

FIRST STEPS

To Following Jesus



CLEAR CREEK COMMUNITY CHURCH

A photograph of a group of people, likely a church congregation, holding hands in a circle. The focus is on the hands and forearms of several individuals. They are wearing dark blue or black shirts. The lighting is warm and slightly dim, creating a solemn and communal atmosphere. Overlaid on this image is a white rectangular frame containing text.

THE GOSPEL IS
GOD DOING FOR
US IN CHRIST
WHAT WE
CANNOT DO
OURSELVES

Jesus Christ was sent as your substitute to redeem you from your sins by living the life you should have lived, dying the death you should have died and rising from the grave in victory over sin, death, and hell. It's more than exciting — it's incredible! But, you haven't just heard it, you actually believe it. You've become a follower of Jesus, a Christian, someone who has placed their faith solely in the person and work of Jesus Christ for their salvation.

What do you do next?

This booklet is designed to help new believers in Christ not only answer that question, but start off on a brand new journey headed in the right direction.

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Know The Gospel Story

Everyone has a story. God has a story as well. It can be summarized in four movements: creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.

God created the world as a paradise, and placed humanity (specifically Adam and Eve) as the crowning glory of it all. God chose mankind to have a special relationship with him by enjoying his presence and stewarding his perfect **CREATION**. God's kingdom, his perfect reign and rule, was in full effect.

But we blew it.

Given the chance to follow God or our own ways, our representatives, Adam and Eve, chose rebellion and, as a result, the cosmos suffered a great **FALL**. Sin entered the picture and consequently, God's perfect creation

is now deeply broken. Nothing remains untouched by the ugliness of sin — marriage, family, work, community, etc. Human beings are left with strife in how they relate to creation, themselves, and most of all, God. His holiness demands that humanity's rebellion be dealt with in perfect justice. Thus, because of the Fall, mankind stands condemned under the judgment and wrath of God. Paradise is lost.

But God, in his great love and mercy, promised to send a rescuer who, through his person and work, would provide **REDEMPTION** for his Creation. Two thousand years ago that redeemer arrived in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus, both fully God and fully human, entered humanity's mess as one of us — breathing the air we breathe, drinking the water we drink, living like one of us. Yet, unlike us, Jesus never sinned. He perfectly obeyed God's law, thus meriting entrance into God's kingdom by his perfection. Jesus did what we should have done but could not do.

Christ then became our substitute by taking our punishment for sin at the cross. God the Father poured out upon Jesus his just wrath that we deserved. Jesus' resurrection three days later proclaimed his victory over sin, death, and hell! We receive Christ's perfect righteousness in return for placing our faith and trust in him alone for salvation. Through the person and work of Jesus, sinners can be fully and eternally redeemed back to God and his kingdom! This is the tale of redemption through God's grace in Jesus, instead of our goodness. We call it the "gospel" or the "good news."

Indeed, there is coming a day when Christ will return and bring **RESTORATION**, returning the creation to its original state of perfection. At his return, Jesus will wipe the universe clean of sin, sickness, disease, and even death itself. Paradise lost will become paradise restored. The kingdom of God will reign on the earth in its fullness! God will dwell with his people like he did once before — in perfect peace and fellowship.

This is the story of history. This is the story

of God. And now, through your redemption by the grace of God in Christ, you have a new role in his story. Knowing the story helps us understand why the world is the way it is, how God wants to use us for his kingdom's sake, and where history is ultimately headed — a time when everything will once again be under God's rule and reign!



**The righteousness of Christ is
the moral perfection of Jesus
credited to those who trust
him alone for salvation.**

Explore Your Gospel Identity

One of the incredible gifts of salvation is that, in Jesus, we have a new identity. The Bible teaches that when someone crosses the line of faith and receives the gospel, they are united with Christ. The Bible describes that union many different ways: we are in Christ, Christ is in us, we are like Christ, and we are with Christ. This union brings with it the blessings Christ earned for us through his work at the cross and should instruct us on how to view ourselves (Eph. 1:3).

Here is a small sampling of some of the wonderful blessings this new gospel identity brings.

IN CHRIST, WE ARE ETERNALLY FORGIVEN!

The gospel shows us that because Jesus bore the full penalty for our sin on the cross, every sin we have ever committed and will ever

commit has been forgiven by God in Christ. Hebrews 10:14 says of Jesus' work: "For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified." This glorious truth of God's grace should not lead us to sin more but free us to serve him all the more! Christians should obey God because of gratitude, not guilt. We are grateful that no matter what happens, God has eternally forgiven us in Christ, in whom "we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Col. 1:14)

IN CHRIST, WE ARE ENTIRELY ACCEPTED!

Jesus perfectly obeyed God's law, making him perfectly acceptable to God the Father. The gospel encourages us that now, because of our union with Jesus, that acceptance includes us as well. There is no more striving to earn God's favor. His righteousness is our righteousness. We are entirely accepted by God because Christ's perfect work was entirely accepted by God. That's why Romans 8:1 can confidently proclaim, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

IN CHRIST, WE ARE COMPLETELY LOVED!

Romans 5:8 says, “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” The gospel points to God’s grace in Jesus as the foundation for God’s love. God the Father loves us as he loves Christ the Son – fully and completely! Indeed, by faith we are adopted by God into his family. We are counted, in Christ, as sons and daughters! The gospel tells us we are loved as much by God today as we will be tomorrow or any day to come. We are loved unconditionally in times of obedience and disobedience, thanks to the work of the cross.

Knowing our identity in Christ carries immense implications for how we live. It is tempting to doubt God’s love for us when we face difficult times or struggle with ongoing sin, however, knowing our gospel identity should provide assurance that any punishment our sins deserve has already been laid upon Jesus at the cross. What a freeing truth to live by! Our gospel identity should continually strengthen our hearts as we remember that in Christ we are forgiven, accepted, and loved.

**“Therefore, if
anyone is in
Christ, he is a new
creation. The old
has passed away;
behold, the new
has come.”**

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17



Look for Gospel Growth

The minute you give your life to Christ in salvation you are ready to grow. Here are some foundational things to know about growing in Christ.

THE BIBLE

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.” – 2 Timothy 3:16-17

The most important tool for growing spiritually is the Bible. The Bible is God’s Word — the method that God chose to specifically reveal who he is and what he seeks to do in the world. Ultimately, the Bible is God’s story of redemption found in Jesus Christ.

Reading God’s Word is imperative for any believer no matter their spiritual maturity. The

Bible teaches us how to glorify Christ with our marriages, families, work, finances, recreation, and everything else. Because it is God’s Word, it is the final authority for Christians and the church. A great place to start reading God’s Word is the book of John.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”

– Galatians 5:16

The most important agent for growing spiritually is God’s Spirit, otherwise known as the Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit helps us grow by empowering us to live for Christ, maintaining our focus on the glorious work of the gospel and directing our steps as we seek to walk with God in grace. The Holy Spirit produces “fruit” in our heart and life — attributes such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).

God grows us spiritually. We cannot make ourselves grow (1 Cor. 3:7). This doesn’t mean we should not employ spiritual practices (e.g.,

A person with long dark hair is sitting at a wooden table in a cafe or restaurant, looking out a large window at a city street. The scene is dimly lit, with natural light coming from the window. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, bold, sans-serif font. The text is arranged in seven lines, with the first four lines in a larger font size than the last three. The text is enclosed in a white rounded rectangle.

**REAL GROWTH
INVOLVES
A HEART
OVERWHELMED
BY THE GRACE
OF GOD IN
JESUS CRHIST**

Bible reading) in order to grow spiritually. We should. However, we must realize the effectiveness of these practices is utterly dependent upon God's grace. Therefore, we should earnestly ask God to move in our heart and life through any spiritual practice we choose to engage.

HOW PEOPLE GROW

"...for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace..." – Hebrews 13:9

As we've already stated, spiritual growth is dependent on God's grace by the power of his Holy Spirit, and is also rooted in the gospel. Ultimately, the reason we commit any sin is because in that moment we love that particular sin more than we love Christ. This is true for sins big and small. Sins are not just transgressions, but lesser loves for lesser things. Therefore, in order for us to experience real change, we must fill up our heart so greatly with love for God that it will overpower and replace the love we have for whatever sin that seeks to defeat us.

This is where the gospel is critical. By contin-



ually feasting upon, and being nourished by, the grace we find in the gospel, we increase our gratitude and love for God to the point that it supplants our love for sin! Real spiritual growth doesn't center on merely changing behavior, but instead aims at the heart of the Christian, calling each of us to look again at the great work God has done at the cross and to be so filled with love and gratitude that obedience follows and growth happens.

THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

"Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for

the present life and also for the life to come."

– 1 Timothy 4:7b-8

So, how can we continually feast upon and be nourished by the grace we find in the gospel? The answer is through spiritual practices (or disciplines). These are practices Christians employ to better receive God's grace to grow. At Clear Creek, we focus on 8 Practices: Scripture, Prayer, Sabbath, Simplicity, Community, Vocation, Generosity, and Evangelism. As you begin your new life in Christ, look for ways to incorporate some of these practices.

**Strong sins can't be merely removed;
they must be replaced – a lesser love
with a greater love.**

Live in Gospel Community

Once someone receives Christ for salvation, they become part of the gospel community known as the church, which is the agency of God's redemptive work in the world.

How can you begin to live well in this gospel community? Here are five fundamental steps to take:

STEP ONE: GET BAPTIZED

[Enter the Gospel Community]

It has been said baptism is the first act of obedience for a new Christ-follower because it is a public profession that one has placed their faith in Jesus for salvation. Much like a wedding ring, it points to a new reality in someone's life. This is why infant baptism, while performed with good intentions, is insufficient. It fails to appreciate the biblical truth highlighted in baptism, namely, one's personal reception of the gospel and conver-

sion to Christ. Being immersed in the waters of baptism is an illustration of our union with Jesus who died and rose to life in order that we might be reconciled to God (Rom. 6:3-4, Gal. 3:27). Baptism is how we publicly identify with Jesus and symbolically enter the gospel community known as the church (1 Cor. 12:12-13).

STEP TWO: JOIN A SMALL GROUP

[Live in Gospel Community]

One of the best catalysts for living in gospel community is by following Christ with a handful of fellow believers at your side. We call them small groups. Each week, small groups "do life" together all over the Bay Area as they gather to study the Bible, pray for each other, share their lives, serve the community, reach their lost friends, and much more. You can join a small group by attending the next GroupLink, our primary event for connecting people in group.

**So we, though many, are
one body in Christ, and
individually members
one of another.**

ROMANS 12:5

STEP THREE: OBSERVE THE LORD'S SUPPER

[Declare Your Connection to Gospel Community]

The Lord's Supper, Communion, Eucharist — these are simply different names for the same meal. Jesus gave his followers the Lord's Supper as a regular reminder about the goodness of the gospel with the bread and cup symbolizing the body and blood of Christ given for us at the cross. Thus, each time we eat of the bread and drink of the cup with our fellow Christians, we declare that Christ is still our hope and the church is still our home (1 Cor. 11:23-26). Each one of our campuses observes a regular rhythm for taking part in the Lord's Supper.

STEP FOUR: SERVE

[Minister to the Gospel Community]

Once you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit gives you spiritual gifts and leverages your talents and passions to serve the church. 1 Corinthians 12:7 says, "To each is given a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." Indeed, every follower of Jesus is a "minister" in the sense that he or she really

does bring something to the table to bless and edify others. Additionally, serving in a ministry area is a great way to connect with people around the church. Consider the gifts, talents, and passions God has given you and find a place to serve.

STEP FIVE: BECOME A MEMBER

[Commit to Gospel Community]

Membership in a local church is about commitment to a local gospel community. By becoming a member at Clear Creek, a person says, "I believe. I belong. I support. I go." All who desire membership should attend a Membership Discovery gathering to further understand the rationale and implications of the four commitments of membership. Ultimately, membership is the way you declare to the church that this local gospel community can count on you.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT
GETTING CONNECTED IN COMMUNITY, VISIT
CLEARCREEK.ORG/NEXTSTEPS

Stay on Gospel Mission

One of the identities you have in Christ is that of a missionary. That's right! You are a missionary. Simply put, a missionary is someone sent on a mission.

Think of Jesus' mission. He was sent to redeem humanity back to God the Father, and to ultimately restore all creation. Christ did so by becoming human like us. He lived with us, showed us what life in the kingdom of God is like through his words and deeds, and allowed us to enter that kingdom through his unique work at the cross!

Jesus was a missionary, sent by God to bring people back to himself.

In the same way, followers of Jesus are sent

into the world to demonstrate through our words and deeds that God has come to restore all people, places, and things by the work of the gospel. This is the mission Jesus gives to us. He said to his followers in John 20:21, "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." Jesus was sent to redeem and restore. We are sent to tell and show others that Christ has come to redeem and restore. This is our gospel mission!

We've been sent by God into our neighborhoods, work, school and every other sphere of life to share how God is restoring the world through Jesus. We should approach every situation in life as an opportunity to display and declare the gospel with our words and deeds. Indeed, one of the most important truths to absorb early in your faith is the idea of being a missionary.

DEVELOP A TOP FIVE

Think of five people far from God that you interact with on a regular basis. Commit to

When we received the gospel of Jesus, we also took up the mission of Jesus.



pray for their salvation and ask God to use you to reach them for the gospel. Keep praying daily for these five people and looking for ways to connect with them missionally.

SHARE YOUR STORY

Once you've become a Christian, the first missional thing you can do is simply share the story of how you received the gospel. Tell people about who Jesus is and what he did for you. You can also share what your life was like before Christ, how you knew you needed salvation, and what becoming a Christian

means to you now. There's no need to wait or "get smarter." You can share your story right from the beginning of becoming a follower of Jesus.

INVITE YOUR FRIENDS

One of the most strategic ways to influence your friends for the gospel is to invite them to attend church with you. Clear Creek desires to partner with you by providing worship services that help people far from God understand the gospel.

Conclusion

The greatest gift anyone can receive is the gospel of Christ! God's grace in Jesus not only grants us eternal life but innumerable blessings to believe and experience now along with our reconciliation to God.

It is our prayer that the first steps taken in your new walk as a follower of Jesus will be headed in the right direction, saturated by, and centered upon, the grace of the gospel.

Doing that well means knowing the Gospel Story, exploring your Gospel Identity, pursuing Gospel Growth, living in Gospel Community, and staying on Gospel Mission.

As you grow in these areas, it is our deepest prayer that God will strengthen your faith and encourage your heart as you walk with Christ now and forevermore.

The Elders of Clear Creek Community Church

**Therefore, as you received Christ
Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,
rooted and built up in him and
established in the faith, just as
you were taught, abounding in
thanksgiving.**

COLOSSIANS 2:6-7

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