
Foundations:

Basic Christian Teachings

Session 1: "A Saving Relationship"

Goal

The goal and prayer is that you grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ as you grow in knowledge of Him, and what it means to be in this relationship, and in your ability to share this good news with others.

Relationships

God made us for _____

- With other people
- With creation
- With God

God wants us to be in relationships with Him

- By _____ (gift)
- Through _____ (trusting in Him)

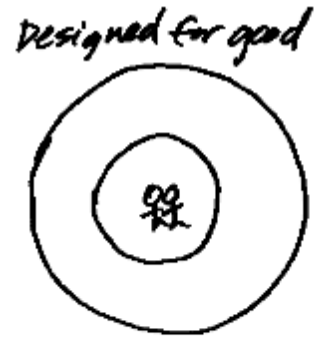
John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

John 14:2-3 *"My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."*

Perfect Relationships?

What would our world be like if all relationships were perfect?

- Relationships with other people
- Relationship with creation/environment
- Relationship with self (health, fulfillment)
- Relationship with God



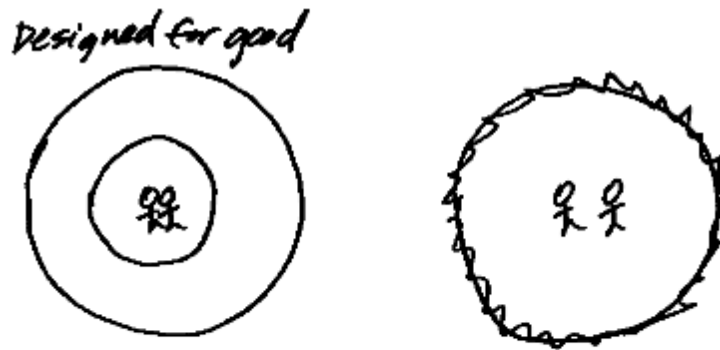
But what is our world really like? How do you feel about this?

Hunger points to food, and thirst points to water, loneliness points to love, so what does it mean that we ache for a better world, a better existence, and better life?

- Most people ache for a _____
- Did one once exist? Or will it someday? _____

Designed for Good

God created a wonderful world. In the beginning all the relationships were right.



Creation

Creation was designed to provide for us and we were designed to care for creation in an interdependent relationship.

Genesis 1:29-31

Genesis 2:4-15

People

People were designed to take care of each other. They were made to be in true community, to love and be loved, to serve and be served, to be themselves without shame in front of each other.

Genesis 2:18-25

God

We were each designed to be in a close intimate relationship with God.

Genesis 1:26-31

Genesis 2:7

Genesis 2:16-17

But what happened to this good world? How did we get to where we are today?

Damaged by Evil

With God completely in charge, we had a wonderful world. But God created humanity with the ability to choose – to choose whether to live in the relationship that He had created for us. We chose self over the relationship – and have been making that choice ever since.

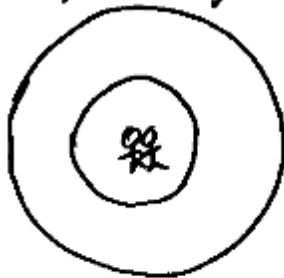
Choosing self over the relationship with God is _____.

We want to be _____.

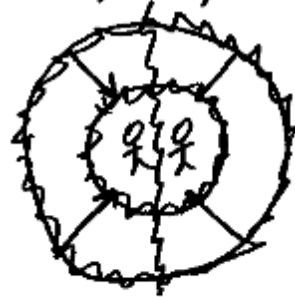
Genesis 3:1-13

The relationship was broken. What did this mean?

Designed for good



Damaged by evil



Creation

The relationship of interdependence is damaged. Creation is now also difficult, dangerous, and deadly. Humanity now also damages creation

Genesis 3:17-19

People

Now we damage each other and others hurt us. Now we seek our own desires first, even when others are hurt. Now there are societal ills such as racism, sexism, slavery, corruption, injustice and oppression.

Genesis 3:16
Genesis 4

God

Now we damage our relationship with God. We tend to ignore God and live for ourselves. We “know good and evil” by choosing for ourselves what is good and evil, instead of only pursuing what God has defined as good. This is sin.

Genesis 3:10
Genesis 3:22-24
Romans 1:18-32

Beyond Repair

Our world is a place of damaged relationships. These damaged relationships are bad, and cause much hurt, pain, loss, and suffering in our world.

But the damaged relationship with God is more severe because it is _____ . To be cut off from God is to be cut off from _____ .

Sinful Condition

Our damaged relationship with God keeps us from permanently and effectively repairing the other relationships. The damaged relationship is a condition that we call _____ .

We are damaged from what we were designed to be: We are _____ rather than God-centered.

Sin is not just something we _____ , but also our fallen _____

Psalm 51:5 *“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”*

Romans 5:18-19 *“Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.”*

We sin _____ of our sinful condition, and because we sin, we will always _____ of the good we were designed for.

1 John 1:8, 10 *“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.”*

Romans 3:23 *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*

Can we fix this situation? Can we attain the righteousness we were designed for? Can we repair the relationship with God?

The Stairway to Heaven

Religion, as a human institution, is _____ attempt to repair the relationship.

- Bridging a Pit
- Climbing the “Stairway to Heaven”

Different religions have different means to “climb the ladder.” What are these?



- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Can we do this?

The Bible says that we cannot climb the stairway and so restore a right relationship with God.

Romans 3:20 *“Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.”*

We need an answer. All of humanity needs an answer. All of creation needs an answer.

Restored for Better

This is why Jesus came. This is what Christmas is all about. This is what Good Friday and Easter are all about. This is what Christianity is all about.

Christianity is not about climbing the stairway to heaven. Christianity is about God _____ to take us to himself.

Christianity is about a restored relationship with Jesus, who _____ the stairway to heaven.

Genesis 28:12 *“(Jacob) had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.*

John 1:51 *“(Jesus) then added, “I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”*

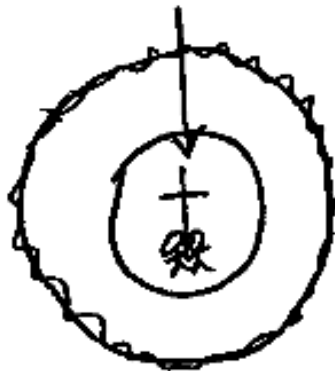
Why did Jesus come?

- + To restore a right relationship with him:
 - _____
- + To give to us the entrance into the place of perfect relationships:
 - _____
- + To empower us to be His agents in restoring relationships in this world:
 - _____ in the power of the _____.

But not even just for humanity . . .

- + To restore and resurrect _____

Restored for better



A Relationship Restored by GRACE

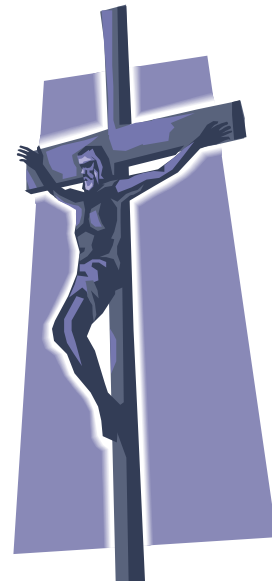
Ephesians 2:8-9 *“For it is by **grace** you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, **it is the gift of God** –not by works, so that no one can boast.”*

Romans 5:8 *“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

Our relationship is restored by _____ through _____

GRACE:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



What did Jesus do to restore relationships?

He _____

- + His life pictured the perfectly restored relationship.
- + He displayed a perfectly restored relationship with His Father

John 10:30 *“I and the Father are one.”*

John 5:19 *“Jesus gave them this answer: “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”*

Matthew 5:17 *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”*

- + He restored relationships with God through forgiveness

Luke 7:48-50 *“Then Jesus said to her, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’ The other guests began to say among themselves, ‘Who is this who even forgives sins?’ Jesus said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you; go in peace.’”*

- + Creation was restored in Him: Diseases were healed, dead raised, creation perfectly cooperated with him in the miracles that he performed:

Luke 7:21-23 *“At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. So he replied to the messengers, ‘Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.’”*

He _____

- + Jesus took our _____ from us; and gave His _____ to us.

2 Corinthians 5:21 *“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

- + Jesus received the _____ we would have received for our sins.

Isaiah 53:5 *"...the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed."*

- + Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice of _____.

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

Read Romans 3:21-28, (p. 1750)

- + Jesus has _____ us by His death.

1 Peter 1:18-19 *"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect"*

He _____

- + His resurrection shows that the fall is _____ in Him

Read Romans 5:15-19, (p. 1753)

- + His resurrection is the promise of _____, the time of perfectly restored relationships.

2 Corinthians 5:17 *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"*

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 *“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.”*

- + His resurrection is the preview of the restoration of _____

Romans 8:19-22 *“The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”*

Restored for Better in Jesus

- + Relationship with God

Romans 8:1-2 *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.”*

- + Relationship with People

Ephesians 4:32 *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”*

- + All of Creation

Read Colossians 1:15-20, (p. 1832)

Sent Together to Heal

- + His _____ is still to restore all relationships.

Read Colossians 1:15-20 (p. 1832)

- + He has made his followers his _____ in this mission.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 *“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”*

- + He sends his followers to _____ of all nations.

Matthew 28:19-20 *“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.”*

- + He empowers His followers by giving them _____

Acts 1:8 *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

- + We are sent forth as His body, proclaiming and living the restored relationship we have in Christ.

- Healing our relationship with God
 - + We are called to submit to Jesus' leadership and become more like Him.
 - + We are called to become the good we want to see in the world.

Galatians 5:22-23 *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."*

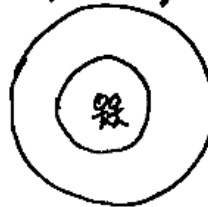
- Healing Each Other
 - + Heal relationships, our own and others.
 - + We ask for forgiveness and forgive others

Matthew 6:12 *"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."*

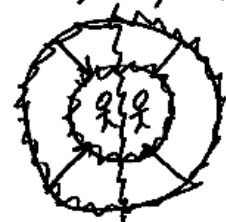
Matthew 18:21-25, 2 Corinthians 5:11-21

- Healing the World
 - + This healing will only be complete in eternity
 - + Until then we are called to (among other things)
 - Protect and heal the environment
 - Fight injustice and oppression

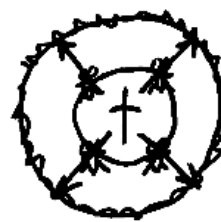
Designed for good



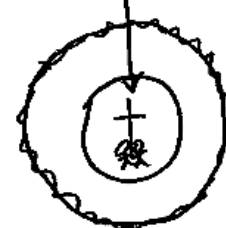
Damaged by evil



Sent together to heal



Restored for better



Saved By Faith

We are saved by grace, through faith. But what does that mean?

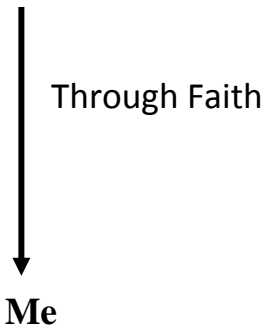
What is Faith?

- More than _____

James 2:19 *“You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.”*

- Receiving _____

The Gift of God



John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

- Receiving _____

John 1:12 *“Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.”*

- Receiving _____, that is, a _____ relationship

Romans 3:21-24 *“But now **a righteousness from God**, apart from law, has been made known... This righteousness from God **comes through faith in Jesus Christ** to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and **are justified freely by His grace** through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”*

Faith is the restored relationship with God.

- + Faith is taking the hand reaching down to us.
- + Faith is saying “Yes” to God’s desire to lift us up.
- + Faith is trust.

Romans 5:1-2 *“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.”*

Romans 8:31-32 *“If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all – how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?”*

Faith brings all the blessings of the restored relationship with God

- + Forgiveness
 - + Eternal Life
 - + The Holy Spirit
 - + Peace with God
-
- It’s not about religion, but relationship.
 - It’s not about information, but transformation.
 - It’s not about achieving, but receiving.
 - It’s not about “DO,” but “DONE.”



So Now What?

How is your relationship with God?

Do you have a faith relationship with the Savior?

Or to put it in terms of a question asked Paul in the Bible, “So what must I do to be saved?”

Acts 16:30-31 *“What must I do to be saved?” They replied, ‘ Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.’”*

John 5:24 *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears My words and believes...has crossed over from death to life.”*

You don’t do anything. All that you do is receive. **God** has already done what is necessary! That’s why it is called **“grace”**. Jesus died on the cross and rose again for the forgiveness of your sins. Do you believe this is true for you and trust it?

If you answered, “YES,” then you are saved! Your sins are forgiven. Your life is redeemed. Your relationship with God is restored. Your name is received into the family of God.

John 1:12 *“Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.”*



Summary for Sharing

- God made a world of perfect relationships
- But our world is damaged. All relationships are damaged. We are damaged.
- God has a plan to restore all things
- Jesus is God come down to save us, taking the damage on himself on the cross
- He rose from the dead, a preview of a new restored creation of perfect relationships
- A restored relationship with God is ours by grace (gift), through faith (trusting in Him.)
- We who believe are God's agents to restore relationships in our world
 - With God
 - With others
 - With creation
- Do you have any questions?
- Do you believe? Do you want to follow Jesus?

*Share this good news with two other people in the coming week.
Since this is practice, it's ok if you share it with someone who already knows it.*

What do I do next?

It does not matter whether you are a new Christian, a revived Christian, or a life-long Christian. Jesus calls each of us to a process of spiritual health and growth that includes the following:

- **Constant in Prayer** – *A disciple has an active prayer life, and is growing in praying with and for others.*
- **Grounded in the Word** – *A disciple is constantly in the Word – reading, studying, memorizing, and applying the Word for daily life.*
- **Faithful in Worship** – *A disciple is dedicated to faithful worship, worshipping with others weekly, and cultivating a personal or family devotion life*
- **Spiritual Friendship** – *A disciple lives his or her faith in relationship, participating in a discipling group or study group*
- **Loving Service** – *A disciple seeks to love all people, and strives to serve people inside and outside the St. John's family*
- **Intentional Generosity** – *A disciple is growing in generosity, giving time, talent and treasure to be a blessing to others and to serve God's mission.*
- **Compassionate Witness** – *A disciple shares the love of Jesus in word and deed, and so seeks to make more disciples*

For Further Growing

You are being given a marvelous little reference book as a gift from St. John's. It is called "Luther's Small Catechism".

The Small Catechism is a book written by Martin Luther, a reformer of the church, in 1529 to help sum up Christian teachings so that they could more easily be taught to children by their parents. It follows a question and answer format.

Each week you will be given readings from this book, which will give you additional information about the topics we have covered.

For this week:

- The Law and Sin pp. 95-100
- The Gospel pp. 100-101, 165-168
- Eternal Life pp. 169-172

Sharpening The Sword

Each week you will be given a verse of the Bible to put to memory. The Bible calls God's Word "the sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17). We want you to have a big, sharp sword!

For this week:

John 1:12 *"Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God."*