

THE JOURNEY

Basic Discipleship

04
REVEALED

STEP FOUR

THE CHURCH



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

We are so glad you're here! As you step into this journey of discipleship, know that you are entering a path designed to deepen your relationship with God and build a firm biblical foundation. This material is meant to guide you, no matter where you are on your faith journey. The tools and lessons you'll find here are adaptable to many settings—whether you're meeting one-on-one, gathering with a small group, or sharing in a larger community. It can be simplified to nurture the hearts of youth and children or enriched to challenge and inspire mature believers to grow even further.

Discipleship is a journey, not a race.

Our prayer is that this journey will help you engage with Scripture, build meaningful relationships, and discover how God is working in and through your life. Let's take this next step together with faith and intentionality as we grow closer to Him. Trust the process of growth and transformation that occurs over time as you walk with God.



04 THE CHURCH

I. "THE BIG-C" CHURCH

GOD'S GLOBAL FAMILY

The Church isn't a building—at least, not the kind made of bricks and stone. However, it is a spiritual structure, founded on the solid rock of Jesus' death and resurrection. The Church universal is composed of everyone who has responded to the Gospel's call and who has been rescued from spiritual death and made alive by the Holy Spirit. These people are the *ekklesia*, the 'called-out ones.' The Bible pictures these saved individuals as living stones, joined together to become a dwelling place for God through His Spirit.

Because of this, they are a holy nation scattered across every continent. They are called saints, or "holy ones," not because of their own righteousness or good works, but because they are covered by the blood of Jesus Christ.



One enters the Church universal (the 'Big-C' Church) immediately upon conversion, which has nothing to do with local church membership or association. We are then God's people, His possession and family, because He owns the Church. As members of the Church universal, we have the most important things imaginable in common.

1 PETER 2:5 | *"...you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."*

EPHESIANS 2:22 | *"And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."*

*Additional
Scripture
References*

1 CORINTHIANS 3:16

1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-13

HEBREWS 13:1

1 PETER 2:9

2 PETER 2:4-5

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does understanding yourself as a "living stone", called out by God, change the way you think about your identity and purpose?
2. In what ways does belonging to the universal Church shape how you view other believers around the world?

KINGDOM PEOPLE

In one sense, the entire universe, both physical and spiritual, belongs to God's Kingdom. But when Jesus spoke of His Kingdom, He was referring to God's reign in the hearts of His people. The Church is the visible expression of that Kingdom on earth. When you become part of the Church universal, you also become part of the Kingdom of God.

This stands in contrast to those still living in rebellion against the Gospel. The Kingdom of God, however, includes those who actively and gladly acknowledge Jesus as ruler and king. They are led by the Holy Spirit and walk in Him. Everything is different for them now.

It's important to understand that the Kingdom of God is both now and not yet: the Kingdom is already present in the Church universal, but the Church is not the final stage of this Kingdom. It will reach its fullness in the new Heaven and the new Earth.

COLOSSIANS 1:13 | *“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.”*

HEBREWS 12:28 | *“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.”*

*Additional
Scripture
References*

LUKE 17:20-21

JOHN 18:36

REVELATION 1:6

REVELATION 11:15

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What does it mean that the Kingdom of God is already present and that you are part of it through the Church?
2. In what ways do you see the values of the Kingdom of God contrasting with the world around you?



RESCUED AND RAISED

The Church is made up of people whom God has rescued. But what has He rescued them from? The answer is death—but death comes in more than one form.

Death is humanity's greatest enemy. Every person old enough to understand right from wrong lives in a state of spiritual death until they respond to the Gospel and are rescued by God through the power of the cross. However, because of the sin in the Garden (which corrupted creation), we are still subject to physical death. Ultimately, apart from God's grace, we would also face what the Bible calls the second death—which The Journey will discuss in a later chapter.

The Church is the community of those God has made alive in Christ. When we are raised from spiritual death, He builds us into His Church as living stones. Death no longer holds power over us, either now or forever.

COLOSSIANS 2:13 | *"When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins."*

MATTHEW 16:18 | *"And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."*

*Additional
Scripture
References*

ROMANS 6:4

1 CORINTHIANS 15:54-55

EPHESIANS 2:1-5

1 PETER 2:5

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How many deaths are there, what are they, and which have we been spared from?
2. How should being built into the Church change our own view of life, death, and eternity?

EVERY BELIEVER A PRIEST

In the Old Testament, priests offered sacrifices on behalf of others. The Law required this to bring forgiveness and demonstrate a right relationship with God. Priests served as mediators between God and the people.

Today, Scripture teaches that all believers form a priesthood of believers—and the center of this priesthood is Jesus, our great High Priest. First and foremost, this means that we no longer need any sort of priest or intermediary (outside of Jesus) to personally approach God in prayer and enjoy a personal relationship with Him. Also, as priests, we are called to offer “spiritual sacrifices.” But what does that mean?

We offer our lives in response to what Jesus has done. We live with open hands, serving, giving, and loving sacrificially. These good works don’t save us or earn God’s favor, but they’re our grateful response to His grace. These works also serve a priestly purpose: to draw others closer to Jesus.

ROMANS 12:1-2 | *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

2 PETER 2:9 | *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”*

Additional Scripture References

MATTHEW 5:16

ROMANS 10:14

HEBREWS 4:14

HEBREWS 13:16

1 PETER 2:5

1 PETER 11-12

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What does it mean that you are part of a “royal priesthood” in Christ?
2. In what ways is your life a living sacrifice for God?



II. THE LOCAL CHURCH

GOD’S PEOPLE, GATHERED

The New Testament speaks not only of the universal Church but also of local churches, which are gatherings of believers in specific places. These communities, often meeting in homes or shared spaces, are central to God’s design for discipleship and mission. A local church is made up of believers who regularly gather in one place to worship, serve, learn, and live out the ‘one another’ commands of Scripture.

ACTS 2:42 | “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

PHILIPPIANS 1:1 | “Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all God’s holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:”

Additional
Scripture
References

ROMANS 16:5
1 CORINTHIANS 11:18
GALATIANS 6:10
HEBREWS 10:24-25

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- 1. What is the difference between the Church universal and a local church?
- 2. Why do you think God includes local churches in His plan (rather than just the universal Church)?

SHEPHERDS OF THE FLOCK

Throughout church history, believers have structured local congregations in various ways and have wrestled with what leadership model best reflects Scripture. In the New Testament, Jesus is consistently described as the head of the Church (with no human equal). Under His authority, the primary leadership role in the local church is that of elder, which seems to be a term used interchangeably with overseer (or bishop) and shepherd (or pastor). While some debate remains, these titles likely describe different aspects of a single office.

Local churches in the New Testament are always led by more than one elder, and Scripture provides two detailed lists of qualifications (in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1). Elders are tasked with many things, including overseeing the church. They are especially charged with guarding its doctrine and spiritual health. They are called to shepherd the congregation by protecting it from false teaching, feeding it through the Word, leading it in mission, and encouraging growth in Christ. It's also worth noting that, aside from the apostles and James the brother of Jesus (who served as foundational eyewitnesses and have since passed from the scene), the Bible never mentions anyone outside a local church having authority over its elders.

Additional Scripture References

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7

TITUS 1:5-9

JAMES 5:14

1 PETER 5:1-2

ACTS 20:17,28 | *“From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church.” “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”*

HEBREWS 13:17 | *“Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.”*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Do you see wisdom in God's design of placing local elders over local churches?
2. What is the biblical way to respond when elders inevitably make a decision you do not agree with?

HELPING HANDS

The second most frequently mentioned leadership role in a local church is that of deacon. The word deacon literally means “servant” or “helper.” Deacons serve under the leadership of the elders so the elders can focus on overseeing, teaching, and shepherding. Deacons are not portrayed as decision-makers in the church; rather, they serve as servant-leaders who support the body through example and action. The seven men chosen in Acts 6 are widely understood to be the first to fulfill this kind of role. Deacons also have a list of qualifications in 1 Timothy 3.

While the New Testament doesn’t list every modern church role (such as children or student ministers, paid administrators, or facilities staff, etc.), it does present a framework for how churches function under elder leadership. Within that structure, local churches are expected to organize practically in order to meet the needs of the congregation and advance their mission.

1 TIMOTHY 3:13 | *“Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.”*

ACTS 6:3 | *“Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them.”*

*Additional
Scripture
References*

MARK 10:42-45

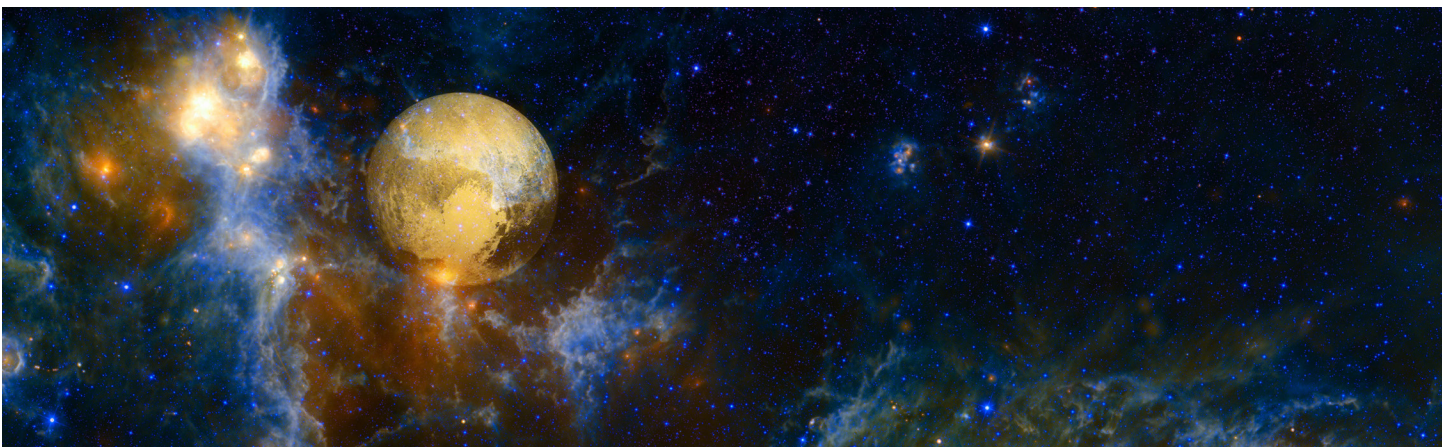
GALATIANS 5:13

PHILIPPIANS 1:1

1 TIMOTHY 3:8-13

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What stands out to you about the biblical purpose of deacons and how they support the local church?
2. How might you grow in serving others, even if you don’t hold an official leadership role?



MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

In the New Testament, believers are consistently portrayed not as isolated individuals but as part of a gathered, identifiable community. Believers are seen as part of a local church where they grow together under elder leadership. Paul's letters address both leaders and members of specific congregations, reflecting a clearly defined structure of local membership and leadership.

Believers are called to gather regularly for teaching, prayer, accountability, service, and the 'one another' commands of Scripture—and to submit to their local church leaders. Scripture makes it clear that assembling with fellow believers is a normal and necessary part of following Christ.

This kind of fellowship involves mutual commitment and accountability, practices that run counter to today's cultural norms. For some, especially those with church wounds, it also requires courage and trust. This is one more reason elders must lead with humility and integrity.

A believer may be part of the universal Church and assured of eternal life, but without a committed connection to a local church, they cannot live a life that fully honors God.

HEBREWS 10:24-25 | *“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

HEBREWS 13:7 | *“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.”*

Additional Scripture References

ACTS 2:41

1 CORINTHIANS 11:18

1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-26

GALATIANS 6:2

1 PETER 5:2

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Why is choosing to follow Christ without committing to a local church inconsistent with God's will as revealed in Scripture?
2. What has shaped your view of local church membership: Scripture, culture, experience, or something else?

III. FOUR RHYTHMS OF WORSHIP IN THE CHURCH GATHERING

PREACHING THE WORD

Preaching and teaching the Word of God are a central part of the gathered church. Scripture commands church leaders to faithfully proclaim God's truth and equip the church through it. This is not a human invention but a God-ordained means of sustaining and growing His people.

The Bible is spiritual nourishment. Just as a body starves without food, a church starves without the regular preaching of God's Word. Faithful preaching brings correction, encouragement, strength, and light to guide our path toward Jesus. It calls listeners to respond to the Gospel. It shapes how we think, how we live, and how we follow Jesus together.

Preaching must be firmly rooted in Scripture. While stories and illustrations can help us understand a point better, the main focus should not be personal opinion or cultural trends, which are nothing more than spiritual junk food. The church gathers not to hear the voice of a preacher, but the voice of God through His Word. When this is missing, so is the lifeblood of the church.

ACTS 2:42 | *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."*

1 TIMOTHY 4:13 | *"Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching."*

*Additional
Scripture
References*

MATTHEW 4:4
ROMANS 10:14-15
COLOSSIANS 1:21, 28
2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17
2 TIMOTHY 4:2

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Why is it important that preaching is rooted in Scripture rather than personal opinion or cultural messages?
2. In what ways do you prepare your heart to hear and respond to God's Word during a worship gathering?



LIFTING YOUR VOICE

Singing praise (thanking God) and worship (honoring Him) is a heartfelt response to who God and Jesus are and what they have done. Offered together through the power of the Holy Spirit, worshiping through song draws the church together in spirit and voice.

Worship through song isn't for our entertainment, and it isn't about the people on stage—it's meant to turn our attention toward God. It's not about how good we sound or our individual musical preferences. It's about choosing to participate fully rather than watching from the sidelines.

Because these songs not only express our devotion but also teach us, they need to be theologically sound and rooted in Scripture. Worshiping this way shapes us spiritually, proclaims the gospel, and grounds us together in Christ.

COLOSSIANS 3:16 | *“...teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.”*

REVELATION 5:13 | *“Then I heard every creature... saying, ‘To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!’”*

Additional Scripture References	PSALM 30:4	ROMANS 12:1-2
	PSALM 63:3-4	PHILIPPIANS 2:9-11
	PSALM 100:1-2	HEBREWS 13:15

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. In what ways does singing alongside other believers strengthen our sense of unity in Christ?
2. Are there any barriers (internal or external) that keep you from participating fully in musical worship? How might you bring those to God?

SHARING SUPPER

The Lord's Supper (or communion) is a sacred practice, commanded by Jesus, to help us remember what He did on the cross. At its heart, communion is meant to give glory to Jesus for His saving work. In communion, we remember His body (symbolized by the bread) and His blood (symbolized by the juice or wine) poured out for the forgiveness of sins on the cross. As we eat the bread and drink the cup, we confess our need for Jesus and look ahead to His return. This is more than a symbol—it is a moment rich with spiritual meaning.

This practice isn't just meaningful—it's meant to be regular. While Christians have long differed on how often to take communion, we can observe the pattern of the New Testament churches. They gathered on the first day of the week to break bread—a practice likely referring to regular participation in the Lord's Supper.

LUKE 22:19 | *"And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.'"*

1 CORINTHIANS 11:26 | *"For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."*

*Additional
Scripture
References*

MATTHEW 26:27-28
ACTS 2:42, 46
ACTS 20:7

1 CORINTHIANS 10:14-17
1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-34

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does regularly participating in communion shape our relationship with Jesus and with others in your church? What happens when we don't?
2. When you take the Lord's Supper, what specific truths about Jesus' sacrifice do you reflect on most deeply?

GIVING GENEROUSLY

Giving financially is a regular part of worship in the gathered church. It is not just a logistical need or a moment of routine—it's an act of worship. Giving expresses our gratitude, our trust in God's provision, and our desire to obey Him.

We also give because God gave first, because He is our Provider, and because everything we have already belongs to Him. Every gift we offer is a response to His grace. In the Old Testament, the giving standard was a tithe (10%). While the New Testament doesn't command a specific percentage, the principle of generous, proportional, and cheerful giving is emphasized—often going beyond the Old Testament tithe.

When we give freely, we demonstrate our trust isn't in money, jobs, or success—it's in Him. Faithful giving shapes our hearts. It loosens our grip on temporary things and turns our attention toward what lasts.

This isn't about guilt or pressure; it's about cheerful and intentional generosity. When churches or individual believers fail to give generously, they become inward, stagnant, and weak. Like a body with poor circulation, a church that stops giving generously starves its mission and weakens its heart.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:7 | *"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."*

PROVERBS 3:9 | *"Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops."*

Additional Scripture References

MALACHI 3:10

MATTHEW 6:19–21

LUKE 21:1–4

ACTS 2:44–45

2 CORINTHIANS 8:1–5

1 TIMOTHY 6:17–19

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What does it look like to give as an act of worship, not just as a habit or obligation?
2. In what ways are you living up to God's call to worship Him through giving and generosity in your local church?



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