Start here: How do we study *The Absolute Basics of the Christian Faith* with youth?

When it comes to using this material, there are many directions you can take. This resource was created as a kind of catechesis for confirmation, but we’re not going to legally require you to use it that way. In fact, it makes a great curriculum for a Sunday school class, college Bible study, or any place where Christians are gathered to learn about their faith. But we realize it can be a little confusing—8 units and 16 questions. How do we tackle this? We have a few suggestions for you.

These are the *absolute basics* of leading youth (age 11–18). So here are a few strategies for forming a successful group around youth, a few example group formats, and discussion questions for each unit in *The Absolute Basics of the Christian Faith*.

**Leading Groups with Youth**

If you are working with youth, or have teenagers of your own, you don’t need me to tell you that this is a unique time in their life. There is joy in stepping up to a new level of maturity, and much pain when students stumble on the stairs to adulthood. Students have an excess of everything: energy, ambition, frustration, and longing for connection, challenge, and purpose. A good youth ministry doesn’t suppress these elements, but harnesses them and points them toward God as part of a student’s faith journey. Essential to this journey is learning to know who God is, who they are in God’s eyes, and where they fit in God’s work in the world. Here are a few tips for leading groups with youth:
1. **Games:** A Jesus-shaped ministry has both *invitation* and challenge. But invitation comes first. Jesus met people where they were, He fed them, ate with them, partied with them, and communicated in a way they understood. Youth ministry meets students where they are by first having fun together. Even for a study gathering, it is helpful to start off with some light competition though quick, easy games like *minute-to-win-it*. If you have a large group, it’s suggested that you break students up into groups, which enables fun competition and creates community at the tables, which brings me to my next point. . . .

2. **Community:** Students won’t share if they don’t feel at home. They have to know you and everyone else in the group. Put on name tags each week. Quiz them on knowing each other’s names. Break the ice early and often with games and open-ended questions (“What’s the worst superhero?” “Who would win in a fight between a giraffe and a koala?”). For large groups, putting students at round tables is a big help, and keeping them with an assigned group creates community and allows you to have some friendly competition between tables. Consistent table leaders are key here as well, which brings me to my next point. . . .

3. **Peer and Adult Leadership:** With an ongoing study like *The Absolute Basics*, you are going to need at least one leader for every five students. Leaders should be in on the fun and competition, as well as learning names and creating community between the students. One of the best things you can do for younger students is to find older, more mature students who can be with them in the process. This shows them this isn’t just something that is important to the adults, but also to their older, cooler peers. Recruiting good volunteers is always worth the time you invest in it. But ministry leaders aren’t the only older people that need to be involved, which brings me to my next point. . . .

4. **Parents:** Parenting is not so much about what parents *say*, as about what youth *see*. If youth see something is important to parents, then they will take it seriously. Taking time to get parents in on the learning process is also an absolute basic starting point. Parents should *know* what students are learning. They should *show* it is important by making time to talk about it with students outside of the ministry time. And they should *go* through it as well, learning the material. The whole community of faith needs to surround students to show this is serious, and seriously important. This brings me to my next point. . . .

5. **Challenge:** Jesus-shaped ministry involves both invitation and *challenge*. Jesus partied, but He also prophesied. He ate and drank, but He also discipled. If students are not expected to learn anything from the teaching, they will quickly forget it. Every serious learning experience assumes that we come away with some real knowledge: school requires exams; driver’s ed ends in a driving test; colleges expect SAT or ACT scores. Yet, despite the fact that Christian education teaches ultimate truths, we often expect little real learning from our youth. *The Absolute Basics* is set up to teach students the core doctrines of the faith in an accessible way. These teachings should be tested continually throughout the process (you can even make a competition out of it) and at the end of the process (such as before
confirmation). What needs to be learned is clearly laid out in the material, but I want to make it clear, which brings me to my next point. . . .

**Key Learning Elements:**

1. **Catechesis Questions and Answers:** *The Absolute Basics* has 16 questions and answers aimed at teaching students the meaning of the core confessions of the Christian faith (the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds). By learning these 16 teachings, students will be well prepared to understand the basics of what all Christians have believed and confessed throughout time.

2. **Memory Verses:** *The Absolute Basics* also has 16 memory verses that are short, and in an easily understandable translation. Scripture memorization is a powerful part of Christian growth, it ingrains on students the very words of God, and it often stays with them throughout their lives. Though memorization often seems like a challenge at first, it isn’t as hard as we may think. Once students (and adults) get rolling, they find they can ingrain all 16 memory verses and repeat them with near-perfect accuracy. One helpful practice is to write out the verses numerous times, and then move to repeating the verses out loud.

3. **Lessons:** The chapters of the book and the videos that illustrate the lessons help students and adults to unpack the meaning of the questions, answers, and memory verses. They are filled with memorable illustrations to provide helpful analogies for big ideas.

**Use in Confirmation**

This guide will help you to set up a **basic doctrinal catechesis** for use in confirmation. However, it should be noted that confirmation is more than just another class. It is intended to be a holistic mind-hands-and-heart preparation for reaffirmation of the baptismal vows. For more information about confirmation’s practice and meaning, please check out this article, or contact me directly at philip.tallon@gmail.com.
**Group Formatting**

**Group Size Options: Benefits and Drawbacks**

- 1. Big Group (more than 20)
  - **Benefits**: Larger numbers engaging materials. More socializing. Easy entry point for new people. Group is less bound to attendance (if a few miss, no need to cancel group).
  - **Drawbacks**: People are more likely to come unprepared. Students less likely to talk. Can feel like a class/lecture. Difficult to individually meet students.
  - **Strategies**: Have more time at the start for fun and conversations. Either you read or watch the video to start the discussion of the material to catch up unprepared people. Put students at round tables, effectively making smaller groups within the overall group. Give each table questions to discuss with each other and time to discuss them, then have the group leader ask for answers from the tables in the large group setting. Also have key leaders in these groups connecting to new students, since meeting/hanging with them becomes tough.

- 2. Small Group (20 or fewer)
  - **Benefits**: Small and intimate. Leader can get to know the individuals. Easy for students to speak up, and it requires less structure to have good conversations. Usually doesn’t take the group leader to mediate the conversation: students speak among themselves.
  - **Drawbacks**: Not as many people getting the material. Tougher to get new students to come to. Sometimes conversations can head down long rabbit trails. Individual attendance has greater effect on group.
  - **Strategies**: Sit in a circle, making the group more conversational. Make sure you know everyone’s name. Be flexible with the material, and have a group text or some messaging system to get a feel beforehand of what attendance will look like. This will remind members to come and also give you advanced notice if members can’t come so you can cancel/reschedule group.

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Example Group Formats

Example 1: Study by Question (16 weeks) ***Suggested for Confirmation***

As you’re soon to find out, these videos and chapters are short and easy to read. But they are also packed with deep, sometimes difficult theological concepts. There is enough conversation to be had within each week if you’re willing to prepare for it. There are 16 individual questions with a corresponding video and chapter for each question. This is suggested for a group of students who are unfamiliar with basic Christian doctrine, or a group that wants to go in depth on each point. It is especially suggested for confirmation. A possible way to structure such a week might be like this:

- **Start with games, open-ended conversation, and quizzing.** This is also a good time to quiz students on learning from previous weeks. This can be a fun competition where points and prizes are given out to different students/groups who get answers right.

- **Ask them the question for the week (optional).** In the case of Unit 1, Question 1, ask: “Who is God?” A question like this is likely to throw them off and be difficult to answer. But let them break off into small groups or have a large group discussion for 10 minutes or so. This will help you see where they are at and hopefully get them excited for the week. If time is tight, you may want to skip this step.

- **Watch the video and/or have them read the corresponding chapter.** This will begin to open up some basic concepts for them. It will almost certainly need more unpacking as well. Let them process this, either verbally by discussing in groups or by writing out some thoughts and questions.

- **Have them put the books away and attempt to answer some comprehension and memory questions on their own.** Some of these questions are provided with the discussion questions. This is, again, a good way to keep the previous week’s material fresh in their minds.

- **Ask some pointed discussion questions.** We provided some here, but feel free to include your own.

- **Summarize the key ideas for the students to make sure they all understand them.** This is a good time to do some teaching. Students will have a framework for the ideas, and some thoughts of their own. Take 10 minutes or so to explain the ideas again, perhaps throwing questions out for students to answer. (Example: “How does the Trinity show us that God is love?”)

- **Read Scripture.** Each question includes a corresponding passage of Scripture for the video. Allow the students to read, reflect, and study this passage. You could challenge the
students to do their own Bible study on the passage. This is as simple as asking them to sit for 5–10 minutes and write out every observation they see about one verse. They might find this tedious, but most students find this exercise enjoyable once finished and it gives them a format for Bible study in the future. You can also bring in other Scripture passages that are not included in the week. Each set of discussion questions has some Scripture questions included.

- **Application point.** Each week, come up with a specific challenge for the students that is tailored for their own context. Try to find a way to make this applicable throughout the group, but have at least some time each week to discuss and think about how what we’re learning affects how we’re living. We’ve included at least one application question for each week.

- **Repeat this week’s question and answer and memory verse together before dismissing.**

*If you still have time to fill, here are two more elements you can add in.*

- **Bring in other voices.** Most of the lessons include quotations from historical Christian thinkers, such as C. S. Lewis or John Wesley. Use these quotations as a springboard for deeper conversation, or invite other conversation partners into the discussion. This could be by way of more quotations, or a different video or speaker. These are not included in the discussion questions, so you will have to come up with your own.

- **Culture connection.** Since you’ll have more time per question in this format, talk about a film, music album, or piece of culture that intersects with your topic. Discuss how that reinforces or undercuts Christian teaching. Discuss how media teaches and shapes culture, and how Christian doctrine fits in. These are not included in the discussion questions, so you will have to come up with your own.

**Benefits:** Covers the material in greater detail and with more depth. Because each group is about one question, there’s more time and so more freedom to take the group in interesting directions.

**Drawbacks:** This is a long period of study. It will fit within the normal semester, but you may need to do a lot to make sure parents and students are committed to the process. It also may require one intensive study session where more than one lesson is discussed (such as at a retreat) in order to fit within a semester, especially if there are holidays that interfere with the schedule.

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**Example 2: Study by Units (8 weeks)**

There are 8 units with two questions per unit. The questions are related to one another. For example, Unit 1 is the “Doctrine of God” that covers who God is and what God is like. You can use
all of the above in terms of what to do within a particular week, but shorten the discussion a bit and cover two questions per week. This will allow your group to get through the material faster (8 sessions), but spend less time per question. This is suggested for a more advanced group who already has a good understanding of basic Christian doctrine. In addition to the above suggestions, here are some ideas for how to work through a unit in a session:

- **Start with games, open-ended conversation, and quizzing.** This is also a good time to quiz students on learning from previous weeks. This can be a fun competition where points and prizes are given out to different students/groups who get answers right.

- **Spend half the time on each section of the unit.** Start off watching the video for the first question in the unit.

- **Have them put the books away and attempt to answer some comprehension and memory questions on their own.** Some of these questions are provided with the discussion questions. This is, again, a good way to keep the previous week’s material fresh in their minds.

- **Ask some pointed discussion questions, including the application question.** We provided some here, but feel free to include your own.

- **Summarize the key ideas for the students to make sure they all understand them.** This is a good time to do some teaching. Students will have a framework for the ideas and some thoughts of their own. Take 10 minutes or so to explain the ideas again, perhaps throwing questions out for students to answer. (Example: “How does the Trinity show us that God is love?”)

- **Lather. Rinse. Repeat the same process with the second section of the unit.**

- **At the end, discuss the importance of the unit title.** We have not created questions or material for the unit titles, but they could still be points of discussion. For example, asking: “Why is formulating a doctrine of God important?” This allows you to have a more systematic or big picture view of the study.

- **Repeat this week’s questions and answers and memory verses together before dismissing.**

**Benefits:** You’ll easily finish in a semester.

**Drawbacks:** Won’t be as in depth as a longer study with meetings of the same duration, and so each topic probably won’t be explored with the same depth as in a longer study. Most of the time will be centered directly on the material, with less time to incorporate other media or discussions about related content.
**Example 3: Study outside Group, Discuss Within**

Another strategy for this study is to have the students read the chapter outside of group and show the video within group. The video is a nice summation of the chapters. You can then supplement the outside readings with the questions or other materials. This saves more time in group and allows students to begin thinking about the topic before they even arrive in group. This should create more thoughtful discussion and engagement. See above for suggestions on how to engage with the students during the week. *This is suggested for very mature students who can be expected to do the reading on their own.*

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Memory, Comprehension, and Discussion Questions for Each Unit

***Note 1: Discussion leaders should look at these questions ahead of time to prepare how you will help students think through them and answer them well. Not all questions are ideal for all groups, so you should pick and choose those questions that are relevant to your context. Further, there may be more questions here than can be discussed in a single session, so you should take into account the amount of time you have to discuss. These questions are here to help you prepare lessons for students, not to provide a complete outline of questions that should be asked.***

***Note 2: At a number of key places in discussion, the issue of salvation will come up. During these times, it is important to be ready to ask students honest and open questions about their relationship with God, and to be ready to talk to them about salvation and pray with them to repent and believe. Without this transformative element in Christian education, all that follows is just head knowledge.***

***Note 3: The first two memory questions should be attempted without using the material. Students should make a go of it on their own. Then you should open the book, check your answers together and correct any mistakes. After the book is open, try to answer the comprehension question by looking through the lesson together.***

Unit 1: Doctrine of God

Question 1: Who is God?

- Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: Who is God? A. God is the _______ ________: ________, _______, and ________: ________. Three _______ in one _______.

- Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: May the _______ of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the _______ of God, and the _______ of the Holy Spirit be with you all. —2 Corinthians 13:14

- Comprehension Question: Fill in the blanks: The Father is the _____________. Jesus is the _______. And the Holy Spirit is the _______.

- Discussion Opener: Name some activities you can’t do alone. How many can you come up with? Is it easier or harder to do activities with other people? Do you prefer to do things alone or with a group?

- Discussion Question: Understanding God as 3-in-1 can be hard. Which way of thinking about God being 3-in-1 made the most sense to you?
• Discussion Question: We heard the analogy of playing 3 notes on a piano that form a chord to help us think about the Trinity. This is a helpful analogy. Can you think of any analogies for the Trinity that you’ve heard that are unhelpful? How are these bad analogies?

• Discussion Question: Look up and read together: 2 Corinthians 13:14 and Titus 3:4–7. How does God work together in our salvation? What does Paul say God, Jesus, and the Spirit are doing? If we pray to the Father in the name of the Son, what is the Holy Spirit up to when we pray?

• Discussion Question: What was the most important idea you learned from this lesson? Is there anything you still don’t understand?

• Application Question: How does a discussion about the Trinity actually impact our lives? How does the fact that God is a Trinity change how we do relationships?

Question 2: What is God like?

• Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: What is God like? A. God is perfect in __________, __________, and in His __________ __________.

• Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: ________ is our Lord and ________ in power; his understanding has ________ __________. —Psalm 147:5

• Comprehension Question: Fill in the blanks: God’s nature is to be a ____________ kind of thing.

• Discussion Opener: If you were a superhero, who would you be? Briefly, why?

• Discussion Question: You are putting together a team of superheroes. Which of these do you choose: Power Person, Genius Guy, or Moral Man?

• Discussion Question: Look up and read together: Psalm 147:5 and 1 John 4:7–16. Since God is love, what is expected of us?

• Discussion Question: Because God is all-loving, God is merciful. Mercy is when someone does not get what they deserve. How can God execute justice and still be loving and merciful to us?

• Discussion Question: Anselm, in pointing out that God was perfect, went so far as to say that any perfect being (God) must exist, for it is more perfect to exist than not exist. Some have really taken this and run with it and called it the “ontological argument for the existence of God.” Do you think this is a good argument for God?
Discussion Question: If God knows everything, does He know the future? Are we free if He does?

Discussion Question: What was the most important idea you learned from this lesson? Is there anything you still don’t understand?

Application Question: An idol is a false god. Worshipping anything less than the one true God is idolatry, and we are commanded not to worship idols. What does idolatry look like in today’s world?

Unit 2: Doctrine of Creation

Question 3: What did God make?

- Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: What did God make? A. God _______ everything into ________, of His own ________ ________, and it was very ________.

- Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: By __________ we understand that the universe was formed at God’s ________, so that what is ________ was not made out of what was ________. —Hebrews 11:3

- Comprehension Question: Fill in the blanks: The Bible teaches that God made the world by His ________, from __________, and that He ___________ it in being.

- Discussion Opener: Are you a beach person or a mountain person? If you could take a trip anywhere in the world, where would you go and why? Or: What is your favorite animal to visit at the zoo? Why?

- Discussion Question: Have different people each look up and read Genesis 1:1–5 and John 1:1–5

  - The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, which has a word, “ruach,” that means spirit, wind, and/or breath. That is the word in Genesis 1 that we read in verse 2. In John, the Greek word for Spirit is “pneuma,” which means spirit, wind, and breath as well. What do these two passages tell us about what the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are doing in the work of creation?

- Discussion Question: God decide to create out of His own free will. That includes time and space. Why do you think God decided to create the universe?

- Discussion Question: When Christians claim that God created everything, atheists are fond of responding with the question of “who created God?” How do we respond to the question of who created God? Did He create Himself? Or did God just always exist? If something has to always exist, which is more likely to be always existent, God or the universe?
• Discussion Question: God has given us a very good gift by giving us creation, and our natural response is gratitude. What are the ways you normally show gratitude to someone who gives you a good gift? Is it just a feeling in our hearts? How do we show that to God? What is the wrong way to show gratitude? Is there a way that we can be well-meaning and desire to show gratitude but do it in the wrong way?

• Discussion Question: If God is best, then does He always necessarily do what’s best? Does this mean God’s decision to create—and all other decisions—aren’t free?

• Discussion Question: What was the most important idea you learned from this lesson? Is there anything you still don’t understand?

• Application Question: You heard about God bringing life simply through speaking. Do we have the ability to bring life, or take life, through our words? How?

Question 4: Why is there evil?

• Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: Why is there evil? A. God gave us _______ _______ to _______ and we did not.

• Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: Therefore, just as _______ entered the world through one man, and _______ through _______, and in this way _______ came to all people, because all _______. —Romans 5:12

• Comprehension Question: Fill in the blanks: Being created in the image of God means that we ________________ Him, but also that we ________________ Him in the world.

• Discussion Opener: Have you ever lost a game because your opponent cheated? Has your team ever lost because of a “dirty ref” or a “crooked umpire”? What game/sport was it, and tell us the story. What is the most important rule for players to keep in your favorite sport? If you could change any rule in your favorite sport, what would you change? Why?

• Discussion Question: God put humans in the garden and asked them not to eat the forbidden fruit from the tree. We broke one of God’s only and simple commands. By creating the tree, God gave human beings the possibility to screw up by eating the fruit. Why did He even give us the chance by putting the tree there?

• Discussion Question: There has been a lot of evil as the result of free will. Do you think that free will is worth all of the evil?

• Discussion Question: We often think of evil as a philosophical problem (how can a good and all-powerful God co-exist with evil?) or a historical problem (there are evil events, such as the Holocaust or drunken drivers causing fatal wrecks), but how is it also a personal
problem? Would you consider yourself as being a mostly good person or better than other people we would consider “evil”?

- Discussion Question: Would you give up your free will if it meant you always did the right thing? Would you take your friend’s free will if it meant that from then on he would always do the right thing? What about that cute-girl-you’ve-been-crushing-on’s free will?

- Discussion Question: Look up and read Romans 5:12. What is the result of sin according to this Scripture?

- Discussion Question: In Isaiah 55:9 God says, “my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.” Is what’s evil to us good to God?

- Discussion Question: What was the most important idea you learned from this lesson? Is there anything you still don’t understand?

- Application Question: Part of what it means to be made in the image of God is to represent Him here on earth. How can you represent God in your own life?

**Unit 3: Doctrine of the Incarnation**

Question 5: Who is Jesus Christ?

- Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: Who is Jesus Christ? The eternally _______ Son of ________ and the Son of ________. Fully ________. Fully ________.

- Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: The ________ became ________ and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only ________, who came from the ________, full of grace and truth. —John 1:14

- Comprehension Question: Fill in the blanks: The mystery of the incarnation is this, that both ____________ (both kinds of thing) were united in one __________: the God-Man Jesus Christ.

- Discussion Opener: Where were you born? Where did you grow up? Where was Jesus born? (Bethlehem.) Where did He grow up? (Nazareth.) Who were His parents? (Mary and Joseph. . . and God.)

- Or Discussion Opener: Do you remember a time when you were separated from a friend, family member, or group? How did it happen? What was that like? How did you become reunited?

- Discussion Question: Look up and read Romans 3:23 and 6:23, and John 1:14. What is the problem that humanity has before God? Is our problem something we could fix on our own? What is God’s plan to solve our problem? (Why would God do that?)
- Discussion Question: Remember the image of the ladder from the lesson. Look up and read Genesis 28:10–17 (Jacob’s dream) and John 1:43–51 (Jesus calling disciples, notice v.51). Where is God in that picture? Where are we?

- Discussion Question: Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s amazing redemptive plan. As we saw, Jesus Christ was a part of a greater historical plan that includes other covenants with the Jewish people. Why didn’t the Father just send Jesus down right after the fall?

- Discussion Question: God coming to earth is a bit of a plot twist in the grand story of God. As we might expect looking back (and can see for sure in history), it took a lot of people by surprise. Do you think there was any other way God could have restored the broken relationship?

- Discussion Question: Why is it important that Jesus is both fully man and fully God?

- Discussion Question: Jesus was fully man, sure, but He was also fully God. How are we supposed to relate to Him? Can we relate to Him?

- Discussion Question: What was the most important idea you learned from this lesson? Is there anything you still don’t understand?

- Application Question: Because Jesus is fully human, what does this mean for us, here and now?

Question 6: Why did the Son of God become human?

- Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: Why did the Son of God become human? A. Because God _______ _____ and wants to make us true __________ of ________.

- Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: But when the set time had fully come, God sent his ________, born of a ________, born under the ________, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive __________ to sonship. —Galatians 4:4–5

- Comprehension Question: Fill in the blanks: God’s motivation is ________, God’s goal is to ______________ us ______________ ____________

- Discussion Opener: Who has been an example of a loving person in your life? What did they do to show you love?

- Discussion Question: Read together the story of the Prodigal Son from Luke 15:11–32. The video compares the parable of the lost son in Luke 15 to our own story. How do you identify with the characters in the story—the older brother, younger brother, and father? Do you have relationships in which you identify with each of these characters?
Discussion Question: Look up and read Luke 15:3–10. What is lost in those two stories? How are they found? Who goes looking for them? What do these stories show us about God?

Discussion Question: The story of redemption is filled with familial imagery: God came to earth to bring us back into the family of God. How do our own human families help us understand (or misunderstand) this image? Does your family show you anything about what God is like? How or how not?

Discussion Question: Why did God not just forgive us? Couldn’t He have just declared we weren’t guilty anymore? Why did Jesus have to die?

Discussion Question: The lesson teaches that God’s motivation is love. What other motivations might some people say God has for saving us?

Discussion Question: How is Jesus’ life like your yours? What do you have in common? How is Jesus’ story different than yours?

Discussion Question: What was the most important idea you learned from this lesson? Is there anything you still don’t understand?

Application Question: What does being a "child of God," mean for your life? How does it change things to continually think of yourself as part of God’s family?

Unit 4: Doctrine of Salvation (Part 1)

Question 7: What is salvation?

Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: What is salvation? A. Through Jesus’ sacrificial _______ and victorious __________, we are __________ with God and _________ from destruction.

Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: For there is one _______ and one __________ between God and __________, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a __________ for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper ______. —1 Timothy 2:5–6

Comprehension Question: Fill in the blanks: Reconciliation means __________ __________. Rescue means saving us from ____________.

Discussion Opener: There are plenty of great rescue scenes in movies. Share a favorite.

Discussion Question: How has Jesus reconciled and rescued us? Have you experienced this in your own life? (This is an important question.)

Discussion Question: Where do you see disrupted relationship in your own life?
Discussion Question: What does it mean that death is a consequence for sin?

Discussion Question:
- Look up and read Matthew 18:21–27. What problem does the servant have in this passage? What does he ask the master to do for him? What does the master do for him? Who bears the financial cost of rescuing the servant from his debt in this story? Would it be hard or easy for you to forgive a monetary debt that someone owed you? What would make it hard or easy to do so?
- Continue: Read Matthew 18:28–30. The fellow servant has the same problem the original servant had—he owes a debt he is unable to pay. What is the original servant’s response to his fellow servant’s request for mercy and patience? Who is expected to bear the financial cost of the financial situation in these verses?

Discussion Question: Look up and read 1 Timothy 2:5–6. The Bible teaches that we have a moral and spiritual debt before God that we cannot repay. Who bears the cost for our situation before God according to these verses?

Discussion Question: Does Jesus’ death on the cross have power to save people who are a part of other religions?

Discussion Question: Jesus responded to our disrupted relationship and our prospects for death in two distinct ways: reconciliation and rescue. How do we enact these two remedies in our relationships with family, friends, and people we interact with each day?

Discussion Question: Jesus’ death made a way for us to be forgiven. But how does the gospel fix us?

Discussion Question: What was the most important idea you learned from this lesson? Is there anything you still don’t understand?

Application Question: Have you personally experienced God’s reconciliation through faith in Jesus? If so, when did this first happen? If not, please share where you are right now with God? (This is an important question.)

Question 8: What is required for salvation?

Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: What is required for salvation? A. We _______ repent and believe in ________ _________.

Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: “The _______ has come,” he said. “The _______ of God has come near. ________ and ________ the good news!” —Mark 1:15
• Comprehension Question: Fill in the blanks: Jesus doesn’t just deliver you from your blank, He offers you an entirely blank.

• Discussion Question: Look up and read Mark 1:15. What does it mean to repent? (To change your mind and behavior) What does it mean to believe? (To fully trust God.)

  ○ The lesson used the analogy of a rebellion against a good king by a group of citizens. How do people rebel against God? What makes it hard to surrender to God and God’s ways? What does God want us to do once we have surrendered to Him? (To trust Him and join His side.)

• Discussion Question: Repentance in the Bible means to “change your mind.” In other words, you completely change the way you were living. What happens when we mess up after our repentance? What is the response when we make choices like we did before we “changed our mind”?

• Discussion Question: The Greek word for the word believe in the New Testament implies not just intellectual agreement with an idea, but a level of trust. How can we continue to trust even when we still have some intellectual doubts?

• Discussion Question: The Bible lays out the two things required for salvation: repentance and belief. What are some examples of things some people add to those requirements? How is that addition wrong? What about examples of people subtracting from those requirements, and how is that wrong?

• Discussion Question: What are some actions and habits that reflect a person that has repented and believes? Are these a requirement for salvation?

• Discussion Question: What was the most important idea you learned from this lesson? Is there anything you still don’t understand?

• Application Question: Is there an area of your life where you think God is calling you to repent, or to trust in Him more fully? (This is an important question.)

Unit 5: Doctrine of Salvation (Part 2)

Question 9: What are the benefits of salvation?

• Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: What are the benefits of salvation? A. We are blank by God, made part of God's blank again, and given blank life and blank.
Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: “Therefore, since we have been ________ through ________, we have ________ with God through our ________ Jesus Christ. — Romans 5:1

Comprehension Question: Fill in the blanks: If we ________ and ________, then we are ________ for our sin, and given new ________ again.

Discussion Opener: Does your family have any specific “house rules” that are different from your friends’ houses?

Discussion Question: The lesson used an analogy of living in God’s kingdom as being like living in a house. Where do you see yourself in the house analogy right now?

- On the porch: Thinking about repenting and waving the white flag of surrender.
- In the doorway: Believing in Christ but not yet fully living inside the house.
- Inside the house: You have repented and believed, and now you’re learning about life inside God’s house as a member of His family.

Discussion Question: John Wesley compared living with God to joining Him inside of His house. And like any other home, there are different rules for being in His house. God gives us a new way of living. Unlike some of the rules that our friends give, all of God’s rules have good reasons for them. What are some examples of the new “rules” God gives us and why does He give them?

Discussion Question: How do we know and understand what “life in the house” looks like? Do we just open up the Bible and follow it verbatim? Or is more reflection required?

Discussion Question: In the analogy in the lesson, the rebels are given basic necessities as a part of the King’s army. How does God provide for His followers in a similar way? Are there things that God gives to His “army” that He doesn’t give to the other “rebels”?

Discussion Question: Do some Christians overly focus on the afterlife—the benefits of salvation there? What are the dangers of this? Do some Christians overly focus on the benefits now—the benefits of salvation in this life? What are the dangers of this?

Discussion Question: What was the most important idea you learned from this lesson? Is there anything you still don’t understand?

Application Question: Where are you now in your walk with God? What would it mean for you to take the next step into “living in the house” of salvation? (This is an important question.)

Question 10: What happens as we live out our salvation in Christ?
Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: What happens when we live out our salvation in Christ? A: God ____________ to work in us to make us ________ and ________.

Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: But now he has ___________ you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without ___________ and free from ____________. —Colossians 1:22

Comprehension Question: Fill in the blanks: Justification spares us from ___________. Regeneration gives us ____________. Sanctification gives us _______ _______ of _________.

Discussion Opener: Talk about something that you wanted to get just right and make perfect (school project, musical performance, artwork, craft project, cooking recipe, athletic skills/game plan, etc.).

• Why was it so important to make it perfect?

• How hard did you work to get it that way?

Discussion Question: Read Colossians 1:21–22 and Philippians 2:12–13. What is God’s ultimate goal in saving us? What is expected of us in this process?

Discussion Question: The lesson talks about the differences of justification, regeneration, and sanctification. Reflect on all three of these and point out what someone’s life would look like with one and not the others. Can you have one without the others?

Discussion Question: If we had trouble being imitators of Jesus before our repentance and believing, how will we be able to be imitators after it?

Discussion Question: How can we tell that we are being “sanctified” or “being made perfect?” Are there lifestyle changes or actions that we will have?

How much effort does it take to start a bad habit? To start a good habit? How hard is it to break a bad habit? To break a good habit? Is there a difference between good habits and bad habits?

What do you think it would feel like to be free from sin?

Discussion Question: What was the most important idea you learned from this lesson? Is there anything you still don’t understand?
• Application Question: If you have repented and believed, is there an area of your life where you feel God sanctifying you? Is there some place in your life God is working in you? If not, why not?

Unit 6: Doctrine of the Spirit

Question 11: Who is the Holy Spirit?

• Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: Who is the Holy Spirit? A. The ________ Spirit of God, who __________ from the Father and the _________.
• Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: But the __________, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will _________ you all things and will _________ you of everything I have said to you. —John 14:26
• Comprehension Question: Fill in the blanks: The Spirit is the ________ of God in us, helping us to follow ________ back to the _________.
• Discussion Opener: Have you ever had a job that was “behind the scenes”? What was it? Why was it important?
• Discussion Question: Have various people look up the following verses. When all are ready, read them in turn: Genesis 2:7; Ezekiel 37:1–10; and Romans 8:9–11. What do these passages have in common? How are they different?
• Discussion Question: Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, instructs us to pray to “Our Father.” Christians in the early church, as today, often pray to Jesus as God as well. When, if ever, is it appropriate to pray to the Spirit? Why do you think this is such a rare practice today?
• Discussion Question: Christian author and speaker Francis Chan has called the Spirit the “Forgotten God.” Why do you think that is and how does that reflect who the Spirit is and what the Spirit does?
• Discussion Question: Have you ever had a personal experience with the Spirit of God in a way that you feel is different than an experience with the Father or Son?
• Discussion Question: What was the most important idea you learned from this lesson? Is there anything you still don’t understand?

Question 12: What does the Holy Spirit do?
• Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: What does the Holy Spirit do? A. The Spirit leads us to __________, gives us _____ _________, and _______ us to follow Jesus.

• Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: He saved us, not because of __________ things we had done, but because of his __________. He saved us through the washing of __________ and __________ by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior. —Titus 3:5–6

• Comprehension Question: Fill in the blanks: The Spirit leads us to repent, by __________ us of sin, and then gives us the __________ to be able to __________ to trust God.

• Discussion Opener: Do you have any weird talents? What’s your greatest ability?

• Discussion Question: How is the Spirit involved in our own salvation?

• Discussion Question: In an earlier lesson, we heard that the phrase “the Gospel is bad news before it is good news.” How does this apply to the work of the Holy Spirit?

• Discussion Question: Look up and read Acts 2:1–5, 12–18. How did God make the disciples witnesses to the people gathered in Jerusalem? How does God call us to be witnesses in our school, community, and church?

• Discussion Question: Look up and read Galatians 5:16–17, 22–25. What elements or ingredients are needed in order to grow fruit? When you think about your life growing the character-fruit God wants, what is the seed? the soil? the water? the sunshine? Where is the Holy Spirit in this?

• Discussion Question: Look up and read John 20:21–23. What job does Jesus give the disciples? How can that job be challenging or difficult? How does the Holy Spirit help us live out that responsibility?

• Discussion Question: If we receive the Spirit upon our salvation, does that mean the Spirit is absent in people who aren’t Christians?

• Discussion Question: If we are Christians who are being changed and led by the Spirit of God, the Spirit is in some sense working in our thoughts and actions. What is the process by which the Spirit works in our minds and thoughts? If we have a thought, what percentage of it is Spirit working in us vs. our own free thinking? How is this increased or decreased?

• Discussion Question: What was the most important idea you learned from this lesson? Is there anything you still don’t understand?

• Application Question: Is there any area of your life where you feel a need for the Spirit’s power to help you?
Unit 7: Doctrine of the Church

Question 13: What is the church?

- Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: What is the church? A. The church is the __________ of all true __________, who are Christ’s __________ in the world, continuing the work of the __________.
- Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: There is one _______ and one ________, just as you were called to one ______ when you were called; one ________, one ________, one ________. —Ephesians 4:4–5
- Comprehension Question: Jesus is the head of the __________, which is made up of many different __________, so that He can be present in the __________.
- Discussion Opener: Name all the different kinds of churches you can think of. How many different kinds of churches have you been to?
- Discussion Question: In comparing the church to the body, which body part would you be? Are you an ear (do you listen well)? Are you an eye (do you observe needs around you)?
- Discussion Question: Eugene Peterson said that churches are not parlor rooms for saints, but “messy family rooms.” What do you think he means by this? How does this critique or encourage your own church family?
- Discussion Question: Some are fond of saying that they want to be Christians and love Jesus, but don’t need church. Why is the church important? Is the church required for salvation?
- Discussion Question: What does the theology of the church teach us about how to pick a church? If we move to a new city, what is the best way to process becoming a part of a local church?
- Discussion Question: What is Jesus doing through the church today?
- Discussion Question: The lesson talked about two kinds of people: those who like the body (the church) but not obeying the head (Jesus); and those who like obeying the head (Jesus), but not being a part of the body (the church)? Are you ever like either of these kinds of people?
- Discussion Question: How does being a part of a local church affect our own Christian walk?
- Discussion Question: What was the most important idea you learned from this lesson? Is there anything you still don’t understand?
• Application Question: How can you be an effective part of your church now?

Question 14: What are the church’s sacraments?

• Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: What are the church’s sacraments? A. Baptism is the holy ________ by which we join the church, and Holy Communion is the church’s ongoing act of ________. Both are means of participating in Jesus’ ________ and ________.

• Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: Therefore go and make ________ of all nations, ________ them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and ________ them to obey everything I have ________ you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. —Matthew 28:19–20

• Comprehension Question: Baptism is ________ into the life of the church. Communion is a ________ that Christians always and everywhere have done regularly.

• Discussion Opener: What’s the closest you have ever come to dying? Did the experience change the way you lived or thought at all?

• Discussion Question: Dallas Willard said (roughly), discipleship is becoming who Jesus would be if He were you. How is your imitation of Jesus different than other people you know? How is it the same?

• Discussion Question: Read Matthew 28:19–20 together. What does Jesus tell us about what it means to be a disciple here?

• Discussion Question: The lesson pointed out two sacraments, or sacred actions, of the church: baptism and communion. Are there other ways God offers us grace besides these? How are they similar to baptism and communion? How are they different?

• Discussion Question: The two sacraments come at the beginning and end of Jesus’s ministry. Is this significant?

• Discussion Question: Baptism and communion have a unique place in Christian history. They have been the subject of much debate, but all orthodox Christian communities recognize their importance. What effect do they have on the life of an individual Christian believer?

• Discussion Question: Have you been baptized? If so, talk about when it was. Were you a baby? If you haven’t been baptized, talk about that. Do you have plans to be baptized?
● Discussion Question: Theologian Peter Kreeft said of communion: “Christ did not say ‘take and understand’ he said ‘take and eat.’” How much ought we to understand about the spiritual effect of the sacraments and how important is our understanding?

● Discussion Question: What was the most important idea you learned from this lesson? Is there anything you still don’t understand?

● Application Question: Discipleship isn’t just a me-and-Jesus thing. It involves other, more mature people teaching and guiding us. How are you being discipled right now?

**Unit 8: Doctrine of Last Things**

**Question 15: What is the world’s great hope?**

● Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: What is the world’s great hope? A. Christ has ________. Christ has ________. Christ will ________ ________ to redeem all things and reign as King forever.

● Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: He who ________ to these things says, “Yes, I am ________ ________.” Amen. ________, Lord Jesus. —Revelation 22:20

● Comprehension Question: The Bible tells us who ________. The Bible tells us who ________. And the Bible also tells us what ________ ________. ________. ________ ________. ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ ________ _______
What stories—think of nursery rhymes, books, movies, and even music—can you think of that reflect this truth?

- Discussion Question: Should the Christian pray for Christ’s second coming? Or should the Christian pray for more time to reach more people? Should the Christian desire death—union with Christ; or life—opportunity to work as Christ?

- Discussion Question: What was the most important idea you learned from this lesson? Is there anything you still don’t understand?

- Application Question: How does knowing that Jesus is returning to redeem all things change how we live here and now?

Question 16: What is our future?

- Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: What is our future? A. Like Jesus, we will be ________ from the ________, either to _________ God forever or to be forever _________ from Him.

- Memory Question: Fill in the blanks: By his power ________ raised the ________ from the ________, and he will ________ us also. —1 Corinthians 6:14

- Comprehension Question: The final step in salvation, glorification, is when the full ________ of ________ is ________ in us.

- Discussion Opener: What are some images you have of heaven from pop culture? How is heaven often pictured?

- Discussion Question: Open your Bibles to Revelation 21 and 22:1–5. Ask this question and then let students answer as they read through it. How does the Bible describe heaven? Where is it? What is it like?

- Discussion Question: How is heaven different in the Bible from the way it is pictured in pop culture?

- Discussion Question: Why do you think the question of what happens to us after we die has gripped humanity in the way that it has?

- Discussion Question: What characteristics of Jesus’ own resurrection reflect the resurrection that we will experience?

- Discussion Question: N.T. Wright calls resurrection the “defining event of the new creation.” If we are to enter this new world, he says, we need a different kind of knowing and living. Christianity often gets mistakenly boiled down to going to heaven when we die, but we find Jesus in the Gospels is often not as concerned with what happens after we die as
we are. Why do you think that is? How is our present world and life connected with God’s new creation that we will one day experience?

• Discussion Question: What will New Creation include; what is its scope? Where in the Bible do we see hints of an answer?

• Discussion Question: Read Matthew 25:31–46 together. What does this tell us about damnation? What are the people (“goats”) who are punished like? Do they show any love for God?

• Discussion Question: What does it mean to be sent to hell? Who goes to hell?

• Discussion Question: What was the most important idea you learned from this lesson? Is there anything you still don’t understand?

• Application Question: Are you already living in the new creation now? Or are you rejecting God’s grace? What does this mean for your salvation? If you are worried about this, what can you do to know with confidence that you are saved? (This is an important question.)

Author’s Note: If you have any questions about this material, please feel free to email me at philip.tallon@gmail.com.