THE BELIEF TABLE · JESUS & BELIEF

PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK

ABIDE | BECOME | BE SENT

Look honestly at Jesus. Respond one small step at a time.

Fourteen guided sessions alongside Jesus & Belief. Use it on your own, with a friend or mentor, or in a small group. Each person keeps their own copy.

New here? Choose one session. Read its Scripture and teaching together; take turns with the questions. Each person writes one small thing they will try and when. Pray and agree when to meet again. Next time, return to that written step: what did I try, and how did it go? At your first meeting, skip the look back. If a step is untried, begin again without a score. Each person keeps their own notes and chooses what to share.

Abide. Become. Be Sent.

A free discipleship resource from MSSNL.
For followers of Jesus and anyone exploring faith: one person, a pair, mentors, and small groups.
mssnl.org/table/belief

Come as you are.

This is a conversation about Jesus, not a test of belief.

1. **Look back:** return to your last My next step note. Skip this at the first meeting.
2. **Read:** Scripture and the session teaching.
3. **Reflect:** answer honestly, in your own words, or pass.
4. **Respond:** choose one small next step and when you will take it.
5. **Pray:** aloud, silently, or simply sit quietly.

On your own or with one other person: allow 40 to 60 minutes. Read and write by yourself first. For a group: meet for 60 to 90 minutes. Everyone can pass.

Each person owns their reflections. Online notes belong only to the signed-in account; nothing is shared automatically with a mentor, facilitator, or group. Speak about what you are learning and wondering. Nobody needs to explain where they stand with God, and nobody is asked to share more than they choose. Keep printed notes wherever you like. Never collect or circulate anyone's private worksheets.

> **You are welcome here as you are**
>
> Come as a follower of Jesus, as someone exploring faith, or somewhere in between. Nobody needs to claim faith, recite the right answer, or share personal answers to belong at this table. Questions are welcome. Every question may be passed. If something in your story is heavy, you are welcome to talk privately with a pastor or another trusted person.

One small step between sessions.

Read it. Try it. Look back next time.

Your next step is one small thing you will do before you meet again to respond to this session. It might be reading a passage, praying a short prayer, asking a question, or practicing trust in one ordinary moment. Write what you will do and when in the My next step box.

> Example: Before our next meeting, I will read John 20 slowly on two mornings and write down one question I want to ask.

1. Choose: use the session's suggested practice to pick one small response. You may adapt it or pass.
2. Write: in the My next step box, say what you will do and when, such as on two mornings before we meet.
3. Try: do it in ordinary life between meetings. Notice what you learn about Jesus and about trusting him.
4. Look back: at the next meeting, read that same note and reflect on how it went. Share only if you wish.
5. Continue: keep the step, make it smaller, or choose a new one after today's conversation. End with prayer.

If you did not choose a step, missed a meeting, or did not try it, simply say not yet or pass. You can try it again, make it smaller, or choose a new one. There is no score and nothing to catch up on.

Your first session: At your first meeting there is no earlier step to look back on. Begin by naming what brought you here or what you hope to understand. You will choose your first step before you finish.

Your session guide.

Fourteen sessions in three movements: Abide (sessions 1 to 7), Become (8 to 11), and Be Sent (12 to 14). Go at a pace that leaves room to respond. The following page numbers lead to each session.

1. Introduction: The Question of Belief · **page 5**
2. Chapter 1: The Promise of a Savior · **page 7**
3. Chapter 2: Jesus the Fulfillment · **page 9**
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Introduction: The Question of Belief

Prepare: Read the Introduction, The Question of Belief.

Listen to Scripture

John 20:31 gives John's reason for writing: that readers may believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and have life in his name. Romans 10:13 promises that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Mark 9:24 records a father who asks Jesus for help with his unbelief while saying he believes. John 3 and John 4 show Jesus in conversation with Nicodemus at night and with a Samaritan woman at a well.

The teaching

Every person lives from what they believe. Some beliefs are easy to name. Others sit beneath the surface and shape how we understand God, ourselves, other people, suffering, and the future. A person who believes their value must be earned may live under constant pressure. Someone who believes their past has the final word may carry shame into every new season. Underneath the daily decisions is a deeper question: who is Jesus? A wise teacher can instruct us and a moral example can inspire us, but neither can rescue us from sin or make us right with God. John wrote so that people would see Jesus clearly and respond in faith. The book traces the story Scripture tells: God made people for life with him, sin brought separation, and Jesus came, lived in full obedience, died bearing sin, and rose again. That gift cannot be earned. The book also says plainly that questions do not vanish when someone begins to believe. Jesus met Nicodemus with his questions and a father who said, in effect, I believe, help my unbelief. Belief is more than agreeing that Jesus existed. It means trusting who he is, receiving what he has done, and beginning to follow him.

Reflect. Respond. Pray.

Introduction: The Question of Belief

First session: At your first meeting there is no earlier step to look back on. Begin by naming what brought you here or what you hope to understand. You will choose your first step before you finish.

Reflect first; share by choice

1. What brought me to this table? What do I hope to understand better about Jesus?
2. Which beliefs beneath the surface shape my days, for example about my worth, my past, or whether people can be trusted?
3. When I hear the question, who is Jesus, what is my honest answer today? It is fine to say I am not sure.
4. Where does the father's prayer, I believe, help my unbelief, describe me?

My reflection: what do I notice about Jesus, and what questions do I still have?

One small next step

Read John 20:30-31 slowly. Then write one sentence that begins, Right now, I think Jesus is... and one sentence that begins, One question I want to bring to him is... Keep both. You will look at them again at the end of these sessions.

My next step: one thing I will try, and when:

Pray

Jesus, you know my story and my questions. Help me see you clearly. Where I believe, strengthen me. Where I struggle to believe, help me. Amen.

Try your step before the next session. Then return to this box and reflect on how it went. You may pass or choose a smaller step. Speak about what you are learning and wondering. Nobody needs to explain where they stand with God, and nobody is asked to share more than they choose.

Chapter 1: The Promise of a Savior

Prepare: Read Chapter 1, The Promise of a Savior.

Listen to Scripture

Genesis 3:1 records the serpent's question, did God actually say, which casts doubt on God's goodness. Genesis 3:9 has God calling to the man who was hiding, where are you. Genesis 3:15 speaks of the woman's offspring who will strike the serpent's head. Genesis 12:3 promises Abraham that all the families of the earth will be blessed through him. 2 Samuel 7:16 promises David a lasting kingdom. Isaiah 9:6 and Micah 5:2 point to a coming child and ruler from Bethlehem. Luke 1:33 records Gabriel telling Mary that her son's kingdom will have no end.

The teaching

Every person knows something is not as it should be. We see it in violence, betrayal, sickness, and death, and we see it in ourselves when we want to love generously and still protect our own interests. God made the world good and made people in his image, with work to do and boundaries that reflected his care. The serpent questioned God's word and suggested God was holding something good back. Sin entered, and Adam and Eve hid. People still hide, through achievement, control, anger, distraction, or the appearance that everything is fine. Scripture treats sin as a serious condition, not a few unfortunate mistakes. Yet God did not leave them hiding. He called, where are you, and in the middle of judgment he spoke a promise of victory over evil. That promise moved through Abraham, through Israel's long story of faithfulness and failure, through David's covenant, and through prophets who spoke of a child, a ruler from Bethlehem, and a servant who would suffer for others. Israel waited through exile and disappointment. When the time came, Jesus was born in humility. The book draws a quiet lesson for us: God keeps his word across generations, even when we cannot see how.

Reflect. Respond. Pray.

Chapter 1: The Promise of a Savior

Look back first: Open the My next step box on page 6, from session 1. If you chose a step, how did it go? What helped or got in the way? If you have no step to review, skip this question.

My look back (optional):

Reflect first; share by choice

1. Where do I see that something is not as it should be, in the world and in myself?
2. How do I tend to hide: achievement, control, anger, distraction, or looking fine?
3. What do I hear in God's question, where are you? Is it a threat, an invitation, or something else?
4. Where am I waiting for God right now? What helps me trust him while I wait?

My reflection: what do I notice about Jesus, and what questions do I still have?

One small next step

Read Genesis 3:8-15 and then Luke 1:30-33. Write down one way you have been hiding and one promise of God you want to hold on to. Once this week, when you notice yourself hiding, pause and pray the short words, here I am.

My next step: one thing I will try, and when:

Pray

Faithful God, you called to people who were hiding and you kept your promise through every generation. Draw me out of hiding and teach me to trust your word. Amen.

Try your step before the next session. Then return to this box and reflect on how it went. You may pass or choose a smaller step. Speak about what you are learning and wondering. Nobody needs to explain where they stand with God, and nobody is asked to share more than they choose.

Chapter 2: Jesus the Fulfillment

Prepare: Read Chapter 2, Jesus the Fulfillment.

Listen to Scripture

Matthew 1:22-23 connects Jesus' birth with Isaiah's promise of Immanuel, God with us. Matthew 5:17 records Jesus saying he came not to abolish the Law and the Prophets but to fulfill them. Matthew 3:17 has the Father calling Jesus his beloved Son at his baptism. 1 Peter 2:22 says he committed no sin. Matthew 11:5 is Jesus' answer to John the Baptist in prison. Matthew 5:3 blesses the poor in spirit. John 5:39 says the Scriptures bear witness about Jesus. Galatians 4:4 says God sent his Son when the fullness of time had come.

The teaching

Jesus was born into the story God had been telling from the beginning. Matthew starts with a genealogy full of kings, failures, and exile, and keeps showing that events in Jesus' life fulfill what God had spoken. Fulfillment is more than a prediction matched to an event. The law revealed God's holiness and the prophets exposed idolatry and injustice; together they showed what people needed. In Jesus, God is with us. The Father named him beloved Son before any miracle or crowd. In the wilderness he trusted the Father where Adam and Israel had not, and he lived without a divided heart. That sinlessness matters, because he could stand in the place of sinners with no sin of his own. He taught that obedience reaches the heart, where anger, pride, and greed begin. When John the Baptist struggled in prison, Jesus pointed to the signs of the kingdom and to good news preached to the poor. He welcomed the overlooked and blessed the poor in spirit, people who know they cannot earn their place. The book adds a careful note: not every personal desire carries a hidden promise. Scripture asks us to tell the difference between what God has promised and what we long to see.

Reflect. Respond. Pray.

Chapter 2: Jesus the Fulfillment

Look back first: Open the My next step box on page 8, from session 2. If you chose a step, how did it go? What helped or got in the way? If you have no step to review, skip this question.

My look back (optional):

Reflect first; share by choice

1. What stands out to me about the people Jesus moved toward?
2. What would it mean for me to be poor in spirit, aware of my need rather than my record?
3. Like John in prison, when have I wondered whether Jesus is who he says he is?
4. Which of my hopes are God's promises, and which are my own longings? How can I hold each one honestly?

My reflection: what do I notice about Jesus, and what questions do I still have?

One small next step

Read Matthew 11:2-6 and Matthew 5:3-10. Each day this week, notice one person who is easy to overlook and offer them simple attention or kindness. Write down one thing you learn about Jesus from how he welcomed people.

My next step: one thing I will try, and when:

Pray

Jesus, Immanuel, you came to be with us and you kept every promise of God. Make me honest about my need, and open my eyes to see you in the Scriptures. Amen.

Try your step before the next session. Then return to this box and reflect on how it went. You may pass or choose a smaller step. Speak about what you are learning and wondering. Nobody needs to explain where they stand with God, and nobody is asked to share more than they choose.

Chapter 3: The Cross: Why He Came

Prepare: Read Chapter 3, The Cross: Why He Came.

Listen to Scripture

Mark 10:45 says the Son of Man came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Romans 3:23 says all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. John 1:29 records John the Baptist calling Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Isaiah 53:5 describes a servant wounded for the wrongs of others. Luke 23:34 records Jesus asking the Father to forgive those crucifying him. Romans 5:8 says Christ died for us while we were still sinners. 2 Corinthians 5:21 speaks of the sinless one bearing sin so we might become God's righteousness. John 19:30 records his words, it is finished.

The teaching

The life of Jesus moved steadily toward the cross. The disciples expected victory and could not understand why the Messiah would suffer, but the cross was central to his mission from the beginning. A ransom secures a release that captives cannot obtain on their own. To see why it was needed, we have to be honest about sin. Sin is more than our choices. It shows a heart turned away from God, and it makes us proud, bitter, or dishonest. All have fallen short. God is holy and does not call evil good just because we want to be forgiven. At the cross, his justice and mercy are seen together. The book is careful here: Jesus did not persuade an unwilling Father to love us. Sending the Son was itself God's love. The Passover lamb and Isaiah's suffering servant prepared people to understand his death. On the cross Jesus prayed for his executioners. He did more than set an example; he stood in the place of sinners and bore the judgment they deserved. His words, it is finished, mean nothing can be added. Receiving grace does not deny the harm we have done. Repentance still tells the truth and seeks to repair what can be repaired.

Reflect. Respond. Pray.

Chapter 3: The Cross: Why He Came

Look back first: Open the My next step box on page 10, from session 3. If you chose a step, how did it go? What helped or got in the way? If you have no step to review, skip this question.

My look back (optional):

Reflect first; share by choice

1. Before reading this chapter, how would I have explained why Jesus died?
2. Where do I try to earn my way back: by performance, by punishing myself, or by promising never to fail again?
3. What does it mean to me that Christ died for people while they were still sinners?
4. Is there harm I have caused that grace invites me to face honestly and help repair?

My reflection: what do I notice about Jesus, and what questions do I still have?

One small next step

Read Mark 15:21-39 or Luke 23:32-49 slowly in one sitting. Write the words it is finished at the top of a page, then write one thing you have been trying to add to what Jesus did. Bring it to him in prayer and, if you are ready, set it down.

My next step: one thing I will try, and when:

Pray

Lord Jesus, you gave your life as a ransom. I cannot add to what you finished. Thank you for loving me before I could repair anything. Teach me to receive your grace and to walk in truth. Amen.

Try your step before the next session. Then return to this box and reflect on how it went. You may pass or choose a smaller step. Speak about what you are learning and wondering. Nobody needs to explain where they stand with God, and nobody is asked to share more than they choose.

Chapter 4: The Empty Tomb: Why Hope Is Possible

Prepare: Read Chapter 4, The Empty Tomb: Why Hope Is Possible.

Listen to Scripture

Matthew 28:6 records the angel telling the women that Jesus is not here, for he has risen as he said. John 20:16 shows Mary Magdalene recognizing Jesus when he says her name. Luke 24 tells of two discouraged disciples on the road to Emmaus. John 11:25 has Jesus telling Martha he is the resurrection and the life. 1 Corinthians 15:20 calls the risen Christ the firstfruits of those who have died. John 20:19 and 20:28 show Jesus greeting frightened disciples with peace, and Thomas answering, my Lord and my God.

The teaching

The cross was not the end of the story. Jesus truly died and was buried, and his followers were grieving and afraid. Grief changes the way we see everything. Then, early on the third day, women came to the tomb and heard that he had risen. The apostles first thought their report was nonsense, and Peter ran to see. Mary Magdalene stood weeping until Jesus spoke her name; her sorrow turned not because of an explanation but because she met him alive. The two on the road to Emmaus had hoped he would redeem Israel, and he helped them see from Scripture why the Messiah had to suffer. The resurrection showed that Jesus did not die as a defeated teacher. Before his own death he had wept with Martha and told her he is the resurrection and the life. Paul calls the risen Christ the firstfruits, the first of a harvest still to come, so Christian grief is real but not without hope. The resurrection was bodily: he showed his wounds, and doubting Thomas confessed him as Lord and God. The book is careful again: this does not promise that every illness will be healed or every plan rescued in this life. It does mean that obedience is a response to a living Lord.

Reflect. Respond. Pray.

Chapter 4: The Empty Tomb: Why Hope Is Possible

Look back first: Open the My next step box on page 12, from session 4. If you chose a step, how did it go? What helped or got in the way? If you have no step to review, skip this question.

My look back (optional):

Reflect first; share by choice

1. Which person at the tomb do I relate to most: the grieving women, the doubting disciples, Mary, the Emmaus travelers, or Thomas? Why?
2. What difference would it make if Jesus is really alive today, not only remembered?
3. Where does fear tell me that a failure, loss, or rejection will decide the rest of my life?
4. How does the hope of resurrection meet a grief I carry, without making it smaller?

My reflection: what do I notice about Jesus, and what questions do I still have?

One small next step

Read John 20:1-18 and imagine hearing your own name spoken by the risen Jesus. Write a short response to him. Also name one fear that the resurrection speaks to, and take one small step this week that you would take if you trusted he is alive.

My next step: one thing I will try, and when:

Pray

Risen Lord, you called Mary by name and showed Thomas your wounds. Meet me in my grief and my doubt. Let your life be the ground of my hope. Amen.

Try your step before the next session. Then return to this box and reflect on how it went. You may pass or choose a smaller step. Speak about what you are learning and wondering. Nobody needs to explain where they stand with God, and nobody is asked to share more than they choose.

Chapter 5: The Witnesses: Why They Spoke

Prepare: Read Chapter 5, The Witnesses: Why They Spoke.

Listen to Scripture

Acts 2:32 records Peter saying God raised Jesus and that they were all witnesses. John 21:15-17 tells of Jesus asking Peter three times, do you love me, after Peter's denial. Acts 1:8 promises power from the Holy Spirit to be Jesus' witnesses. Acts 4:20 has Peter and John saying they cannot stop speaking about what they have seen and heard. 1 Corinthians 2:2 shows Paul resolving to know Christ crucified. 1 Corinthians 15:6 mentions an appearance to more than five hundred people, many still living when Paul wrote.

The teaching

The news of the resurrection did not stay in a locked room. Frightened followers who had scattered at Jesus' arrest began speaking openly in Jerusalem, the city where he had been crucified. Peter, who had denied Jesus three times, stood before a crowd and said, we are witnesses. His confidence makes sense only in light of what happened on the shore of Galilee, where the risen Jesus asked him three times, do you love me, and restored him. Failure did not have the final word. Jesus promised the Spirit's power so that ordinary people could be his witnesses. A witness tells the truth about what has been seen and heard. The apostles did not claim to invent their message, and they kept speaking when it cost them. Women were the first messengers of the empty tomb. Paul, who had persecuted the church, became one of its preachers and passed on a list of people who had seen the risen Christ. The book is honest about limits: willingness to suffer shows sincerity, but it does not by itself prove every claim. Their testimony deserves careful examination. Today, our witness is different from theirs. We do not need to make ourselves impressive; we speak truthfully, treat people with dignity, and point to the Jesus they proclaimed.

Reflect. Respond. Pray.

Chapter 5: The Witnesses: Why They Spoke

Look back first: Open the My next step box on page 14, from session 5. If you chose a step, how did it go? What helped or got in the way? If you have no step to review, skip this question.

My look back (optional):

Reflect first; share by choice

1. What strikes me about Peter being restored after his failure?
2. If I think about the first witnesses honestly, what makes their testimony believable to me, and what questions remain?
3. What keeps me quiet about Jesus: fear of rejection, not having answers, or feeling my life is too imperfect?
4. Who first spoke to me about Jesus? What did their life and words show me?

My reflection: what do I notice about Jesus, and what questions do I still have?

One small next step

Read John 21:15-19. Then write a short, honest account of how you have come to know or wonder about Jesus so far, in a few sentences and in your own words. You do not need to share it. If you wish, thank the person who first told you about him.

My next step: one thing I will try, and when:

Pray

Lord Jesus, you restored Peter and sent ordinary people as your witnesses. Meet me where I have failed, and give me honest words about what I have seen of you. Amen.

Try your step before the next session. Then return to this box and reflect on how it went. You may pass or choose a smaller step. Speak about what you are learning and wondering. Nobody needs to explain where they stand with God, and nobody is asked to share more than they choose.

Chapter 6: The Story That Can Be Trusted

Prepare: Read Chapter 6, The Story That Can Be Trusted.

Listen to Scripture

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 records the message Paul received and passed on: Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. Luke 1:3 describes Luke following things closely to write an orderly account. John 20:31 states John's purpose. Luke 24:27 tells how Jesus explained from Moses and all the Prophets the things about himself. Mark 9:24 is the father's prayer, I believe, help my unbelief.

The teaching

Christian belief invites us to consider what is true. The gospel is not just personal preference or family tradition; it makes claims about events in history. Jesus lived among people who knew his name, was crucified under Roman authority, and his followers announced that God raised him. Paul passed on a message he had received, naming people who saw the risen Jesus. Luke describes careful work with eyewitness accounts, and John says plainly why he wrote. The four Gospels tell the story from different angles, and the book says these differences deserve careful reading, not quick dismissal and not forced harmony. They also keep the disciples' failures in view. The book is careful about what testimony can establish: sincerity is not proof, and embarrassing details do not settle every question. Faith does not require abandoning careful thought. We can tell the difference between a hard question and a demonstrated contradiction, and admit what remains uncertain. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus showed that the whole Bible finds its center in him. Some questions come from wounds rather than research, such as harm done by a church leader or prayers that seemed unanswered; those call for patient listening. Eventually the question becomes personal: is the crucified and risen Jesus worthy of my trust?

Reflect. Respond. Pray.

Chapter 6: The Story That Can Be Trusted

Look back first: Open the My next step box on page 16, from session 6. If you chose a step, how did it go? What helped or got in the way? If you have no step to review, skip this question.

My look back (optional):

Reflect first; share by choice

1. What is my biggest honest question about whether the story of Jesus can be trusted?
2. Is that question mostly about evidence, or does it come from an experience or a wound? Both are welcome here.
3. How do I hold careful thinking and trust together without treating them as enemies?
4. If I set my questions beside the character of Jesus in the Gospels, what do I notice?

My reflection: what do I notice about Jesus, and what questions do I still have?

One small next step

Choose one Gospel and read the first chapter and the last chapter this week. Write down one question you would like to explore further and one thing about Jesus that stood out. If you wish, bring the question to a pastor, mentor, or friend and look into it together.

My next step: one thing I will try, and when:

Pray

God of truth, you acted in history through your Son. Give me patience to study, honesty to admit what I do not know, and courage to trust Jesus with my questions. I believe; help my unbelief. Amen.

Try your step before the next session. Then return to this box and reflect on how it went. You may pass or choose a smaller step. Speak about what you are learning and wondering. Nobody needs to explain where they stand with God, and nobody is asked to share more than they choose.

Chapter 7: More Than Agreement

Prepare: Read Chapter 7, More Than Agreement.

Listen to Scripture

Matthew 4:19 records Jesus calling Peter and Andrew, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. John 1:12 says those who received him and believed in his name were given the right to become children of God. Luke 18:9-14 tells the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector who prayed, God, be merciful to me, a sinner. Matthew 11:28 is Jesus' invitation to the weary to come and find rest. Ephesians 2:8 says we are saved by grace through faith as God's gift. Luke 23:43 is Jesus' promise to the criminal beside him. John 15:4 calls disciples to abide in him.

The teaching

It is possible to know a lot about Jesus and still keep him at a distance. Familiarity with the story is not the same as trusting the Savior at its center. When Jesus called fishermen, they did not understand everything; their faith began as a response to the one who called them. The book uses a simple picture: a person can study a bridge, know others have crossed it, and still stand on the bank. Trusting Jesus engages the whole person: understanding, acknowledging need, receiving grace, and bringing our desires and decisions under him. John says those who receive him become God's children, not by ancestry or effort. Jesus' parable of the two men at the temple shows that the man with nothing to offer but a plea for mercy went home right with God. The criminal on the cross had no time to build a record and still heard Jesus' promise. Grace comes first, and good works follow as a response, never as payment. Repentance belongs to this life of faith, not as a way to make God love us, but because his grace has brought us to Christ. Jesus pictures this life as a branch abiding in a vine: continued dependence, sustained by the Spirit, in community.

Reflect. Respond. Pray.

Chapter 7: More Than Agreement

Look back first: Open the My next step box on page 18, from session 7. If you chose a step, how did it go? What helped or got in the way? If you have no step to review, skip this question.

My look back (optional):

Reflect first; share by choice

1. Where might I be standing on the bank, agreeing with things about Jesus without trusting him with my life?
2. Which man in the temple do I resemble more often, the one who lists his record or the one asking for mercy?
3. What does Jesus' invitation to rest mean for the burdens I am carrying?
4. What would abiding in Jesus look like in one ordinary part of my week?

My reflection: what do I notice about Jesus, and what questions do I still have?

One small next step

Read Luke 18:9-14 and John 15:1-5. Pray the tax collector's short prayer once a day in your own words. Choose one area, such as a decision, a relationship, or a habit, and take one concrete step to bring it under Jesus' care.

My next step: one thing I will try, and when:

Pray

Jesus, I do not want only to know about you. I want to trust you. Have mercy on me, give me your rest, and teach me to abide in you. Amen.

Try your step before the next session. Then return to this box and reflect on how it went. You may pass or choose a smaller step. Speak about what you are learning and wondering. Nobody needs to explain where they stand with God, and nobody is asked to share more than they choose.

Chapter 8: Received by Grace

Prepare: Read Chapter 8, Received by Grace.

Listen to Scripture

Ephesians 2:4-5 says God, rich in mercy, made us alive together with Christ when we were dead in our trespasses. Ephesians 2:8 says salvation is by grace through faith and is God's gift. Luke 15:11-32 tells the parable of the lost son, including the father running to embrace him and going out to plead with the older brother. 1 John 3:1 says the Father's love calls us his children. 1 John 1:9 promises forgiveness and cleansing when we confess. Matthew 18:21-35 is the parable of the unforgiving servant.

The teaching

Much of life connects what we receive with what we have earned. Wages, skills, and trust are earned, and that is good. But it makes a free gift hard to understand. Many people believe Jesus forgives and still feel they must become worthy before coming near. Paul says we were dead in our trespasses and God, rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ. Faith receives this gift; it is not a payment that puts God in our debt. Jesus pictured God's welcome in the father who saw his wasteful son far off, ran, and embraced him before the son finished his speech. The book notes that the father also went out to the resentful older brother, so the story speaks to the rebellious child and the dutiful one who keeps score. Grace gives an identity our past cannot: children of God. That does not place us beyond correction; obedience flows from grace rather than buying a place. Confession agrees with God about our sin, and may involve apologies, restitution, and facing consequences. The book is careful that forgiveness does not erase the need for wisdom, boundaries, protection, or justice, and that trust may take time to rebuild. Grace makes us humbler and kinder toward others who fail.

Reflect. Respond. Pray.

Chapter 8: Received by Grace

Look back first: Open the My next step box on page 20, from session 8. If you chose a step, how did it go? What helped or got in the way? If you have no step to review, skip this question.

My look back (optional):

Reflect first; share by choice

1. Where do I still feel I must become worthy before I can come near to God?
2. In the parable, do I relate more to the younger son, the older son, or both?
3. What would change if I believed God calls me his child, and so I am?
4. Is there something I need to confess, or someone toward whom grace should soften my heart, while still keeping wise boundaries?

My reflection: what do I notice about Jesus, and what questions do I still have?

One small next step

Read Luke 15:11-32 twice, once as the younger son and once as the older son. Write a short prayer of confession about one thing, then read 1 John 1:9 over it. If appropriate and safe, take one step to make something right with another person.

My next step: one thing I will try, and when:

Pray

Father, you ran toward your lost son and pleaded with the one who stayed home. Receive me by your grace, free me from keeping score, and make me merciful as you are merciful. Amen.

Try your step before the next session. Then return to this box and reflect on how it went. You may pass or choose a smaller step. Speak about what you are learning and wondering. Nobody needs to explain where they stand with God, and nobody is asked to share more than they choose.

Chapter 9: Alive in Christ

Prepare: Read Chapter 9, Alive in Christ.

Listen to Scripture

John 10:10 records Jesus saying he came so his sheep may have life abundantly. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says anyone in Christ is a new creation. John 14:16 promises another Helper to be with believers forever. Romans 8:16 says the Spirit bears witness that we are God's children. Galatians 5:22-23 lists the fruit of the Spirit. Romans 5:1 speaks of peace with God through faith. John 14:27 and 15:11 record Jesus giving his peace and his joy. Philippians 3:20 says our citizenship is in heaven. Colossians 2:6 says to walk in Christ as you received him.

The teaching

Believing in Jesus begins a new life. People can be busy and successful and still sense something essential missing. Jesus, the good shepherd, came to give abundant life, and the book is clear that this is not measured by wealth, comfort, or the absence of hardship. In Christ a person is a new creation. Their past remains part of their history but no longer gives the final word on who they are before God. That does not erase memories or end every struggle; old habits may need patient repentance and wounds may need care. Believers are not left to grow by willpower. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit, who is fully God, personally present, teaching, comforting, convicting, and assuring us that we are God's children. That assurance does not depend on a constant feeling. The Spirit forms new desires and grows fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Growth is often quiet, like a patient answer where anger used to rule. Peace with God is first a restored relationship, and it can coexist with grief. Joy is not constant happiness. Our hope also looks ahead to Christ's return, which gives reason to love our neighbors faithfully now.

Reflect. Respond. Pray.

Chapter 9: Alive in Christ

Look back first: Open the My next step box on page 22, from session 9. If you chose a step, how did it go? What helped or got in the way? If you have no step to review, skip this question.

My look back (optional):

Reflect first; share by choice

1. What have I looked to for life that could not finally satisfy me?
2. Where do I see small signs of new life, in myself or in someone I know?
3. Which fruit of the Spirit do I most long to see grow in me? What ordinary moment might it show up in?
4. How can peace and joy be real for me even in a season of sorrow?

My reflection: what do I notice about Jesus, and what questions do I still have?

One small next step

Read Galatians 5:16-25. Choose one fruit of the Spirit and pray each morning for the Spirit's help with it. At the end of each day, note one moment where you saw it or missed it, without scorekeeping. Thank God for any small growth.

My next step: one thing I will try, and when:

Pray

Holy Spirit, make me alive in Christ. Grow your fruit in me, assure me that I belong to the Father, and teach me to walk with Jesus as I received him. Amen.

Try your step before the next session. Then return to this box and reflect on how it went. You may pass or choose a smaller step. Speak about what you are learning and wondering. Nobody needs to explain where they stand with God, and nobody is asked to share more than they choose.

Chapter 10: Faith in the Fire

Prepare: Read Chapter 10, Faith in the Fire.

Listen to Scripture

John 16:33 records Jesus saying his followers will have trouble, but to take heart because he has overcome the world. Hebrews 2:18 says Jesus, who suffered when tempted, is able to help those who are tempted. The book of Job shows a righteous man suffering and friends who wrongly blame him. Psalm 13:1 asks, how long, O Lord. 2 Corinthians 12:9 records the Lord telling Paul his grace is sufficient and his power is made perfect in weakness. Romans 5:3-4 traces suffering to endurance, character, and hope. 1 Peter 1:8 speaks of loving Jesus without having seen him. James 1:2-5 calls believers to face trials and ask God for wisdom.

The teaching

Following Jesus does not remove hardship. He told his disciples plainly that trouble would come and gave them a reason to take heart: he has overcome the world. Faith is often tested in circumstances we would never choose: unanswered prayer, a broken relationship, lost work, a diagnosis, grief, or the cost of doing right. Questions in those seasons do not automatically mean faith has failed. Joseph, Moses, David, and Israel all walked long, painful roads, but the book warns against turning their stories into guarantees that our stories will end the same way. Jesus entered human suffering fully; he wept, was betrayed, and went to the cross, so he can help those who struggle. Scripture does not let us assign a simple cause to every person's pain. Job's friends made his suffering worse with quick explanations. Compassion listens, tells the truth, and never makes suffering a measure of spiritual worth. Someone facing illness may need treatment and practical help; someone in danger needs protection. The Psalms give words for lament. Paul's weakness was not removed, yet grace was enough. Endurance grows through small acts of faithfulness and is a work of grace, never a demand placed on someone who is overwhelmed. God places us among his people so no one walks through the fire alone.

Reflect. Respond. Pray.

Chapter 10: Faith in the Fire

Look back first: Open the My next step box on page 24, from session 10. If you chose a step, how did it go? What helped or got in the way? If you have no step to review, skip this question.

My look back (optional):

Reflect first; share by choice

1. What hardship, past or present, has tested what I believe about God?
2. Have I ever received or given a too-quick explanation for suffering? What did it do?
3. What would an honest how long prayer sound like from me right now?
4. What is one small faithful step, or one kind of help, that fits the weight I am carrying?

My reflection: what do I notice about Jesus, and what questions do I still have?

One small next step

Read Psalm 13 and write your own short lament in the same shape: honest complaint, a request, and, if you can, one line of trust. If you are carrying a heavy burden, tell one trusted person and accept one concrete offer of help this week.

My next step: one thing I will try, and when:

Pray

Lord, you have overcome the world, yet you weep with those who weep. Hear my honest prayer. Let your grace be enough for today, and surround me with people who will help me carry what is heavy. Amen.

Try your step before the next session. Then return to this box and reflect on how it went. You may pass or choose a smaller step. Speak about what you are learning and wondering. Nobody needs to explain where they stand with God, and nobody is asked to share more than they choose.

Chapter 11: The People of Jesus

Prepare: Read Chapter 11, The People of Jesus.

Listen to Scripture

Ephesians 2:13 says those once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Matthew 16:18 records Jesus saying he will build his church. Acts 2:42 describes believers devoted to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer. 1 Corinthians 12:12 compares the church to one body with many members. Hebrews 10:24-25 urges believers to stir one another up to love and good works and to keep meeting together. Galatians 6:2 calls believers to bear one another's burdens.

The teaching

Faith is personal. No one can trust Jesus on behalf of someone else, and growing up in a Christian family does not do it for us. Yet the Savior who welcomes us one by one gathers us into a people. From Abraham onward, God has been forming a people, and in Christ he brings together those who were far apart. Jesus said he would build his church, and it belongs to him; no leader or organization takes his place. The first believers devoted themselves to teaching, fellowship, meals, and prayer, and Acts is honest that they still had disagreements and overlooked needs. Churches today are full of imperfect people. The book takes church hurt seriously: harsh judgment, manipulation, and mishandled wrongdoing are real, and the name of Jesus must never be used to silence anyone or excuse abuse. Leaving an unsafe church is not abandoning Christ. Paul describes the church as a body where every part matters, and quiet service in kitchens and hospital rooms honors Christ as much as visible roles. Belonging means receiving as well as giving. Healthy community makes room for trustworthy friendship, worship, and shared burdens, and finding such a community may take patience: look for one rooted in Scripture, centered on Christ, and marked by humility and safety.

Reflect. Respond. Pray.

Chapter 11: The People of Jesus

Look back first: Open the My next step box on page 26, from session 11. If you chose a step, how did it go? What helped or got in the way? If you have no step to review, skip this question.

My look back (optional):

Reflect first; share by choice

1. What has church been for me: a gift, a source of pain, unfamiliar, or a mix?
2. Where do I find it easier to give help than to receive it?
3. Which part of the body could I be: teaching, encouraging, praying, hospitality, practical help, listening?
4. Whose burden could I help carry this week, and who could help carry mine?

My reflection: what do I notice about Jesus, and what questions do I still have?

One small next step

Read Acts 2:42-47 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. This week, take one step toward Christian community: attend a gathering, share a meal, reach out to a believer you trust, or ask a question of a church you are considering. Do one practical act of care for someone carrying a burden.

My next step: one thing I will try, and when:

Pray

Lord Jesus, you build your church and bring the far off near. Heal what has been wounded in your name, give me trustworthy brothers and sisters, and make me a faithful member of your body. Amen.

Try your step before the next session. Then return to this box and reflect on how it went. You may pass or choose a smaller step. Speak about what you are learning and wondering. Nobody needs to explain where they stand with God, and nobody is asked to share more than they choose.

Chapter 12: Sent Under the King

Prepare: Read Chapter 12, Sent Under the King.

Listen to Scripture

Matthew 28:18-20 records Jesus saying all authority has been given to him, sending his followers to make disciples of all nations, and promising to be with them always. Acts 1:8 names Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. 1 Peter 3:15 calls believers to be ready to give a reason for their hope with gentleness and respect. 1 Corinthians 3:7 says God gives the growth. Matthew 5:16 calls Jesus' followers to let their light shine so others glorify the Father.

The teaching

Jesus does not call people to believe and then leave them without direction. Mission grows from belonging to him. After the resurrection, he met his disciples in Galilee, some of whom had denied or abandoned him, and began with his own authority. They were not sent because they were impressive, but because Jesus is Lord. He told them to make disciples, which reaches beyond one conversation to baptism, teaching, and walking with people over time. This work belongs to the whole church. Some will travel far, and many will be faithful in homes, workplaces, and neighborhoods; faithfulness is not measured by distance or audience. The Spirit empowered the witness from Jerusalem outward, across real divisions. The book encourages us to look at those already near: a coworker, a neighbor, a friend with unspoken questions. Not every conversation must become a presentation. Love listens, serves, keeps promises, and respects a person's freedom to respond. Peter says to be ready with a reason for hope, and to give it with gentleness and respect. It is fine to admit we need to study. We cannot create faith in someone's heart and must never use pressure or manipulation; God gives the growth. Mission also looks like integrity, generosity, and forgiveness in ordinary life, and Jesus promises to be with us always.

Reflect. Respond. Pray.

Chapter 12: Sent Under the King

Look back first: Open the My next step box on page 28, from session 12. If you chose a step, how did it go? What helped or got in the way? If you have no step to review, skip this question.

My look back (optional):

Reflect first; share by choice

1. Who has God already placed near me who might need friendship, care, or a conversation about hope?
2. What makes me hesitant to speak about Jesus? What would gentleness and respect look like for me?
3. How does knowing that God gives the growth take pressure off me?
4. Where in my ordinary week could my life show God's goodness: integrity, generosity, or forgiveness?

My reflection: what do I notice about Jesus, and what questions do I still have?

One small next step

Read Matthew 28:16-20. Write the names of two or three people near you and pray for them by name this week. Take one simple step of love toward one of them: listen without hurry, help in a practical way, or, if the moment comes, share honestly why Jesus matters to you.

My next step: one thing I will try, and when:

Pray

Risen King, all authority is yours. Send me into the places I already go. Give me gentleness and courage, keep me from pressure, and remind me that you are with me always. Amen.

Try your step before the next session. Then return to this box and reflect on how it went. You may pass or choose a smaller step. Speak about what you are learning and wondering. Nobody needs to explain where they stand with God, and nobody is asked to share more than they choose.

Conclusion: Believe and Follow

Prepare: Read the Conclusion, Believe and Follow.

Listen to Scripture

Matthew 4:19 records Jesus calling fishermen, follow me. Romans 10:13 promises that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. John 20:31 returns to the purpose of believing and having life in his name. Colossians 2:6 calls believers to keep walking in Christ as they received him.

The teaching

The question that opened the book remains: who is Jesus? The book's answer is that he is the eternal Son of God, fully God and fully man, who fulfilled God's promises, died for sinners, rose bodily, and reigns as King. Our sin is real, and no record of good deeds can remove it, but forgiveness is offered through him. We come to these words with different stories. Some have followed Jesus for years and are returning to the foundations. Some know the language of Christianity without having placed their confidence in Christ. Some are exhausted by trying to become worthy. Jesus knows our failures and our hard questions, and his invitation is still open. The Lord who calls us to believe also calls us to follow, as he called fishermen who could not see the whole road. Faith grows in ordinary places: how we speak to people at home, treat coworkers, spend money, and respond to interruptions. This life is sustained by the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, not our strength alone. There will be weak days. We need Scripture, prayer, the church, and honest friendships. For someone who has never trusted Christ, the book says you can turn to him in repentance and faith. For long-time followers, the same gospel remains the foundation. Wherever you are: receive his grace, trust his words, and keep walking with Jesus.

Reflect. Respond. Pray.

Conclusion: Believe and Follow

Look back first: Open the My next step box on page 30, from session 13. If you chose a step, how did it go? What helped or got in the way? If you have no step to review, skip this question.

My look back (optional):

Reflect first; share by choice

1. Look back at what I wrote in Session 1. How would I answer, who is Jesus, today?
2. What has changed in me through these sessions? What question am I still carrying?
3. Where am I now: just beginning to consider Jesus, ready to trust him, returning to him, or continuing to follow? There is no wrong answer.
4. What is one way I will keep abiding, keep becoming, and stay open to being sent?

My reflection: what do I notice about Jesus, and what questions do I still have?

One small next step

Write a short closing plan: one practice to keep, such as daily Scripture reading or prayer; one person to keep talking with about faith; one question to keep exploring; and one person to pray for. If you want to talk with someone about trusting Jesus, name who you will ask.

My next step: one practice I will continue, and when I will review it:

Pray

Jesus, you are the promised Savior, crucified and risen. Wherever I am, I come to you. Give me grace to believe, courage to follow, and joy in walking with you. Amen.

This is the final session. Choose one practice to continue and a time to look back on it, on your own or with a trusted person. Another group meeting is not required. Speak about what you are learning and wondering. Nobody needs to explain where they stand with God, and nobody is asked to share more than they choose.

Keep walking with Jesus.

A finished workbook is a beginning, not a verdict.

Keep returning to the Gospels, to honest prayer, and to people who will walk with you. If you would like to talk about trusting Jesus, baptism, or finding a church, ask your facilitator, a pastor, or a trusted friend.

One practice I want to keep:

A question I still want to explore, and who I could ask:

What I want to say to Jesus now:

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