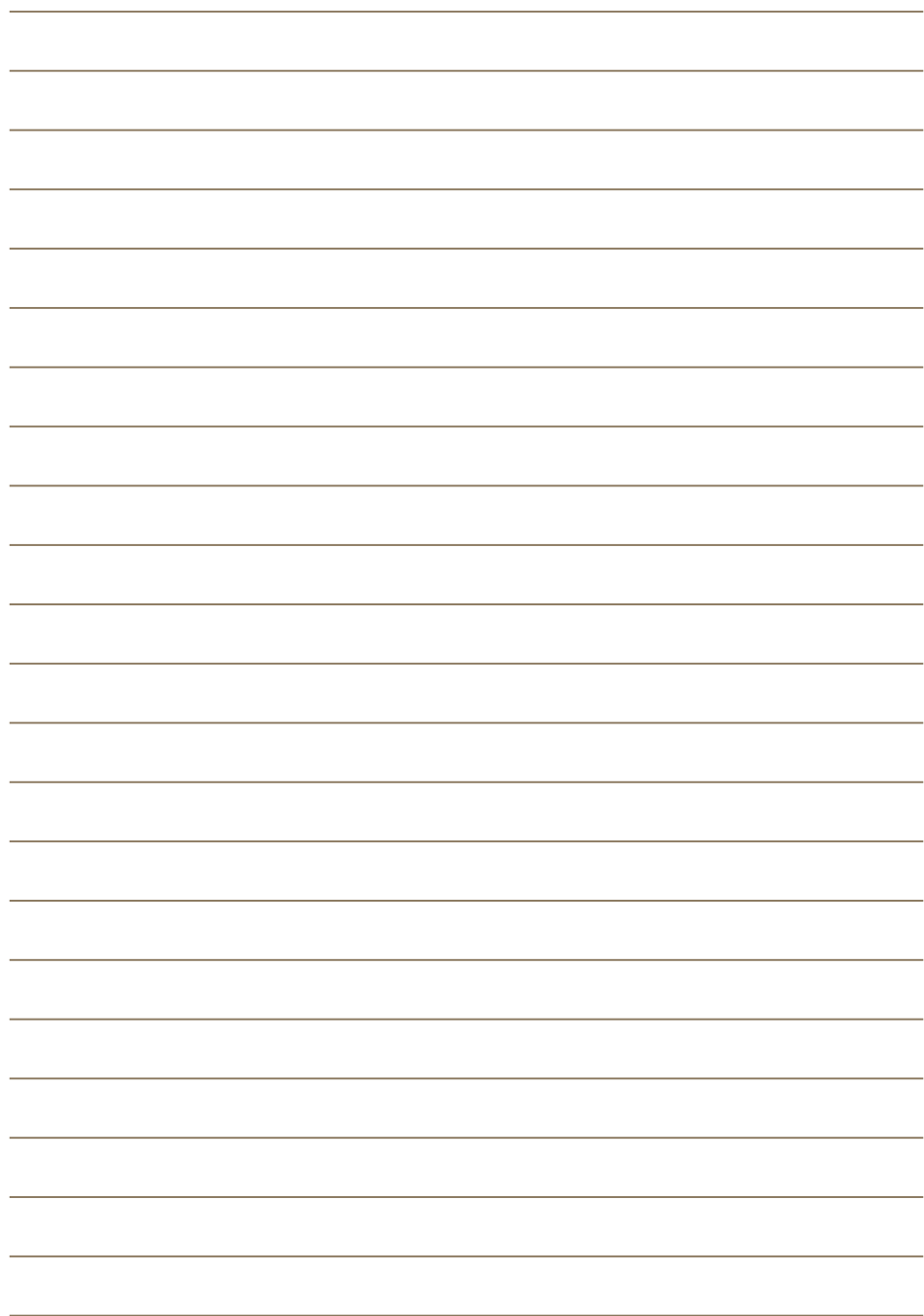


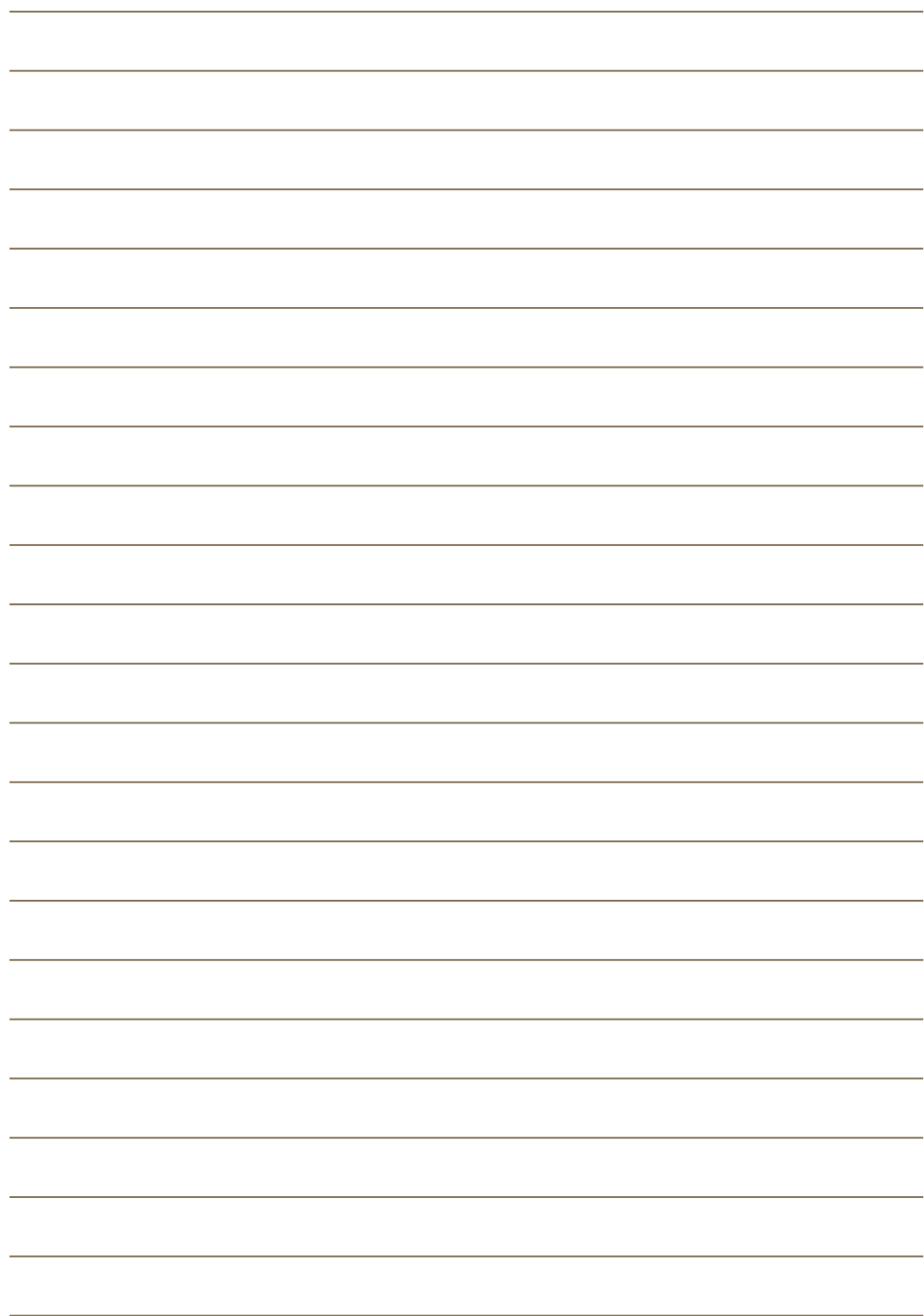
RESPOND ▼

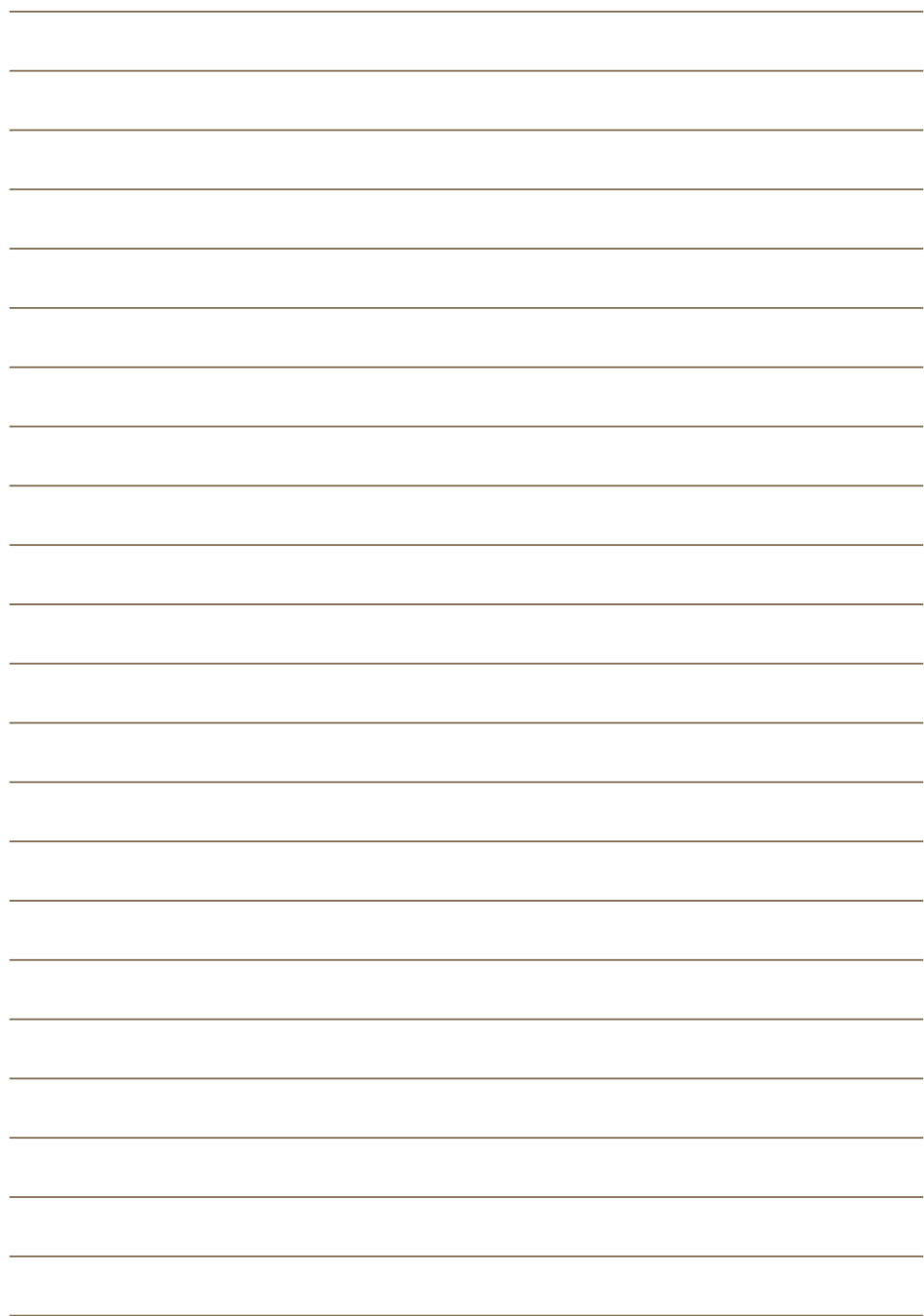
Knowing the inevitability of the end, how can I live wisely to make my life count for the Lord?

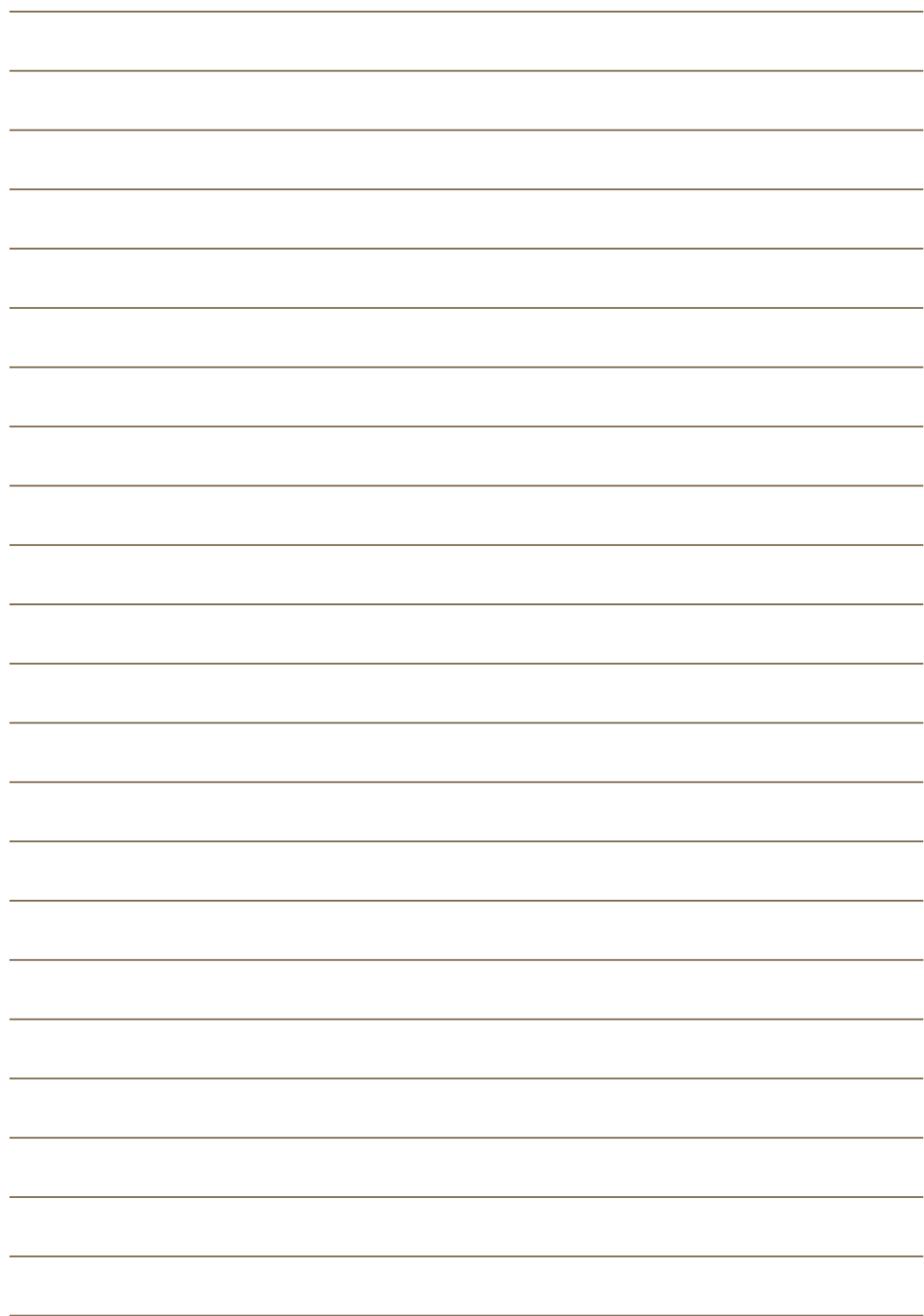
Additional Resource

- Worship song - “Hope of the Ages” by Hillsong Worship











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