

The Power Program

Discipling 101

1. Who Is Jesus?
2. Discovering the Real Me
3. Living Every Day with God
4. Discovering God in Church
5. Reaching Out with Jesus

Christianity 101 Course Outline and Facilitators Guide

www.thepowerprogram.org

Discipling - Using Christianity 101

The First of 'The Power Program' Studies

Christianity 101 is a short course written by Paul & Bunty Collins of the Online Bible College.
www.onlinebiblecollege.com

The biblically-based studies are ideal for private study or for small group discipleship training. This non-denominational course is designed to introduce the foundational truths of the Gospel and consists of five sections:-

1. **Who is Jesus?**
2. **Discovering the Real Me.**
3. **Living Every Day With God.**
4. **Discovering God In Church.**
5. **Reaching Out With Jesus.**

The Discipling 101 Program's principles underpin the small group process of:-

- Engaging** people where they are at, according to their culture.
- Establishing** the foundations of Christianity.
- Equipping** believers to explain their faith to others.
- Empowering** all believers to disciple.

The understanding and experience gained through actively participating in group discussions provide individuals with the tools and confidence to share their faith.

Discipling 101 is an ideal follow-up to a Church event where people have had an 'Experience'. It facilitates a journey of personal discovery (within the boundaries of biblical truths), develops relationships and connects people with established Christians.

Groups are initiated by discussion facilitators rather than teachers. All course materials are downloaded free of charge from The Power Program website. www.thepowerprogram.org

A safe place for friendship and fellowship is created as each participant is given the opportunity to openly share their feelings, thoughts, ideas and beliefs concerning the questions relating to Faith. This gives the facilitator an insight into each group member's current perceptions. The participant, in the privacy of their own home, then interacts with the lesson material under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, thus developing their own personal relationship with Jesus. Personal revelations and questions arising from the studies then form the basis of discussion for the next group get-together.

There is no right or wrong way to use this resource. Group facilitators do not need to be teachers or leaders. They simply organise a venue to meet, invite some people along, point them towards the program download and facilitate the journey.

Engaging, Establishing, Equipping and Empowering Disciples

To go into all the world and MAKE DISCIPLES Matthew 28:19

Discipling 101 Course Outline

Arrange a quiet venue and invite a maximum of five guests to sit around a table.

Meeting 1 - Initiate introductions by modelling with your own personal story of approx. 5 minutes and encouraging others to do likewise. Who you are, what you do, where you're at in life. Interruptions and questions are encouraged. The facilitator is not the teacher and listens 90% of the time and only talks 10%. The lesson material teaches : The group discusses.

Before participants have read any of the lessons, ask the Christianity 101, Lesson One questions of each group member and listen carefully to their current views. Resist the urge to correct or teach. The lesson material instructs during their private time at home.

Direct participants to [The Power Program Website](#) to download and install Christianity 101 to a PC (or handout printed versions of Lessons). Participants read Lesson One at home, write out and bring their written answers to the next meeting.

Meeting 2 - Ask the Lesson One questions of each group member again and listen carefully to their answers. Encourage group discussion and ask whether their views were changed by the study.

Meeting 3 - Before participants have read Lesson Two, ask the Lesson Two questions of each group member and listen carefully to their current views. Resist the urge to correct or teach, the printed material will instruct in private between meetings.

Meeting 4 - Ask the Lesson Two questions of each group member again and listen carefully to their answers. Encourage group discussion and ask whether their views were changed by the study. Ask members to read Lesson Three at home and bring their written answers to the next meeting.

Meeting 5 - Ask the Lesson Three questions of each group member and listen carefully to their answers. Encourage group discussion. Ask members to read Lesson Four at home and bring their answers to the next meeting.

Meeting 6 - Ask the Lesson Four questions of each group member and listen carefully to their answers. Encourage group discussion. Ask members to read Lesson Five at home and bring their answers to the next meeting.

Meeting 7 - Ask the Lesson Five questions of each group member and listen carefully to their answers. Encourage group discussion.

Ask members to share their thoughts and experiences whilst working through 101. Encourage members to now initiate their own 101 groups to disciple and equip others to disciple and equip others.

[The Power Program Website](#) has many studies which are ideal for discipleship.

Christianity 101 a short course designed to introduce the 'Good News' of Christianity.

Project 21 is ideal for a newcomer to build on the Christianity 101 foundations.

The Power of the Gospel is a more in-depth study to explore and understand the parameters within which God relates to you and works within your life.

1. Who is Jesus?

The Bible says: "*Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty?*" (Job 11:7).

No one has ever seen God. But many people have tried to imagine what He is like. This has led to a lot of different ideas about God. Some think He may be just an impersonal force. Others think He is "energy" that you can tap into. Still others think He's "out to get me", like a mean ogre, just waiting for you to do the wrong thing. But what is God really like?

The Bible tells us that Jesus was God coming to the earth as a human being, just like you and me.

"No one has ever seen God, but God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, has made Him known" (John 1:18).

This means that if we take a look at Jesus, we can discover what God is really like.

Why Jesus came

Jesus' arrival was the result of a carefully thought out plan by God. Look here at how Jesus described His mission:

- *"I have come that (you) may have life, and have it to the full"* (John 10:10).
- *"(I) came to seek and to save what was lost"* (Luke 19:10).
- *"(I) did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give (My) life as a ransom for many"* (Matthew 20:28).

Jesus came to give you a deeper quality of life, but that's not all. In coming to the earth, Jesus was seeking out what had been lost to God. He is doing the same thing today. So many people's lives have been "lost" to God. Jesus came to "find" us, to bring us back into a close relationship with God. And to do this, He said, would mean He would have to give his own life as a "ransom" for our lives.

Why did Jesus come for you?

The message of Jesus

Jesus said: *"...every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit... Thus, by their fruit you will recognise them"* (Matthew 7:17-20).

Jesus didn't just come to speak nice words. He came to get to the root cause of people's problems and to deal with the most basic problem of all - a broken relationship with God. He spoke some very strong words, especially against hypocrisy (putting on a religious front) and dead religion. He told us that it's not just outward appearances that God is interested in, but our heart - what's on the inside.

Read Matthew 22:35-40*. In this verse, what did Jesus say was the most important thing for us to do?

Jesus' whole message can be summed up in these words: "Repent for the kingdom of God is near!" (Matthew 4:17). What does "repent" mean? "Repent" means to change direction, to have a radical change in your thinking and lifestyle.

This is what God is looking for in your life. Not just "being good", but having your life aligned with the plan God has for you. Not just "being religious", but being in a close, daily relationship with God. Not just your time on Sunday, but your whole life.

What does God expect from you?

What Jesus showed about God

The Bible says that Jesus is "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being" (Hebrews 1:3). So when we look at Jesus, what do we discover about God? Through Jesus, we see two very important parts of God's nature. God is:

- Absolutely loving
- Absolutely holy

You cannot understand God unless you see both these parts.

You cannot get to know God unless you take both God's love and God's holiness into account. God's love reaches out to you - He wants you to be in close relationship with Him. But God's holiness - His purity and goodness - cannot turn a blind eye to anything impure. The Bible tells us:

"No one is good - no one in all the world is innocent. No one has ever really followed God's paths, or even truly wanted to. Every one has turned away; all have gone wrong. No one anywhere has kept on doing what is right; not one...Yes, all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious ideal" (Romans 3:10-12,23 - Living Bible).

What a problem God faced with you and me! Although God loved us with all His heart, we were cut off from Him by our own actions and attitudes. God's holiness demanded that we be brought to trial. God had to judge all that was impure in our lives or He would end up denying His own holiness.

But God is also *absolutely wise*. God set a plan into motion that would meet the demands of both His love *and* His holiness. That plan sent Jesus into the world - not just to tell you what to do, but *to take your place*. He was sentenced to die an agonising death on a Cross - *but it was all for you*. Jesus ransomed your life back to God.

What do people do with Jesus today?

The death of Jesus

Jesus said that our wrong attitudes and bad habits were like bad fruit on a bad tree. It's no good just plucking the fruit, because it will keep growing back. The problem is not with the fruit, but with the tree itself. Jesus came into the world to do more than just pluck bad fruit from people's lives. He came to deal with the real source of every problem - the roots of our lives.

Matthew 3:10 tells us: "The axe is already at the root of the trees..." Jesus came to be an axe that would chop off the real root of all your problems.

Almost 2,000 years ago, Jesus was arrested, beaten and flogged, put through a mock trial, then taken away and crucified, executed like a common criminal.

People nailed Him hand and foot to a wooden cross.

But the Bible tells us something happened there on that Cross.

An exchange took place. Everything you have ever done wrong was placed on Jesus as He hung upon the Cross. Instead of judging you, God judged Jesus on the Cross. Jesus died in your place, and broke the barrier between you and God.

Jesus is alive today

But Jesus didn't stay dead! Death could not hold down the Son of God!

Three days after His death, Jesus came back to life, the proof that everything that stood between you and God has been dealt with forever.

Now, because of Jesus, you can have a close relationship with God every day.

Jesus is your bridge. He took the punishment that you deserved.

God counted Jesus' death to be your death, so that now, in God's eyes, you can walk free! Jesus came to give you a fresh new start, but this time with God in your life. It's like crossing a bridge from death into life!

Jesus said: "I tell you the truth, whoever hears My Word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24).

What does Jesus mean to you?

Verses from the Bible*

Matthew 22:35-40 And one of them, a teacher of the law, put a question to Him, testing Him, and saying, "Master, which is the chief rule in the law?"

And He said to him, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest rule.

And a second like it is this, love your neighbour as yourself."

Romans 5:6-8 For when we were still without strength, at the right time Christ gave His life for evil-doers. Now it is hard for anyone to give his life even for an upright man, though it might be that for a good man someone would give his life. But God has made clear His love to us, in that, when we were still sinners, Christ gave His life for us.

1Timothy 2:5, 6 For there is one God and one peacemaker between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as an offering for all.

Romans 10:9-10 Because, if you say with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and have faith in your heart that God has made Him come back from the dead, you will have salvation:

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, I am the true and living way: no one comes to the Father but by me.

1. Who is Jesus?

Making it all mine

1. People have many ideas about what God is like. How can we really know?

2. Why did Jesus come into the world?

3. One word sums up the whole message of Jesus. What is it and what does it mean?

4. What two things do we need to know about God before we can get to know Him?
 - *God is*

 - *God is*

5. Why did Jesus die for you?

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2. Discovering the Real Me

Making it all mine

Answer these questions in your own words before reading this lesson.

1. What are some of the things God has placed of Himself in you?
2. Why did God create you in His image?
3. What is it that spoils the image of God in peoples lives?
4. How did God deal with sin?
5. Why does God want you to have eternal life?

2. Discovering the Real Me

Every single person is unique. Each person is a special creation of God, sought out personally by God. God has a plan for your life and this plan is for your good. God wants the very best for your life.

So what went wrong? A lot of people feel their life is worthless. People tell them they are an "accident", "useless", "going nowhere". But these are all lies, because the Bible tells us something very different. **Read Psalm 139:13-16, 1-5*.**

Made in God's image

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27).

You were created in God's image! You are special, if for no other reason. But why did God do this? He didn't just decide one day that He wanted a mirror copy of Himself. He created you in His image for a reason - so that He could have a close relationship with you.

You can only have a real relationship with someone who is *like* you - someone who speaks the same language, who has feelings like you do, who understands what you go through. So when God created you, He put something of Himself in you - an ability to love, a desire for companionship, a demand for justice, a sense of humour, an enjoyment of music and art, and, most important of all, a free will - the ability to choose for yourself how you will live your life. The problem is, people have chosen to live their lives without God. And when you do things that are against the nature of God, then the image of God becomes spoiled.

What are the lies we believe about ourselves?

Spoiled by sin

People like to compare themselves with one another. We like to compare our looks, our possessions, and especially our behaviour. But this can be deceiving. Many people say, "But I'm just as good as the next guy." But that's not how God sees it. God doesn't compare between us, picking out which one is better, or which one will qualify for His love. No, God compares us with only one thing - the original image He created us to be.

Read Romans 3:23*. This verse tells us that in God's eyes everyone is in the same boat - everyone has sinned, not just the ones we call "bad". We have all fallen short of God's glory - the image of God's perfection.

But what is sin? When you think of sin, what comes to mind? Many people think of things like murder, stealing, adultery. But what about God? What does He think of sin? **Read Jesus' words in Matthew 5:21-28*.**

Sin is not just outward acts. Sin is an inside condition. It doesn't matter how good a person looks on the outside, it's the inside that counts, and God sees the inside. Before sin becomes an act on the outside, it starts with a bad attitude or wrong thinking.

The Bible says that sin destroys a person's life. Sin makes our lives "ugly" to God. It is like a cancer that eats people up on the inside. But most important of all, sin becomes a barrier between us and God - His love, His protection and His plan for our lives.

If you take a look at a tree, you only really see half a tree. The other half is hidden, under the ground. It's the same with people's lives. Others only see what is "above the ground" - the fruit, our behaviour. But God sees what's "under the ground" - the roots, the real source of all the problems.

What inside things affect peoples behaviour?

A new creation

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God..." (2 Corinthians 5:17-18).

When you align yourself with God's plan for your life, God does a work of re-creation. You become what the Bible calls a "new creation". When you accept God's offer of relationship through Jesus, you become a brand new person on the inside, clean and forgiven. The old has gone; the new has come. You start a new life with God.

How does God do this? The Bible tells us: *"He forgives all my sins...He fills my life with good things!...He is merciful and tender toward those who don't deserve it; He is slow to get angry and full of kindness and love...He has not punished us as we deserve for all our sins, for His mercy toward those who fear and honour Him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far away from us as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:3-8, Living Bible).*

Born into God's family

God's great desire is for you to be part of His family. This is the bottom line of God's plan for you. When a religious man approached Jesus about how to really know God, Jesus told him very clearly: *"You must be born again!" (John 3:7)*. Jesus was using the picture of natural birth to show what it means to become a part of God's family. A baby cannot be born by itself. Its mother must bring it to birth. In exactly the same way, you cannot just enter God's family by anything you try to do. You are born by God's own Spirit into His family.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3).

This now gives you a whole new perspective on life. You become a child of God, not because of anything you do to earn it, but because of God's great love and mercy toward you! You are a child of God because of something that God did for you. When Jesus died and then was raised back to life, He broke the sin barrier and opened the way for you to be born into God's family.

The family likeness

A new-born baby has the family likeness - people look for the resemblance to the rest of the family. And when you are born into God's family, God again stamps his likeness on you. God recreates in you that original image He had planned for you. **Read Colossians 3:9-10***.

But this is only the beginning. A baby may look like her Mum or Dad, but she is still only a baby. She still has to grow up. In the same way, when we are born into God's family, God puts His Spirit into our lives to help us to begin to grow in that renewed "image of God". God begins to change our lives to line up with His own nature of love and goodness, so that the image of God shines out in everything we say and do. This is the "living hope" that the Bible says we have been born into.

What does it mean to be born again?

The seed of eternal life

"For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God" (1 Peter 1:23).

When we are born into God's family, God gives us the most wonderful birthday gift we could ever have - eternal life. This is because He wants your new-found relationship with Him to go on forever and ever. But again, the Bible describes it like a seed. A seed has all the life of the tree inside, but it still has to grow into a tree. When you are born into God's family, you receive God's life - new, clean and linked to God. This life is eternal - it will never go away.

Jesus Himself gives us this special promise: *"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:28).*

Why is God's life in me like a seed?

Verses from the Bible*

Psalms 139:13-16 You created every part of me; You put me together in my mother's womb. I praise You because You are to be feared; all You do is strange and wonderful. I know it with all my heart. When my bones were being formed, carefully put together in my mother's womb, when I was growing there in secret, You knew that I was there - You saw me before I was born. The days allotted to me had all been recorded in Your book, before any of them ever began.

Psalms 139:1-5 LORD, You have examined me and You know me. You know everything I do; from far away You understand all my thoughts. You see me, whether I am working or resting; You know all my actions. Even before I speak, You already know what I will say. You are all around me on every side; You protect me with Your power.

Matthew 5:21-28 "You have heard that people were told in the past, 'Do not commit murder; anyone who does will be brought to trial.' But now I tell you: if you are angry with your brother you will be brought to trial, if you call your brother 'You good-for-nothing!' you will be brought before the Council, and if you call your brother a worthless fool you will be in danger of going to the fire of hell. So if you are about to offer your gift to God at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, go at once and make peace with your brother, and then come back and offer your gift to God. "If someone brings a lawsuit against you and takes you to court, settle the dispute while there is time, before you get to court. Once you are there, you will be turned over to the judge, who will hand you over to the police, and you will be put in jail. There you will stay, I tell you, until you pay the last penny of your fine. "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But now I tell you: anyone who looks at a woman and wants to possess her is guilty of committing adultery with her in his heart".

Matthew 12:33-34 "To have good fruit you must have a healthy tree; if you have a poor tree, you will have bad fruit. A tree is known by the kind of fruit it bears. You snakes - how can you say good things when you are evil? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of".

Romans 3:23 "Everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence"

Colossians 3:9-10 "Do not lie to one another, for you have put off the old self with its habits and have put on the new self. This is the new being which God, its Creator, is constantly renewing in His own image, in order to bring you to a full knowledge of Himself".

John 1:12-13 Some, however, did receive Him and believed in Him; so He gave them the right to become God's children. They did not become God's children by natural means, that is, by being born as the children of a human father; God Himself was their Father.

Romans 6:6 And we know that our old being has been put to death with Christ on His cross, in order that the power of the sinful self might be destroyed, so that we should no longer be the slaves of sin.

Romans 6:23 For sin pays its wage---death; but God's free gift is eternal life in union with Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. Discovering the Real Me

Making it all mine

1. What are some of the things God has placed of Himself in you?
2. Why did God create you in His image?
3. What is it that spoils the image of God in peoples lives?
4. How did God deal with sin?
5. Why does God want you to have eternal life?

3. Living Every Day With God

"...God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.' So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'" (Hebrews 13:5-6).

God is always there. He doesn't just go away, then come back to check on how we are doing. He's *always* there. The starting point in our life with God is to realize that *He is there*. At the beginning of the day, throughout the day and at the end of the day, we must be conscious of His presence with us. When we realize this, the whole day will be different! **Read Psalm 139:1-10***.

The Starting Point

As you begin your day with God, you need to remember three special gifts that He has given you, just because you asked Him into your life. You cannot earn these gifts by being good enough. You cannot qualify for them by being a Christian long enough. They are gifts. Because you received them, they're yours.

These three gifts are:

- Righteousness - **Read 2 Corinthians 5:21***
- Eternal life - **Read John 3:16***
- God's Spirit - **Read Ephesians 1:13***

Many people struggle all their lives trying to qualify to be accepted by God. Some people struggle with unworthiness, guilt and failure. But the Christian message has wonderful news! We are not trying to become righteous in God's sight - God gives His own righteousness to us as a free gift! We are not trying to earn eternal life - God gives us eternal life as a gift! We are not trying to become good enough so we can have God's Spirit in our hearts - God gives us His Spirit as soon as we open our hearts to Him. It's all a package deal. When you were born into God's family, these three things were God's birthday presents to you. They are now your starting point every single day.

Why do many people try to earn the three gifts?

Putting your roots deep into God

Just like a tree must put its roots down deep into the ground - where the underground rivers are - so you need to put your life's roots deep down into God. Many people put their roots down into other things - money, bitterness, unforgiveness, selfishness - and this is what their life feeds on. Their roots are ingrown on themselves. But now, as a Christian, your life can feed on God's presence every day.

The Bible describes the two main kinds of roots we can have:

Ingrown roots: "This is what the Lord says: 'Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes.'

He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives" (Jeremiah 17:5-6).

Roots into God: *"But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit" (Jeremiah 17:7-8).*

The Christian life isn't just a Sunday experience. It's a daily experience. Every day we get to know God better. Every day we can draw on special strength to face life with God. Every day we grow in the image of God, becoming more and more like Jesus Himself. God does not want weekly Christians. He wants *daily* Christians.

Where do many people put their roots?

Talking to God everyday

Prayer is a special part of the daily Christian life. Prayer is simply talking to God, spending time in His Presence. We can talk with God anywhere, at any time. Because we are a part of His family, we have an open invitation to talk with Him about anything that might be worrying us. **Read Philippians 4:6-7***. But we can also make special appointments with God at regular times every day. First thing in the morning, we can find a quiet place to spend a few moments alone with God, and this can give us special strength for the day. "

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" (Matthew 6:6).

Reading the Bible everyday

The Bible is a special gift from God to you. It contains many historic stories about God's involvement with people, and how Jesus came into the world. But the Bible also contains God's thoughts about you. This is why the Bible is often called "God's Word". As you read the Bible, you will discover more about God and about yourself too. God wants to change the way we look at ourselves and others, and when we read the Bible, it can be like hearing God's quiet "voice" in our hearts. You can ask another Christian where to begin reading the Bible.

"Jesus answered, '...Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'" (Matthew 4:4).

Read also Colossians 3:16* and James 1:21-22*.

Standing strong everyday

As you pray and read the Bible each day, you can receive special strength from God to face temptation and difficulties. Maybe you have a weak area that you always give into. But now that you have God's Spirit living in your heart, you can begin to rely on Him to give you strength.

However - if you do get into difficulties with sin, God has made a wonderful promise to you. **Read 1 John 1:9***. This means that you don't ever have to allow anything to get between you and God. Just ask God to forgive you and He has promised to cleanse you. You can also talk to the minister of your church. Part of his responsibility is to help you in any area where you may be having a struggle.

How can we really be daily Christians?

The secret to the Christian life

The secret to the Christian life is God's Spirit - called the Holy Spirit - living inside your heart. *Without Him, the Christian life doesn't work.* You can try all your life to be a good Christian by yourself, but you will fail. God's standards are too high. God has designed the Christian life to work only by the power of the Holy Spirit working on the inside, helping you to live up to God's standard. The Bible uses a very special word for this inner power - "**GRACE**".

Grace means God doing what you can't do yourself. God's grace is God's energizing power in your life, working from the inside out. **Read Ephesians 2:8-9***. This is a beautiful example of God's grace. You didn't deserve to be "saved". In fact, the Bible says you deserved to be judged for sin. But God's grace saved you from that judgment, because of God's love and mercy. When the Holy Spirit brought you to birth into God's family, that was His grace in action. But grace didn't just stop there.

Read Titus 2:11-12*. The "Grace Factor" is the secret to your whole life with God. It is God energizing you to live a life that pleases Him. Not just every now and again, but every day.

How does God's grace really work?

Verses from the Bible*

Psalm 139:1-10 LORD, You have examined me and You know me. You know everything I do; from far away You understand all my thoughts. You see me, whether I am working or resting; You know all my actions. Even before I speak, You already know what I will say. You are all around me on every side; You protect me with Your power. Your knowledge of me is too deep; it is beyond my understanding.

Where could I go to escape from You? Where could I get away from Your Presence? If I went up to heaven, You would be there; if I lay down in the world of the dead, You would be there. If I flew away beyond the east or lived in the farthest place in the west, You would be there to lead me, You would be there to help me.

2 Corinthians 5:21 Christ was without sin, but for our sake God made Him share our sin in order that in union with Him we might share the righteousness of God.

John 3:16 For God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not die but have eternal life.

Ephesians 1:13 And you also became God's people when you heard the true message, the Good News that brought you salvation. You believed in Christ, and God put His stamp of ownership on you by giving you the Holy Spirit He had promised.

Philippians 4:6-7 Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking Him with a thankful heart. And God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus.

Colossians 3:16 Christ's message in all its richness must live in your hearts. Teach and instruct one another with all wisdom. Sing psalms, hymns, and sacred songs; sing to God with thanksgiving in your hearts.

James 1:21-22 So get rid of every filthy habit and all wicked conduct. Submit to God and accept the word that He plants in your hearts, which is able to save you. Do not deceive yourselves by just listening to His word; instead, put it into practice.

1 John 1:9 But if we confess our sins to God, He will keep His promise and do what is right: He will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by God's grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God's gift, so that no one can boast about it.

Titus 2:11-12 For God has revealed His grace for the salvation of all people. That grace instructs us to give up ungodly living and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this world,

Making it all mine

Read through the lesson again, then answer these questions in your own words.

1. What should you always be conscious of, every single day?
2. What are the three gifts God gives you when you are born into His family?
3. In your own words, what is the verse 2 Corinthians 5:21 talking about?
4. What is the secret to the Christian life?
5. Write out below the bible verse in this lesson that means the most to you?

4. Discovering God in Church

God never planned for you to live the Christian life all by yourself. He designed the new life He gives us to be experienced together with other Christians. In fact, we can really only see the Christian life working when Christians are in relationship with others. This is what the Church is all about.

What is the Church?

When many people think of the Church, they think of cathedrals, stained glass windows and buildings with a cross on top. But the Church is more than just buildings and furniture. It is even more than Sunday services and mid-week meetings. The Church is God's people. **Read Ephesians 5:25-27***.

Jesus didn't die for buildings. He died for people. When the Bible says that Jesus died for the Church, it means He died for you and me. The Church is all those who have been "redeemed" - all those who have responded to God's invitation of a new life. The buildings that we see are simply the places where the Church meets.

The Church is a Family

Read Ephesians 2:11-13,19*. When you are born into God's family, you become a child of God in every sense of the word. But you are not the only child. You have many other brothers and sisters, who are also in God's family. The Church is the meeting together of God's family. And so, the Church is all about relationships - a relationship, first of all, with God - and then, just as important, an ongoing relationship with other Christians.

Why does the Church mean so much to God?

The Church is a Body

"The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ...Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it" (1 Corinthians 12:12,27).

The Bible says that the Church is like a body. Our bodies are made up of many parts, each with a special function - so is the Church. Our bodies are the physical extension of ourselves. People can only know what we are thinking and feeling if we use our bodies (our hands, our voices, our eyes) to show them. Jesus Christ is now in heaven. But He hasn't stopped reaching out to people's lives.

How does He do this? God's Spirit works through His people - the Church - to reach out and show the love and concern of Jesus to others. We are like His body - His hands, His feet, His voice - to help other people discover God for themselves. And so, the Church is all about the ministry of Jesus, touching other lives through our lives.

The Church is a Fellowship

God has a goal for your life - He wants you to begin to grow as a Christian, to allow the image of God He has stamped on your heart to work out into every area of your life. God has designed the Church to help individual Christians to grow "until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

This is why God created the Church - to be a family, a body, and a fellowship of mutual support. We don't just grow individually. We grow together into everything that Christ is - "the fullness of Christ".

The Bible says: *"...speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work"*. (Ephesians 4:15-16).

The Church is made up of many millions of people all around the world. And everyone of them is unique - different in race, culture, traditions. Even individual churches are different. What makes us the "body of Christ" is what we have in common. We have all believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. We have been "redeemed" - purchased back to God through the shedding of Jesus' blood. And we have God's Spirit living in our hearts.

The Holy Spirit is our common bond. It is the Holy Spirit who makes us a family, and it is the Holy Spirit who makes us a body. *It is the Holy Spirit who makes the Church work.* But for the Church to be the Church, Christians must actually meet together regularly. This is why the Bible tells us: *"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another..."* (Hebrews 10:24-25).

What is God's goal for our lives?

Where the rubber meets the road

When you are born into God's family, God recreates His image in you. He places His Holy Spirit in your heart so that you can live with God every day. But Church is where "the rubber meets the road" - where what is on the inside begins to work outwards. Relationships is where the "real me" comes out.

This is why so many marriages are on the rocks, why families struggle, why friendships fall through. When we come close to other people, then the "roots" of our lives begin to show. But Church is where your life's roots can grow more firmly into the life of God - and this will have a deep affect on all your other relationships.

"But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (Colossians 3:8-10).

The right stuff

The Bible tells us there are some special ingredients needed in our lives to allow the Church to work properly. These ingredients are found in Colossians 3:12-14:

- Humility (**Read Colossians 3:12***)
- Forgiveness (**Read verse 13**)
- Love (**Read verse 14**)

The Bible tells us clearly: "*Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us...We love because (God) first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom He has not seen*" (1 John 4:11-12,16,19-20).

What common things make us the Church?

The fruit of God's life

To be a Christian is the hardest thing in the world. Because being a Christian means being like Jesus. It means having the same love and heart of forgiveness as God Himself. **Read 1 John 3:16-18***. The problem is, the standard is too high. How can we ever live up to it all? How can we lay down our own self-interest in order to love others? Only Jesus was ever able to do it.

But there is good news! **Read Galatians 5:22-26***. All those things in that verse - love, joy, peace, etc - are called "the fruit of the Spirit". They are the product of the Holy Spirit's own nature! You don't need to struggle to be a Christian - you just have to allow God's Spirit to work in your life. If your roots are planted every day in the life of God's Spirit, then the fruit you produce will be *His* fruit.

"He has by his own action given us everything that is necessary for living the truly good life...making it possible for you to...share in God's essential nature" (2 Peter 1:3-4, Phillips).

What does "love your brother" really mean?

Verses from the Bible*

Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave His life for it. He did this to dedicate the church to God by His word, after making it clean by washing it in water, in order to present the church to Himself in all its beauty---pure and faultless, without spot or wrinkle or any other imperfection.

Ephesians 2:11-13 You Gentiles by birth---called "the uncircumcised" by the Jews, who call themselves the circumcised (which refers to what men do to their bodies)---remember what you were in the past. At that time you were apart from Christ. You were foreigners and did not belong to God's chosen people. You had no part in the covenants, which were based on God's promises to His people, and you lived in this world without hope and without God. But now, in union with Christ Jesus you, who used to be far away, have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Ephesians 2:19 So then, you Gentiles are not foreigners or strangers any longer; you are now citizens together with God's people and members of the family of God.

Colossians 3:12-14 You are the people of God; He loved you and chose you for His own. So then, you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you. And to all these qualities add love, which binds all things together in perfect unity.

1 John 3:16-18 This is how we know what love is: Christ gave His life for us. We too, then, ought to give our lives for others! If we are rich and see others in need, yet close our hearts against them, how can we claim that we love God? My children, our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action.

Galatians 5:22-26 But the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control. There is no law against such things as these. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have put to death their human nature with all its passions and desires. The Spirit has given us life; He must also control our lives. We must not be proud or irritate one another or be jealous of one another.

Ephesians 1:22-23 God put all things under Christ's feet and gave Him to the church as supreme Lord over all things. The church is Christ's body, the completion of Him who Himself completes all things everywhere.

Colossians 2:6-7 Since you have accepted Christ Jesus as Lord, live in union with Him. Keep your roots deep in Him, build your lives on Him, and become stronger in your faith, as you were taught. And be filled with thanksgiving.

Making it all mine

Read through the lesson again, then answer these questions in your own words.

1. What is the Church?
2. For the Church to be the Church, what must Christians do regularly?
3. What three ingredients are important in the Church?
4. What do you have to do to have the fruit of the Spirit in your life?

5. Reaching Out With Jesus

God sent Jesus into the world on a mission - to seek and save that which had been lost to God. But before we can understand Jesus' mission, we first have to see the world the way God sees it.

How God sees the world?

Read Hebrews 4:13. God loves the world. This means that He loves every single person. But He also sees the problems people face. He sees every tear that is cried in the dark. He sees the family problems, the work problems, the financial problems, the things we hope nobody will ever find out about. He knows the grief people feel - the loneliness, the guilt, the despair.

But how could God reach out past the walls that we put up around our lives? God created people with the ability to make their own choices in life. But people have used this ability to reject God - sometimes out of ignorance, sometimes out of rebellion. Mankind has chosen a path that does not include God. As a world, we've shut God out. And this is the condition of so many lives today.

But the good news is: "...God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

God sent Jesus into the world to break through the walls we build against God. Jesus became the door through the wall. Jesus became our link back to God.

What kind of walls do we build around our lives?

Living in the world

Even though God loves the world - that is, the people in the world - God hates what the world does to people. God hates sin because He sees the destruction it causes to people's lives. Now that we have aligned ourselves with God, the Bible tells us to love the world in the same way God does - the people, but not the system. **Read 1 John 2:15-17*.**

The biggest change that can happen in your life is when you begin to love God more than anything this world has to offer. We are special people. The Bible calls us "*aliens and strangers in the world*" (1 Peter 2:11) and says that "*our citizenship is in heaven*" (Philippians 3:20). Jesus Himself said about you: "*They are not of the world, even as I am not of it*" (John 17:16).

Dead and buried

The Bible talks many times about how our life is now "in Christ". This means our life is now no longer centred in what this world has to offer - money, popularity, the good life - but is centred in the life of Jesus. When you believed in Jesus, something very special happened in your life. The Bible says you "died". As far as God is concerned, when Jesus died on the Cross, your old life died with Him.

When Jesus was buried, your old life was buried with Him. When Jesus was raised back to life, you too were raised back to life in Him. This is because you have aligned your life with the life of Jesus. Jesus' life is now your life. You are now "in Christ". **Read Romans 6:6-11***; **Galatians 2:20***; **Galatians 6:14***; **Colossians 3:1-3***.

What a difference this makes to your life! All the old struggle is gone. You are a dead person to this world! The simple secret to living in the world is to live in the life of Jesus! Listen to the words of Jesus:

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing...As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Now remain in My love" (John 15:5,9).

Jesus said: "Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me...This is to My Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples" (John 15:4,8).

How can you be "In the world but not of it"?

Your mission

Jesus said: "...As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21).

Jesus has given us the same mission that the Father gave Him: to introduce people back to God. When God sent Jesus into the world, His priority was *reconciliation* - bringing people back into relationship with Himself. **Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-20***. This is now our mission: to bring others into relationship with God.

God is at work

God never stops working to bring people closer to Himself. **Read John 5:17,19***. God was at work in your life, drawing you to Himself, long before you ever made a decision to give your life to God. In the same way, God is also at work in the lives of your family, your friends, your workmates, the people you meet during the day. You may not see this work of God, but the Holy Spirit is there, working invisibly on the hearts of people.

God is not asking you to go and bring others back to God all by yourself. He gives you His Spirit to help you in this mission. Even Jesus - God's own Son - said He couldn't do anything by Himself. But He saw the work God was already doing in people's hearts and He then joined God in His work. As you reach out to your friends and family, ask God to help you to understand the work He is already doing - and then co-operate with God.

What kind of work is God doing in others' lives?

Showing God's love

The old saying goes: "Actions speak louder than words." Jesus didn't just come to *tell* us that God loved us. He *showed* us.

In the same way, we don't just tell people about God. We show the reality of God's love through our life - by having genuine concern for people, being ready to help, to listen, to express love in practical ways. Remember: Just as the Father sent Jesus, so Jesus is sending you. How did Jesus show the love and concern of God? He gave His life for others. This is how you too are to show God's love to others. You are God's ambassador on your street. Your friends, family and neighbours cannot see God, but they can see you.

Touching the heart

Read 2 Corinthians 4:4,6*. The Bible tells us that many people are "blinded" to God's love by the things this world has to offer. The work of God's Spirit is to take away this blindness so that we can see the love God wants to give. But God doesn't *aim for a person's mind* to try to convince them - *He aims at the heart*. When you talk with your friends about Jesus, you can cooperate with God's Spirit by doing the same thing - speak to a person's heart, not just their mind. Don't try to convince your friends and family about God, and don't argue. Be natural. Be yourself, and allow God's life to work out practically for them to see. When you talk with your friends, there will be opportunities to talk about "heart-issues". You can then share about your experience of God's love and the gift of His presence. Even if it takes a while, God's Spirit is working in their lives to break down the barriers.

Jesus said: "*Freely you have received, freely give*" (Matthew 10:8). You don't have to wait until you "know it all" before you begin telling others about Jesus. God just asks you to give to others what you yourself have received from God - nothing more, nothing less.

How can we show God's love practically to others?

Verses from the Bible*

Hebrews 4:13 There is nothing that can be hid from God; everything in all creation is exposed and lies open before His eyes. And it is to Him that we must all give an account of ourselves.

1 John 2:15-16 Do not love the world or anything that belongs to the world. If you love the world, you do not love the Father. Everything that belongs to the world---what the sinful self desires, what people see and want, and everything in this world that people are so proud of - none of this comes from the Father; it all comes from the world.

Romans 6:6-11 We know that our old being has been put to death with Christ on His cross, in order that the power of the sinful self might be destroyed, so that we should no longer be the slaves of sin. For when we die, we are set free from the power of sin. Since we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. For we know that Christ has been raised from death and will never die again---death will no longer rule over Him. And so, because He died, sin has no power over Him; and now He lives His life in fellowship with God. In the same way you are to think of yourselves as dead, so far as sin is concerned, but living in fellowship with God through Christ Jesus.

Galatians 2:20 It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. This life that I live now, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave His life for me.

Galatians 6:14 As for me, however, I will boast only about the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; for by means of His cross the world is dead to me, and I am dead to the world.

Colossians 3:1-5 You have been raised to life with Christ, so set your hearts on the things that are in heaven, where Christ sits on His throne at the right side of God. Keep your minds fixed on things there, not on things here on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Your real life is Christ and when He appears, then you too will appear with Him and share His glory! You must put to death, then, the earthly desires at work in you, such as sexual immorality, indecency, lust, evil passions, and greed (for greed is a form of idolatry)

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into His friends and gave us the task of making others His friends also. Our message is that God was making all human beings His friends through Christ. God did not keep an account of their sins, and He has given us the message which tells how He makes them His friends. Here we are, then, speaking for Christ, as though God Himself were making His appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf: let God change you from enemies into His friends!

John 5:17,19 Jesus answered them, "My Father is always working, and I too must work. I tell you the truth: the Son can do nothing on His own; He does only what He sees His Father doing. What the Father does, the Son also does.

2 Corinthians 4:4,6 They do not believe, because their minds have been kept in the dark by the evil god of this world. He keeps them from seeing the light shining on them, the light that comes from the Good News about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. The God who said, "Out of darkness the Light shall shine!" is the same God who made His light shine in our hearts, to bring us the knowledge of God's glory shining in the face of Christ.

Making it all mine

Read through the lesson again, then answer these questions in your own words.

1. Why does God hate sin?
2. When Jesus died on the cross, what happened to you?
3. What is our mission?
4. What does God want you to share with others?

What can you do?

"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." (1 Peter 3:15)

God is reaching out to people, and He wants for you to be involved with Him in this. He wants you to be ready and willing to share with anyone He brings across your path. This means doing three things:

- **Pray it** Ask God to work in other's lives.
- **Live it** Live the new life God has given you.
- **Speak it** Talk to others about the wonderful gift of relationship with God.

When you share with others about Jesus, you become what the Bible calls a "witness". What is a witness? A witness is someone who has seen something or experienced something, then tells someone else about it.

As you pray, live and speak about your new life, God will give you special wisdom to know how to share your faith.