

a new creation

*basic Christian teachings for those exploring a faith that is new
--or new again*

earl creps

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--or new again*



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introduction

a new creation

Exploring faith in Jesus Christ is the most important choice anyone can make. This journey is not about joining a religion, but becoming, "a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17) A brand new life awaits you as a citizen of the Kingdom of God. Jesus said, "I have come that they might have life and have it to the full." (John 10:10b)

Anything new creates a lot of questions. Developing a relationship with Jesus will be no exception. *A New Creation* is designed to help those exploring a faith that is new—or new again. It will help you learn how to find answers and nourish a growing relationship with the Lord. *ANC* can be used as an individual study or in groups. Each session unfolds in four stages:

- *Reading*: a brief teaching begins the session. Read this portion carefully and jot down any questions you want to explore further individually, or bring up during discussion if you are in a group. Each teaching is drawn from the bible.
- *Reflecting*: every teaching is accompanied by a short bible verse on which you can meditate. Putting God's thoughts into your heart will help your new faith to grow.
- *Researching*: a series of questions follows each teaching. Look up the bible verses and write your answers during the week, perhaps doing one question daily. You will discuss the questions at your next meeting if you are in a group. "I don't know" and "I don't agree" are always acceptable answers. Remember, this is not a test. It's about exploring God. (*Note*: if you're new to the bible—look up the books in the Table of Contents, and then use the Chapter and Verse numbers to find your place. Example: for *John 3:16*, find the page number of the book of *John* in the Table of Contents, then follow the numbers within John until you find Chapter 3. Within Chapter 3, go down the lines until you come to verse 16. It's all numbered the same way, so it's easy to find things.)
- *Reacting*: you will be encouraged to do something specific about what you are experiencing. This personal project may involve things like prayer or service.

In Christ, life begins all over again. The Lord is going to do wonderful things in your heart and mind. As you experience His love and power, it will be natural to share with others the joy of being God's friend.

Enjoy the journey!

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session 1: alive!

In the beginning God and humanity enjoyed a perfect relationship. When mankind chose to sin (make our own decisions without God) our friendship with God was broken and we became separated from our Creator. This rebellion brought death into the world and made "sin" (self-will) a permanent part of human nature. Apart from God each one of us is without hope in this life and the next.

Our heavenly Father loved us too much to let us remain in this condition. He desired to have each one of his children close to him again, but our self-involvement (sin) stood in the way. So God sent his son Jesus into the world to make a way for us to return to him. (John 14:6) On the cross Jesus took our guilt upon himself and paid the full price for our sins with his own death. He died so that we might have eternal life. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

Salvation (becoming spiritually and eternally alive again) begins when we receive Jesus and his sacrifice on our behalf by faith, believing that, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures..." (1 Corinthians 15:3b-4) Good deeds or religious activity have nothing to do with it. As Romans 10:9-10 explains, "...if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved." Our sins are forgiven and our eternal destiny is assured by our relationship with Jesus.

This is not a commitment to a religion or philosophy. Neither is it a particular prayer or formula. People become alive in Jesus in all sorts of ways. But they all have one thing in common: an entrance into a new love relationship with God through his son. The bible calls this being "born again." (John 3: 3) This is God's way of saying that our life is starting all over again as if the past never existed. Being born again also means that the Holy Spirit now lives within our hearts. (1 Corinthians 6:19) He brings the life of God into our daily existence. God is no longer far off; He is as close as our heartbeat.

We are cleansed and made new by what Jesus has done. He will live forever in our hearts, will care for us on earth, and one day welcome us into his presence in heaven.

meditate:

John 10:10 "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

session 1: exploration questions

1. What is sin? How does it affect the people you know? (1 John 3:4-5; Romans 3:10-12,23)

2. What remedy has God provided for sin? Why has he done this for us? (John 3: 14-18; Romans 6:23)

3. What do these verses say to the person relying on good works or religion for salvation? (Ephesians 2:8-9; Acts 4:12)

4. Is there anyone too bad for God to forgive? (Romans 10: 11-13)

5. How can you know you are saved even when you do not "feel" that way? (1 John 5:13; Romans 8: 16; John 5:24)

my turn:

In your own words, how would you explain to a friend what it means to become spiritually alive in Jesus?

session 2: starting over

What would it be like if we could start our lives all over again as someone else? Are there mistakes you would avoid, missed opportunities you would take? The good news about Jesus is that, in him, anyone can be someone new. Jesus brings us, "out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:9) It's not about just believing differently, but being different because Jesus lives in our hearts.

The bible calls this being a "new creation." (2 Corinthians 5: 17) Because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, God can forgive and forget everything about our past and adopt us as his children. (Ephesians 1:5)

As you become free from the power of sin and death through Jesus, you will begin to notice changes in yourself that you never thought possible. Jesus is renewing your mind through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 12:2) In him we can become someone we've never met before.

The best part of starting over is not having to accomplish these changes on our own. In fact, we cannot! Being a Christian is not about trying harder. It is about admitting that even our best efforts will not be good enough. Only the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts can produce permanent change. Will power and personal reform are good things, but they cannot begin to match what the Spirit is able to do. Our heavenly Father wants only for us to be open to his Spirit and willing to grow in Christ.

Being a new creation is not the end. It is the beginning of an entirely different way of living, what Jesus called an "abundant" life. God has a personal interest in our future and many surprising ways of getting us there. (Ephesians 2:10)

As you read the bible and talk with him every day, he also will open up areas of your life that need a healing touch. He is a specialist at bringing wholeness to shattered hearts. There is nothing too hard for the Lord. (Jeremiah 32:17)

God loves you and will lead you gently into an entirely new way of thinking and living. He is changing you from the inside out. In his power, you are truly free to start over.

meditate:

Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'"

session 2: exploration questions

1. What are some examples of the "old" things God removes and the "new" things God puts into our lives when we become alive in Him? (2 Corinthians 5:17-19)

2. As a new creation in Christ, why do you no longer have to live with guilt? (1 John 1:7-9; Romans 8:1-2)

3. What is the most important aspect of living as a new creation in everyday life? (Colossians 3:14; 1 Corinthians 13:13)

4. How should relationships for followers of Jesus be different from relationships in the world around us? (Ephesians 4:25-32)

5. What should you do if you make a mistake? What does God do? (1 John 1:8-2:2)

my turn:

Forgiveness can help us start over. Receiving it from God through Jesus gives us freedom; but sometimes we need to free others by forgiving *them*. Read Ephesians 4:32. Is there anyone you need to forgive? Take this issue to God, and ask Him to help you. Releasing them will release you.

session 3: water baptism

Important transitions are usually marked by a public symbol. At a wedding we exchange rings. In a business deal we sign contracts. And when you become a believer in Jesus Christ you are baptized in water. Jesus Himself led the way when he was baptized in the Jordan River.

Our water baptism provides a perfect opportunity to make a public profession of faith in Christ as Lord (leader) and Savior (deliverer). It is a way to tell the whole world that we belong to Jesus. We go into the water as he went into the grave and emerge from it as he rose from the dead. What a powerful statement—in water baptism you identify with the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord.

While water has no spiritual power in itself, it is important that every believer be baptized. Jesus instructed it. (Matthew 28:19) The early church practiced it. (Acts 10:44-48) There is no more forceful way of announcing that you are part of God's family, united in faith with believers everywhere on the planet. You are sharing in an experience common to all Christians for 2,000 years.

The bible does not teach that baptism is necessary for salvation. (Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Corinthians 1:14-17) Rather, it is a sign that salvation has (and is) taking place and that the new believer wants to live his or her life for Christ. (Galatians 3:27)

Since baptism is meant to announce faith (Acts 2:38), the bible encourages it for those old enough to understand what they are doing. New Testament baptism also seems to follow a pattern of full immersion in water. The word translated "baptism" in your Bible means, "to dip something into liquid." This kind of baptism also more closely identifies with Jesus' descent into the grave and return from the dead.

However, the method that is used is much less important than what water baptism represents. It is a public way of expressing an ongoing private experience: you are alive in Christ and you want to commit your life fully to him.

meditate:

Romans 6:4 "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

session 3: exploration questions

1. Have you ever been baptized? If so, what did it mean to you?

2. Who should be baptized? (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38, 40-41)

3. Why does salvation *not* depend on being water baptized? (Titus 3:4-5; Ephesians 2:8-9)

4. What should occur in your heart before you are be baptized? (Acts 2:38; Acts 16:29-34; Mark 16:16)

5. What does water baptism symbolize? (Romans 6:4-5; Colossians 2:12)

my turn:

If you have a come to a living faith in Christ, it's time to consider being water baptized. If you express this wish to your church leadership, they will make all the necessary arrangements. If you are not a part of a church, a Christian friend can probably recommend one where you could be baptized. Doing this in a public setting is part of the experience and the message.

session 4: spirit baptism

Becoming a follower of Jesus is the most important thing that can happen in anyone's life. The Lord Jesus now lives in our hearts and is making us into new people—not perfect, just new. He has given us eternal life in the future and abundant life now. All life comes from abiding in him. (John 15:3-5)

Until we reach heaven, we have the privilege of sharing the good news about Jesus. He said, "you will be my witnesses." (Acts 1:8) However, trying to serve God in our own strength will not get us very far. The job is too big and the opposition too stiff.

To meet this challenge, Jesus has given us a source of great power. After His resurrection He told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem before going out to spread the gospel (good news). Why? Because they needed to be "clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:49b) Without God's power, nothing of lasting value is accomplished.

That power arrived shortly after Jesus' instructions to wait in the city. His followers were gathered in Jerusalem when, "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." (Acts 2:4) This "baptism" in the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11) enabled the early church to carry the story of Jesus to the world. 3,000 people came to faith on that day alone when Peter (an early Christian leader) announced the good news in the power of the Spirit. (Acts 2:41)

Today the baptism in the Holy Spirit is available to followers of Jesus who seeks it. We need to be "clothed with power from on high" just as much as the early Christians did; we carry the same message and face the same enemy. As in the book of Acts, Spirit baptism fills us with an experience of God that overflows into the ability to speak in other tongues.

This experience will open up a new dimension of prayer, praise and power in your Christian life. Salvation means receiving all of the Holy Spirit. Spirit baptism means he receives all of you. What was predicted in the Old Testament (Joel 2:28-29) is now a New Testament reality (Acts 2:5-18) for any Christian who asks.

meditate:

Acts 1:8 "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you."

session 4: exploration questions

1. What is the purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit? (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:7-8)

2. How can you receive Spirit baptism? (Luke 11:9-13)

3. What special kind of language ability accompanies the baptism in the Holy Spirit in these passages? (Acts 10:44-48; Acts 19:1-7)

4. To whom does the promise of Spirit baptism apply? (Acts 2:16-19; Acts 2:37-39)

5. What kinds of spiritual power are made available to the church by the Holy Spirit? (Acts 4:31; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11)

my turn:

Read Luke 11:9-13 and Acts 8:14-15. As you pray and meditate this week, ask Jesus to fill you with the Holy Spirit.

session 5: setbacks

You have discovered by now that following Jesus is not always easy. While it is certainly a life worth living, there are times when every believer faces spiritual setbacks. "A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all." (Psalm 34:19)

Setbacks come in many forms. The world around us is often opposed to the Kingdom of God, making it difficult to live for Jesus. (John 15:18-19) In addition, Satan works to tempt and trap us. While temptation is not a sin, given the opportunity, it can do great harm. (1 Peter 5:8)

Also, we face opposition from within ourselves. The book of James asks, "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?" (James 4:1) Of course they do. We are often our own worst enemy. Thank God that he is putting this old nature to death so that our new nature in Christ can grow. (Galatians 2:20)

There are days, however, when the pressures and temptations can seem too much for us. We feel that we are letting down God and others. Satan uses this to inflict discouragement and despair. The enemy whispers that God rejects us because we have made mistakes or shown weakness.

But even in the midst of setbacks, God's love is absolutely constant. "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor the son of man, that he should change his mind." (Numbers 23:19)

If God loved us enough to send Jesus when we were lost, how much more will He reach out now that we are part of his family? (Romans 8:32) His desire is to encourage and restore us. "The Lord upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down." (Psalm 145:14)

The key is what we choose to do with our setbacks. If we come to God for strength and forgiveness, He will never turn us away. God lifts up the humble. (1 Peter 5:5) As a result, your setbacks can become the pathway to growth and strength.

meditate:

Romans 8:1 "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

session 5: exploration questions

1. Does every Christ-follower face spiritual difficulties, or is it just you? (1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 Peter 5:9)

2. When we fail, what is God's attitude toward us? (Romans 8:1-2, 33-39; Psalm 37:23-24)

3. Why can believers be confident in victory over Satan? (1 John 4:4; Romans 16:20; Revelation 12:10-11)

4. Despite some obstacles, why can we be confident in our walk with the Lord? (Philippians 1:6; Jude 24-25)

5. How can setbacks, properly handled, work to our good? (James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-5)

my turn:

Are you facing a setback, or know someone who is? What could you do this week to help yourself (or them) handle it in the right way?

session 6: the bible

The bible is a book unlike any other because it is the inspired Word of God. This means that when the bible speaks on a subject, God has spoken on it. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed..." When we read the bible, then, God himself is breathing his Word into our hearts.

In the Old Testament, the phrase, "thus says the Lord," or its equivalent, occurs more than 2,000 times. (Jeremiah 1:9) In the New Testament, Jesus confessed to the Father, "your word is truth." (John 17:17) Clearly, the scriptures claim to be a revelation from God on which we can rely.

The authority of the bible is affirmed in a variety of ways, for example:

- Discoveries in archeology repeatedly confirm the biblical accounts of history. Literally thousands of archeological findings are consistent with the scriptures.
- Specific events predicted in advance by scripture writers validate biblical prophecy. For example, after 19 centuries of dispersion, the Jewish people were re-gathered into the nation of Israel in 1948, exactly as predicted by the prophets. (Isaiah 14:1-2) This event is unique in history.
- Several scholars who set out to disprove the bible were actually converted by their own findings.
- Most importantly, it works. The bible's teachings are sensible and life-giving.

This is not a book of fables, or a contrived religious manuscript. The words and the Word are God-given. Were the Bible merely a "fairy tale" we would have known long before now. "The word of our God stands forever!" (Isaiah 40: 8b)

The bible is our guide on matters of belief and conduct. But it is much more. The scriptures are powerful. God provides them so we can know His thoughts, trust His promises and grow to be like Jesus. As you explore the bible each day you will find yourself challenged and changed. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." (Psalm 119:105)

meditate:

Psalm 119:18 "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law."

session 6: exploration questions

1. What are some of the reasons we have confidence that the bible is not just a collection of opinions and stories? (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13)

2. What did God say to Joshua about meditating on the scriptures? (Joshua 1:8)

3. By what standard will those who reject the Bible's message be evaluated? (John 12:48; Hebrews 2:3)

4. What are some of the ways we can know about what happened during Jesus' ministry? (2 Peter 1:16; Hebrews 2:3-4; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

5. List some of the things that the Word of God can do in our lives. (Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Psalm 119:28)

my turn:

What passage of Scripture means the most to you right now? Why?

session 7: prayer

Communication is the heart of any relationship. When you became a disciple (a Christ-follower) you entered a new relationship with God. Communicating with him is called *prayer*.

The bible encourages us to, "pray continually." (1 Thessalonians 5:17) Many Christians do not take advantage of their access to God because of wrong ideas about what it means to pray. For example, some feel they are not spiritual enough. Others think God hears only those who speak in fancy words or special places.

God does not require that we meet rigid standards for our prayers to "count". We do not have to be in church, kneel or even close our eyes! It is the posture of our hearts, not the posture of our bodies that makes the difference. Prayer is a warm conversation with a loving God, not a religious exercise designed to persuade him to listen.

When Jesus died on the cross he opened the way for us to come into the very presence of our heavenly Father with all of our needs and cares. We can be totally honest with him. As Hebrews 4:16 puts it, "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." God has given us an open invitation to commune with Him.

In prayer we simply talk with the Lord as we would anyone else. He "will neither slumber nor sleep," so you can count on him being there when you need him. (Psalm 121:4b) Prayer is the vehicle for us to worship God, to ask for help, to lift up the needs of others, and, especially, just to *be* with him.

Perhaps the most wonderful thing about talking with God is that he talks back! "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know." (Jeremiah 33:3) Our heavenly Father never puts us on "hold." He always answers his calls! Through his Word and by his Spirit he speaks to us and meets us right where we are. Take advantage of this great privilege by talking with God each day.

meditate:

Psalm 27:4 "One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.

session 7: exploration questions

1. Why do you think the bible encourages us to pray frequently? (1 Thessalonians 5:17; Colossians 4:2)

2. How can I communicate with God when I do not know what to pray for? (Romans 8: 26-27)

3. What are some traits to avoid in prayer? (Matthew 6:5-8)

4. Does God want to hear about everything in my life, or just the good things? (Philippians 4:6; James 5:13-16; Hebrews 4:14-16)

5. What are some things that could hinder the effectiveness of our prayers? (James 1:5-7; James 4:3)

my turn:

What do you need most from the Lord right now? Read Luke 18:1-8. Talk with God about this need every day this week, believing him for an answer, and see what happens.

session 8: holiness

The idea *holiness* sometimes has a bad reputation. For example, Christians are called "holy rollers," religious fanatics enslaved by a rigid code of conduct. Sadly, some believers fit this description, basing their spirituality on things like external appearance.

The bible does not define holiness this way. Our sins were forgiven completely when we trusted in Jesus. (Colossians 2:13) But God did not stop there. He cleansed our unrighteousness and replaced it with the righteousness of His Son. (2 Corinthians 5:21) This is all our heavenly Father sees when he looks on us! (Colossians 1:21-22) No wonder you can have confidence before God. (Hebrews 4:16; 1 John 2:28)

With Jesus' righteousness as a foundation, the Lord builds holiness (purity) in our lives through a process of spiritual growth. The follower of Jesus is being separated from harmful things in the world system and devoted to God. Holiness is not instant perfection. Nor does it focus on external things such as how we look or dress. Rather, it is the shaping of our character from the inside out resulting in a change of conduct.

God's purpose is not to force us to obey a detailed set of rules, but to help us become more like Jesus. (Romans 8:29) Our actions and attitudes are "holy" to the extent that they reflect the character of the son of God. (Matthew 10:24-25)

You can cooperate with God's process of purifying our lives in several ways:

- Repent (turn away) from any sin in your life. (1 Corinthians 7:1)
- Commit yourself to living by God's Word. (John 17:17)
- Focus your mind on excellent things. (Philippians 4:8)
- Trust God to change you by his Spirit. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

Think of holiness as the Spirit working out what Jesus has worked in. This is possible only by the grace (getting what we need instead of what we deserve) of God and the righteousness of Christ in us. (1 Thessalonians 5:23) In his power you can know the joy of a life that pleases God.

meditate:

1 Peter 1:15 "Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do."

session 8: exploration questions

1. What are some ways we can deal with temptation? (2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Corinthians 10:13)

2. What kinds of things should a follower of Christ avoid? (Colossians 3:5-11)

3. What should you do if you sin? (1 John 1:9; Romans 6:15)

4. What are some of the things God uses to protect us from sin? (Psalm 119:9; Hebrews 12:9-11; Matthew 26:41)

5. What are some traits that will appear in your life as you become more like Jesus? (Galatians 5:22-23)

my turn:

Each day ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any part of your life that needs to be changed. Take time to listen to him. Ask God for the grace to become the person he knows you can be.

session 9: witness

When we tell anyone the story of what Jesus has done we are being a “witness,” offering testimony of who Jesus is and how his love is changing our lives. Jesus said, “you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) Like a witness in a courtroom, we are called upon to relate the facts of the case as we know them. There is no need to make anything up, or to exaggerate. The story is enough.

Jesus urged His followers to “go and make disciples of all nations...” (Matthew 28:19a) Our friends, families and co-workers all need to know of the love of God expressed to us in his Son. The free gift of eternal life is available for all who believe. (Acts 16:31)

Presenting our faith-story to someone who is not a Christ-follower is a spiritual adventure. It requires love, persistent prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus spoke of in Acts 1:8. Only the Spirit can convict the world of sin, that is, reveal to others their true spiritual condition of alienation from God. (John 16:8-11) This is *not* our job.

There are some practical things that can help you share your faith with others:

1. Be a friend. Build unconditional, loving relationships without pressure and without agendas.
2. Be transparent. Don’t be afraid to admit your failings and uncertainties.
3. Be sensitive to the Spirit. He will give you a sense of when and how it is appropriate to share your story.
4. Be real. Live your witness. Unless others see the love of Christ in us they will have no reason to consider the Christian possibilities for their lives.
5. Be a servant. Care for the needs of others.
6. Be patient.

The Lord will use your life and your words to tell the story. Be ready to be a witness—even in unusual ways and places.

meditate:

2 Corinthians 5:18 “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.”

session 9: exploration questions

1. What factors stop Christians from sharing their faith-story more than they do?

2. Where can you get the power to be an effective witness? (Acts 4:31; 2 Timothy 1:7)

3. What did you think of Christians and the gospel before you became a follower of Jesus? Why? (John 17:14; Acts 17:1-9)

4. What would be two ideas for effective witness contained in the story of Philip and the Ethiopian? (Acts 8:26-38)

5. What kind of life must Christians live if the world is to believe our testimony? Provide an example. (Matthew 5:14-16; 1 Peter 2:11-12)

my turn:

What kind of “witness” opened your heart to the possibility of following Jesus? How could you become that kind of witness to others?

session 10: discipleship

Some people come to Christ thinking they have reached the end of their spiritual journey. In reality they have only begun. Jesus did not tell us to make converts, but to "go and make disciples." (Matthew 28:19, 20)

The word *disciple* means a learner-follower: one who is devoted to Jesus and wants to live out his love. "If you hold to my teaching," Jesus said, "you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32)

To be a disciple of Jesus is to think his thoughts, to say his words and to do his deeds. It is having the character of Christ poured into our character. The goal of discipleship is to bring our lives into complete harmony with his. "It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant to be like his master." (Matthew 10:24-25)

Becoming a disciple of Jesus does not just happen. It requires a commitment to spiritual growth. A loving local church can provide many pathways by which this growth can occur. Be sure to take advantage of them.

Also, discipleship is not just a matter of gaining knowledge. Our faith in Jesus means little more than what we are willing to do about it. There is simply no substitute for practical experience in following him. Nothing grows disciples faster nor pleases God more. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command." (John 14:15)

Finally, you cannot become a disciple on your own. Jesus said, "apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5b) Our character becomes like Christ's only by the power of the Holy Spirit. As we commit ourselves to discipleship, the Spirit grows us into maturity by producing the character of Jesus in us. (Galatians 5:22-23) As Christ-like character develops, Christ-like behavior naturally follows. This gives God glory and fills our lives with joy.

meditate:

John 15:8 "This is my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

session 10: exploration questions

1. What is the end product of discipleship? (Romans 8:29; Ephesians 4:15)

2. What traits of a disciple are described in the John 13:35 and Ephesians 4:31-32?

3. Is it easy to be a true disciple? Why or why not? (Luke 9:23-26; John 15:18-19)

4. What are some of the benefits of being a disciple described in Matthew 7:24-27 and John 15: 7?

5. What kind of changes can we look forward to in our lives as we become disciples of the Lord Jesus? (Galatians 5:19-25)

my turn:

Read 1 John 3:16-18. What are some specific ways you could love someone in need this week?
