

SESSION GOALS

Life Change: To imitate Jesus's words, actions, and attitude in our everyday interactions, both in the church and with those who don't know him.

SESSION'S QUESTION AND ANSWER

A Christian is a forgiven and redeemed follower of Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, dedicated to obeying God's Word and growing more like him.

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REVIEW LAST SESSION

In our previous session, Francis introduced the Holy Spirit and the way he worked in biblical events as well as how he works in our lives now. Before moving to today’s session, let’s discuss the Deeper Walk exercises you chose. **Which ones did you choose? How did it go?**

OPEN

Which sports teams do you support? How enthusiastically do you show your team spirit?

College and pro sports teams offer many ways for fans to express their loyalty. For instance, it’s usually easy for observers to guess which team we support by the colors we wear—and which ones we refuse to wear. In our spiritual lives, our actions and attitudes reflect our loyalty—to ourselves or to Christ. In our final session, Francis describes how Christians respond to salvation. Whose colors are we wearing?

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Francis Chan’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

In what ways is the Christian faith more than just a set of beliefs?

What kind of life is a Christian to pursue while waiting for Jesus’s return?

Show Session 6: *What Is a Christian?* (13 minutes).

As he opened this concluding session, Francis noted that we have learned a lot of material throughout the series. **As you think back over previous sessions, what new information have you learned about God and his relationship with humanity? If nothing was truly new, in what ways do you understand a facet of your faith better or differently?**

The Christian faith is more than information to learn and beliefs to affirm. Francis reminded us that God desires a relationship with us, to know us and to be known by us. The Bible uses relational terms to describe our connection to God: bride, child, brother and sister. God has invited us into his family at the closest levels.

How would you describe the difference between knowing about God and knowing God personally? In what ways is knowing God a richer experience than checking off a list of beliefs?

When God created us in his image, he intended to enjoy deep relationship with us. But rebellion separated us from him. Read Ephesians 2:1–7. The apostle Paul walks us through the progression of our spiritual status, starting with our sinfulness. He calls us dead—aligned with evil, under the power of sin and our own selfishness, unable to make ourselves right with God. We’ve all been there. **To what extent have you considered your inability to repair your relationship with God? In what ways does your sin grieve you now, even if you have trusted Christ?**

It's been said that the most beautiful phrase in the English Bible is "But God..." In verse 4, we read those words in Paul's turn from describing our

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, typical of notebook or legal stationery. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

lostness to revealing our salvation. We'd have remained "children under wrath" without God's intervention. Notice how God is described as "rich in mercy." Mercy happens when God chooses not to repay us for our wrongdoing but to extend forgiveness instead. **In what ways have you experienced God's mercy?**

Verse 5 says God “made us alive with Christ” because of his exceedingly great love for us. Our sin may have separated us from him, but his love never stopped. We remain his image-bearers, created for relationship with him, and Christ was willing to sacrifice himself so we could be reconciled to him. His love is strong and true. **Do you believe God loves you? What has convinced you of his love?**

To remember how God's great mercy has rescued you, see Practice 1 in the Deeper Walk section at the end of this session.

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In Christ, God took us from death to life. We call that process salvation, or “being saved” from the power of sin and death. Our future rests in our reconciled relationship with God, who offered salvation as a free gift. **What emotions arise when you consider God’s free gift of salvation?**

Paul emphasizes his teaching on salvation by repeating himself. Read Ephesians 2:8–10. Just as a loved one sometimes shows up with a freely offered, generous present, God offers us reconciliation and waits for us to take hold of it. We do not earn it, and we don't earn any bragging rights either. All the work was done by Christ on the cross, not by any good things we've done. **When it comes to your relationship with God, to what extent do you think you must win his approval? What might help you remember that your salvation is a gift you cannot earn?**

In verse 10, Paul describes us as God's workmanship. Some versions say handiwork, accomplishment, or masterpiece. The original word, *poeima*, is the root of our English word poem. So, in a sense, each person is like a line of divine poetry, a beautiful expression of his love.

To what extent do you treat others—and yourself—with the dignity and respect they deserve as God's *poeima*?

In a play on words, Paul goes on to explain how we, as God's workmanship, were created to do good works that God had prepared for us to do. Our good works flow out of our faith in his grace—as expressions of our love, faith, and gratitude toward God. The Christian life is meant to be a force for good in the world. **In what ways are you looking to do good? What can you adjust in**

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your life so that good works become a normal part of your everyday routine?

Francis acknowledged that our world is full of pain and struggle. Read Romans 8:22–23. While we anticipate our eternal future with Christ, we live in the present world with all its problems—Paul says “creation has been groaning.” And we can live in such a way as to glorify Christ in how we treat others, in how we reflect godly character, and in inviting others to know Christ deeply. **What is your usual attitude toward the suffering you encounter? What role does your faith play in how you respond to difficulties?**

To meditate on a prayer about how to live as a Christian in any circumstance, see Practice 2 in the Deeper Walk section at the end of this session.

Our faith will change us for the good. Read Romans 12:1–5. When we declare our faith in Christ, it's as if we have switched team loyalty. No longer are we supporting sin and selfishness; now we are on “Team Jesus.” We want to, as verse 2 says, “discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God” and pursue his priorities, not our own. **How have your priorities changed since deciding to follow Christ?**

Ancient Voices: The Apostles' Creed

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.

The final section of the creed lists beliefs related to the church and our relationship with God. To say that we believe in “the holy catholic Church” means that God’s people can be found everywhere throughout the centuries, across continents, and within all denominations. The word “catholic” in the creed means universal. It was added to the creed in the first two or three centuries of the church, before any divisions within the church became formalized, and does not refer to any specific branch of the Christian faith. All the statements in the creed together make up orthodox teaching—the confirmed, approved truth of Christianity—and are affirmed by all Christians throughout history.

Submitting to God's ways of relating, working, and thinking instead of resorting to our fleshly, sinful ways is what Paul calls "true worship" in verse 1. God is pleased when we sacrifice our desires and pursue his instead. He renewed our life, and we give it back to him. **In what ways has your faith influenced you to change your life trajectory or overcome temptation? Would you say that you've sacrificed anything because of your faith? Why, or why not?**

It is comforting to know that we do not live out our faith alone. Each of us is one part of a greater whole, the church, also called the body of Christ. In verses 3–5, Paul explains how God has designed us to work together, each one’s faith contributing to the health of the whole group. Together, we show the world who Christ is—his character, his generosity, his love. **In what ways has your church family encouraged your faith? What have you learned about Jesus from other Christians? How can you join in your church’s or small group’s efforts to serve others together?**

To explore ways to maximize your reach as a small group, see Practice 3 in the Deeper Walk section at the end of this session.

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As we endure difficulties and love our messy world, we await our savior's return. As Francis said, "Yes, God, we want you to come back and make things new." Read Revelation 21:1–5 and 22:20–21. Our great hope lies in a new heaven and new earth, where Christ restores and renews his creation and lives with us—resurrected to new life—forever. **How can you keep in mind the Bible's message of hope as you live out a regular day? In what ways can knowing that Jesus will make all things right encourage you through hardships? Whom can you tell about your faith and hope?**

For encouragement on telling others about your relationship with God, see Practice 4 in the Deeper Walk section at the end of this session.

LAST WORD

As Christians, we responded to God's love and forgiveness with a "yes" that echoes for the rest of our lives. In a world full of suffering and hardship, our trust in Christ gives us the strength to endure with love as our constant companion. With our fellow believers alongside us, we wait for our savior's return. But we are not sitting still—we teach truth and serve our neighbors, shining the light of God's love out to those who need to know him. We are little Christs in the world looking to invite more into his family. Put your faith to work by loving your neighbor in word and deed.

SESSION'S QUESTION AND ANSWER

What is a Christian?

A Christian is a forgiven and redeemed follower of Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, dedicated to obeying God's Word and growing more like him.

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The Deeper Walk section is designed to help you practice different ways to interact with God and reflect on what you've learned in this session. Pick at least one activity to try this week.

To remember how God's great mercy has rescued you, memorize Ephesians 2:4–5, "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace!"

The apostle Paul prayed for the believers of the Colossian church, and his prayer echoes through the ages to us as well. Read and meditate on his words of encouragement from Colossians 1:9–12.

“... we haven't stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, so that you may have great endurance and patience, joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the saints' inheritance in the light.”

As a group, brainstorm what opportunities you have to serve your local community. As you plan, find ways to maximize the spiritual gifts within your group. Do you have administrators who can organize, evangelists ready to share the gospel, or some with a strong sense of mercy who will

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pray with people you meet? Do your best to include everyone, and experience the body of Christ working together for good.

Practice 4: Testimony

Each of us has a story to tell, a story of how God reached into our lives and helped us see our need for him, his love for us, and how a life devoted to him would bring fulfillment and joy. Have you ever told or written out your testimony—your story of salvation? The basic elements include who you were before you met Jesus and how he has changed your life since you committed to following him. Hearing how faith in Christ has impacted someone often helps others understand how he can change their lives too. Write out your testimony and share it with someone this week.

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RightNow Media Presents
What Is a Christian? STUDY GUIDE

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