



FRESH START

Hope City



Contents

02 Introduction

04 How to Use This Guide

Part 1: What We Need to Know

05 Week 1: Who is God?

God: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

07 Week 2: Who Are We?

Identity: Sonship

09 Week 3: What is Our Mission?

Gospel: How Do I Share My Faith?

11 Week 4: How Do We Hear the Voice of God?

Power: Who is the Holy Spirit?

13 Week 5: What is Life After Death?

Eternity: What is Heaven like?

Part 2: What We Need to Do

15 Week 6: Understanding the Bible

Bible: Holding On to God's Word

17 Week 7: Talking to God

Prayer: Teach Us to Pray

19 Week 8: Staying on the Right Path

Connect: The Power of Relationships

21 Week 9: Why We Give

Blessing: I Can Be Generous

23 Week 10: Making the Most Out of Life

Impact: I Can Make a Difference

Introduction

Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons... 2 Corinthians 5:17 MSG

Welcome to Fresh Start. This teaching series is designed to give new believers and anyone else who wants to build up the foundation of their faith an encouraging space to talk about who God is and what having a relationship with Jesus means for your life. This group is a safe place to ask genuine questions that may have challenged your faith.

There may not always be a perfect answer, but that's ok. God's Word tells us that "His thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways." A god that could be fully understood by us would be no God at all. Aren't you grateful to have a God who is bigger, wiser, and who can do more than we ever could?

Our hope is for you to flourish in your relationship with and understanding of God. We believe that you can break old thought patterns, grow tremendously in faith, and experience extraordinary life-change, both personally and spiritually, through this teaching series as you begin to seek after Jesus every day.

To get you started, here are some practical next steps for you to take now that you have decided to follow Jesus:

- **Take our One-Year Challenge.** For one year, go all in. That includes attending Sunday services, other events and conferences. Complete the Growth Track, join the Dream Team, and build relationships through Connect Groups. We believe that if you dedicate one year of your life to doing these things, you will see God transform your life in new and exciting ways.
- **Get Water Baptized.** This is an important step of obedience that shows others we have personally trusted Jesus for our salvation. If you have not been water baptized, the opportunity to do so is available the first and third Sunday of each month at every Hope City location. Find out more on specific times and locations at: hopecity.com/baptism.
- **Start attending Sunday services regularly.** It's important to be plugged in to a church with other believers. There are probably many good churches in your area, and although we'd love for you to call Hope City home, and invite you to join us regularly, the most important thing is to pick a place and commit.
- **Complete the Growth Track.** The Hope City Growth Track is a two-step process designed to help you discover your redemptive purpose and live the full life God created you for. Growth Track is available at every location and online as we continue to meet virtually. To get started, visit <https://hopecity.com/get-connected/growth-track/>.

- **Join a Connect Group.** Great job! You can already mark this one off the list. We also want you to know that there are a variety of Connect Groups available – from Bible and book studies, marriage and financial groups, to running and lunch groups, there is something for everyone. Hope City Connect Groups have one simple purpose: to bring people together because we believe that real life change happens in the context of relationships. Check out the Connect Groups directory at <https://hopecity.com/get-connected/connect-groups/> to find and get involved with one that interests you.
- **Stay connected** to what's going on at Hope City, hear testimonies of life change, and see all kinds of other inspiring content through social media.



/yourhopecity



@yourhopecity



@yourhopecity



/yourhopecity

If you want to know more or have any questions, your Connect Group Leader is a great resource. You can also learn more at hopecity.com.

– Hope City Connect Group Team

How To Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help you process the video teachings and kick-start group discussions each week as you grow deeper in your faith.

Watch

Each week we will address and explain a main topic through the video teaching and Connect Group discussion. Each video is 15-20 minutes long.

Big Idea

This is a summary highlighting the main point or key thoughts of the video message for that week. Each “Big Idea” is followed by a supporting Scripture.

Discussion

This section contains questions that are designed to encourage discussion and group interaction, while hopefully moving people closer to God and to others.

Prayer Focus

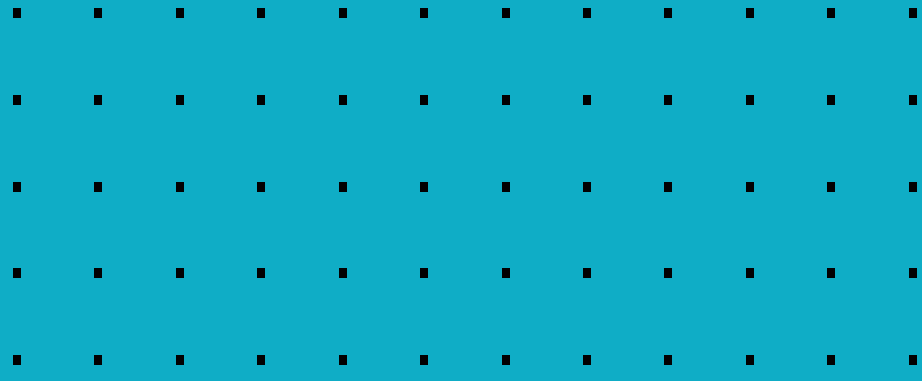
Each week you’ll find a suggested prayer focus tailored to your group’s current step in the journey.

Next Steps

Next Steps are your opportunity to take what you learn each week and put it into practice. They are practical, attainable, and stretching actions you can take to grow and move forward in your journey following Jesus.

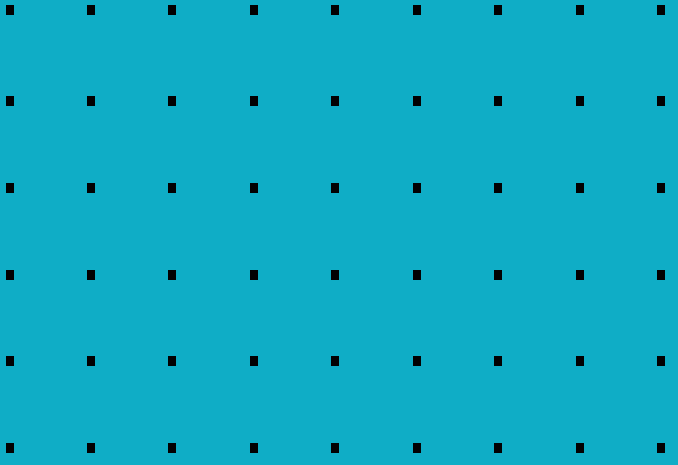
Notes

Use this space to jot down notes and insights during your discussions.



PART ONE

What we need to know.



Week One

Who Is God?

Watch *God: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*

Big Idea

Who is God, and how can we live in relationship with Him? God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He loves us so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to save us from our sin and set us free. The cost was heavy, and it was one that only God Himself could pay. Then, He sent His Holy Spirit to empower and guide us in this life. God is our Father, and He wants His children to know Him, not just through a set of rules to follow, but through a genuine, vibrant relationship. God gives us life. He gives us His Son. He gives us Himself. It is the joy of our lives to know, pursue, love, and live in relationship with God our Father.

I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.

2 Corinthians 6:18 NIV

Discussion

- From the video, which view of God do or did you relate to most? Has your view of God changed as your relationship with Him has changed? If so, how has it changed?
- What is your relationship with your earthly father like? How could that affect your relationship with your heavenly Father?
- Relationships are a two-way street. What does your part in the relationship with God look like?
- What is one thing if you started doing this week would improve your relationship with God?

Prayer Focus

In your daily prayer time, pray using Jeremiah 29:13 – “You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart”. Ask God to reveal His character to you, and prepare to seek Him with all of your heart. Renew your commitment to Jesus each day.

Next Steps

Spend time in the presence of the Father this week and develop a personal time of connection with Him. Don't worry about being formal. Try calling God by a different name like “Father”, “Dad”, or “Abba”. Just be real, and watch how your time with God transforms.

Notes

Week Two

Who Are We?

WATCH *Identity: Sonship*

Big Idea

Many of us have some confusion about our spiritual identity. We are not slaves to God, but rather, sons and daughters. Romans 8:17 says, “Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ...” So, not only are we God’s children, but we are heirs of His kingdom. The invitation to be adopted into God’s family is open and available to everyone through Jesus Christ.

But when the set time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are His sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are His child, God has made you also an heir.

Galatians 4:4–7 NIV

Discussion

- Discuss the difference between approaching God as your master versus as your father. Has this message changed the way you think about God? If so, how?
- Romans 8:17 states, “Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ...” What does being an heir of God mean to you?
- What, if anything, stands in the way of viewing yourself as an heir? What can you do to remove the barriers?
- Talk about a time when you attempted to love someone out of duty, rather than out of your genuine care for them. Explain what that was like for you. How should your devotion to God impact how you love other people?

Prayer Focus

Pray this week using Philippians 2:12-13 – “Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him.” Pray each day that you will be driven by devotion and not duty.

Next Steps

In our pursuit of God, we sometimes have a tendency to try to work our way into salvation. Identify one step you can take this week to focus more on Jesus and less on your own actions.

Notes

Week Three

What Is Our Mission?

WATCH *Gospel: How Do I Share My Faith?*

Big Idea

Some of us view God as living behind a locked gate where He can't be reached. Others think of getting to God like scaling an endless ladder, where we strain to climb and climb but never really reach the top. God's Word says He is near to us and not remote. All God asks from us is to believe in Jesus and live in light of that redemption. The truth is that God offers Himself as a free gift to all through Jesus. With that in mind, how can we share this free gift with others? The most powerful tool you have, outside of the Bible, is your own story. People connect with stories. Honestly share how you came to know Jesus and invite them to experience the presence of God that heals and transforms broken lives.

So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making His appeal through us...
2 Corinthians 5:20 NLT

Discussion

- What does being an ambassador for Christ mean to you?
- In the video, Pastor Daniel mentioned four pictures people have of God – as a locked gate, a pile of luggage, an endless ladder, and the true view of Him - as a free gift. Do any of these pictures resonate with you? If you had doubts about who God is, have you overcome those doubts? How?
- Talk about a time someone shared their faith with you. What can you learn from how they did it? How would you go about sharing your faith with someone else?
- Briefly share your salvation story. When did you make the decision to follow Jesus?

Prayer Focus

Pray for God to give you the boldness to live a Matthew 5:16 life: "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

Next Steps

- Make a list of the people in your direct sphere of influence and begin intentionally showing them the love of God. Pay attention to them, hear their needs, and make yourself available to serve them in the areas where they need help.
- Invite someone you know to come to your Connect Group or attend church with you next Sunday.

Notes

Week Four

How Do We Hear The Voice Of God?

WATCH *Power: Who is the Holy Spirit?*

Big Idea

The Holy Spirit is our guide, our teacher, and our friend. John 16:13 says, “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come.” The Holy Spirit lives within us, a source of power and comfort who guides and directs us on the journey to live a life of purpose, submitted to God. Being filled with the Holy Spirit doesn’t make you better than anyone else; it makes you better than yourself.

*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. **John 14:26 ESV***

Discussion

- What have you believed about the Holy Spirit? Where do you think your beliefs came from?
- Did hearing about who the Holy Spirit is change how you think about Him? If so, how will that new perspective change how you make decisions in the future?
- Have you ever had an encounter with the Holy Spirit where He convicted, or guided you to an action? Did you feel a signal from God, or hear His “still, small voice”? Did you listen and do what the Spirit was leading you to do? What were the results?
- Share steps you can take to grow in your relationship with the Holy Spirit.

Prayer Focus

Cultivate an intimate and daily friendship with the Holy Spirit. Pray using Psalm 139:23-24, “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Ask the Holy Spirit to operate in your life and for Him to show you, change you, and fill you daily.

Next Steps

Ask the Holy Spirit these two questions: “What am I doing that I should not be doing?” and “What am I not doing that I should be doing?” Listen for His answer, and make a decision to move forward in obedience to the Spirit.

Notes

Week Five

What Is Life After Death?

WATCH *Eternity: What is Heaven like?*

Big Idea

The Bible tells us that Heaven is a real place. It is also a right place, where evil is absent and there is no more sorrow. Heaven is a relational and rewarding place. God created mankind to be His family, and in Heaven we will live in perfect relationship with one another and with God. So how do we respond to this truth? We refocus each day on where we are going, not where we are. Then, we reach people at any cost because we know that life is like a vapor, here today and gone tomorrow. Each day, in every interaction with another person, we recognize that we have an opportunity to impact their eternity through an introduction to Jesus, the One who saves.

*Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in paradise." **Luke 23:42–43 NIV***

Discussion

- Discuss what you heard about Heaven in this week's message. Was it different than what you had learned before? How?
- What excites you the most about Heaven?
- When talking about "refocusing our energies," did you feel the Holy Spirit speaking to you about some of the areas He wants you to refocus? Talk about how you can refocus to live for Heaven instead of earth with your time, talent, treasure, and love for people.

Prayer Focus

Pray that God would help you live with Heaven in mind and give you the wisdom to make the most out of every opportunity.

Next Steps

Do you know someone whose eternity is still on the line? Identify some ways that you can help them take a next step. Starting may be as simple as reaching out to them and building a closer relationship, sharing what God has done in your life, or inviting them to church. Don't be intimidated! You can start small and be amazed at what God does.

Notes



PART TWO

What we need to do.



Week Six

Understanding The Bible

Watch Bible: *Holding on to God's Word*

Big Idea

The Bible is God's Word. It's His voice, constant and unchanging, speaking to a culture and a world that is always moving fast. Sometimes, it may seem impossible in the middle of your busy schedule to make time for God. Here's the good news: holding on to God's Word is not as hard as you think. Start by using the First Fifteen approach. Give God the first 15 minutes of your day by spending five minutes in the Bible, five minutes in worship, and five minutes in prayer. If you take those simple steps, God will honor your commitment and the Word will put down roots in the heart of who you are. Make this time the foundation of your day and watch how quickly God uses it to transform your everyday life.

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12 NIV

Discussion

- What is the Bible to you? Has this week's teaching changed the way you view the Bible? If so, how?
- Discuss the First Fifteen approach. How could giving God the first of each day by starting every morning with five minutes in the Word, five minutes in worship, and five minutes in prayer make a difference to the rest of your day?
- Have you seen your decisions and actions change by holding on to God's Word? How?
- Share your experience with reading the Bible. What has worked well for you? What has not worked well for you?

Prayer Focus

This week, focus on praying that the Word of God would draw you into a more vibrant relationship with the Father.

Next Steps

- Make a commitment to set the foundation of your life in God's Word. Find and use a study Bible in a translation that helps you understand the Word better.

- Dedicate the first part of your day to Him by taking the First Fifteen approach.
- Decide ahead of time that you will attend church each week so that you can hear the Word preached regularly.
- Download the Bible app and write down two verses to memorize this week.

Notes

Week Seven

Talking To God

WATCH *Prayer: Teach Us to Pray*

Big Idea

The Lord's Prayer in Mathew 6:9–13 walks us through how to pray. The Lord's Prayer is not the only way to pray, but it does provide a guideline for how we can pray effectively. Many of us have repeated the Lord's Prayer by memory, or read it word for word as a more general prayer, but it is also very valuable as an outline for our prayer life. The Lord's Prayer is simple, beautiful, and powerful. If we draw out the principles in His prayer, we can use them to help us develop our own prayer life.

This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Matthew 6:9–13 NIV

Discussion

- Does prayer tend to be your first response or your last resort? Why do you think that is?
- After hearing this week's message, what do you think your prayer time should look like?
- What are some potential distractions that get in the way of spending time in prayer?
- God responds to the prayers of His people, and His answers sometimes surprise us. Share a time God answered your prayer.

Prayer Focus

Ask God to help you fully surrender anything that you need to release to Him. Pray for a healthy, vibrant daily prayer life.

Next Steps

Begin familiarizing yourself with the tools in the Pray First Guide (hopecity.com/prayerguide). Plan your prayer time by establishing a time and place that you can see yourself using daily.

Notes

Week Eight

Staying On The Right Path

WATCH *Connect: The Power of Relationships*

Big Idea

Choosing our relationships carefully is vital to staying healthy. God doesn't just call us to nurture and initiate meaningful relationships, His Word also tells us to stay away from harmful relationships and to restore our broken ones. Developing strong relationships takes work, but we can do it. Be intentional with the people in your sphere of influence. Take the time to cultivate Godly relationships with your church family, friends, and coworkers. Growing the right relationships is important because "we" is always better than "me."

A mirror reflects a man's face, but what he is really like is shown by the kind of friends he chooses.

Proverbs 27:19 TLB

Discussion

- Discuss your biggest takeaways about how Pastor Daniel described the key to spiritual growth.
- Talk about a time when you walked through a difficult season on your own. How do you believe the support of a Connect Group would have impacted the way you experienced that season?
- Can you think of any relationships in your life that feel negative, draining, or unhealthy? What are ways you could start to step away from those relationships?
- What new relationships do you need to start? How could those existing relationships be strengthened?

Prayer Focus

Pray to have healthy relationships. Ask God to help restore any relationships that have been broken, and for the strength and wisdom to sever harmful ones.

Next Steps

- Ask God to show you any relationships in your life that need to be restored. Take a small step towards reconciliation. Starting may be as simple as making a phone call.

- Ask the other members of your group how you can pray for them. Write down their prayer requests and pray for them throughout the week. You might even text them with an encouraging word sometime during the week.
- Go to hopecity.com/growthtrack and take your next step to join a Dream Team or consider leading a connect group in the future.

Notes

Week Nine

Why We Give

WATCH *Blessing: I Can Be Generous*

Big Idea

Intentional giving and generosity is important. God has blessed us with more than we need so that we can be a blessing to others. Let's look for opportunities to be generous and consistently make an effort to listen for the voice of God. When we give generously, we can experience new joy, watching with open hands while God works miracles with the resources He provides us.

*You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that by His poverty He could make you rich. **2 Corinthians 8:9 NLT***

Discussion

- Have you been a recipient of someone else's generosity? How did it make you feel?
- We can all be a blessing to someone else. How can we be intentional with the gifts or resources God has given us to bless others? What is one thing you could do to bless someone this week?
- When do you find it the easiest to be generous? When do you find it the most difficult? What factors contribute to each of those situations?
- Our God is generous. He continues to bless us even when we don't deserve it. How do you live differently knowing that God loves us that much?

Prayer Focus

Seek God's will daily and look for opportunities to expand the Kingdom.

Next Steps

- Ask God to speak to you clearly about how He is calling you to live generously.
- Think about random acts of kindness, outreach, mission trips, a giving plan through your church, and other opportunities that can help you demonstrate generosity in your daily life.
- Ask for wisdom managing your personal finances and pray that God would show you how to leverage your resources to expand His Kingdom.
- Watch or listen to our Hope City series "The Blessed Life":
<https://youtu.be/2ZoWmgBafMg>
<https://hopecity.com/the-blessed-life-episode-1/>
<https://hopecity.com/the-blessed-life-episode-2/>
<https://hopecity.com/the-blessed-life-episode-3/>

Notes

Week Ten

Making The Most Out Of Life

WATCH *Impact: I Can Make a Difference*

Big Idea

We all have an innate, God-given desire to make a difference. When we know Jesus personally, He empowers us to serve His Kingdom in a way that can forever change the lives of others. We are all called to use everything God has given us to serve others and to share the love of Jesus. When we live like this, we get to contribute to the Kingdom of God in a way that continues to impact the world long after we go to Heaven.

*You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: "As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bow before Me; every tongue will acknowledge God." So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. **Romans 14:10-12 NIV***

Discussion

- What do you believe is the greatest inheritance that you can leave for your children or loved ones? What can you start doing today to be more intentional about creating or sustaining that legacy?
- What would you want the people who know you best to say about you when your life is over? What in your life would have to change to make that a reality?
- Identify someone you know personally who seems to be living out God's purpose for his/her life well. What characteristics does that person embody that you would like to see in your own life?
- God has given each of us specific gifts and abilities. What are some of those gifts and how can you use them to impact others?

Prayer Focus

Pray for your eyes to be opened to the needs around you. Ask God to show you how to use your time, resources, and gifts to bless others.

Next Steps

- Decide as a group how you can help each other build a legacy. Create opportunities to bless others together and invite people to join you. Your faithfulness will make a difference in the lives of others.

- Now that this Connect Group has come to a close, identify one next step you could take that would have the biggest impact on your relationship with God. Once you do, share it with a friend or someone from the group for accountability.

Notes
