



Moving People from Membership to Discipleship

**A Spiritual Formation Series Seeking to Enable People
to Mature in Their Christian Walk**

Sample Booklet

SESSION 1 FROM:

Life Sustainers (Ages 55 and Up)

Life Planters (Ages 36-54)

Deeper Roots (Ages 18-35)

Growing in Grace (Ages 12-17)

Growing in Christ (Ages 11 and Under)





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Sample Booklet

Includes All Age Groups

Series One: Discipleship and New Life

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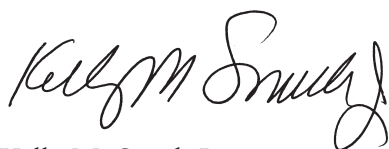
Introduction

The **SEED** (Spiritual Elements Essential for Discipleship) series is designed to move people from church membership to Christian discipleship. It is for people at all levels of spiritual maturity. It starts everyone at the same place and moves them to other levels during the course of the series. It is our belief that this happens through the maturing of a person's spirituality. This is called "spiritual formation."

Many people have come to be church members through reasons other than a desire to grow closer to and be more intimate with Jesus Christ. Too many have the belief that the only step a person needs to take is to be a member of a church; that is the beginning and the end of their search for divine intimacy. This series is designed to help people work through that myth and to be actively engaged in drawing closer to the Lord. It is believed that this series will help new converts, as well as those who have been in the church for a long period of time.

The core passage of Scripture for the **SEED** series is Mark 4:8—"Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times" (NIV). This passage of Scripture is a part of a larger pericope (a section of Scripture) which talks about the places where seeds are planted and the kinds of results which occur. Theologically speaking, the *seed* is the Word of God. The soil is the people where the seed is planted. The seed is understood to be a good seed. The challenge is being planted in good soil.

Thus, our intent through the series is to create and nurture fertile ground in people to allow the Word of God to grow within them. Through this creation and nurturing, it is our belief that "crops" will be produced. These crops should be manifested in a person's religious (church) and personal (everyday) lives. It is expected to give a clear meaning as to what it means to be saved. It is designed to help one in one's private and public worship. It is to help with Christian service in and beyond the church walls, with moral choices, with family life, and with personal stewardship and financial accountability. All of this is designed to help believers hear God's voice as to how we are to see these things through spiritual eyes.



Kelly M. Smith Jr.

Executive Director/SEED Developer



Moving People from Membership to Discipleship

A Spiritual Formation Series Seeking to Enable People
to Mature in Their Christian Walk

Life Sustainers

Ages 55 and Up



Series One: Discipleship and New Life



Series One: Discipleship and New Life

Session 1

Fresh Start: God's Call to Salvation

Words to Know

Christian: someone who shows the compassionate, forgiving, and accepting nature of Jesus Christ; the state of being a believer in and a follower of Jesus Christ.

Salvation: deliverance from sin by acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior; the free gift of eternal life given by God.

Sin: when we separate ourselves from God's desires for our lives via willful or immoral actions; the act/actions of "missing the mark" of God's standard of righteousness.

Discipleship: using Christ's life as a model for our thoughts, behaviors, and relationships.

Cultivating the Ground

The following questions are designed to help clarify the spiritual challenges we face as we mature in age and God's grace. In addition to answering the questions, seek to understand their spiritual value for your life.

1. What has been your most significant challenge as a Christian? What is the spiritual work that you have engaged in on a consistent basis to enable you to become more Christ-like? What is your evidence of its success? Of its occasional failure? What must you do on a consistent basis to maintain your Christian walk?
2. How do you know that you have been saved by Christ? How is salvation evident in your life (to you, and to your family members, workmates, and strangers)? What deliverance from sin might you still require to give evidence of your salvation? Has your view of salvation changed over the years? If so, how? Write your response in your SEED Journal.
3. How are you tempted to sin on a daily basis? What has tripped you up the most? What specific spiritual, social, emotional, and relationship supports can strengthen your fight against sin? Share some of your thoughts in your SEED Journal.
4. How have you structured your life to be a faithful disciple? (For example, do you tithe? Work in a church ministry? Volunteer in the community? Apologize for wrongdoing? Behave consistently across situations?) What have you taught your children, grandchildren, or others about the responsibilities and privileges of discipleship?

The SEED

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.



Planting the SEED

God loves us. God's desire is that we live right in this life and choose life after death with Him. To do this we must accept and walk with God's Son, Jesus Christ. Most parents would be concerned if one of their children refused to ever walk, or if the child preferred crawling even though he or she had the physical ability to walk. Such is our relationship with God. We are the sons and daughters of God (see John 1:12-13). As a result, those of us who have accepted Christ as our personal Lord and Savior must learn how to walk according to His expectations. An unsaved life is a crippled and dead life. A saved life is a moving and growing life.

Resources for the SEED

Romans 3:23; 5:8; 6:23; 10:9



The "**Roman Road**," also known as the *Plan of Salvation*, is a group of Bible verses from the book of Romans in the New Testament. If you walk down this road you will end up understanding how to be saved from your sins by Jesus Christ.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (**Romans 3:23**)

.....

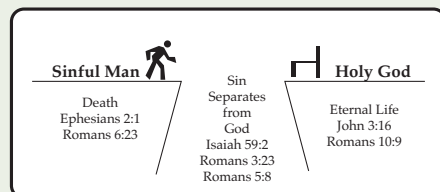
But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (**Romans 5:8**)

.....

For the wages of sin is death. (**Romans 6:23**)

.....

If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (**Romans 10:9**)



Nurturing the SEED

The most important decision we can ever make in our lives is the decision to accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. In order for this to truly have meaning for us, we have to have had a fresh start with Jesus Christ. This "fresh start" is called salvation. This means we clearly know that we have made mistakes (sin), admit that we have made mistakes (confession), and intend to turn our lives around from the mistakes through a "new

birth” in Jesus Christ (regeneration). This means that we are willing to read, listen to, know, and follow the intent Jesus Christ has for our lives.

When, how, and the circumstances around which we were first born through our natural birth was something we had no choice in. When we did start making choices our choices were not pleasing to God. This is called *sin* and we are controlled by its power. We must understand that all of us, at all ages, are prone to sin—to do things that create a separation between God and ourselves.

The Old Testament states that God has established penalties for our sin. Yet, the New Testament points also to the loving nature of God to pay that penalty for us. This payment was through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. Therefore, in order for us to be saved we have to make the conscious choice to embrace Jesus Christ and to be guided by Him in all that we do. That is why it is stated in the gospel of John, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” This is what makes us His disciples.

The process to get there is by following the example known as the *Plan of Salvation*. It is also called the “Roman Road” (see the passages on the previous page) because all of the passages are in the book of Romans. When a person follows this plan and prays for the Lord to enter into his or her heart, this is the fresh start—this is salvation.

One of the faulty assumptions is that because a person is a member of a church, and may have been a member for many years, we think that is automatic “proof” that he or she is a Christian. Further, there are those who believe that evidence of their being a Christian is that they sing in the choir, usher, or “deacon,” or even preach; often that becomes the automatic qualifier that a person is a Christian. There are those who also believe that simply because God has blessed them or even has spared them from some life calamity that they are Christians. These are all very wrong assumptions. The only thing that qualifies us as being Christians is when we make the choice to accept by faith Jesus Christ in our lives and allow ourselves to be transformed by Him in all that we are and do. Then when we are active in the church, this is done with the right attitude, the right meaning, and the right purpose. You will find yourself doing what pleases God and not what may or may not please people.



Fruit from the SEED

What this really means is that to truly be Christians we must be transformed. Transformation does not mean that we just add something new to our lives, like joining a lodge, a fraternity, or a sorority. It means that once a person



makes the decision to be a Christian, every other decision he or she makes in life is made based on what he or she believes Jesus would want him or her to do. You may recall a few years ago a trend that was started called “WWJD?”—meaning, “What would Jesus do?” This was established so that we could look at life through the eyes of Jesus, constantly asking ourselves, “What would Jesus do if He was in a similar circumstance as ourselves?” This is the constant question of Christians. When I am faced with any decision in my life I must ask myself: What would Jesus do?

Harvesting Time

Opportunities for Growth spurts, Pruning, and Maturing



To paraphrase an important question asked by the Global Oneness Project, “What would the world look like if we embodied our highest Christian potential?”—if we truly walked as Christ walked, treated each other as brothers and sisters, and loved each other as He loves us? Those blessed to experience their senior years are community elders. Elders have the responsibility to ensure the safety and continuity of our community by teaching lessons that only they know.

Parents and grandparents are among those responsible for ensuring that our *Christian* walk keeps the path wide open for youth, whether related to us or not, who might have gone badly astray. We must remember that many young people who act out, mildly to terribly, are simply asking for us to invite them into the fold. This is what Christ did when He walked among us. It is what He expects us to do. Creating and re-creating family is *discipleship* in action. Helping gang members (and other young people) learn that God has a *plan of salvation* for their lives decreases their desire to sin.

The *Cross and the Switchblade* is a book that relates the true story of David Wilkerson, an Assembly of God minister who, in the 1960s, moved to New York City from a small town. Though his relationship with them often endangered his life, Wilkerson sought to bring change to the lives of gang members by showing them, by example, “what faith in God can do.” Wilkerson attempted to demonstrate to New York gang members that we can be redeemed, even though our human nature makes us sinners who fall short of the expectations that God sets for us (see Romans 3:23). His hard work led to a number of conversions. Having grown tired of lives of violence and impressed by the example that Wilkerson set, several gang members internalized this important lesson: God loved us enough to send Christ to die for all of us who have sinned (see Romans 5:8).

There is one peculiar fact that is often overlooked when we think of gangs: gangs are families. Having been, in many cases, poorly parented, these young people have formed families of their own. With no model to follow, their rules are dysfunctional—their structures are violent. They hold out little hope for long lives. But they are as cohesive as they are personally and socially destructive. Sin always leads to death; gang members have yet to learn that eternal life is found in Jesus Christ (see Romans 6:23).

People who have spent considerable time toiling in God’s vineyard can, at times, become jaded about those who seem to be throwing away the gift of life. It is important that we understand the youth psyche. It is also essential that we recall an important fact: even if we did not engage in gang behavior, we were all young once. We must be convinced that those who engage in the worst behavior are capable of absolute redemption. We must truly believe that all persons created by God are eligible for redemption and salvation. The surprising result to this could not just be the effect on the individuals but on the community as well. When individuals are saved communities are also saved.

The truth is that gangs form when society has failed them. Presenting God's *plan of salvation* within the context of our extended families and welcoming church arms are essential steps in counterbalancing the failures.



Digging Deeper

Continue your journey into God's call to salvation by reading the resources available on these Web sites, some of which were used as references in your lesson. Use the Web site information to enhance the exercises in the lesson as well as to further address the self-assessment and class dialogues encouraged by the lesson. You are encouraged to write down your responses in your SEED Journal.

Supplemental Section

Book

David Wilkerson, Elizabeth Sherrill, and John Sherrill. *The Cross and the Switchblade*. Jove Publisher, 1986. DVD available.

Gangs and Gang Behavior

1. www.globalonenessproject.org/search/node/gangs - View the longer version of Barrio de Paz.
2. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCpCvCpdP_g - Minister Farrakhan on gang behavior
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www.globalonenessproject.org - In filmed form, this Web site asks the question you were challenged to address personally. "What if the world embodied our highest potential? What would it look like?"

God's Plan of Salvation

<http://www.chick.com/information/general/salvation.asp>

Christian Games

<http://biblewordgames.com/> - This site has Christian crosswords, word search and trivia games.

Closing

No matter what wrongs we have done in our lives, it is never too late to accept Christ. Christ has already accepted us. He awaits us with open arms, acknowledging that we have faults and fears. He knows that we wish for our spirits to be washed clean. In Him, we are redeemed. Revelation 22:17 reads, "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life." (A volunteer should lead the class in prayer.)



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Life Planters

Ages 36-54



1

Series One: Discipleship & New Life



Series One: Discipleship and New Life

Session 1

Fresh Start: God's Call to Salvation

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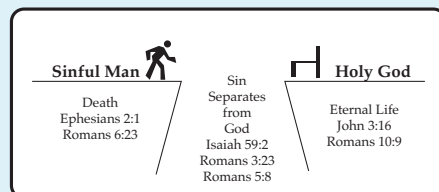
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Moving People from Membership to Discipleship

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Deeper Roots

Ages 18-35



Series One: Discipleship and New Life

Series One: Discipleship and New Life

Session 1

Fresh Start: God's Call to Salvation

Words to Know

Christian: one who is like Christ; a follower of Christ.

Salvation: the saving of the soul through the atonement of Jesus.

Sin: a transgression of God's Word/law.

Discipleship: a lifestyle of following Christ (i.e., doctrines, principles).

Plan of Salvation: a process whereby a person can be saved.

Cultivating the Ground

New life in Christ brings peace and joy unspeakable, and full glory! We as Christians do not realize the privilege and blessings we have because of our salvation. Many Christians walk around with a defeatist attitude, not realizing that in Christ all things are possible and that we are more than conquerors. We need to reach into our toolboxes, which consist of God's Word, prayer, and meditation. We would be surprised to discover that we can live victorious lives even in the midst of world crises. Although salvation is a free gift from God, we have to develop the kind of commitment that propels us to want to know more about the will of God and the plan that God has for our lives. If we really want to experience the true joy of salvation, we need to build an intimate relationship with God!

- **ROLE-PLAY:** Write a paragraph about a situation in your life that you are dealing with in your Christian journey; then fold up the paper and place it in the box (anonymously). Each person will pick one randomly out of the box and role-play the situation—and the group will help to solve the problem.
- **LET'S TALK ABOUT GOALS:** Think about what you want to gain from this lesson; we will revisit that goal and see where you are.

The SEED

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.



Planting the SEED

God sent His Son to save us. Saving us is more than preparing us for heaven. God wants us prepared for this life. Life brings about situations that cause us to question whether or not we have all we need to conquer the problems and crises that we are confronted with. Just as parents desire to see their children grow and become the best that they can, so it is with God. In sending Jesus to our world, God was giving us the best foundation that we would need in order to grow and develop into the kind of Christians who can live victoriously. God gave us His best so that we could be His best!

Resources for the SEED

Romans 3:23; 5:8; 6:23; 10:9



For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (*Roman 3:23*)

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But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (*Romans 5:8*)

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For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus. (*Romans 6:23*)

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If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (*Romans 10:9*)



Nurturing the SEED

These verses are popularly known as the Roman Road to salvation. Examining these verses is a clear way to look at the simplicity of salvation, the power of salvation, and the ultimate purpose of salvation.

THE HIGH FIVES

- Romans 3:23—Yes, we are all sinners. Sin caused us to fall short of the goodness that God wants to direct toward us—the deeper depths that He desires to give us. We all start at the same place—as sinners—but the good news is that we do not have to end there.
- Romans 5:8—God made a sacred demonstration of His love for us. Even though we were sinners, He died on a cross, bearing all the shame and humiliation just for us. At Calvary, every charge that could be brought against us was cancelled!
- Romans 6:23—There is a consequence for sin: death. The good news is that God’s gift brings life!
- Romans 10:9—We must confess that Jesus is Lord and the ruler of our lives, and believe that after His death, the power of God raised Him from the dead—that He is alive forevermore! We have the gift of salvation! We are saved, redeemed, and delivered from death. This gift of salvation is for you, for me—for all of us who call on His name with sincere hearts; hearts of repentance and thanksgiving receive this gift of salvation.

Now this is a road worth travelling! Are you on this road? Were there any stumbling blocks? Talk about them. Then write some of your thoughts in your SEED journal.



Fruit from the SEED

We move now to consider a more tangible expression of our personal walk with God. Salvation is that pivotal moment in our lives when we confront all that is wrong or depraved about us. Salvation brings about transformation. We are saved by grace—“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). The goal of our lives is to regain the broken fellowship with God. We are aware that sin caused us to “fall short” of God’s glory.

Being sinners by nature, we fail in achieving the chief end of humanity. We failed to reach the full mark, the full potential. Our ultimate purpose is to glorify God. Even in our sinful state, God demonstrated His love for us in Christ. The theme of both the Old and New Testaments is salvation. God wants to salvage/rescue us from damnation and grant us His grace that we might walk into our destinies. God wants to salvage us during these difficult times that we are facing. How does God salvage us? How does God give us the wherewithal to endure, to flourish, and to thrive during times that could possibly bring about doubt, depression, distress, and disillusionment?



Experiencing salvation is an allusion to more than a spiritual liberation. We can thus find liberation in all of life's adversities. How do we rely on God's redemptive power to transcend all physical, spiritual, and emotional perplexities? Is our salvation limited to "pie in the sky"? God wants us to be conquerors. Living life victoriously requires a continuous personal, theological, and ethical reflection. Current issues such as economic instability, health care reforms, and unemployment are having a devastating effect on persons all around our world. Have you considered their implications for you as a Christian? Will these issues make you stronger and propel you to seek a closer walk with God? We who are connected to Christ—who are well-versed in Scriptures and have fellowship with other believers—will find spiritual resources that will enable us to stand. We can yet flourish during difficult times (see Psalm 37:25). Having a closer walk with God can help us survive the stressors of our times. What is going on in this world right now that is causing you some concerns? How are you coping? Write your responses to these questions in your SEED journal.



Harvesting Time

Opportunities for Growth spurts, Pruning, and Maturing

We have been considering in this lesson some dynamics of our early development in Christianity. Our personal walk with God is a daily decision. Having a strong foundation, being grounded in God's Word, and living a life of obedience are key factors for the power-filled journey. Taking our salvation to the next level, we must seek to be change agents in a world that needs salvation and resurrection. But it must first begin with our own understanding of salvation and its propensity to change not only us, but also the world around us. It is time to mature in Christ. We should experience growth spurts. In order to do that, it will take the process of *pruning*. Pruning usually involves a snipping off, a cutting off so that growth can take place. Hopefully you took inventory of your life throughout this lesson. What needs to be pruned—cut off or cut out? What is it that is hindering you from moving forward, from reaching your potential in Christ? When God saved us through His Son, He gave us His best. Why not give God our best? As we focus on our lives, the Holy Spirit will direct us to areas of weakness and places in our lives that need cultivating. Yes, we can!



Digging Deeper

ASSIGNMENT

(Choose any three.)

1. How has knowing about the Roman Road to salvation (the High Fives) helped you to grow in Christ?
2. Write a short essay about the person you were prior to salvation, and the person you are today. Identify areas of growth and areas of weakness.

3. Using some incident from your past or some aspect of your present life, reflect on the meaning and relevance of salvation.
4. Choose a metaphor that describes your walk with God (i.e., my walk with God has been like that of a turtle: slow growth; stubborn/hard shell).

Closing

Salvation is God's gift to us through His Son, Jesus the Christ. Though we are sinners saved by grace, our walk with God is a daily process. There are various stages of development as we move toward maturation. In order for us to grow deeper roots in God, we must seek an intimate relationship with Christ. In conjunction with life's struggles, we are faced with societal problems that can affect our spiritual growth. Issues of social justice, racial and ethnic inequities, and inadequate health care have detrimental effects on our ability to live life to its fullest potential. Our degree of connectedness with God will determine our response to the many issues of life. It is conceivable that unless we are building a stronger foundation, our attention can easily be diverted away from God. We must become firmly planted in Christ and thereby experience exponential growth.

Prayer

Thank You, God, for Your work of atonement in giving us Your dear Son for the propitiation of our sins. As we seek to reach our fullest potential in You, allow our lives to reflect more of You and less of us. Help us to demonstrate love, forgiveness, and grace. As we live in this world, help us to focus on areas that need salvation and resurrection. Help us to delight in the pruning process so that when harvest time comes, You will get the glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

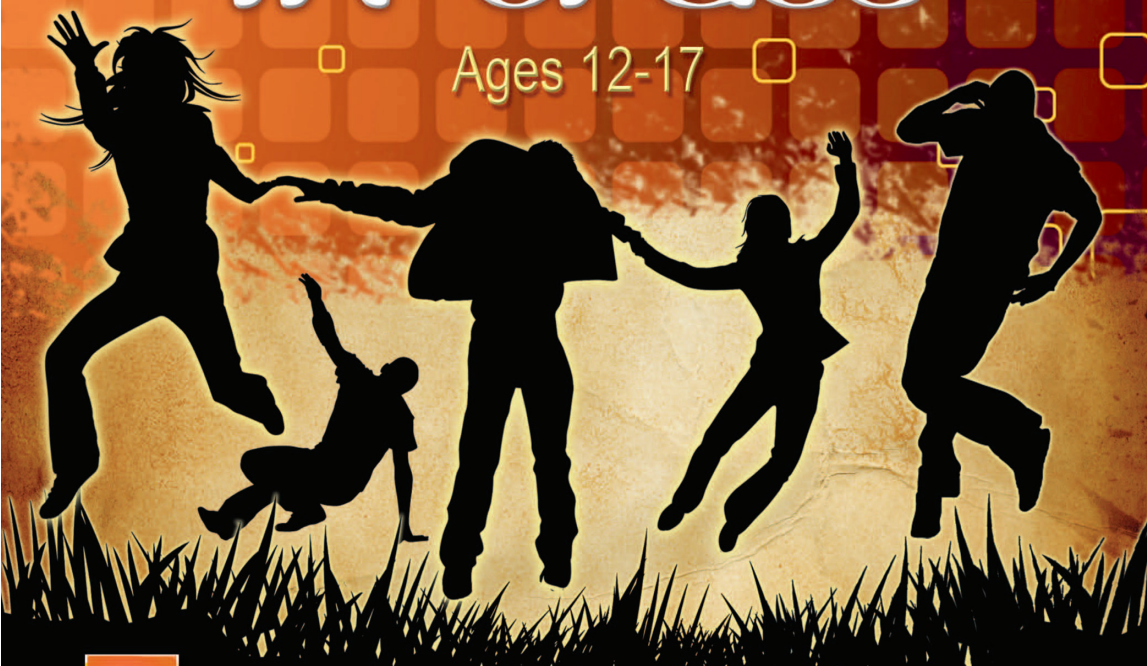


Moving People from Membership to Discipleship

A Spiritual Formation Series Seeking to Enable People
to Mature in Their Christian Walk

Growing in Grace

Ages 12-17



1

Series One: Discipleship and New Life

Fresh Start— God's Call to Salvation



Words to Know

Christian: to be Christlike.

Discipleship: to be a follower of Jesus in what we say and what we do.

Plan of Salvation: the process whereby a person can be saved.

Salvation: to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Sin: separating ourselves from the desires of God for our lives.

Cultivating the Ground

Even as a teenager there are important decisions you are going to have to make for your life. Take time now and list five decisions you believe will be crucial for your growth, maturity, and living. List them according to their priority, with the most important being first.

If you are a Christian, what influence, if any, did your faith have upon your list? In what ways do you see your Christianity coming into conflict with your list? If you are not a Christian, what are the reasons you have not become one? For everyone, what are some important steps each person must take to have a fresh start in Jesus Christ? How do we maintain this throughout our lives?



The SEED

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Planting the SEED

Accepting salvation is a personal decision that each person must make for him- or herself. It is not something that can be given to you by your parents or friends. Though they may be able to help you understand what it means to be a Christian, you have to make the final choice for yourself. To be a Christian is more than just being baptized. To be a Christian is more than saying you are a Christian. To be a Christian is more than just coming to church, or singing in the choir, or ushering, or participating in youth activities. All of these should be done as a result of your being a Christian and not just acting as if you are a Christian.

The challenge many of us have is that we have already started developing patterns of living which are focused on the world. How we think is based on what we are exposed to. How we dress is based on what we see in terms of fashion, culture, and society. So many of our views are based on what we see on television. So much of our understanding about relationships comes from what we hear in the music to which we listen. Not all of what we see and hear is bad. The challenge for Christians is knowing what is good and what is bad. An even greater challenge is answering for ourselves, "How does what I have been exposed to in the world speak to my desire to live and walk as a Christian?"

Resources for the SEED

Romans 3:23; 5:8; 6:23; 10:9

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. **(Romans 3:23)**

.....
But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **(Romans 5:8)**

.....
For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus. **(Romans 6:23)**

.....
If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **(Romans 10:9)**



Nurturing the SEED

One of the simplest explanations of the salvation experience is called “The Roman Road.” Notice which book of the Bible all of these passages come from. This is why it is called the *Roman Road*. These are the passages of Scripture which help us to know how to be saved, and they are found in the book of Romans. These four passages of Scripture give an excellent roadmap on how a person can have a fresh start.

From Romans 3:23 we learn we must first admit (confess) that we have done things which are against what God wants us to do. In order to have a fresh start we have to admit that our previous start was not a good one. Our previous start was when we were physically born into the world; that was when we started a pathway of self-destruction. We have made choices in our lives which are not pleasing to God. That is called *sin*. Sin is our separation from God.

We must not be so shortsighted that we think that sin is limited to only a few things. Sin comes in many different forms.

Look at the list below and talk about why each of these is a sin:

- Cheating on an exam.
- Intentionally giving wrong information on a registration form or application.
- Using illegal drugs and alcohol.
- Having sex before getting married.
- Taking something that does not belong to you.
- Trying to hurt or kill someone.
- Staying out late on Saturday and not coming to church on Sunday.
- Using profanity.
- Not respecting your parents, other adults, and other people.
- Saying negative things about the way a person looks.
- Hating on someone because of some things that person may have or do that you do not have or do.
- Failing to help people who need your help.
- Doing what someone else wants you to do even though it may get you into trouble.
- Not taking time to pray to and worship God.

This list is only a sampling of some of the sins in people's lives. The truth is that all of us have committed sin at various points in our lives, and we become subject to God's wrath because of it.

From Romans 6:23 we learn that doing things that are against what God wants us to do causes death. The Bible tells us that sin causes death in us. It causes physical death. If you have ever been to a funeral, then you have seen someone who has physically died. There is no more life in that person's body. Every person who has died has died as a direct or indirect result of sin. Some die because of health issues, accidents, or old age. Others die while committing acts that are against the will of God.

But even more importantly is that sin causes spiritual death. Though you may still be physically alive and you don't look dead, you can still be dead in your soul. This means that you do not have a heart for God. It means that you do not want to follow the things the Bible teaches. It means that you only look for those things that you believe will make you feel good right now, knowing that there may be trouble for you later on in your life. It means you have turned your back on God.

From Romans 5:8 we learn that even though we made the mistake, God fixed the mistake by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And what is so amazing about salvation is that in spite of our turning our backs on God, God never turned His back on us. He always is making a way for us to start fresh and get on the right track. The Bible teaches that the only way for people to get back on the right track with God is through a worthy sacrifice. The only worthy sacrifice was the life of God's Son, Jesus Christ. He was the only one who could do it, and the only one who needed to do it to fix the wrong things we have done in our lives.

From Romans 10:13 we learn that it is necessary for each one of us to personally ask the Lord to save us. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ fulfills God's requirement for justice against sin. Jesus did what needed to be done for us to get back on the right track. We are saved when we accept and believe in Jesus Christ. This is what is meant when it is said that Jesus paid the price for our sins. He saved us. We must ask not just with our mouths or even just through our prayers. We ask with our hearts and with our lives. We ask God to save us by our sincere desire to turn away from the things which are wrong (sin) and turn toward those things which are right (salvation). This turning is called "repentance."

We can sum up the understanding of salvation in a passage of Scripture from the gospel of John: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one



and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (John 3:16-18).

Fruit from the SEED

The question many may still have is, "How do I know that I am saved?" One of the interesting things about salvation is that God provides it and it is universal, which means it is free to all who believe. However, the proof of a person being saved does not lie with God, but it is based on the person who wishes to be saved. The person's repentance must be real, authentic, and sincere. We cannot and should not play as if we are saved when we have not truly accepted Christ. It is too serious of a matter. The proof is in what you believe and how you act based on what you believe. Those who are saved will still deal with the same things others will experience in their lives. They will have to deal with mistakes, sickness, death, misfortunes, disappointments, betrayals, and so forth just like anyone else. The difference is in our having the ability to handle these hard times. We never lose hope, regardless of the situation. We always seek to respond in a godly way and not a worldly way.

The Old Testament speaks about the joy of salvation—Psalm 51:12: "Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me." This is a joy that comes when we have handled the tests that life gives us and we know that our actions please God. This joy is not a worldly joy that is given by the world. This is the joy that only God provides that is better than any other joy. There is a song that is sung sometimes that has some of its words, "This joy I have the world didn't give it and the world can't take it away."

Gather in groups of two to four students for this next exercise.

For each of you who is a Christian:

- Talk about when you truly knew that you were a Christian and made the choice to follow Jesus Christ (this may or may not be the time when you were baptized. It is the time when you truly began to feel Christ moving in your life).
- Talk about some of the challenges you have faced since becoming a Christian. Share with the others what you are comfortable in sharing.
- Talk about how you have handled some of the challenges.

- Talk about ways you are planning to deal with other issues which hinder you from being the Christian you want to be.

For those of you who are not Christians:

- Talk about what you believe it means to be a Christian.
- Talk about what you are still wrestling with that keeps you from making the decision to follow Jesus Christ.
- What do you need the others in your group to do to encourage you as you determine to follow Jesus?
- If you believe you are ready today to make the decision to accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, ask the others in the group to pray for you and then let your teacher know you are ready to take that step for Jesus.
- Finally, what will you write in your journal regarding what you have learned or experienced in class today?



Harvesting Time

Opportunities for Growth Spurts, Pruning, and Maturing

You should have gained some insight about the difference between being saved and being unsaved from this session. Tradition may have taught or suggested to you some things about salvation that are not necessarily true. What are some things that you have learned about salvation as a result of this session?

Digging Deeper

Use a concordance and a study Bible to find more Scriptures that teach about salvation. Write them in your journal and one or two sentences about what you learn from them.

Closing

You are encouraged to close out the session with prayer—either through group prayer, with prayer partners, or individual prayer. You can close out the session with this prayer: *Father, we thank You for Your gift of salvation and that we have the opportunity to learn about Jesus Christ and be His disciples. Help us as we grow in Your Word. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.*



Moving People from Membership to Discipleship

A Spiritual Formation Series Seeking to Enable People
to Mature in Their Christian Walk

Growing in Christ

Ages 11 and Under



1

Series One: Discipleship and New Life

SESSION

1

SERIES ONE: DISCIPLESHIP AND NEW LIFE

A Brand New Start



Ready, Set, Grow!

When we look at a plant or a tree and how it grows, we see that it starts with a SEED that is planted in the ground. Our growth as disciples of Jesus also starts with a SEED. That seed is the Word of God, which we plant in our hearts (see Psalm 119:11).

When we talk of God's Word being a SEED, we can use the letters SEED to stand for something really special: **S**piritual **E**lements **E**ssential for **D**iscipleship.

S—Spiritual

E—Elements (ingredients)

E—Essential (things that are really necessary or needed)

D—Discipleship (being followers of Jesus in our words and actions)

***Plant Activity:** Gather materials to plant your bean sprout seedling project. Follow your teacher's instructions in class.

Words to Know

Devotion: worship in which we express our love and praise for God through songs and prayers; sharing with others what God means to us and what He has done for us.

Disciple: a follower or a student of a certain teacher or a particular teaching.

Discipline: training in order to develop self-control; using punishment to correct behavior.

Grow/Growth: a natural development by increasing in size and changing physically; progressing to maturity.



Cultivating the Ground

Where do we have *devotion* sessions? We can have them at home or at church. We can be alone or with others. Devotion is a way to help us focus on God as we start our day, and to ask God to help us through the day.

Let us sing the song “Jesus Loves Me” and then have prayer. Remember that *prayer* is communication (talking) with God.



The SEED

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Planting the SEED

When you hear the word *discipline*, what is the first thing that comes to mind? Did you know that one of the definitions for the word *discipline* is “to teach or to get training for self-control”? The word *disciple* is related to the word discipline. A disciple is someone who follows a certain teaching, or a certain teacher.

Jesus had disciples, or people who followed Him. To follow Jesus means that a person has to behave like Jesus did in his or her actions.

How does someone become a disciple of Jesus? To become disciples we must be saved. We must accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. The Bible tells us that God loved us so





much that He sent His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life (see John 3:16).

A person must admit that he or she is a sinner, which means that the person has tried to live a life without God. This sinful life would have led to death for all eternity. Then, a person must believe that Jesus died for his or her sins, and rose again from the grave. The person must then ask Jesus to come into his or her life. When a person believes this, he or she will be saved and become a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Resources for the SEED

THE ROMAN ROAD

Romans 3:23; 5:8; 6:23; 10:9

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. **(Romans 3:23)**

.....

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

(Romans 5:8)

.....

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus.

(Romans 6:23)

.....

If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **(Romans 10:9)**

Nurturing the SEED

In order to follow Jesus Christ more closely, we must grow. To *grow* means “to increase in size, to change, and to develop.” Now that we have planted the bean sprout seedling, we will be tracking the growth and changes over the next few weeks as our souls are growing closer to God’s Word.

Do not forget that holding devotionals and prayer time with God—starting the day with prayer and a Bible verse—will help you grow in Christ.

Fruit from the SEED

Once the SEED is planted and nurtured in our hearts, what kind of growth/fruit should we see in our lives?

Engage in a discussion about spiritual changes: being kind to others, listening to parents and teachers; sharing; not being jealous; doing our best in school; helping others; inviting others to Sunday school; and looking for opportunities to tell others about Jesus.

*Growth Activity 1

Draw pictures of trees in the space below and find information on the purpose of roots.



*Growth Activity 2

List healthy foods and how these foods affect your body. Next, discuss and write what would happen if you only ate candy or only drank soda versus eating healthy foods—like fruits and vegetables or lean meats.

Healthy Foods

Unhealthy Foods

*Word Search 1

Find the following key words from the **Words to Know** section and Scripture references in the puzzle.

DEVOTION

DISCIPLE

ETERNAL

GROWTH

LOVE

SINNERS

E T E R N A L S

A B C O E U Q I

D E V O T I O N

X S J H F M O N

D I S C I P L E

G R O W T H L R

P L O V E Z I S

Harvesting Time

Opportunities for Growth spurts, Pruning, and Maturing

Once the SEED (or Word of God) has been planted in our hearts, what kinds of growth or changes should we see in our lives? Discuss with your classmates.

Read/discuss the SEED (John 3:16) along with the “Roman Road” passages (Romans 3:23; 5:8; 6:23; 10:9).

- **John 3:16**—God loved us so much that He sent His very best for us—JESUS.

- **Romans 3:23**—No matter how old or how young we are, we have all done something wrong and disappointed God.

Read the rest of the Roman Road passages (see page 7) and discuss what they mean with your classmates.

To be a disciple of Jesus is to be a Christian. Are any of you Christians? If you are, what helped you to make those decisions? For those who are not Christians, what will help you to make the choice to be one?

Digging Deeper



Continue to develop your devotional time with God each morning before you start your day. End your day in prayer at night by talking to God about your day's experiences. Remember to commit to memory the SEED verse for this lesson and be ready to recite your verse at the next class session. Congratulations—as you are growing in Jesus Christ and digging deeper into God's Word!

Closing

Father, we thank You for Your gift of salvation, and that we have the opportunity to learn about Jesus Christ and be His disciples. Help us as we grow in Your Word. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.



SEED Series Topics and Scripture for Series One through Ten

SERIES ONE: DISCIPLESHIP AND NEW LIFE

- Session 1 – Fresh Start: God’s Call to Salvation
The SEED: John 3:16
- Session 2 – Life with Meaning: God’s Call to Purpose
The SEED: John 10:10
- Session 3 – Communicating with God: God’s Call to Divine Intimacy
The SEED: Matthew 6:5-6
- Session 4 – Footlights: God’s Call to Study
The SEED: Psalm 119:105
- Session 5 – Character Matters: God’s Call to Christian Disposition
The SEED: Matthew 5:16
- Session 6 – Set Apart: God’s Call to Service
The SEED: Acts 13:2-3
- Session 7 – I Just Wanna Testify: God’s Call to Witness
The SEED: John 4:39-42
- Session 8 – What a Fellowship: God’s Call to Relationship
The SEED: Mark 12:29-31

SERIES TWO: DISCIPLESHIP AND LIFE CHOICES

- Session 1 – The Opportunity and the Challenge of Choice
The SEED: Matthew 7:13-14
- Session 2 – Fun, Fun, Fun for Everyone: Fun in Faithful Living
The SEED: Luke 14:16
- Session 3 – Life on a Tightrope: Finding the Balance among Life’s Desires and Demands
The SEED: Exodus 18:17-18
- Session 4 – You Can’t Choose Your Family, but You Can Choose Your Friends: Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships
The SEED: 1 Corinthians 15:33
- Session 5 – Spirituality and Sexuality: Maintaining Spirituality in a Sexually Charged Society
The SEED: 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8
- Session 6 – Don’t Let the Joneses Get You Down: Finding Contentment in Life
The SEED: Philippians 4:11
- Session 7 – Out of Bounds (and Out of Control): Drugs, Alcohol, and Other Controlled Substances
The SEED: Romans 6:12
- Session 8 – Failing Forward: Rebounding from Failures
The SEED: Luke 22:32

SERIES THREE: DISCIPLESHIP AND FAMILY LIFE

- Session 1 – That Looks like My Family: People of Faith and the Family of God
The SEED: Matthew 1:17
- Session 2 – Making a House into a Home: Establishing and Maintaining Family Values
The SEED: Colossians 3:18-21
- Session 3 – Two Hearts Beating as One: The Blessing of Marriage
The SEED: Genesis 2:23-24
- Session 4 – When Two Hearts Stop Beating as One: The Pain of Divorce
The SEED: Hebrews 12:13

- Session 5 – The Brady Bunch Has Become My Bunch: Blended Families
The SEED: Matthew 1:20-21
- Session 6 – Living Single: Christianity and the Single Life
The SEED: 1 Corinthians 7:32-35
- Session 7 – When the Baby Carriage Comes First: Children Born Out of Wedlock
The SEED: Genesis 16:15
- Session 8 – Junebug Goes to Jail: Adjusting to the Incarceration of Loved Ones
The SEED: Acts 12:5

SERIES FOUR: DISCIPLESHIP AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS

- Session 1 – Gifted to Serve: Spiritual Gifts for Ministry
The SEED: Romans 8:9
- Session 2 – What's My Gift?: Spiritual Gifts Inventory
The SEED: 1 Corinthians 12:11
- Session 3 – Making Something Out of Something: The Importance of Every Gift
The SEED: James 1:17
- Session 4 – Got the Gift and Got to Use It: The Importance of Sharing Our Gifts
The SEED: 1 Peter 4:10
- Session 5 – I Got This (but I Don't Got That): The Value of Differing Gifts
The SEED: 1 Corinthians 12:27
- Session 6 – We Don't Do That in My Church: Addressing Some Controversial Gifts
The SEED: 1 Corinthians 14:12
- Session 7 – Power Boost: Keeping Our Gifts Vibrant
The SEED: 2 Timothy 1:6-7
- Session 8 – Love Jones: Ministering through the Greatest Gift
The SEED: 1 Corinthians 13:13

SERIES FIVE: DISCIPLESHIP AND CHURCH LIFE

- Session 1 – Let the Church Roll On: The Role and Responsibility of the Twenty-first-century Church
The SEED: Acts 2:43-47
- Session 2 – Patients' Entrance: A Church for All People
The SEED: Mark 2:17
- Session 3 – First Giving Honor to God: Worshipping in Spirit and in Truth
The SEED: John 4:23-24
- Session 4 – School's In: Christian Education as the Church's Support System
The SEED: Acts 2:42
- Session 5 – "Who Moved My Board?": Changing the Mentality from Boards (and Programs) to Ministry
The SEED: Hebrews 8:6
- Session 6 – Order in the Church: Understanding Church Structure and Accountability
The SEED: 1 Corinthians 14:40
- Session 7 – In-Service Training: Preparation for Church Leadership
The SEED: 2 Timothy 2:15
- Session 8 – "Where Is the Church and Where Is the Steeple?": The Charge to Be a Missional Church
The SEED: Matthew 28:18-20

SERIES SIX: DISCIPLESHIP AND PERSONAL STEWARDSHIP

Session 1 – Who's in Charge Here? (God Is!): The Theology of Stewardship

The SEED: Psalm 24:1

Session 2 – Manager on Duty: Our Personal Role as Stewards

The SEED: Genesis 1:26

Session 3 – Time Management: The Stewardship of Time

The SEED: Matthew 24:42

Session 4 – Giving the Best that I Have: The Stewardship of Talents

The SEED: Matthew 25:21

Session 5 – Your Heart and Your Treasure: The Stewardship of Treasures

The SEED: Matthew 6:21

Session 6 – Putting Out Fires: Debt-free Living

The SEED: Romans 13:8

Session 7 – Living within Your Means: The Bible and Your Personal Budget

The SEED: Luke 14:28

Session 8 – Back to the Future: Investing from a Christian Perspective

The SEED: Ecclesiastes 11:2

SERIES SEVEN: DISCIPLESHIP AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

Session 1 – The Total Package: The Interrelationship between the Spirit, Body, and Soul

The SEED: Psalm 139:14

Session 2 – Body Works: Taking Care of Our Bodies

The SEED: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Session 3 – I Can't Believe I Ate the Whole Thing: The Spiritual Importance of a Healthy Diet

The SEED: Daniel 1:8

Session 4 – Doctor's Orders: Faith, Health, and Healing

The SEED: John 9:6-7

Session 5 – Break Time: The Importance of Rest

The SEED: Mark 6:31-32

Session 6 – Passing Through: Understanding Death and Dying

The SEED: Romans 14:8

Session 7 – It's a Family Matter: Caring for a Sick Loved One

The SEED: 1 Timothy 5:8

Session 8 – I'm Crying, but I Don't Know Why: Depression and Other Mental Health Illnesses

The SEED: 1 Kings 19:3-4

SERIES EIGHT: DISCIPLESHIP AND SOCIETY

Session 1 – Did I Sign Up for This?: Ministering beyond the Church Walls

The SEED: Luke 10:3

Session 2 – The Challenge of Being Our Brother's Keeper: Bridges within and beyond Our Community

The SEED: Genesis 4:9

Session 3 – Can't We All Just Get Along?: Addressing the Issue of Community Violence

The SEED: Psalm 133:1

Session 4 – Religion-free Zone: Personal Faith and Public Practice

The SEED: Mark 6:5

Session 5 – And Justice for All: Justice Issues and the Christian Faith

The SEED: I John 3:17-18

- Session 6 – The Moses and the Joshua Generations: Transition of Values, Voice, and Leadership
The SEED: Joshua 1:1-2
- Session 7 – Fighting the Negative “Isms”: Addressing Racism, Sexism, Ageism, and Other Forms of Prejudices and Discriminations
The SEED: Galatians 3:26-29
- Session 8 – What Will They Think of Next?: A Christian View of Media and Technology
The SEED: Colossians 1:16

SERIES NINE: DISCIPLESHIP AND CIVIC DUTY

- Session 1 – God and Government: A Christian View of the Political Process
The SEED: Romans 13:1-3
- Session 2 – Death and Taxes: A Christian View of Paying Taxes
The SEED: Romans 13:6-7
- Session 3 – Economic Stimulus: Working the System for Christian Causes
The SEED: Galatians 6:10
- Session 4 – Orderly Conduct: Christian Responses to Just and Unjust Laws
The SEED: 1 Corinthians 10:23
- Session 5 – The Army Wants You!: A Case for Christians Serving in the Military
The SEED: Deuteronomy 20:1
- Session 6 – I’m a Lover, Not a Fighter: A Case for Christian Pacifism
The SEED: Matthew 5:38-41
- Session 7 – Christian Non-conformist: In the World but Not *of* the World
The SEED: Romans 12:1
- Session 8 – God of the Oppressed: Identifying with Victims of Systematic Discrimination
The SEED: Psalm 146:7

SERIES TEN: DISCIPLESHIP AND THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY

- Session 1 – He’s Got the Whole World In His Hand: The Providence of God and the Global Community
The SEED: Job 12:10
- Session 2 – Who Is My Neighbor?: Expanding Our Understanding of Global Relationships
The SEED: Luke 10:36-37
- Session 3 – They Are Trying to Take My Jesus: One World, Many Religions
The SEED: Ephesians 4:2-3
- Session 4 – Your Church Does Not Look like My Church: Ecumenism, Ethnicity, and Denominationalism within the Christian Faith
The SEED: Isaiah 56:7
- Session 5 – That’s Not My Problem: Christian Responses to AIDS, Hunger, Genocide, and Other Issues Facing Third-world Countries
The SEED: Matthew 25:40
- Session 6 – You Want Me to Go WHERE?: The Call to Ministry beyond the Church Walls
The SEED: Acts 16:9-10
- Session 7 – We Are Not Alone: Facing Arrogance and Greed in the Global Community
The SEED: Habakkuk 2:4-5
- Session 8 – Is It Just Me, or Is It Getting Hotter Out Here?: Global Warming and the Christian Perspective
The SEED: Genesis 1:28