YOUR FIRST STEP



hope.church

Where do I begin?

1. Water Baptism:

We encourage every new follower of Jesus to be baptized in water as soon as possible! In a letter written to first century Christians, the Apostle Paul gives a description of baptism:

"[5] And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love. [6] When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. [7] Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. [8] But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. [9] And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. [10] For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. [11] So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God." —Romans 6:5-11 (NLT)





Why and what is water baptism?

1. Follows making Jesus your Leader, Lord, and Authority.

2. Is a public statement of an inward change.

3. A symbolic of our IDENTIFICATION with Jesus.

"For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead." —Colossians 2:12 (NLT)

4. It illustrates my new life as a Christian.

2. Begin Studying the Bible:

Similar to training for a marathon or getting fit in the gym, GROWING in your new or renewed relationship with Jesus will NOT happen by accident. Human Growth is like anything else: It is INTENTIONAL and a JOURNEY. A good place to begin, is by learning to study the Bible. Here are a couple of starting points for what is often known as "Bible Study":

1. Start reading ANY Gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John) and Proverbs.

2. Download the YouVersion Bible App, and search for a "Reading Plan" by hitting the "Plans" tab, followed by "Find Plans."

3. S.O.A.P.

Use a journal to write down your responses to the four areas:

Scripture - write down a verse you have read, which stands out to you.

Observation - jot down a couple of observations about that verse.

Application - how can you apply your observations to everyday living?

Prayer - pray Jesus will help you to apply the verse.

3. Prayer:

Consider how you talk with people you care about on a regular basis; it is the same thing as your relationship with Jesus. Any healthy relationship requires spending time together and sharing personal details through conversation. Prayer is no different. Here are a couple of tips for talking with Jesus:

1. A.C.T.S

Adoration - fancy way of saying "praise" Jesus for WHO He is and what He has done.

Confession - fess up! Confess your wrongs, foul-ups, mess-ups. Ask for forgiveness.

Thanksgiving - thank Jesus for all He has done and continues to do; gratitude.

Supplication - express your needs, wants, desires, etc. to Jesus.

2. Praying the Psalms

The book of Psalms is FILLED with poems, songs, and prayers, about all kinds of life situations and circumstances. Psalm 8, 9,



4. THRIVE Path:

Jump in to the next "First Steps" class or ANY class within the THRIVE Path. Here is a quick summary of what that is:

The mission of Hope Church is:
To help people Thrive through discovering and developing what matters **M.O.S.T**

M: Make Relationships Central- **THRIVE Path: CONNECT**
We desire to help people discover and develop a dynamic relationship with Jesus and one another.

O: Offer Something Back- **THRIVE Path: SERVE**
We desire to help people discover and develop their spiritual gifts, passion, personality and experiences for the purpose of serving and strengthening the local and global church.

S: Spread God's Grace and Truth- **THRIVE Path: SHARE**
We desire to help people discover and develop their lives as a witness so unconnected and disconnected people may come to trust in Jesus Christ as their forgiver and leader.

T: Train to Follow- **THRIVE Path: CULTIVATE**
We desire to help people discover and develop a deepening apprenticeship with Jesus Christ.

First Steps Class-
We desire to start every New Disciple/Follower of Jesus off on the right foot by helping them discover and develop a foundational understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Overall, The THRIVE Path is our plan and process for growing as followers [disciples] of Jesus Christ.

Resources.
*thebibleproject.com
*YouVersion Bible App

What Have I Done?
Covenant Love



On the most basic level, you have decided to make Jesus the Author of your story and Authority of your life. Throughout the Bible, God is notorious for engaging in what is called a Covenant with humans, or a relational partnership, to bring about order and purpose and to spread all that is good, across the earth. We see this most notably in the creation story:

"[7] Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person…[15] The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it…[19] So the Lord God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would call them, **and the man chose a name for each one**. [20] He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him." —Genesis 2:7,15, 19-20 (NLT)

One of the risks tied to covenant love, is humanity's freedom to yield to or reject Creator God's design for living out our lives. Within the story of mankind, people have consistently decided to rebel against God and redefine for ourselves what is actually good and right and true.

The decision to follow Jesus and to become one of His disciples, **realigns** us (or puts us back into right relationship) with Creator God. Based upon what Jesus has done for humanity, we can be made right. The Apostle Paul put it like this:

"Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us (Romans 5:1)" and "For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives (Romans 6:4)."

Bottom line: The God of the Bible, entered into a series of formal relationships with various humans, including the nation of Israel, in order to ultimately rescue the world through **JESUS**.

What is Sin?



In the original languages of the Bible, to "sin" is to fail or miss the goal and to act contrary to the will and Law of God. Sin is a failure to obtain THE goal! In addition, we humans have failed to love God and one another by not treating them with the honor they deserve. Once again, the Apostle Paul helps us,

"[18] But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. [19] They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. [20] For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. [21] Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. [22] Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. [23] And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles."

Throughout the Bible, the human condition is explained and demonstrated as follows:

1. God engages in a loving relationship/partnership with humans.

2. Humans continually choose to redefine what is good.

3. Humans fail to love God and one another.

4. Humans are easily deceived, even deceiving themselves, leading to redefining "bad" decisions as "good."

YET,

5. Prophets spoke and wrote of One who will come and put everything to right.

6. Jesus demonstrated for us what it looks like to be truly human and fulfilled the prophecies, providing us with grace, mercy, forgiveness, and true fulfillment, amongst other things!

Because of this, sin is more than just doing "bad things," but a breach in partnership and relationship with a loving Creator.

Bottom line: Sin is a failure to be truly human, our inability to judge whether we are succeeding OR failing, and it's our deep selfish impulse driving much of our behavior, which is a BIG DEAL to God

Try answering these questions:

1. Think about a time you fell short of an expectation either placed on you or you placed on yourself. How did it feel to "miss the mark" and fail to obtain "the goal?"

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2. With the above question in mind, how would it have felt to have been offered complete forgiveness even if you did not deserve it?

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3. When you hear or read the word "sin," what images come to mind? How has the above section shifted your imagery, if at all?

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What is Salvation?

Sin is a really BIG deal…
And,
God's grace is a really BEAUTIFUL concept.

In the original languages of the Bible, the word salvation refers to an occasion or event where someone is rescued from danger when they could not save themselves and in the New Testament of the Bible, salvation is deliverance or rescue from sin. This idea of salvation begins in Genesis 3, after Adam and Eve sin: God clothes them as a sign of grace, mercy, and rescue!

The metaphor of salvation then plays out in God's relationship with the nation of Israel. In the book of Exodus, the Jewish people are established as "the people of God" because God rescues them from slavery to the nation of Egypt and gives them what is known as "the promised land" (Exodus 15:1–21; Hosea 13:4; Nehemiah 9:9–25; Psalm 105:23–45; Isaiah 63:11–14).

Jesus comes into the picture claiming to be the Savior and the very name "Jesus" means "the Lord (Yahweh) is Salvation." The very role of Jesus is an essential piece to salvation; His life, sacrificial death on The Cross, and resurrection are understood by all New Testament writers to be the basis of salvation. For example, a car can be fully intact in order to properly run, but if you do not have a key or ignition switch of sorts, the vehicle is not going to work. Jesus, in essence, is the ignition to life and salvation; He is the central role, therefore, placing our faith and trust in Him is essential to being "saved" or "rescued" from sin and death. THIS IS GREAT NEWS!



Salvation is:

1. A single experience in the past; a moment or event in which you decided to place your trust in Jesus as your savior, leader, and authority (1 Corinthians 15:2).

2. A process every Christian is continuously undergoing (Philippians 2:12-13).

3. A future experience (Romans 5:9-10; 13:11).

In and through Jesus, we have been delivered from the punishment of sin and reconciled (to be made right) to Creator God and one another. We have new life in and because of Jesus' death on The Cross, and His resurrection (Romans 5:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9). Therefore, salvation is not just a "get out of Hell free" card, but it means we now get to participate with Creator God in the restoration of all Creation and the mission of proclaiming this Good News (gospel) to all people.

The Apostle Paul summarizes salvation for us:

"21 But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses[i] and the prophets long ago. 22 We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.23 For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. 24 Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. 25 For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past…"
Romans 3:21-25 (NLT)

Peter, a disciple of Jesus', states it like this:

"[22] He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone. [23] He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly. [24] He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed."
1 Peter 2:22-24 (NLT)

This means:

1. I can be confident my life has purpose and meaning.

2. I can live my life guilt and shame free! Jesus is my rescuer; I am no longer trapped and chained by sin.

3. My past does not dictate my future. I can learn from it and utilize it for good and God's kingdom.

4. I do not need to fear death anymore.