

# BELONG

Discovering Your Place in God's Story



# TEACHER MATERIALS

# Curriculum Introduction

## Purpose

Welcome to Belong! Belong is a three week class for parents and their elementary-aged children. The hope of this class is to teach children the foundations of Christian faith and equip parents to better discern their child's belief in and understanding of the gospel.

We are using this curriculum as a replacement for the baptism class we previously offered, but it could also be used in tandem with one. The content is written to a 3rd-5th grade reading level, though we opened the class to all elementary-aged children according to the discernment of their parents and ministers.

## Content

This curriculum packet includes internal resources, teaching notes, and visuals in the section labeled "Teacher Materials." We also made a slide deck that corresponds to each lesson.

We have also included "Participant Materials" such as note-taking pages, at-home activities, and a next steps guide. We recommend printing a copy of these for each family and placing them in a 1 inch binder to keep everything together.

The three weeks of class are organized as follows:

**Week 1:** The Story of God. This lesson covers the big-picture view of God's work in the world and the arc of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation. It also includes a clear gospel presentation.

**Week 2:** The Story of You. This lesson explains the process of spiritual growth and illustrates how believers repent of sin and work out their salvation.

**Week 3:** The Story of Us. This lesson explores what it means to belong to the global and local church and how to join God's mission.

Attendance is required for all three weeks, and at least one parent (or spiritual mentor) must be present with each child. In-between each week, there will be an at-home activity in the booklet for families to complete together.

# Interest Meeting Notes

## Intro

Thank you for expressing interest in our Belong class and taking the time to be here! Today's meeting is just a short introduction to our class material to help you decide if this is the right time for your child to participate. If you decide that it is, we'll send you a registration link and some more information about the class.

It's also okay if you get to the end of this meeting and decide this isn't the right time for your family. We hope that you'll leave here with some clarity about next steps! Afterwards, I'll stick around to answer any questions you might have.

## Vision

**If your child is interested in being baptized, this class is the prerequisite for scheduling a baptism interview with one of the NextGen ministers.** If you decide that's a step you'd like to pursue after the class ends, let us know and we can provide you with more information about the baptism process here.

Instead of focusing solely on baptism, however, the class will illustrate the Christian story in three parts: the Story of God, the Story of You, and the Story of Us. As you take the class together, our hope is that you have opportunities to discern your child's understanding and belief. Though it's impossible to cover *everything* we'd like to in three weeks, we've tried to create a fairly robust introduction to the essentials.

This class is called "Belong" because that's our hope for our kids! We want them to know that being a Christian means so much more than understanding a few concepts or nodding their head to a list of beliefs. We have the beautiful invitation to *belong* to God and become a part of His story!

## Who is this Class For?

This class is open for all elementary-aged children, but the content is geared especially towards an upper-grade comprehension level. If you realize halfway through that it's

going over your kid's head, that's totally fine! You can always retake the class when you think they'll be able to grasp more of the material.

If you have multiple children, they don't have to take the class together, and we'd encourage you to wait until each one is ready. This isn't a competition, so feel free from the pressure to compare yourself to other families or hit a certain milestone.

We believe anyone could benefit from this course, but there are two situations where we think this content will be most helpful:

1. Your child has started asking questions about faith. They've seemed more curious than normal and you're wondering if the wheels are starting to spin for them. Maybe they seem extra-aware of their sinfulness, or maybe they're paying more attention in their small group and you're hearing them recall what they've learned or ask more questions. This might be the right time to take this class and lean into their curiosity!
2. Your child has already professed faith and you're wondering what the next right steps might look like for them. This class can help clarify what they've professed and then help them think through how to walk out their salvation. If they're ready to consider baptism, this class is also the first step before scheduling an interview with a NextGen minister.

Of course, you're more than welcome to take this class even if your child doesn't fall into one of these categories, but these are the kids we had in mind when shaping the curriculum. Feel free to talk with one of us afterwards if you're still unsure if this is the right time! We'd love to help you think through it.

## Overview

A little overview of where the class is headed:

We'll meet for three Sundays in a row starting *\*insert dates\** in *\*insert classroom\**. Each of these sessions will run about an hour with a ten minute break in the middle.

Week 1 will introduce the Story of God. This session will cover the big picture view of God's work in the world and the arc of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation. During this session, we'll also use an object lesson to make a clear gospel presentation and explain what it means to be saved.

Week 2 will zoom in to the Story of You and answer the question: what does God's big story mean for my everyday life? We'll talk about spiritual growth and becoming more like Jesus instead of the world. Then we'll give you and your child an activity that teaches the process of recognizing lies, repenting of them, and replacing them with the truth.

Finally, we'll wrap up Week 3 with the Story of Us! When God saves us, He adopts us into His family. During our final session, we'll talk about what it looks like to belong to the Church, including the purpose of the ordinances (baptism and communion) and what it means to participate in God's mission for the world.

### **What is my Role as Parent?**

This class is designed to be taken as a family, so at least one parent or other spiritual mentor needs to be present with the child for each session.

As you sit through each week, we encourage you to take note of the language and examples we're using so you can use them during conversations at home. Also pay attention to how your child is responding to the lesson. Are they engaged and interested or do they seem confused? This will help guide some of your conversations afterwards.

Between each week, we'll also have at-home activities to complete with your child. Don't worry, we're keeping these very simple. No glitter glue or ten-step projects! The point of these activities isn't to check them off a list but to help start meaningful conversations about faith.

Before the first session, your at-home activity is two-fold:

1. Take some time to remember your own story of salvation and God's faithfulness to you. If you're married, have a conversation with your spouse about their story

and their hopes for your child. Then pray for yourselves and your child and ask your community to pray for you too!

2. Walk your child through a hypothetical situation where someone asks them “what do you believe?” and gauge their understanding of the gospel. Try to take a posture of curiosity as you ask instead of making it seem like a test. This will help you know your child’s starting point as you head into the first class on The Story of God.

You’ll have more details about all of the at-home activities in your class binder, but we wanted to let you know to expect those and to set aside a little time each week to complete them.

## Prayer and Q&A

# Parent Activity: Processing the Interest Meeting

**Parents:** Take some time to ready your heart for the coming weeks.

- Reflect on the gospel: How did God save you? How has He faithfully sustained and strengthened your faith as you've walked with Him? How has He blessed you? Corrected you? Kept you?
- Ask for help: God has given parents the primary joy and responsibility of discipling their children. No parent is perfect. Take time to confess any areas where you may have fallen short as a mom or dad. Ask God for help, protection, and grace as you walk your child through this time. Pray for the wisdom and discernment to draw out their heart and to see them as the Lord does. Invite your community to pray for you during this season as well.
- Pray for your child: Think about your child and the unique person they were created by God to be. Consider the conversations you've had about Jesus and what it means to trust Him. Pray for them – that they would both understand and believe the gospel. Ask God to encourage their hearts over the next few weeks.

# Family Activity: Preparing for Week 1

**Parents:** Gauge your child's understanding of the gospel by placing them in the following hypothetical situation.

You are at school, soccer, gym, etc. and one of your friends starts to ask you about Jesus. They've never been to church, and they don't know anything about God. They ask you what you believe. What would you say? Think about using the following prompts if they get stuck:

- Who is Jesus? What is He like?
- Why did He come to earth?
- Why did Jesus die?
- What happened when He died? What happened after He died?
- Why do you believe this?
- How do I go to heaven?
- What does it mean to be a child of God?
- How does someone become a child of God?

# Week 1 Teaching Notes

## Supplies Needed— Part One:

- Printed copy of the blank notes for each child
- Pens or pencils
- A yellow and red marker for each child
- Metallic gold paint pens
- Small gold star stickers

## Supplies Needed— Part Two:

- Two small cups for each child (one filled with water, one empty)
- Black washcloth for each child
- A yellow and red marker for each child (or food coloring)
- Straw or spoon for stirring
- Pitcher or bottle of clean water

*Greet the class and introduce yourself. The **blue words** indicate blanks on their note-taking sheet, so make sure you say those slowly and repeat if needed.*

## Part 1: Zooming Out

Welcome to Belong! For the next three weeks, we are going to explore one story in three parts: **the Story of God, the Story of You, and the Story of Us**. Our hope is that this class helps you discover your place in God's story!

There are lots of good stories out there in the world. Maybe you have a favorite movie because it has a plot full of twists and turns, or maybe there's a book series that describes a magical world you would love to live in. *\*feel free to give an example of your favorite story\** Close your eyes and picture that story you love so much. Think about how excited you feel to hit play or open the pages. **When you think of what that story is, you can open your eyes and write it on your worksheet.**

Now imagine that there's a story that's even better, even more beautiful and exciting and fun. And best of all, this story is TRUE. Your favorite movie always ends, and the

magical world of your favorite book stays on the pages when it's over. But this story doesn't ever end because it's the realest story in the world.

This is the **Story of God**.

Like all good stories, we'll start at the beginning. And the story of God begins with... **God**. Now that might sound obvious to you, but it's **really important**. We often tell the story like it starts when God created the world, but it actually starts long before that.

Some people think God was lonely before He created the world. Do you think He was lonely? *\*allow them enough time to share their thoughts\** Thanks for sharing your ideas!

The Bible tells us that God has never been lonely, even before He created the world. There is only one God but He exists as three persons— God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit! Because God is three-in-one, He has always been perfectly complete!

Before anything was made... before mountains reached up to the sky or tigers roamed the jungles, before there were clocks to measure time or even a sun to mark the day and night... God already existed in perfect love! He was never bored or unhappy because He was full of all the joy and beauty anyone could ever want. Even if this were the end of the story, it would be the most beautiful story ever told.

Why is it important that we start here? It matters because it reminds us that God doesn't need anything from us to be God. **We aren't the most important part of the story— God is!**

So if God didn't *need* to create the world, why did He? God created the world to show the overflowing goodness of His love and bring Himself glory! God deserves to be shown, honored, and enjoyed as most valuable, and creation echoes these truths!

## Chapter 1

We're going to talk about this story in four chapters, and this first chapter is called Creation. If you turn the page, you'll see a blank where you can write the title (**Creation**) and a colorful picture.

You've probably heard this before, but as a reminder: **God made everything and called it GOOD!**

This picture just shows the earth, but God made so much more! He made BIG things like the entire Milky Way and even galaxies we probably don't know about yet. He made TINY things like grains of sand and cells you can't see without a microscope.

While all of this was good, God saved the words "very good" for what He made last: people. Even more than galaxies and grains of sand, God made people to bring Him glory! People were designed to love God, enjoy God, and reflect God's image to the rest of creation.

Have you ever held a mirror? What do you see when you look into it? *Your face!* In the same way that a mirror reflects your face and shows what you are like, YOU were made to reflect God's image and show the world what He is like.

The first two people God made were called Adam and Eve, and they lived in a Garden where they had everything they needed: delicious food, beauty all around them, and friendship with each other and God. God gave them one rule: do not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, but everything else was available to them.

**This is Chapter 1: Creation, and it was good.**

## Chapter 2

But you and I both know that something happened because we don't live in that Garden right now, do we?

One day, Adam and Eve were together in the Garden and the serpent (Satan) came up to them. Genesis 3 tells us what happened:

*“[The serpent] said to the woman, ‘Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’”*

Who did Eve choose to believe— the serpent or God? *The serpent*. Believing the lie, Eve took the fruit from the tree, and she ate it. She gave some to her husband Adam and he ate it too, even though he knew God’s rules. When Adam and Eve ate the fruit, everything changed because sin entered the world. Sin is whenever we do, say, or think something that displeases God.

### **This was the beginning of Chapter 2: The Fall.**

I want you to turn to the next page in your book and write **The Fall** as the title. Notice how the world isn’t bright and colorful anymore but dark and gray. This represents the ways that sin changed God’s beautiful world. Sin brought the small problems we face everyday like mosquito bites, stuffy noses, and fighting with our siblings, but it also brought big problems like hunger, war, and sickness.

Now I want you to **take the yellow marker next to you and scribble all over the world**. When we sin, it’s like taking a marker to a piece of expensive artwork and coloring all over it— it ruins the art and it disrespects the artist who made it. Sin ruins the world and people that God made and disrespects Him as the Creator.

When you’re done, I also want you to **take the red marker and color all over where you scribbled with the yellow**. This red represents God’s wrath, which is His right anger and punishment towards sin. With the Fall, the whole world came under the anger and punishment of God. Romans 6:23 says that the “wages” of our sin is death.

On the bottom line, write “**sin**” in the blank to finish the sentence. Sin brought brokenness and wrath. Now, if our story ended here, it would be the saddest story ever told! God made everything, and it was good, but sin brought brokenness and wrath. It is both true and tragic.

But just moments after Adam and Eve ate the fruit, God promised them that He would not end His story this way. Even as He sent them out of the Garden, He told them that one day Someone would come to crush the lying Serpent. But until that day, God’s people waited...and waited... and waited.

As they waited, God gave them little hints of what this Someone would be like. He would be a Rescuer like Moses, setting His people free. He would be a King like David, a good and mighty ruler. He would be a Prophet like Elijah, speaking the truth about God. All of these people pointed to the One to come, but none were strong enough to turn back the sin and wrath of the Fall.

### *Chapter 3*

After thousands of years of waiting, the promised Someone finally came, and I’m sure you know His name: Jesus!

Jesus is completely God and completely human. So when God was there in the beginning, deserving all worship, Jesus was there and He deserved all worship because He is God. And in the beginning when God made everything— the galaxies and grains of sand— Jesus was there making all of it because Jesus is God and has always been God. And though Jesus is God, He was born on the earth as a little baby boy. And you probably know this— this is the reason we celebrate Christmas! Jesus was born in a town in Israel called Bethlehem.

**Flip over to chapter 3 and place your gold star sticker near Israel** (an adult can help you find it). This star represents that in a broken and sinful world, Jesus was the only one who had no darkness in Him. He was the Light of the World.

When Jesus was born, He had a heart that was unlike yours and mine. He wasn't filled with sin. Unlike us, He didn't ruin the world God made. He came to rescue it! When He was a baby, He never sinned. When He was nine years old, He never sinned. When He was a teenager, He never sinned. When He was an adult, He never sinned.

Pop quiz: did Jesus EVER sin? *No!*

Everything He did honored God the Father and brought Him joy. And because He never sinned, He didn't deserve God's wrath and punishment.

But the Bible says in Romans 5:8 that "God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Even though Jesus was not a sinner, He died on the cross to take the wrath and punishment that sinners deserve. And then He was buried in a tomb and sealed away.

On the third day, two women went to His tomb to check on His body, but He wasn't there— He had risen from the dead! He told the women to go and spread the word, and then He spent 40 days with His friends, giving them final instructions before He was lifted back up to heaven. Jesus didn't leave His friends empty-handed— He gave them a mission to tell the good news to the whole world and the Holy Spirit to guide them along the way.

We'll talk more after our break about exactly what happens for God's children because of Jesus, but **the title of this chapter is Redemption**. Redemption means to purchase-back or to save. God the Father saves His children through the death and life of His Son, Jesus. And then He sends them out as messengers to the world through the power of the Holy Spirit. In the blank, write "**children**" because this isn't true about everyone— only those who belong to God's family.

**Then, to represent their mission, take your gold paint pen and draw arrows going out from your star to the rest of the world.** Even though the world is still dark because of the Fall, God's children are made new and bring the light of Jesus with them.

## *Chapter 4*

So we've made it from Creation to the Fall, and for those who are in God's family, from the Fall to Redemption. But now if you turn the page to the final chapter, you'll see the world in full-color again. **Go ahead and title this chapter New Creation and use your gold paint pen to trace the yellow lines.**

The gold represents God's glory. In Chapter 3, Redemption, we see that Jesus is the perfect image of God's glory and that believers get to represent Him in a dark world. But one day, the ENTIRE earth will be made new and "all the sad things will come untrue" (Tolkien).

There will be no more sin, no more sickness, and no more sorrow. Jesus will come back to gather His people, and we'll worship God in a holy city that the Bible describes as "having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal" (Rev 21:11). Those who do not love Jesus will spend forever apart from Him, but all of God's people will enjoy Him forever. **This is the New Creation. God will make all things new!**

## *Review*

So, to review, let's flip back through our pages to make sure we understand the story of God.

**Chapter 1: Creation. God made everything and called it good.**

**Chapter 2: Fall. Sin brought brokenness and wrath.**

**Chapter 3: Redemption. God rescues His children and gives them a mission.**

**Chapter 4: New Creation. One day, God will make all things new!**

Though there are many good stories, this one is the most beautiful because it is also the truest. And for those who love and trust Jesus, this story is their story. They live in the redemption of chapter 3, and they wait for chapter 4, when God will make all things new.

**We're going to take a short break now, and when we come back, we'll talk about what it means to belong to God's story as a believer in Jesus.**

## Part 2: Zooming In

### *Review*

So before our break, we looked at the story of God from a really wide view. We talked about how God existed before time and then looked at His plan for the world. Just to make sure we're on the same page, I'm going to make a few statements and I want you to finish the sentence for me:

1. The story of God begins with \_\_\_\_\_ (God)
2. He has forever existed as God the Father, Son, and \_\_\_\_\_ (Holy Spirit)
3. God made a good world, but it was broken by \_\_\_\_\_ (Sin)
4. God rescues His children and sends them on \_\_\_\_\_ (Mission)
5. One day, God will make all things \_\_\_\_\_ (New)

Okay so that was the really big story, but now we're going to imagine that our cameras are zooming in to see it up close. What does God's plan for the world mean for you and me? How do we become a part of His story?

### *Sin (Yellow)*

You have a small **cup of water** next to you on the table. Notice how it's nice and clear right now— so clean you could drink it! This represents how our hearts were meant to be.

But because Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, all of us are born with hearts that do not look like this glass of water. **Take the cap off your yellow marker and swirl it around in your cup to represent sin.** (*Alternatively: pass around a dropper of yellow food coloring*).

Earlier, we scribbled yellow all over the world, and we talked about how sin is like drawing all over a masterpiece. It ruins the art and disrespects the artist. You might be thinking “well I don't do that! I wouldn't want to ruin the world. I'm a good kid!”

But here's the thing about sin— it can be really sneaky! Sometimes it looks really obvious, but sometimes it doesn't. Maybe you've never lied or stolen anything and you've tried your best to behave.

But instead of keeping the rules because you love God, you keep them to feel better about yourself, avoid getting in trouble, or earn the attention of other people. This disrespects God because it's like trying to claim that YOU are the artist who should get the credit instead of Him. It's like taking the yellow marker and writing your own name all over the work that He made.

Whether in sneaky ways or obvious ways, all of us have sinned against God. All of us are born with hearts that look like this cup: no longer clean but covered with sin.

### *Wrath (Red)*

God is good, and because He is good, He is just. This means that He is right to punish sin. This might sound cruel to us, but we wouldn't want to live in a world without a just God!

If you spent all week making a beautiful piece of art and you worked really hard on it, and then someone came along and ripped it up, you would be upset if your art teacher just shrugged and ignored them. Or imagine if bullies in school were pushing kids around and the principal gave them a piece of candy and said "great work!!" Or imagine if a thief stole something very special from your house and the police just smiled and gave him a high-five.

We want the world to be just. It is good that God punishes sin.

But if all of us have sinned, that means all of us deserve God's punishment. We called this His "wrath" earlier and represented it with the red marker. **So now I'd like for you to take the cap off your red marker and swirl it around in your cup.** (*Alternatively: pass around a dropper of red food coloring*). This represents that because we have sinned, we've earned God's wrath, which is eternal punishment in hell.

### *Christ (Absorber)*

Looking at your cup now, is there a way the water could ever become clear again? Could it think “be clear, be clear, be clear?” Could it just feel really really bad about being dirty? No! The water would stay the same because it is impossible to undo what’s already been done.

In the same way, we can’t undo our sin. We can’t think really hard about getting rid of it. We can’t just feel really really guilty about it. We can’t even make up for it by doing nice things.

Like this cup, we can’t clean ourselves. But God in His wisdom had a plan before the beginning of time. He would send Jesus to die so God’s children could be cleansed of their sin and experience both His mercy and His justice.

Isaiah 53 describes what would happen on the cross like this:

*“But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to His own way and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”*

That verse has some big words and one of them you might have noticed is *iniquity*. Iniquity is a word that describes what you see in your cup right now— everything we have done, said, or thought that deserves God’s punishment. And Isaiah says that all of that was put onto Jesus on the cross.

We’re going to do a little visual to help us understand what that means.

**I’m going to hand you a towel, and then you’ll slide it into your cup slowly and hold it there for a moment.** As you do, watch what happens because the water should start absorbing into the towel. *\*wait a few seconds to let the water absorb\** Parents, you can help them make sure all the water is absorbed and then you can **take the towel out and put it in your empty cup.**

When we started this experiment, where was the dark water representing sin and punishment— in the cup or the towel? *In the cup*. But now where is it? *In the towel*. Like this towel, Jesus was perfectly clean and pure, but He absorbed the sin and punishment God’s children deserved on the cross.

1 Peter 3:18 summarizes it like this: **“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God.”**

So now, your cup is empty— no more sin and punishment. But God is SO very kind that He doesn’t leave His children empty.

Use the paper towel beside you to make sure your cup is totally dry and **then fill your cup with the clean water sitting on your table**.

When Jesus died and resurrected, two things happened:

1. Like absorbing the dirty water, He took the bad that God’s children deserve
2. And like pouring out clean water, He gave God’s children the good that He deserves

So when God the Father looks at His children, He doesn’t just see them as a blank slate. He fills them with His Holy Spirit and sees them with all the love and joy that He sees Jesus. How much do you think God the Father loves Jesus? That’s how much He loves His children.

### *Evidence of Faith*

Throughout this lesson, you might have noticed that instead of saying this is true about everyone, I’ve been saying this is true for “God’s children.” So how do you know if you’re a child of God?

God’s children are those who love and trust Jesus. They recognize that they are sinners and deserve God’s punishment. But instead of trying to fix their own dirty cups, they’ve admitted that they need Jesus to absorb their sin. They’ve put their trust in Jesus instead of themselves, and He has made them clean.

God's children are also filled with the Holy Spirit like your cup is filled with clean water. Because of this, they LOVE God! And that love isn't just a feeling— their actions prove it! They have joy and patience even when things don't work out the way they planned. They make choices that serve God and others instead of only serving themselves. They want to obey God instead of disobeying God. They know they won't do it perfectly, but they want to be a part of God's mission by telling this good news to the world.

As we leave today, I want you to think about whether you are a child of God.

There's a **drawing of two cups in your notes**, one filled with the dark water and one that has been cleaned and filled with new water. And I'd like you to ask yourself: which cup looks like your heart?

- Have you asked Jesus to absorb your sin and the punishment you deserve? Or are you still trying to do that on your own?
- Does the Holy Spirit help you honor and obey God or do you usually choose what sounds best to you?
- Does God's love make you want to serve others or do you always think about yourself first?

I'm going to pray for us and then you'll have some time this week to talk with your parents about what you've learned today. *\*Pray and dismiss\**

# BELONG

Discovering Your Place in God's Story



**Week 1:**

The Story of God

This class is going to explore  
one story in three parts:

1. The Story of God
2. The Story of You
3. The Story of Us

The story of God begins with:

A. God

B. Creation

C. Adam & Eve

We aren't the most important  
part of the story— God is!

# Chapter 1: Creation

God made everything and  
called it good.



# Chapter 2: Fall

Sin brought brokenness  
and wrath.



# Chapter 3: Redemption

God rescues His children and gives them a mission.



# Chapter 4: New Creation

One day, God will make all  
things new!



# Week 2 Teaching Notes

## Supplies Needed:

- Printed copy of the blank notes for each child
- Pens

*Note: Like many places in Scripture, this lesson uses physical growth as a metaphor for spiritual growth. If a child in your class has a physical disability, be mindful and adjust the language accordingly. The ending breakout also relies on parent-child trust. If a child does not have a safe parental relationship, pair them with another trusted adult or adjust the activity.*

*Greet the class and introduce yourself. The **blue words** indicate blanks on their note-taking sheet, so make sure you say those slowly and repeat if needed.*

## Part 1:

### *Review*

Welcome back to Belong! Last week, our class focused on the Story of God in four chapters. Can someone remind me what they were? (*Creation, Fall, Redemption, and New Creation*). You learned that God created a good world, but because of sin, everyone is born under the Fall. But through Jesus, God's children are rescued and brought into a new chapter: Redemption! And one day Jesus will come again and make all things new.

Then you did a water activity to illustrate how Jesus absorbed the punishment that God's children deserved. I hope you've taken some time since then to consider which cup your heart looks like. Are you still holding onto the dirtiness of sin, or have you asked Jesus to absorb it and fill you with new, clean water?

As we talk today, I want you to remember how you answered that question. If you've asked Jesus to make you new, then you belong to God! You are a *believer* and a *child of God*. If you are still holding onto your sin, then you are *not* a believer or a child of God. This is important for our lesson today.

## *Physical Growth*

So last week we zoomed out really big and learned about the story of God. This week we're going to zoom in really close and learn about the story of **YOU**.

Every story has a beginning, including yours! Every single person in this room was created by God and then born on a special day. Raise your hand if you know what your birthday is! *\*give them a chance to share their birthday\**

Since that day, you've been growing and growing! Your body has gotten taller and bigger, and you've learned how to do new things. First you learned how to roll over, and then you figured out how to walk. Pretty soon you learned how to run and kick, and now you might even know how to dance or play a sport! You've already gotten stronger and smarter, and your body will keep growing and changing until you look like a full-grown adult.

## *Spiritual Growth*

There's actually another way we grow that's a little bit harder to recognize. We all know we're growing *physically* because we can see our bodies changing. But all of us are also growing *spiritually*!

Everyone's physical growth is headed towards the same goal: becoming an adult. **But there are two different directions people can grow spiritually: becoming more like the world or more like Jesus.**

We were all born with hearts that were sinful. From the very first moment, we honored ourselves as most important instead of God. Not only were we born with sinful hearts, we were also born into a sinful world! Because of the Fall, we're all growing up in a world that tells us **lies about God and ourselves.**

Without God's help, someone who is greedy when they're younger will only become more and more obsessed with what they have. Someone who lies a little bit will find it easier and easier to twist the truth. Someone who thinks they can avoid God's punishment by following all the rules will only become more and more prideful. The sin

might look different for each person, but this is the path of everyone who is being formed by the world.

But in John 3, Jesus describes something really strange that happens when a person becomes a child of God. He says they are “born again.”

Did you know that every believer actually has TWO birthdays? A physical birthday, the one you just shared with us, and a spiritual birthday, the day that you are born again and become a child of God. Some people know exactly what day they were born again! Other people don’t remember what day it was, but they do know there was a time when they asked Jesus to rescue them from their sin and were brought into God’s family. *\*If you know the day you were saved, briefly describe it. If you don’t know the exact day, share that with the class!\**

The moment someone is saved from their sin and born again, they’re kind of like a baby in God’s family. Even though they might be 10, 15, or even 30 years old, they’re spiritually brand new!

### *The Father’s Love*

Now I bet you all have seen a baby before. What are some things that brand new babies are good at? *\*give them time to answer: crying, drinking milk, pooping, sleeping.\** Are any of those things really impressive or helpful for their parents? *No!* Are babies good at solving math problems or writing stories? *No!* Are babies good at washing the dishes or folding laundry? *No!*

Babies aren’t good at much because they still need time to grow. Even so, good parents already love their baby SO much! When they see their baby, they are filled with joy and want to give them good gifts! That’s because they don’t love them for what they can do or how impressive they can be. They love their child because they belong to them.

In the same way, it takes time to learn how to obey God instead of the world! New believers— and old believers— won’t have it all figured out. They need time to grow!

Like a good parent though, God the Father looks at His children with nothing but joy! He has already completely forgiven their sins and enjoys giving them good gifts. There's nothing they can do to earn or lose His kindness. Romans 8 tells us that even all of the biggest and scariest things we can imagine— dark places, powerful rulers, and even death itself— cannot change or end God's love for His children. That's because He doesn't love them for what they can do or how impressive they can be. He loves them because they belong to Him.

### *The Son's Example*

What happens to babies as more time passes and they feel safe with their parents? *They grow!* They start trying new things and learning. They might fall down or mess up, but each day they become a little bigger and stronger than the day before.

The same is true for God's children. As they feel safe in His unchanging love, God's children start trying new things. Slowly but surely they start walking and talking like the person they were made to be. They start becoming more like Jesus!

Imagine some of the stories you've heard about Jesus in the Bible. What are some words that describe what Jesus is like? *\*Give them time to answer, prompting if needed. Either write their words on the whiteboard or remember a few to reference back to.\**

What are some of the things Jesus did while He was living on the earth? *\*If they're stuck, list examples like: praying to the Father, knowing Scripture, serving the poor, speaking the truth, sacrificing for others\**

All of these words you listed describe the kind of person God's children are becoming. They'll need time to grow and change, but all true believers want to be more like Jesus. They want to be patient and honest; they want to be more prayerful and compassionate towards the poor (*try to use examples they gave*). They know that God's way is better than the world, and like a toddler trying to find their steps, they stumble their way towards it.

## *The Spirit's Power*

Just like a good parent wouldn't abandon their child and say "good luck with life! I'm going on a vacation— be back in twenty years!" God doesn't leave His children to figure it out on their own.

Out of His kindness, He's sent them a helper: God the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit lives inside of every believer and gives them the power to become more like Jesus. When they feel tempted to sin, the Holy Spirit warns them. When they feel weak, the Holy Spirit strengthens them. When they don't know how to pray, the Holy Spirit helps them.

The Holy Spirit isn't a genie or an imaginary friend. The Holy Spirit is God Himself! Every good and amazing thing you know about God is also true about the Holy Spirit. And God's children can trust that the Holy Spirit is always at work.

## *Summary*

Raise your hand if you like hearing good news! Me too! Before we take our break, I have three pieces of good news for you today. These will all be on your notes, so I'll say them twice to give you plenty of time to write.

**#1: God the Father will never stop loving His children.**

**#2: Day by day, God's children will become more like Jesus.**

**#3: This change happens by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

We're going to take a short break and then we'll come back to learn what this means for everyday life!

## **Part 2:**

### *Review*

Okay, before we jump back in, let's all read the three pieces of good news together to make sure we're all ready!

#1: God the Father will never stop loving His children.

#2: Day by day, God's children will become more like Jesus.

#3: This change happens by the power of the Holy Spirit.

### *Renewing Your Mind*

We know that anyone who is *not* a child of God is going to become more like the (*world!*). On our own, we have no power over sin. But the Bible tells us that God's children can be different. They don't have to live like the world! This is what it says in Romans 12:2:

*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. (NIV)*

Transformation starts by renewing our minds. Before we change our actions, we have to change our thoughts. Believers no longer belong to the world. They belong to God! But this doesn't mean they never feel tempted again. The world is full of lies, and it takes practice to stop believing them.

#### **Renewing our minds means:**

- **Recognizing the lie of the world**
- **Repenting from it**
- **Replacing it with the truth of Jesus**

Repenting just means to do a complete 180° and go the other direction! Actually, let's do a quick practice. Everyone go ahead and stand up facing the left wall. Start walking that direction, and then on the count of three, I want you to flip around and start walking to the right. Ready... 3, 2, 1— flip! *\*repeat if needed and then have them sit back down\**

That's what believers do when they repent and renew their minds! They recognize the lie, turn the other direction, and start walking towards the truth.

### *Activity Walk-Through*

Your family activity this week is all about how believers can renew their minds in everyday life!

The goal of this activity isn't to solve all of your problems with a quick fix. Sometimes our sin is complicated! This is just a tool to help you practice recognizing lies and replacing them with truth.

Before you try this on your own, we're going to practice together. For our practice round, let's pretend that we have a friend named Andy.

Andy just got home from a really long day at school, and he's exhausted. He didn't eat all of his lunch, so his stomach is growling. All afternoon, he's been dreaming of eating his favorite chips. *\*ask someone in the class what their favorite chips are and use that as your example\** When he gets to the kitchen, he rushes to the pantry, throws open the door, and reaches for the bag... but they're all gone. All that's left are a couple of apples and his LEAST favorite kind of chips, salt and vinegar. Blech! "WHERE ARE MY CHIPS?!" he yells to his family. Right then, his sister walks into the room, holding an empty bag of the exact chips he was looking for. "Moooooooooom," Andy whines, "why would SHE get those?? You knooooow they're my favorite!! Ugh!!" *\*feel free to add some dramatic flair here\** He runs off to his room and slams the door before anyone else can respond.

Clearly, our friend Andy is struggling.

Okay, so keeping that story about Andy in our brains, let's flip over to the page in our workbook called Renewing Your Mind. Since this is just a practice round, we've already written the answers in yellow so you can follow along. *\*check to make sure everyone is on the right page\**

1. The blank at the top is a space for writing down something that you're struggling with. We wrote down "complaining" for Andy because he obviously had a hard time with his response to not getting that bag of chips. You could've also written down whining, anger, or selfishness for him.
2. Then the first column on the left is called "lies about myself." This part can be pretty tricky because for one struggle there might be several different lies going

on! So we're just going to keep it simple by picking the one that sticks out the most right away. For Andy, we circled "I can't be happy if I don't get what I want."

3. The next step is pretty simple. Put your finger on the lie you circled and then trace your finger across to the next column. For every lie about ourselves, there's usually a lie about God that goes along with it. Trace your finger and read out the lie that Andy was believing about God: "God isn't generous enough." Andy's whiny attitude showed that he didn't believe that God had already given him everything he needed.
4. So we're going to help Andy turn from the lies and look to what is true! Repentance starts with changing our beliefs about God and that leads to changing our beliefs about ourselves. Just like before, we'll drag our fingers across the page to find the truth. Let's read out the truth together: "God is the perfect giver, so I can be thankful for what I have." Isn't that so good, that Andy can have joy even when things don't work out the way he wanted them to? He can be thankful because God is always generous!
5. Now that we've finished that activity, we can go to the next page and finish the reflection. The first box offers you space to write down what you circled and see how it all fits together. Andy's summary reads like this: "I often struggle with complaining because I believe the lie that I can't be happy if I don't get what I want and that God isn't generous enough. But the truth is that God is the perfect giver, so I can be thankful for what I have."
6. After you write out your summary, the last step is reading scripture and praying for God's help! The two verses on Andy's column are James 1:17 and Philippians 4:19. After reading those and thinking about them for a while, he can pray that God would forgive him and help him have a thankful heart. He can also pray that God would give him the courage to apologize to his family for being unkind.

Our friend Andy will still have hard days, and he'll still feel the temptation to complain and whine. As Andy gets older, he'll struggle with believing different lies and facing

new challenges. This is just one simple example of how what he believes about God affects the everyday choices he makes.

That was just a practice round with Andy's story, but your family activity will be repeating this same process with one of your own stories. The goal of this activity isn't to give you an "easy fix" for your problems. The goal is to show how your beliefs affect your choices and help you start to pay attention to that.

You can decide if you'd like to pick something you're struggling with right now or if you'd rather use a story from a few weeks ago. Maybe there's a fight you had with your siblings or a time you got really upset at school. Pick a story that you remember clearly and then try to keep it simple by just choosing one lie that stands out to you. Your parents can help you connect the dots if you're having a hard time.

Recognizing lies and turning towards the truth isn't a one-time thing, it's something believers get to do over and over for their whole lives! You don't always need to use a tool like this, but sometimes it can be helpful to get you started.

Does anyone have questions about how this works? Okay, from here you have two options: parents, you can decide to save this activity to do later at home or you can go and find a quiet spot around the church to work on this now! There are lots of quiet spots around the campus where you shouldn't be too distracted. Either way, I'm going to pray and then you're dismissed until next week! *\*Pray and dismiss\**

# BELONG

Discovering Your Place in God's Story



**Week 2:**

The Story of You

There are two different directions  
people can grow spiritually:

- More like the world
- More like Jesus

# Three pieces of good news:

1. God the Father will never stop loving His children.

# Three pieces of good news:

1. God the Father will never stop loving His children.
2. Day by day, God's children will become more like Jesus.

# Three pieces of good news:

1. God the Father will never stop loving His children.
2. Day by day, God's children will become more like Jesus.
3. This change happens by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Renewing your minds means recognizing the lie of the world, repenting from it, and replacing it with the truth of Jesus.

# Week 3 Teaching Notes

## Supplies Needed:

- Printed copy of the blank notes for each child
- Pens
- Puzzle with Great Commission graphic (we ordered a 30 piece custom puzzle from Shutterfly)

*Note: Part 2 of this lesson is highly contextualized for our local church. As noted in our introduction, you may adjust your teaching notes to reflect your own church's ecclesiology.*

*Greet the class and introduce yourself. The **blue words** indicate blanks on their note-taking sheet, so make sure you say those slowly and repeat if needed.*

## Part 1:

### *Review*

Welcome to our last week of Belong!

Our first week together, we learned what it means to belong to God's Story from creation to new creation! We also learned how Jesus takes the punishment God's children deserve and gives them His blessing instead.

Then last week, we zoomed in to the Story of You! We learned about spiritual growth and how all of us are either becoming more like the world or more like Jesus. We also talked about how God's children can renew their minds by recognizing lies, repenting, and replacing them with the truth.

### *The Garden*

This week we're wrapping up with the **Story of Us**! Before we start, I'd like us to rewind back to something we learned our very first week. We had a conversation about whether God was lonely before He created the world, and I'd love for someone to remind me what the Bible says. *\*allow time to answer\** The Bible tells us that God was never lonely

because He has always been three-in-one. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have enjoyed each other forever, and it was out of that love that God made everything!

We also learned that God made people to reflect His image. Like holding up a big mirror, we were created to show one another what He's like. So how could one person reflect the image of a never-lonely, always-loving God on their own? They couldn't! God created us to live as a community and we need one another. **God is three-in-one, and we reflect His image together!**

### *The Global Church*

The moment someone becomes a child of God, they are adopted into God's big family. God becomes their perfect Father, and they get a ton of new brothers and sisters!

Everyone who has EVER believed in Jesus belongs to this family. So if you are a child of God, you're a part of the same family as people who love Jesus across the world in Dubai or Japan. This family even includes people who lived before you and whose stories are written in the Bible— if you belong to God, then Moses is your brother and Queen Esther is your sister!

The Bible uses lots of different names for the people who make up God's big family. You might hear them called believers, the people of God, the Body of Christ, or God's Kingdom. Today we're going to call them the "global church." What do you think of when you hear the word "global?" *\*give them time to answer\** **The global church includes everyone in the world who loves Jesus.**

1 Peter 2:9-10 describes the global church like this:

*"But you [the Church] are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."*

So the global church is a family, but it's so much more than that. **It is a family with a mission!** And 1 Peter describes the mission as “proclaiming” how God brings people out of the darkness and into the light.

You might have heard these verses before, but right before Jesus was lifted back up to heaven, He told His disciples exactly what the church's mission would be:

*“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Go back to the first week of your notes, and find the picture for Chapter 3: Redemption. Why is the world still black and white in this picture? And what do the gold arrows represent? *\*discuss\** The world is still black and white to represent the darkness of sin. And the gold arrows represent the global church on mission! Like the arrows going in every direction, the church's mission is to bring light of Jesus to every place on earth!

### *Puzzle*

The mission of God is way too big for one person to do on their own! To illustrate this, we're going to do a quick activity.

Each of you has a little bag with some puzzle pieces. Go ahead and take them out and try to create the full picture without working together. *\*give them a second to look at their pieces\** Is it possible to create the full picture with just the pieces in front of you? Do they even make sense on their own? *No!* In the same way, it's impossible to accomplish God's mission without working together.

Okay, now you can work together as a team! Use all your pieces and help each other finish the puzzle so you can see the whole picture. *\*give them time to put the whole puzzle together and then have them read what it says out loud\**

This is the mission that Jesus gave His church! The global church is full of people who are really different from each other. They speak different languages, live in different places, and experience different challenges. And they disagree with each other all the time! But God designed His church to need each other and to reflect His image as they complete the mission together.

*\*release for a short break\**

## Part 2:

### *Review*

Welcome back! Let's do a quick review and then we'll jump into our last section of the class.

Because God is three-in-one, we were made to reflect His image together! When we become God's children, we're invited to belong to His big family: the global church. The global church is everyone in the world past, present, and future who loves Jesus. And the global church has a mission to go out to every place on earth and proclaim the gospel!

### *Local Church*

The big global church is made up of lots and lots of smaller local churches. **A local church is a group of believers who regularly meet together to worship God, proclaim the gospel, and care for one another.** Northway is one local church that is part of God's big global church.

Local churches are led by men called elders or pastors. At Northway, we have several pastors and elders. Do you know a few of their names? *\*give them a chance to answer and make sure to mention a few lay elders if the kids don't know them!\** The Bible says that these men need to love God, care about the people in the church, know how to teach the truth, and live honestly and responsibly. Pastors and elders are not perfect— only Jesus is! But like every believer, pastors should be becoming more like Jesus everyday.

There are also people who serve the church called ministers or deacons. These people use their talents to meet the church's needs and support the elders. I'm a minister who serves the church by leading Northway Kids! You've probably met other ministers and deacons who help in different ways like Mrs. Damaris, Mr. Logan, and Ms. Amanda.

People who belong to a local church are called members. Belonging to a local church is a really important part of a believer's life. Through the church, believers *get* so many good things. They get to hear truth from the Bible and meet people who will care for them through hard things. But believers also *give* so many good things to their church. They share their story with others and offer their time, money, and talents to serve.

Most churches gather on Sundays because that is the day when Jesus rose from the dead! During the Sunday gathering, church members talk to each other, sing together, pray for people's needs, listen to a pastor preach from the Bible, and practice communion. On certain Sundays, the church will also baptize new believers.

Not everyone who attends the Sunday gathering belongs to the local church. In the same way that you probably invite neighbors and friends over to dinner at your house, the church should be a welcoming place for people to visit. But when your friend comes over, do they become a member of your family just by eating dinner with you? No, of course not! In the same way, unbelievers who attend the gathering don't become a part of God's family just by being there. But you should still treat guests in your home with hospitality! And in the same way, the local church should always be kind to unbelievers in hopes that they might hear the gospel and become a member of God's family.

### *Baptism*

While believers are together, they practice two ordinances. An ordinance is a special church practice that points to the truth.

The first ordinance is called baptism. You might have seen baptisms on Celebration Sunday before! Baptism is when a believer is dipped under the water and then pulled back up. Going under the water represents Jesus's burial in the tomb and how believers die to sin. Coming up out of the water represents the new life believers have because

Jesus rose from the dead! *\*show a video of a baptism, pointing out what's happening during each part\**

Baptism doesn't make someone a child of God. It's an outward symbol of something that has already changed in a person's heart. It's a way of announcing: I belong to God's family, not to the world! Baptism is an important step of obedience for every believer! Before our break we read Matthew 28 together, where Jesus gives the church its mission: make disciples, *baptize them*, and then teach them to obey His commands. Jesus Himself was baptized, and believers want to become more like Jesus!

If you've become a child of God and you haven't been baptized yet, we would love to help you think about taking that step! We've included some extra pages with more information in the back of your packet, and we're always here to talk with you about this important decision.

### *Communion*

**So the first ordinance of the church is baptism, and it's an *announcement of salvation!* The second ordinance is called communion or the Lord's Supper, and it is a *reminder of salvation.***

At Northway, we practice communion every Sunday right after the sermon ends. A pastor or elder will read a few verses from 1 Corinthians 11 and then give the church some time to pray. As they pray, church members will pass around a plate just like this that holds pieces of bread or crackers and small cups of grape juice. *\*hold up a communion tray\** Believers each take one piece of bread and a cup of juice, but unbelievers should let the plate pass them by because this meal is only for God's children. After the plate has been passed around, believers eat the bread together, which represents Jesus's body, and then drink the juice, which represents Jesus's blood.

Now, this might seem strange to you! Why do you think the church would act like they are taking Jesus's body and blood? *\*give them time to answer\**

On the cross, Jesus's body was broken and His blood spilled out. And through His death, He absorbed the sin and punishment God's children deserved. So when someone

becomes a believer, they're essentially saying, "I'll accept the trade! Jesus will take my sin, and I'll take His death on the cross." When believers eat the bread and drink the juice, they remember this trade and celebrate God's mercy!

The church proclaims the gospel for two reasons: to invite others into God's family and to remind their own hearts of what is true. We usually think of proclaiming the gospel with our words, like singing the lyrics of a worship song or listening to the Bible during a sermon. But we also proclaim the gospel with our bodies! Baptism and communion are two ways that the church acts out and re-tells the story of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection.

### *Wrap-Up*

Over the past three weeks, we've taken a look at the Story of God, the Story of You, and the Story of Us. We hope that through this class, you've had some clarity about where you are right now and that you've heard the clear and wonderful invitation to belong to God's family.

At the back of your packet, there's a list of steps you might take after this class ends, but I want you to go ahead and start thinking about it now.

If you are not a child of God, there's only one next step we'd like you to consider, and that's saying yes to God's mercy. If you're still holding on to the cup full of sin and wrath, there's no way for you to make the water clean on your own. You can't ignore it or think hard enough or even earn your way out with good behavior. Admit that you need a rescuer and look to Jesus! He's the only one who can absorb your sin and punishment and fill you with His blessing. If you have any questions about that, talk with your parents and you are always welcome to talk with one of us.

If you are a child of God— if you can say with confidence that you have received His mercy and belong to His family, then there are a few next steps to pray about.

The first is baptism. Baptism is an announcement of salvation, and we would love to celebrate what God has done for you!

We also encourage you to think back to Week 2 and how God is forming you into someone who looks more like Jesus each day. Are there any small steps of obedience you need to take? Maybe there's someone you need to ask for forgiveness. Or maybe you want to learn more of the Bible, so you'd like help picking a verse to memorize! Take some time today to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help you see where He is leading you right now.

Wherever you are today, I want you to hear this: there is no more beautiful place to belong than God's family. And there is no story more amazing than the one God is inviting us into. Whatever you think God is like, He's even better. Let's pray. *\*pray to close\**

# BELONG

Discovering Your Place in God's Story



**Week 3:**

The Story of Us

God is 3-in-1, and we reflect  
that truth together.

The global church includes  
everyone in the world who loves  
Jesus. It is a family with a mission.

A local church is a group of  
believers who regularly meet  
together to...

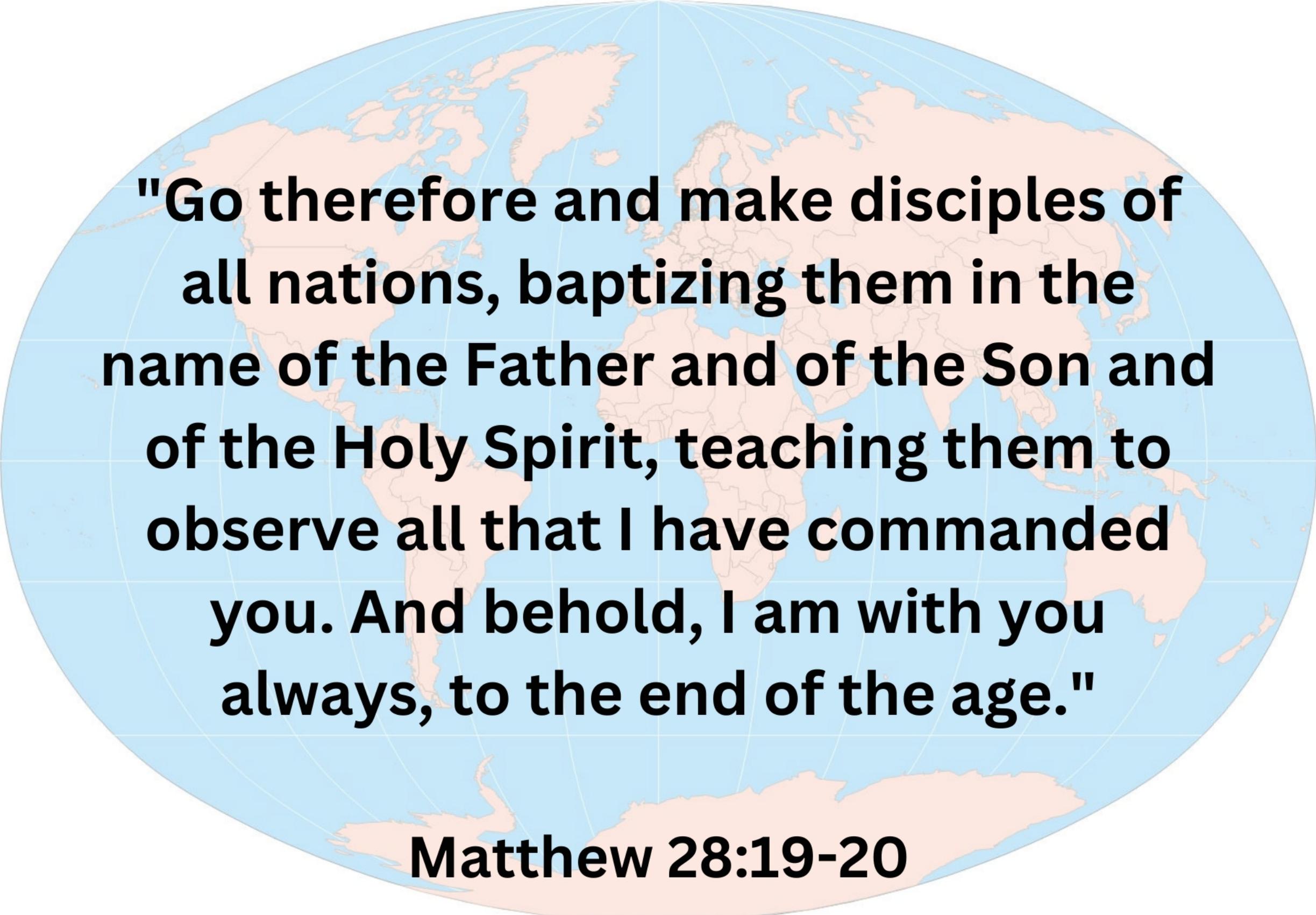
Worship God

Proclaim the gospel

Care for one another

The two ordinances are  
baptism and communion.

# CUSTOM PUZZLE



**"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."**

**Matthew 28:19-20**

# **PARTICIPANT MATERIALS**

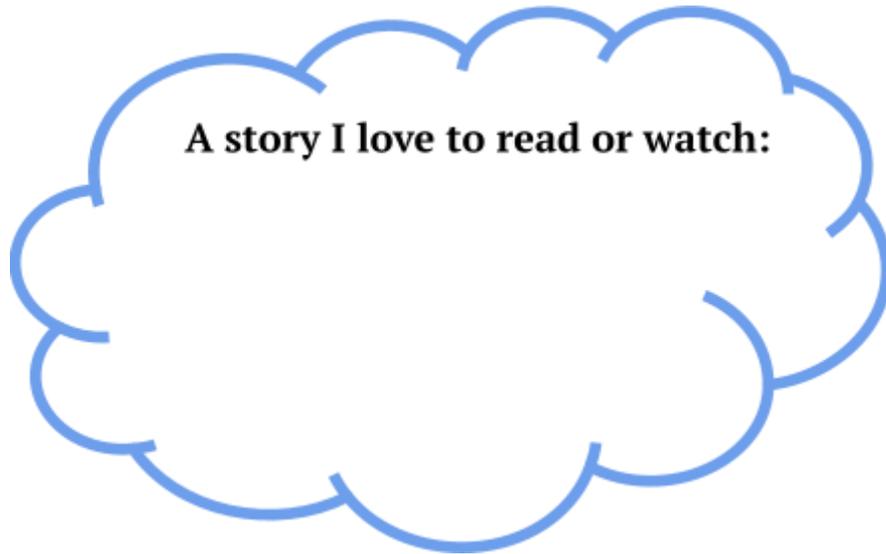
# WEEK 1

The Story of God

# Week 1 Notes

This class is going to explore one story in three parts:

1. The Story of \_\_\_\_\_
2. The Story of \_\_\_\_\_
3. The Story of \_\_\_\_\_



The story of God begins with: (*circle the correct answer*)

- A. God
- B. Creation
- C. Adam & Eve

\_\_\_ aren't the most important part of the story— \_\_\_ is!

# CHAPTER 1: \_\_\_\_\_



God made everything and called it \_\_\_\_\_.

## CHAPTER 2: \_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_ brought brokenness and wrath.

## CHAPTER 3: \_\_\_\_\_



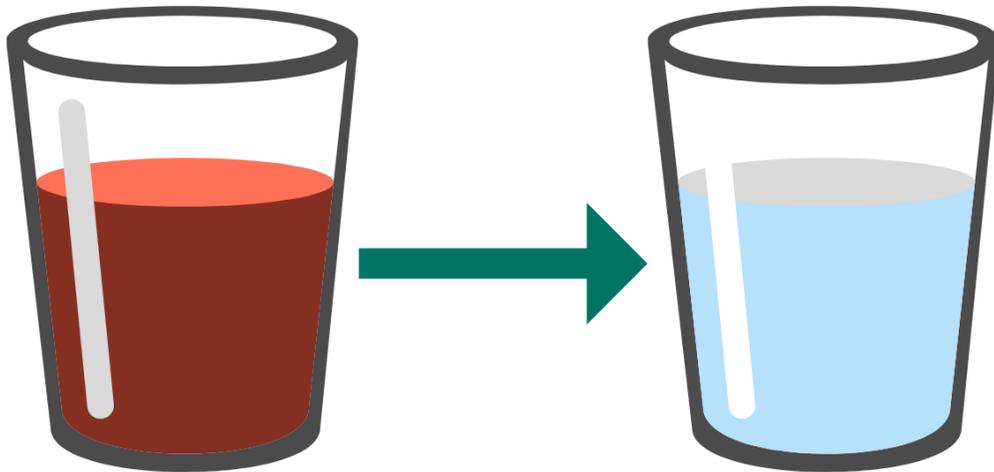
God rescues His \_\_\_\_\_ and gives them a mission.

# CHAPTER 4: \_\_\_\_\_



One day, God will make all things \_\_\_\_\_!

**Jesus absorbs the sin and  
punishment God's children  
deserve...**



**...and Jesus gives God's children  
the blessing He deserves.**

# Week 1 Take-Aways

## Key Verses:

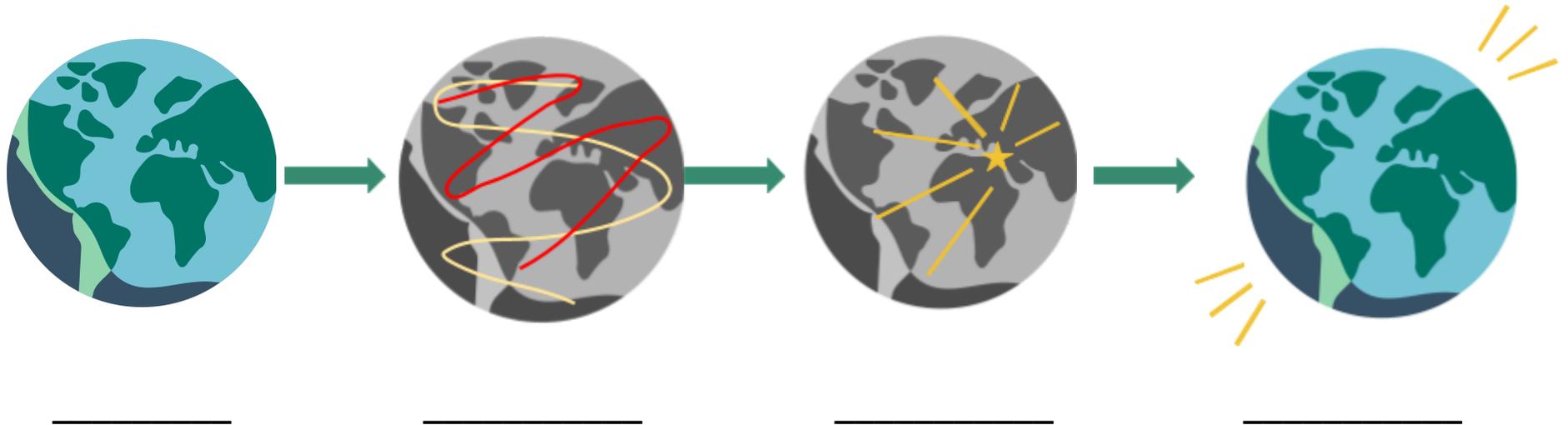
- Genesis 1-3
- Romans 5:8
- Isaiah 53
- 1 Peter 3:18

## Helpful Definitions:

- Trinity: the one true God who exists forever as three persons—  
God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
- Sin/iniquity: whenever we do, say, or think something that  
displeases God
- Wrath: God's right anger and punishment towards sin
- Redemption: being purchased-back and saved from sin
- God's children: those who love and trust Jesus

## At-Home Activity: Timeline

Work together to title each piece of God's story (try to do it without peeking!) and discuss what you learned about it. Then, take some time to talk through the questions below.



1. What stood out to you from class today? Was there anything confusing or interesting?
2. What did the activity with the two cups of water mean to you?
3. Have you asked Jesus to absorb your sin and take the punishment you deserve?
4. Would you say that you are a child of God? Why or why not?

# WEEK 2

The Story of You

## Week 2 Notes

This week, we're zooming in to the story of \_\_\_\_\_!

There are two different directions people can grow spiritually:

- More like the \_\_\_\_\_
- More like \_\_\_\_\_

Three pieces of good news:

#1: God the \_\_\_\_\_ will never stop loving His children.

#2: Day by day, God's children will become more like \_\_\_\_\_.

#3: This change happens by the power of the \_\_\_\_\_.

Renewing your minds means recognizing the \_\_\_\_\_ of the world, repenting from it, and replacing it with the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus.

# Renewing Your Mind: Activity

This activity is designed to help you see the connection between what you do and what you believe. Think of something you struggle with— maybe it's fighting with your siblings, comparing yourself to others, or reacting in anger when you don't get what you want. Write that struggle in the space below.

Then, look at the first list and circle one of the lies you believe during that struggle. This can be hard! Ask an adult for help if needed. Once you circle it, trace your finger across to the next column and circle the lie about God. Then, trace your finger to the last column and circle the truth about God and yourself.

**Struggle:** *Complaining*

## 1) Lie about Myself

I can't be happy if I don't get what I want.

I always know what is best.

I won't be okay if fail.

I need other people to notice and like me.

No one understands or cares how I feel.

I can't stop feeling or behaving this way.

## 2) Lie about God

God isn't generous enough.

God doesn't know what is best for me.

God isn't kind or merciful.

God's love and attention isn't enough.

God doesn't understand or care about me.

God isn't as strong as my feelings or choices.

## 3) Truth about God & Myself

God is the perfect giver, so I can be thankful for what I have.  
James 1:17; Philippians 4:19

God knows everything, so I can trust Him and ask for wisdom.  
Proverbs 9:10; James 1:5

God is kind and merciful, so I can rest in His love when I fail.  
Psalm 103:8-14

God's love is enough, so I don't need other people to notice me.  
Zechariah 3:17; Psalm 149:4

God understands and cares about me, so I can talk to Him.  
Psalm 139:1-18

God is strong, and He gives His children power to change.  
Galatians 2:20; 2 Peter 1:3

# Renewing Your Mind: Reflection

Look back at the struggle you wrote down and what you circled in the chart. Then, use those answers to fill in the blanks with this summary statement.

**I often struggle with:**

*Complaining*

**because I believe the lie that:**

*I can't be happy if I don't get what I want*

**and that God:**

*isn't generous enough*

**But the truth is that:**

*God is the perfect giver, so I can be thankful for what I have.*

Look up the verses next to the truth you circled and read them out loud twice. Take some time to reflect on what you've learned and write down what steps of obedience God is asking you to take. Ask an adult for help if you need it!

*Read James 1:7 and Philippians 4:19.*

*Andy can ask God to forgive him and help him have a more thankful heart. Then Andy can apologize to his family and eat a different snack without complaining.*

# Week 2 Take-Aways

## Key Verses:

- John 3:1-8
- Romans 8:38-39
- John 14:26
- Romans 12:2

## Helpful Definitions:

- Physical growth: becoming more like an adult
- Spiritual growth: becoming more like Jesus
- Born again: when someone becomes a child of God
- Renewing your mind: replacing the world's lies with God's truth
- Repentance: doing a 180 and going the opposite direction

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## Struggle:

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I always know what is best.

I won't be okay if fail.

I need other people to notice and like me.

No one understands or cares how I feel.

I can't stop feeling or behaving this way.

### 2) Lie about God

God isn't generous enough.

God doesn't know what is best for me.

God isn't kind or merciful.

God's love and attention isn't enough.

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God isn't as strong as my feelings or choices.

### 3) Truth about God & Myself

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# WEEK 3

The Story of Us

## Week 3 Notes

This week, we're finishing up with the Story of \_\_\_\_\_!

God is \_\_\_\_\_-in\_\_\_\_, and we reflect that truth \_\_\_\_\_.

The \_\_\_\_\_ church includes everyone in the world who loves Jesus!

It is a \_\_\_\_\_ with a mission.

A \_\_\_\_\_ church is a group of believers who regularly meet together to:

- \_\_\_\_\_ God
- Proclaim the \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ for one another

The two church ordinances are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

Baptism is an announcement of salvation and communion is a reminder of salvation!

# Week 3 Take-Aways

## Key Verses:

- Genesis 2:18
- 1 Peter 2:9-10
- Matthew 28:18-20
- Matthew 3
- Exodus 12
- 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

## Helpful Definitions:

- Global church: everyone in the world who belongs to God's family
- Local church: a group of believers who regularly meet together to worship God, proclaim the gospel, and care for one another
- Elders/Pastors: qualified men who lead and care for a local church
- Deacons/Ministers: people who serve the local church by meeting needs and supporting the elders
- Ordinance: a special church practice that points to the truth
- Baptism: when a believer is dipped under the water and then pulled back up to represent death to sin and new life in Jesus
- Communion: when a local church eats bread and drinks wine or grape juice to remember the gospel together

# NEXT STEPS

## **At-Home Activity: What's My Next Step?**

Take some time as a family to discuss your experience with the class and make a plan for what's next. We've listed a few ideas to help you start brainstorming! The options marked with a star come with an extra guide in the back for discussion and study.

If you aren't a child of God:

- Ask about something you heard in class that's still confusing you.
- Tell a trusted adult about something you need help with.
- Talk with a parent or minister about putting your trust in Jesus.

If you are a child of God:

- Start a practice of praying and reading the Bible.\*
- Consider if you're ready for baptism and communion.\*
- Share your story with someone else.\*
- Repeat the "Renewing Your Mind" activity with a different sin or struggle.
- Think of a creative way to serve your church or community.
- Write down a Bible verse and hang it somewhere special.

**My Next Step:**

# How Do I Pray and Study the Bible?

Children of God want to know their Father! They can never earn or lose His love, but they can grow in their understanding of Him through prayer and studying the Bible. The acronym “SET” can be a helpful tool for spending time with God in His Word.

## SEEK:

- Find a quiet place to spend time with God. This can be your room, the kitchen table, or the backyard porch— wherever you focus best!
- Close your eyes and slowly take 3 deep breaths in and out.
- Begin by praying. If you aren’t sure what to say, start with something like this:  
*“Thank You for giving me Your true Word to show me who You are. Help me to understand and love what You say. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

## EXAMINE:

- Choose a few verses ahead of time. Consider picking something you learned about on Sunday or choosing from the starter list below. You can also reread the same verses for several days in a row.
- Read the verses two times. Bonus tip: try whispering the words out loud if you get distracted!
- Write down confusing words so you can look them up or ask your parents later.
- After you read, ask yourself these questions and write your answers in a journal or on a sheet of paper:
  - What do these verses teach me about God?
  - What do these verses teach me about myself or the world around me?

## TAKE:

- Pray for wisdom to take what you learned into the rest of your day. Ask God questions like these, and then write down what comes to mind:
  - Is there a truth about You I need to believe or remember?
  - Is there a sin I need to confess and turn away from?
  - Is there someone I need to apologize to or forgive?
  - Is there someone I need to pray for or share this with today?
- Write down any action steps you need to take and ask God to help you obey. Thank Him for speaking to you through His Word!

## Family Discussion:

- How can we make time with God a priority as a family?
- What place and time of day works best for each of us?
- What tools do we need to have ready? (Consider making a stack with your Bible, pens or pencils, and a journal)

## Starter List:

The whole Bible is true, good, and beautiful. These are just a few ideas for where to start! Work together to make a reading plan for the next few weeks.

Genesis 1:1-31

Matthew 6:5-13

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Luke 11:1-13

Psalms 23:1-6

John 6:1-14

Proverbs 3:1-8

Romans 12:9-13

Isaiah 55:6-13

Philippians 4:4-9

Micah 7:18-20

Colossians 3:12-17

# Should I Be Baptized?

One of your next steps might be asking your parents about getting baptized! We talked about baptism a little bit in our last class session, but we wanted to give you more information about what it is and how we do baptisms here.

## What is Baptism?

Not every church practices baptism the same way! Some churches sprinkle babies with water to show that they are welcoming them into their church family. At our church, we do something called Parent Commissioning. During Parent Commissioning, we pray for parents and ask God to bless them as they raise their new babies. We also pray that their children will become believers one day!

Our church believes that baptism is meant for people who have already become believers. Baptism does not make someone a child of God or save them from their sins. Only Jesus can do that! Instead, baptism is a symbol of what has already happened.

Have you ever seen someone wear a wedding ring? Wedding rings are special because they represent promises that a man and woman make to each other on their wedding day. But a ring doesn't make someone married— it's a symbol of a marriage that has already happened!

Baptism is similar. It represents the choice someone has already made to turn away from sin and put their trust in Jesus. Even though baptism is not how people are saved, it is an important step of obedience. God tells His children to be baptized, and believers want to obey God!

## What Happens During a Baptism?

If you haven't seen a baptism before, ask your parents to bring you to our next Celebration Sunday! It usually looks like this:

- The person being baptized will stand in a small pool of water and tell the church about how God saved them. Another person will stand beside them. This person can be a minister, parent, or friend who taught them about God.
- The minister, parent, or friend will ask if the person getting baptized has put their trust in Jesus. If they answer "yes," the other person will say "I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."
- The other person will dip them completely under the water and then pull them right back up. Going under the water represents dying to sin. It's also a picture of how Jesus was buried in the tomb. Coming up out of the water represents the new life believers have because Jesus rose from the dead!
- After they come out of the water, the whole church celebrates!

## What Does Baptism Represent?

Baptism is a way of declaring:

- I belong to God, not to the world.
- I believe Jesus is fully God and fully man. I believe He actually died on the cross, rose from the dead, and is coming back one day to make all things new!
- I have asked Jesus to absorb the sin and punishment that I deserve.
- I believe that God the Father will never stop loving me, that day by day I am becoming more like the Son, and that this change is happening by the Holy Spirit's power.
- I want to say no to sin and yes to obeying God.
- I belong to this church family, and I want to join them in God's mission.

## Am I Ready?

Talk through these questions with your parents and answer them honestly. This isn't a competition or a test! If you and your parents both agree that you're ready for the next step, they'll help you schedule a conversation with the elementary minister.

### Understanding:

Look back at the list of what baptism represents and then consider these questions:

- Can you say an excited and confident “yes!” to the whole list of what baptism represents? Is there anything on the list you're unsure about?
- If a friend asked you about the gospel, how would you answer them?
- If someone asked you what baptism is, what would you say?

### Obedience:

- What is sin? What do you do when you realize that you've sinned?
- Do you enjoy talking with God and reading the Bible?
- Think back to your life two years ago— how have you changed since then?
- How do you make decisions about what to do?

### Motive:

These are some wrong motives for being baptized:

- I'm afraid God will be mad at me or not let me into heaven if I'm not baptized.
- My family wants me to be baptized, and I care about making them happy.
- I want to feel special or have people's attention.
- My friends or siblings have been baptized, and I want to be like them.
- I enjoy being in the water, so baptism seems fun.

## Bible Passages to Discuss as a Family:

- Matthew 3:13-17
  - What did Jesus come to the Jordan river to do? *To be baptized*
  - Who baptized Jesus? *John the Baptist*
  - What happened right after He was baptized? *The Spirit descended on Him and the Father said “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”*
- Matthew 28:19-20
  - Where does Jesus tell His disciples to go? *To all nations*
  - In what name does He tell them to do baptisms? *The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*
  - What does He tell them to do after they baptize people? *Teach them to observe all that He commanded*
- Galatians 3:26-29
  - How does this verse say we become children of God? *Placing faith in Christ Jesus*
  - What does this verse teach us about baptism? *We are baptized into Christ, and that makes us unified with other believers*

# Should I Receive Communion?

As you think about being baptized, you might also be thinking about participating in communion! We covered this a little bit in Week 3, but we wanted to give you more information about what communion is and help you think about whether you are ready to join the church in this important practice.

## What is Communion?

To understand where communion started, let's do a quick history lesson!

Rewind your brain back to the Old Testament. Have you heard of Moses and the Exodus? The cruel Pharaoh refused to set the Israelites free from slavery, so God sent ten punishments to the Egyptians called "plagues." Before the final plague, God told the Israelites to sacrifice a lamb and paint its blood onto their doorposts. This would be a sign that they belonged to God, so He would "pass over" their houses and protect them from His punishment. And God kept His promise! The families who marked their homes were spared. Every year afterward, Israelite families gathered for a special meal called the Passover to remember God's mercy and power.

The night before Jesus was crucified, He gathered His disciples to celebrate the yearly Passover. During the meal, Jesus blessed the bread and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Then He took the cup and said, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

The next day, Jesus died on the cross. His body was broken, like a piece of crushed bread. His blood was spilled, like a cup of wine poured out. When Jesus died, He spared

believers from the punishment they deserved and marked them as separate from the world. Sound familiar? It should! 1 Corinthians 5:7 makes it clear: “Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.”

When believers practice communion, they are replaying Jesus’ last meal and remembering His death on the cross. Not all local churches practice communion the same way. At our church, we eat a thin cracker to represent Jesus’ body and drink a cup of grape juice to represent His blood. We believe communion is a special meal for church members, but we welcome other believers to join us if they’re visiting.

### What Does Communion Represent?

Communion is a way of declaring:

- I believe Jesus really died and took the punishment I deserved.
- I accept the trade! Jesus will take my sin, and I’ll take His work on the cross.
- I want to remember my salvation and celebrate God’s mercy.
- I belong to this church family, and I want to share this meal with them.
- I am excited for the day Jesus is coming back again!

### What Happens During Communion?

If you haven’t seen communion before, ask your parents to take you with them to service one Sunday or pick you up early to watch! It usually looks like this:

- An elder will give instructions about who should receive “the elements” (the cracker and juice) and read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 out loud.
- A few church members will pass out plates with crackers and small cups of grape juice. Believers will take one of each, but unbelievers should let the plate pass them by because this meal is only for God’s children.

- After the plate has been passed around, believers will eat the bread and drink the cup together.

### Are You Ready?

Talk through these questions with your parents and answer them honestly before participating. It's okay if this isn't the right time! We want to make sure you really understand why communion is special.

#### Understanding:

- Can you say an excited and confident “yes!” to the list of what communion represents? Is there anything on the list you're unsure about?
- If a friend asked you about the gospel, how would you answer them?
- If someone asked you what communion is, what would you say?

#### Obedience:

- Have you been baptized? If not, what is holding you back?
- What is sin? How do you respond when you know you've sinned?
- Have you asked God to help you follow His commands?

#### Motive:

These are some wrong motives for participating in communion:

- I'm afraid God will be mad at me or not let me into heaven if I don't do this right now.
- My family wants me to do this with them, and I want to make them happy.
- My friends or siblings have received communion, and I want to be like them.

- I'm a little hungry or curious about what it'll taste like (hint: it tastes just like normal crackers and juice, and you can always eat a snack at home!).

### Bible Passages to Discuss as a Family:

- Exodus 12:21-28
  - What did God do when He saw the lamb's blood on the Israelites' doorposts? *He "passed over" their houses and did not punish them*
  - How did they remember God's mercy every year after? *The Passover*
- Matthew 26:17-29
  - What meal were Jesus and His disciples eating the night before He died? *The Passover*
  - What did Jesus say was His body and blood? *The bread and the cup*
  - What did Jesus say His blood was poured out for? *The forgiveness of many sins*
- 1 Corinthians 11:23-29
  - What are believers remembering and proclaiming during communion? *Jesus and His death*
  - What should people do before they eat and drink? *Examine themselves*
  - What does this tell us about communion? *It's very important and should be taken seriously!*

# How Do I Tell My Story?

If your next step is learning more about baptism, it's time to start thinking about how to tell your story! This is sometimes called your "testimony," and it's when you share with others how God has saved you and made you new.

Sharing your testimony is a part of baptism at our church, but it's also a normal part of being a Christian. God's children love to tell others about what He has done for them!

Sometimes people feel nervous about sharing their story with others, and that's okay! Once you start practicing, it gets easier. During baptisms at our church, most people bring a piece of paper with them so they can read it instead of having it memorized. And remember it doesn't have to be long or fancy— it just has to be true!

Here are some tips to help you start writing out your story!

## [Spend Time in Preparation and Prayer](#)

Think about your life before God saved you. What was going on in your heart? What problems or needs were you facing at the time? How did your life change after you became a child of God? Tell God any worries you have and ask Him to help you share what He wants you to.

## [Use a 3-Point Outline](#)

Telling your story in 3 points (before, how, and after) can be really helpful!

**Before:** Explain what your life was like before you trusted in Jesus. What were you searching for? What lies did you believe from the world? What were the main problems, thoughts, or situations you were struggling with? Where did you put your hope instead of in God? Use specific examples!

**How:** How did God rescue you? Talk about how you recognized your sin and need for forgiveness, and then share what made you consider Jesus as your savior. Where were you? What was happening at the time? What people or situations influenced your decision?

**After:** Explain how your life has been different since then. How has God's forgiveness changed you? How have your thoughts, choices, and emotions changed? What lies have you exchanged for truth? Share how you've experienced God's love and grown in your love for Him.

### [Bible Passage to Discuss as a Family:](#)

Read Acts 26, where the apostle Paul speaks to King Agrippa. As you read, notice how he structures his story! First, Paul talks about his life before he was saved. Then, he describes his miraculous encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. To close, he tells the king about his new life after turning to God. Talk about why Paul tells his story in that order and how you can learn from his example.









# Extra Resources

Here are some resources we recommend to explore these topics more!

## Books:

- *Emblems of the Infinite King* by J. Ryan Lister
- *The Radical Book for Kids* by Champ Thorton
- *The Biggest Story* by Kevin DeYoung
- *Creative God, Colorful Us* by Trillia Newbell
- *The Lightlings* by R.C. Sproul
- *Meeting with Jesus* by David Murray
- *What is the Church?* by Mandy Groce and Bill Bell

## Songs:

- “Ephesians 2:1-10” and “Isaiah 55:6-13” by Northway Collective: Kids
- “Our Great God” by The Village Kids
- “The Trinity,” “First Things First,” and “Unto Him” by Kingdom Kids