Fuel

Our vision at St Clement's is to spread a passion for Jesus Christ in Manchester the UK and the world. You can only spread a passion for something if you have a passion for that thing. You can only spread a passion for Jesus Christ if you have a passion for Jesus Christ. Fuel is a course of Christian discipleship. Its purpose is to fuel your passion for Jesus Christ.

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ involves three things. It involves your head, your heart and your hands. Knowing, being and doing. Fuel will help you know the Christian faith. It will help you walk with Jesus Christ. And it will help you put your faith into practice.

The teaching is grouped into sets of five seminars. Each set of seminars are self-contained. The only exception are the first two sets which cover the foundations of the Christian faith over 10 weeks.

Please join us on Sunday mornings as we fuel our passion for Jesus Christ.

Christian Foundations
Over the next ten weeks we will be covering the basics of the Christian Faith. What we believe as Christians, how to walk closely with God and how to practically live out your Christian life.

The ten topics are these
Week 1 The Gospel
Week 2 God
Week 3 Jesus Christ
Week 4 Human beings
Week 5 Salvation
Week 6 Last Things
Week 7 Walking with God
Week 8 Growing in holiness
Week 9 Serving others
Week 10 Gifts and giving

Week 1 - The Gospel

When Jesus began his ministry he began by speaking about the gospel. Mark 1:15 '*The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand repent and believe in the gospel*.'

The gospel is at the heart of our faith as Christians. It is point one in theology. Although there is more to say about the Christian faith than the gospel. The gospel is something which we never move past. It is the good news which we believe and by which we are saved.

So what is the gospel?

The word gospel simply means good news. And this tells us both what it is and what it isn't. It is news. It isn't advice. It is news of what God has done. It isn't advice on what you and I need to do to.

One word to describe this in the Bible is the word grace. In Galatians 1:6 Paul describes the gospel as 'the grace of Christ'. The gospel is the good news that God by his grace has done something to rescue us. The rescue we require is a rescue from sin, death and hell. This is something that God and God alone has done. We couldn't do it ourselves.

One illustration of the gospel is that of a person drowning at sea. A helicopter comes along and lets down a rope. The person takes hold of it and is brought safely to shore. We are like that drowning person, and the gospel is like the helicopter sent to rescue us. By faith we take hold of the rope and are saved. As Paul says in Ephesians 2:9 'for by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.' Salvation is by grace not works. It is his rescue work.

This gospel is found in the Bible.

The gospel is recorded in the Bible. It is there in the Old Testament though undeveloped and hidden at times. It is there clearly and fully in the New Testament. Especially in the four gospels which speak of the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ himself is the good news because it is through him and him alone that God rescues us.

One way to determine whether the gospel that you have heard is the true message of the Christian faith is whether it agrees with the gospel of the Bible. Any 'gospel' that doesn't is not the Christian gospel no matter who says it.

Alternative 'gospels'

Although the Bible says there is only one gospel. It also says that even in Bible times there were people who distorted the gospel (Gal 1:7). They turned the true gospel into a false gospel. Sadly, this continues to happen today. There are two ways in which people can distort the gospel. The gospel is distorted by adding to it or taking away from it. Words sometimes used to describe this are legalism and liberalism.

Legalism is where someone adds to the gospel. The common way this is done is through adding rules or rituals to the gospel. You must do X or you must not do X in order to be a Christian (Col 2:16-23). Legalism distorts the gospel because it says that salvation is not found in Jesus Christ alone.

Liberalism is where someone takes away from the gospel. There are two common ways this is done. The first is by taking away from the message of the gospel. You don't need to believe that Jesus Christ died for you in order to be a Christian. The second is by taking away from what is required to accept the message. You don't need to turn from sin in your life. You can hold onto sin and hold onto Jesus Christ and be a Christian (Rom 6:1, 15). Liberalism distorts the gospel because it says that salvation is not found in Jesus Christ alone.

The true gospel message is clear. God is the one who saves and he does so through Jesus Christ and through him alone.

So how does God save us through Jesus Christ?

One word in the Bible that helps us to understand what Jesus has done to make us right with God is the word ***propitiation*** (Romans 3:25; Heb 2:17; 1 John 2:2). Propitiation is the act of making someone favourable by the removal of anger through the offering of a sacrifice on their behalf.

This is not a word we often come across. But the idea is common enough. For example, a man may give his wife some flowers because she is annoyed with him for something he has (or hasn't) done. The purpose of the flowers is to placate his wife's anger so that she might be pleased with him again. This is what Jesus did.

The Bible says that God is angry with us because of our sin. We need a sacrifice that will enable God to be pleased with us. Jesus is that sacrifice. Unlike us Jesus lived a perfect life. Because of this God was always pleased with him. When Jesus died on the cross he died in our place. He literally swapped places with us. God placed our sin on him so that we might be right with God through him. God's anger was directed to him so that God's love and favour might be directed to us (2 Corinthians 5:21).

When we believe in Jesus Christ God applies to us what Jesus did on the cross. All our sin goes to Jesus and all his goodness comes to us. We are now forgiven and accepted as right in God's sight. God is now pleased with us. In fact, as we will see God is so pleased with us that he brings us into his family. We become sons and daughters of God himself. That really is good news.

There is one Gospel on which I stand
For all eternity
It is my story, my Father's plan
The son has rescued me
Oh what a Gospel, Oh what a peace
My highest joy and my deepest need
Now and forever he is my light
I stand in the Gospel of Jesus Christ
City Alight

Week 2 – God

The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father,
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Trinity

The Apostles Creed is an early and simple description of what Christians believe about God. It has three paragraphs one for each member of **The Trinity**. The Trinity is the belief that there is ***One God in three persons.*** The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Each of these persons is God and equal in power and glory. All three persons are different. And yet there are not three gods but only one God. When we look at the three we are meant to see the one and when we look at the one we are meant to see the three. If this blows your mind it is meant to. Our response to seeing God is to bow down and worship.

The Trinity is the foundational belief of the Christian faith and the clear teaching of the Bible (Matthew 3:16-17, 28:28:19-20; John 1:1-4, 20:28; Colossians 2:9; Revelation 5:13-14). A person cannot be a Christian unless they believe it.

The Trinity is hard to understand (!!). As a result people have come up with alternative teachings to try to explain it. Sadly, instead of explaining the Trinity these teachings (called heresies) deny it. They usually do so in one of three ways. Either by saying that Jesus Christ is not fully God (like Jehovah's Witnesses do), or by saying that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are not three different people but three different ways of God revealing himself to us or by saying that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are three parts of God and not three persons in the godhead.

Sometimes these false teachings are reinforced through the use of analogies such as an egg, a candle, a transformer toy or a three leafed clover. The Trinity is not something we can illustrate but it is something that we believe. There is one God and there are three persons in the godhead.

God
The first paragraph of the creed tells us about God. It tells us three important things about God. That he is creator, Father and almighty.

1. He is the Creator
When we call God creator we are saying that everything was made by him
Genesis 1 describes the creation of the world. It tells us that God made everything. That he made it out of nothing by his word (Gen 1:1; Rev 4:11; Heb. 11:3) He created it by speaking (Gen 1:3; John 1:1-4). He created it in six days (Exodus 20:11). And all he made was very good (Gen 1:27, 28, 31).

Because everything was made by God. ***Everything belongs to God.***
If an artist creates a sculpture out of clay. He has the right to say I made that. It belongs to me. In the same way God has the right to look at everything and say I made that it belongs to me. The everything includes you and me. We are not independent autonomous people. We belong to the one who made us and gave us life.

2. He is the Almighty
To be almighty is to have all might and power. When we call God almighty we mean that he governs and preserves the whole world. That God governs and rules the world is mentioned throughout the Bible (Psalm 115:2-3).

As well as governing the world God also preserves the world he has made (Matt 6:26; Acts 17:24-25). He is not a watchmaker who has made a watch and once it is going leaves it alone. Instead, he is intimately involved in the world that he has made. He preserves it and provides for it. One old and heart-warming description of God's care for the world (sometimes called his providence) calls it

The almighty and everywhere present power of God; by which, as it were by his hand, he upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures; so that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yes, and all things come, not by chance, but by his fatherly hand.
Question 28 Heidelberg Catechism

3. He is the Father
The concept of God being our father goes right to the centre of the Christian faith. When Jesus was asked by his disciples to teach them to pray. He began with these words 'Our father in haven.'

When a person becomes a Christian they are *adopted* into his family. This adoption happens not on the basis of who they are or what they have done but on the basis of them simply believing in Jesus Christ (John 1:12).

Our ultimate *identity* from that moment on is that we are children of God (1 John 3:1). We are first and foremost not European or African and Asian or American but a child of God.

The benefits of being a child of God are incredible. We now know and have God's unconditional love which is reflected in his protection and provision. And we have access to God. The sort of open access that a little child has with their parents.

This is my Father's world,
And to my listening ears
All nature sings, and round me rings
The music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world:
I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas
His hand the wonders wrought.
Maltbie D. Babcock

Week 3 - Jesus Christ

The Mediator

There are many names given to Jesus Christ in the Bible. One important name is mediator. In Hebrews 12:24 Jesus is called 'the mediator of a new covenant.' A mediator is a middleman who brings two people or groups together. Jesus Christ is called the mediator because he is the middleman who restores the divide between God and us.

To consider Jesus Christ and his role as mediator we need to look at who he is (his person) and what he does (his roles or offices).

Who He is (His Person)

The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is one person with two distinct natures. These two natures aren't mixed together in him nor are they so separated that he is two people in one person. They are two distinct natures in one person. Jesus is one person fully God and fully man.

Jesus is fully God (*His divine nature)*

Jesus is repeatedly called God in the New Testament. (Jn 1:1; Col 2:9; Heb 1:8). He is said to do the works of God (John 5:26). One of these works that he did which only God does is create the world (John1:1-4; Colossians 1:15-17). Since he is God, he is of equal glory with God the father and like the Father is to be worshipped. This is something we see people and angels doing in the Bible. (John 20:28; Rev 5)

Jesus is fully man *(His human nature)*

Jesus was born as a human being. The word became flesh (John 1:14). We call this the incarnation. As a human being he had a human body that grew tired and fell asleep in a storm (Mark 4:38). As a human being he felt human emotions such as anger and sadness at the graveside of a friend (John 11:33-35). He can relate to our emotions and sympathise with our weaknesses . As a human being he could suffer and be killed. In fact he became a human being so that he could suffer and be killed for us (Heb 2:14-18).

What he does *(his offices)*

In God's people in the Old Testament there were three major roles or offices; the prophet, the priest and the king. The prophet spoke God's word to the people. The priest offered sacrifices and prayers on behalf of the people. And the king was God's ruler and representative on earth over the people. Together these three roles enabled God's people to live in a right relationship with him.

In the New Testament we are told that Jesus Christ fulfils these three roles. Because he fulfils them we can have a right relationship with God through him.

As Prophet
In the Old Testament the Word of the Lord came to the Old Testament prophets. And they passed on that word to the people. They did this at different times and in different ways. Through speaking God's word they revealed God to the people but they did not do so perfectly and clearly.

In the New Testament Jesus is the one who speaks God's word to us. He speaks God's word on his own authority. As he does so he perfectly reveals God to us. (Deut 18-15-18; John 10:30, 14:9; Heb 1:1-2)

As Priest
In the Old Testament the priests approached God on behalf of the people. They offered sacrifices to God for the peoples sins and prayed for the people to God (sometimes called intercession). They could not do this perfectly as they themselves sinned. They died and couldn't continue in the role. And the sacrifices they offered were animals that weren't an appropriate substitute for people.

In the New Testament we are told that Jesus is the final and ultimate priest (Heb 7). He is the final and ultimate priest because Jesus offered a perfect once for all sacrifice for sin through his death on the cross (Heb 9:24-28). Through his sacrifice he is able to continually bring us near to God (Heb 10:19-22). And because he lives forever he is able to continually pray for us (Heb 7:25).

As King
In the Old Testament the kings of Israel such as David ruled God's people on God's behalf. They were God's king though they ruled imperfectly and temporarily.

The New Testament says that Jesus is God's ultimate King. After his resurrection Jesus ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God as God's king (Matt 28:18; Eph 1:2-22; Heb 1:4-14). He now rules not only God's people but the whole universe as well. He will continue to rule the universe until he returns to earth to judge the world. When he comes again his authority as God's king will be recognised by everyone (Rev 19:11-16).

Jesus my shepherd, brother, friend,
My prophet, priest, and king
My Lord, my life, my way, my end
Accept the praise I bring
John Newton

Week 4 - Human Beings

Knowing who we are as human beings is very important. How can we know God and how can we know how to live if we don't know who we are? The Bible tells us two important things about who we are as human beings.

1. Human beings are created

The first thing we should know about ourselves is that we are created by God. We didn't evolve from another animal. We are not independent beings but created beings dependent on our creator for life, breath and all things. We were made by God to serve God. We were created higher than any other creature for a great purpose, to glorify and enjoy God forever (Psalm 16:11 Cor 10:31).

In God's image

When God made us he made us in his image (Gen 1:26-28). Human beings were made to image God by reflecting his righteous and holy character back to him and by ruling the world on his behalf.

God created man male and female in his image. Sexual differentiation is part of who we are. As fellow image bearers men and women are equal but different.

Our nature and purpose

The Bible says that there are two parts to a human being. We have a physical body and a spiritual soul (Gen 2:7). We were made as free actors responsible for our actions.

Human beings were made to have children, who would spread over the earth and bring out the potential of the earth to meet their needs and to glorify God. We were made with the ability to create like God our maker. Only we create from pre-existing things whereas God creates from nothing.

At the beginning of creation God formed a relationship with Adam in which he promised life to Adam and his descendants as long as they obeyed him (Gen 2:16-17).

2. Human beings are sinful

The second thing we should know about ourselves is that we are sinful.

What is sin?

Sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4). To sin is to break God's law or to fail to conform to it. Sin begins in the heart. We set our hearts on other things than God (idolatry). This in turn leads us to disobey God and live for other things instead.

Why are we sinful?

Back in the garden of Eden Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That event, called the fall, brought disaster on the whole human race. Adam as the representative of the human race passes on guilt for

his sin and a sinful nature to his descendants. We are all born sinful. Our sinful nature results in us committing actual sins (Rom 5:12-21).

What are the results of sin?

There are three results of sin: guilt, uncleanness and punishment.
We are guilty before God for breaking God's law (Rom 3:19). We are unclean and being unclean we are unfit to be in the presence of a holy God (Isaiah 6:5). And because he is a just God we deserve God's judgement and punishment for disobeying him (Rom 6:23).

The origin of sin

Sin is part of God's mysterious plan, and he planned it for good and holy purposes (Eph1:11). In planning sin God did not commit sin or recommend it but he condemns it, hates it and will destroy it. In relation to sin he is like a publisher not like an author. The first sin was Satan's. He tempted Adam and Eve to disobey a specific word of God; the fall (Gen 2:16-17; 3:1-7).

I stand amazed in the presence
Of Jesus the Nazarene,
And wonder how He could love me,
A sinner condemned, unclean.

How marvelous! How wonderful!
And my song shall ever be:
How marvelous! How wonderful!
Is my Savior's love for me!

Week 5 - Salvation

Introduction

The wonderful claim of the Bible is that God saves sinners and he does so through Jesus Christ. Paul says in 1 Tim 1:15 that 'Jesus Christ came into the world in order to save sinners.' We are connected to what Jesus did through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit applies to us the salvation that Jesus Christ accomplished through his life, death, resurrection and ascension.

There are eight events in which the Holy Spirit applies salvation to us.

1. Calling

In Romans 8:30 Paul talks about the way in which God by his Spirit brings salvation into our lives. The first thing he does is call us 'those whom he predestined he also called'.

Calling is an act of God that guarantees a response from us. This call of God draws us out of darkness into God's marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9). It brings us into relationship with Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:9).

This call of God comes through the preaching of the gospel (2 Thess 2:14). Some people hear the gospel and do not respond to the message. But others hear the gospel and the Holy Spirit so works in their lives that they respond to the call (Acts 16:14).

2. Regeneration

As we hear the message of the gospel God speaks through it to call us to himself. At the same time the Holy Spirit works in us to make us spiritually alive. This is called regeneration or being born again (John 3:3-8).

This regeneration is entirely a work of God in which he gives new life to people (John 1:13). This new life involves two things. It involves a cleansing of our hearts and recreation of new life within us (Ezek 36:26-27; John 3:5).

The result of being born again is that is that a person will believe in Jesus Christ, seek to love others and refrain from sin in their life (2 Cor 5:17).

3. Faith and repentance

One of the results of regeneration is faith and repentance. Repentance is a turning away from sin. Faith is a trusting in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. Whilst regeneration is a work of God alone. Faith and repentance are something we do. God regenerates. We repent and believe.

Faith involves three things. It involves knowledge of who Jesus Christ is and what he has done. It involves agreeing that this knowledge is true. And it involves personal trust in Jesus Christ.

Like faith repentance involves three things. It involves an understanding that sin is wrong. It involves an emotional sadness and hatred for sin and it involves a personal decision to turn away from sin and to live a life of obedience to God instead.

Repentance and faith are not one off actions in our lives. They are attitudes of our hearts that continue throughout our lives. We are always repentant and always trust in Jesus Christ.

4. **Justification**

The most basic question of religion is this. How can a person be right with God? The answer is found in the word justification. To be justified is to be declared legally right by God. Justification involves two things. In justification God forgives all our sins. He also accepts us as righteous in his sight. God declares us to be righteous because he counts Jesus Christ's righteousness to us.

Christ's righteousness becomes ours when we put our trust in Jesus Christ and in him alone. It is by faith in Jesus Christ that we are justified not by anything that we do (Rom 3:26, 5:1; Gal 2:16). We are right with God now and forever God through faith in him.

5. **Adoption**

Adoption is arguably the greatest privilege of a Christian. By his grace God adopts us into his family so that we now have a right to all the privileges of being children of God (John 1:12; Rom 8:14-17).

Being adopted by God into his family means that we are also brothers and sisters with others who believe in Jesus Christ as well (Rom 1:13, 8:12). The church is God's family.

6. **Sanctification**

Whilst justification is a once for all time act of God that declares us as right in God's sight. Sanctification is an ongoing work of God in which God's Spirit makes us more like Jesus Christ by enabling us to turn from sin and to lives of obedience to God.

Sanctification begins at regeneration as God's Spirit cleanses and renews us (Titus 3:5). Sanctification increases throughout our lives as God's Spirit enables us to become more and more holy (2 Cor 3:18) by helping us to apply the gospel into our lives. Sanctification is completed in us when we die (Heb 12:23).

7. **Perseverance**

Perseverance of believers means that if God has begun a good work in you then he will preserve you as a believer until the end of your life (Phil 1:6). This does not mean that everyone who professes faith in Christ will be secure for ever. But that those who are truly born again by the Holy Spirit will be kept by the same Spirit as believers until the end of their lives (John 10:27-29).

8. Glorification

The final event in the application of salvation is the glorification of believers (Rom 8:30; Col 3:4). This will happen when Jesus Christ returns. Four things take place in glorification. The bodies of believers will be raised up by the Holy Spirit and reunited with their souls (Rom 8:11; Phil 3:20-21). Our bodies will be transformed to be like Jesus Christ's body (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15). The world will be renewed (Rom 8:21). We will be sons of God like Jesus Christ (Rom 8:19).

Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost but now am found
Was blind but now I see

Week 6 - The Last things (Eschatology)

The study of the last things or end times includes personal eschatology (what happens to each individual after death), and historical eschatology (the return of Christ to judge the world).

Personal Eschatology (What happens to us after we die?)

The intermediate state

After death believers go immediately to be with Christ in heaven (Luke 23:43). Heaven is a real place in time and space. It is the place that God dwells. Jesus is there with Enoch and Elijah (Gen5:24; 2 Kings2:11).

In the intermediate state believers are with the Lord and the Lord is with them (Luke 16:19-31). It's not the final state there's more to come. In the intermediate state the wicked are in torment, receiving no mercy. Our eternal destinies are set at death.

The eternal state

At the end of history, Christ will return to judge the world and bring in a new creation (1 Thess 4:13-18). Jesus will return with his saints. The dead bodies of believers will rise from the ground and believers living on earth will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

After Christ's return comes God's final judgement (Revelation 20:11-15). It will be of all people. Unbelievers will be judged according to their works. Believers will be vindicated because of Christ's redemption.

The new creation will be a renewed physical and temporal universe (Revelation 21:1-8). We will have new physical bodies which may have powers we don't currently have. There will be no sexual activity and our time will be spent in worship. We will be with God.

Heaven (the new creation)

The primary blessing about heaven is that we will be in the presence of God himself. The presence and power of sin will be absent from our lives and we will enjoy intimacy and joyful feasting with God.

We will also receive our inheritance. This is chiefly God himself. It also includes ruling the world and judging the angels. We will receive rewards for our good works on earth. There will be degrees of reward (Luke 19:11-27).

Hell

It's unpleasant but real. Hell is eternal punishment. It is based on deeds done in this life. (Matthew 25 especially 31-46) There will be degrees of punishment (Matt 11:22).

Historical Eschatology (When and how will Christ return to judge?)

The 1000 years

Revelation 20:1-8 describes the millennium (1000 years). This is a period of time from Jesus' ascension to his return in which Christ rules the world having gained victory over Satan, sin and death. Although we don't see all the effects of it now. Satan is now bound yet still has power although he no longer deceives the nations as he did before Christ. Christ will empower the church to fulfil his mission in bringing the gospel message to every nation. This will involve suffering and persecution but also the gospel will increasingly influence general culture.

The end of history

At the end of this era Satan will be released to deceive the nations. The man of lawlessness will come. But both will be frustrated and defeated by the return of Christ and the judgement that will result in their destruction. We live in this era, the now, looking forward to the not yet to come (Christ's death and resurrection were like the second world war D-day, his return will be like V-day).

Lo! He comes with clouds descending,
once for favoured sinners slain:
thousand thousand saints attending,
swell the triumph of his train;
Hallelujah!…
God appears on Earth to reign.
Charles Wesley

Week 7 - Walking with God

The Means of Grace

When we become a Christian we begin a relationship with God. How do we keep that relationship up? How do we walk with God throughout our lives? The way to continue as a Christian is the way we became a Christian which is by grace. God has provided the Bible, prayer, the church and the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper to minister his grace to us and keep us walking with him.

The Bible and Prayer

When we become Christians we begin a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. That relationship is continued through Prayer and Bible reading. The Bible is how God talks to us. Prayer is how we talk to him.

How to read The Bible

In order for us to know God he must reveal himself to us. The Bible is God's word and is the primary way that God speaks to us (Psalm 19; 2 Timothy 3:16).
It is good to read the Bible regularly (morning and evening is a good pattern) and systematically (one passage after another). So that the Bible saturates our lives and orders our days. Reading Bible notes or making notes on the Bible can be helpful. A good method for Bible reading is to pray, read, meditate, pray.

How to pray

A common acronym used for prayer is ACTS. Adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication. Incorporating these four aspects of prayer into your prayers helps to strengthen your prayer life.

Equally using the The Lord's Prayer as a basis and arrangement for prayer is also helpful as it provides structure to your prayers (Matt 6:9-13). When thinking about how to pray prayer should be both organized and spontaneous. Prayer can also be accompanied by fasting to help increase our hunger for God (Matt 6:16-18).

The Church

When we become Christians we begin a relationship with other Christians. We are citizens of the same community, members of the same family, inhabited by the same Holy Spirit. Joining a church is crucial to continuing as a Christian.

Fellowship

Church fellowship means doing life together with other Christians (Acts 2:42-47). Encouraging each other in our faith, encouraging each other to witness for Jesus. Being involved in a midweek community group can help with this. It is at church we find friends who believe the same things we do and can help us walk with God (Ephesians 2:11-22).

Church Services
Attending church services is crucial to helping us walk with God. Through a service we worship him, confess our sins and remember his mercy and forgiveness, we pray, listen to God's word read and preached and leave knowing that we are under his blessing. God has ordered it that church services help to build our faith as we worship together with other believers. Listening to the preaching of the word of God in particular establishes an strengthens us in faith (2 Timothy 4:1-2)

The Sacraments
There are two sacraments in the New Testament. Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are signs and seals of God's grace to us in Christ.

Baptism
Baptism is a washing with water in the name of the trinity which is a sign and seal of our union with Jesus Christ. It is to be given to those who profess faith and to the children of believers (Matt 28:18-20).

The Lord's Supper
As Christians we should regularly take the Lord's Supper to encourage our faith in God. As we eat the bread and drink the wine we remember what Jesus has done for us on the cross, proclaim this to others and participate in it ourselves (1 Cor 11:18-34). The words said at the distribution of the bread explains what we are doing. We '*take and eat this (bread) in remembrance that Christ has died for [us] and feed on him in [our] hearts by faith with thanksgiving'*.

The Lord's Supper is helpful to our faith as it gives us assurance of God's love and leads to praise and holiness. It is to be given to baptized Christians who are able to examine themselves (it isn't to be given to children), who are in good relationships with other Christians and who want to live godly lives.

Knowing You Jesus knowing You
There is no greater thing
You're my all You're the best
You're my joy my righteousness
And I love You Lord love You Lord
Graham Kendrick

Week 8 - Growing in Holiness

Why did God redeem us?
One important reason for why God redeemed us is that we might be holy (Eph 1:3-4; 2:10). We are redeemed from slavery to sin to live godly and holy lives. To be holy as God is holy. We don't seek to live a holy life in order to be redeemed but we live a holy life because we are redeemed (Rom 12:1-2).

Holiness is not an optional extra in the Christian life. Holiness is necessary for our redemption (Matt 7:21; 1 Cor 6:9-10; Heb 12:14; James 2:14, 17; 1 John 2:3-6).

So how do we grow in holiness?
By obeying God's word (Exodus 19:4-6; John 14:23; 1 John 2:3). Whilst obeying the whole Bible is important God's particular rule for holiness is the law in particular the Ten commandments (Exodus 20; Deut 5). These ten commandments are central to the ethics of the Old and New testaments (Rom 13:9-10). Jesus famously summarized the ten commandments as to love God and to love your neighbour as yourself (Mark 12:28-34).

Why should we obey the law?
The law shows us what God is like
God reveals himself to us as he speaks. So when he speaks the law it cannot be separated from himself (Exodus 20:1-2). The law is an expression of the law givers heart and character. It shows us what he is like. God hates lies because he loves truth. He hates murder because he loves life. He hates stealing because he loves generosity. He hates idolatry because he himself is the source of life. Our attitude to the law is a sign of our hearts attitude to God himself. If we love God we will love what his law.

The law shows us what pleases God
Because the law reveals the law giver. It also reveals what pleases him. When the law was given in Exodus 20 the Israelites had been saved and brought to Mt Sinai and into a covenant relationship with God. Now they are told this is what pleases God. If God has saved us we should want to do what pleases him. We shouldn't do it grudgingly but out of gratitude for what God has already done for us.

The law shows us how life works well
The ten commandments were given to free people to show them how to live free lives. The ten commandments don't constrain our freedom but they are the behaviour and lifestyle of the free. God's law is the lifestyle of the free man and woman.

The law shows us what we are like
The law is like a mirror to show us what our hearts really value. Knowing what we are like helps us to know where our lives need to change to become more holy (psalm 19:7-14).

How are we able to keep the law?
When a person becomes a Christian God says he puts his law within them and writes it on their hearts. That means the Holy Spirit comes and lives in us and gives us a new desire to live by God's law. Before we became Christians the law feels like a burden now we are Christians it's what we want to do.

O great God of highest heaven,
occupy my lowly heart.
Own it all and reign supreme,
conquer every rebel power.
Let no vice or sin remain
that resists your holy war.
You have loved and purchased me,
make me yours forever more.
Bob Kauflin

Week 9 - Serving others

We are saved to serve. Jesus told the apostles that the world would know that they were his disciples by their love for one another (John 13:34-35). The same goes for the church. Selfless, humble, Christlike love is to be the signature of those who claim to be members of the church. We are to deliberately cultivate a culture of love and concern for each other in the church so that we would be known as a loving Christian community in the surrounding area.

The call to serve one another

The Bible calls us to do life together. There should be ***no independent Christians***. We are told in the Bible not to give up meeting together (Hebrews 10:25) and to greet each other with a brotherly kiss (1 Thess 5:26).

Serving each other is inherent to being a Christian

When we are born again, we join a new family. God becomes our father and other Christians become our brothers and sisters. As a church we are a cross cultural, cross generational diverse family.

Serving each other means being involved in each other's lives

In order to do life together we ned to know other Christians and be committed to them. The more you get to know people, the more you serve others the more you will grow as a Christians (Eph 4:15-16).

Serving each other means using our God given gifts to help others

What does this other serving life together look like?

A life of love (John 13:34)

The way we are to love each other is very practical. It involves being involved in each other's lives in a deep way. Serving each other's needs. The key question to ask is 'What needs do you have?' 'How can I meet those needs?'

Love involves speaking to each other

1 Thessalonians 5:14 mentions three ways in which we are to speak to each other:
admonish the idle When we see sin in each others lives we should be concerned about it and with gentleness and grace challenge it and help the person to change.
encourage the fainthearted Inspire and urge each other on especially those weak in faith or who have difficulties in their lives or who have questions about the future.
help the weak The weak are those struggling with sin. We need to help each other fight against sin in our lives.

Love involves being patient with each other

be patient with them all (1 Thess 5:15). Be patient especially with those who don't change quickly or with those who are difficult, demanding, disappointing, argumentative or rude.

Love involves grace
See that no one repays anyone evil for evil (1 Thess 5:15)
Forgiveness and grace are to be the standard operating procedure in church life. This attitude of grace in the church will overflow into the way we relate to those outside the church. If we act in grace people will see that and will want to join it and will be changed by grace as they do.

Loves involves doing good
Seek to do good to one another and to everyone (1 Thess 5:15)
Love involves using the unique treasure, talents and time that God has given to us to benefit others in the church, and also those outside. We are to do good regularly, joyfully and in a planned way.

How do we become a community like that?
By reminding ourselves of who we are and whose we are. All are relationships are to be ***'in the Lord'.*** All the relationships that we have with each other as Christians are relationships in Christ. Jesus Christ brought us into God's family through his self sacrificial love for us (Mark 10:45). In response we are to live to serve those for whom Jesus died (the church) and this love is to overflow to those outside the church too.

So let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthrone Him
Each other's needs to prefer
For it is Christ we're serving
Graham Kendrick

Week 10 - Evangelism and Missions

The Great Commission

Immediately before Jesus ascended to heaven he gave a commission to his followers. Often called the great commission. In the great commission Jesus tells his followers that they must go out on mission to continue his mission of taking his message to the world (Matt 28:18-20).

Why are we to go on mission?

We are to go on mission because Jesus rules the world (Matt 28:18). Whilst Jesus had authority whilst on earth following his ascension to heaven the sphere of his authority was enlarged. He now has absolute authority in heaven and earth.

Since Jesus Christ is the king of the universe it is right for him to be acknowledged and worshipped as king by all peoples on earth (Psalm 86:9; Rev 5:11-14).

Since Jesus Christ is the king of the universe this is good news for the world (Mark 1:14-15). The good news is that there is a king who has conquered sin and death and that there is forgiveness and peace and joy to be had in this world now and that there is a world to come which will be a world of pure love and joy. It would not be good to keep that news to ourselves.

What is the mission we are called to go on?

Jesus commands his disciples to make disciples (Matt 20:19). The very essence of being a disciple involves disciple making. God calls us to himself to send us out to others. All disciples of Jesus Christ are people of mission. Mission to all nations, all peoples and all languages.

What does it mean to be a disciple?

To be a disciple is to become like your teacher. It is not just about believing certain things or behaving in a certain way. It is about becoming like a certain person. To be a disciple of Jesus is to become like Jesus (Rom 8:29).

How are disciples made?

Jesus characterizes making disciples with the words baptise and teach (Matt 28:19-20).

Baptism is the initiation ceremony. A sign of entrance into God's community by hearing about Jesus Christ and coming under his kingship. To be a disciple of Jesus Christ a person needs to turn to Jesus Christ and put their trust in him. In a word they need to be converted.

Teaching is the way a baptized person submits to his kingship. They learn to obey all that he has commanded. That is they learn about Jesus Christ who he is and what he has done. And they learn how to live like him. They learn to devote themselves to

obey his teaching. And to enjoy doing so. Their aim in life is to glorify him and enjoy him forever.

How can we help make disciples?
There are two main strategies to make disciples.

1. ***Come and see***

We can invite people we know and meet to come and see what Christianity is about. We can invite them to church, or to a bible group or we can give them something to read or to listen to.

2. ***Go and tell***

We can go and build relationships with people and as we share life with them talk to them about our faith and ask questions about what they think and why and share with them how Jesus is the good news for us all.

If Jesus is Lord why do we need to go and make disciples?
No-one can be saved without believing the gospel. In order for people to believe the gospel we need to share the gospel message (Rom 10:13-17). If we don't do that people won't be saved, we won't have the joy of seeing them saved and we will be disobedient disciples.

What helps us to go on mission?
Knowing that Jesus, whose mission it is is with us as we go (Matt 28:20). This gives us confidence to speak for him, patience when we don't see immediate results (2 Tim 2:23-26) and leads us to pray for him to open doors for the gospel to spread (Eph 6:19; 2 Thess 3:1).

Go forth and tell! O church of God, awake!
God's saving news to all the nations take:
proclaim Christ Jesus, Saviour, Lord and King,
that all the world his worthy praise may sing.