



## A Resource for Making Followers of Jesus Christ

1. The pain of human heartache and the sting of evil, destruction, and death which mark human history do not bear witness to God's loving design, but to a world that is not as it should be. Yet, God is healing this world, one person at a time, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and our faith in him.
2. Jesus Christ is God incarnate! As the only true way to know God, Jesus calls all people to become His disciples, following Him in obedient faith. He also calls His followers to disciple others, even as He tells each of us to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God. Here is the story of that good news.
3. Out of an overflow of love and for God's glory, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit created this world and all that is in it, from nothing. God created the human family in his own image and likeness, intending us to live and love in relationship with God, each other, our selves, and the rest of creation.
4. With great generosity, God assigned human beings deep and fulfilling purposes on the earth. Like prophets, we are to name God's intentions and advance his purposes. Like priests, we offer ourselves to mediate God's presence and declare God's glory through our joyful submission and worship. Like kings, we are to exercise the loving rule of God over every corner of creation.
5. Yet, with reckless abandon, our first parents cast off God's loving rule, plunging the world into rebellion and inviting darkness to reign. As we've followed in their footsteps, no corner of the world has been spared from the devastating effects of human crookedness.
6. Removed from the presence of a loving God who will not dwell with anything impure, and consigned to eventual death, we've lost so much. Disconnected from our Heavenly Father, and no longer aware of our intrinsic value, we live as orphans seeking to find or create an identity for ourselves.
7. Having welcomed evil through our rebellion, we now live under its dominion and with its bitter consequences. Often, our work is toilsome and futile; our relationships are strained and broken; our purpose is elusive. We experience brokenness in our relationship with God, others, ourselves, and the rest of creation.



8. Rather than declaring God's glory, advancing God's intentions, and exercising God's loving rule, we've come under the influence of Satan—the ultimate rebel and ruler of this dark world. By our pride, deception, greed, and rebellion, we position ourselves to be oppressed. We are truly in bondage to our sins, as well as to Satan.
9. We are also unquestionably stuck. Not only do we experience the bitter consequences of our brokenness and rebellion, but we have earned for ourselves a just punishment for our sins. Because God is perfect in goodness and purity, we owe God a righteousness that we are not able to supply; we simply cannot redeem ourselves, nor can we heal this world. Left to ourselves, we are destined to the hell of eternal separation from God and all that is good.
10. Yet God does not leave us to ourselves! From the moment sin enters the world, God is merciful, promising and working for restoration. Even as God is candid with our first parents about the consequences of their rebellion, he graciously promises a deliverer to eventually crush Satan and all that sin has unleashed.
11. While the human family spirals deeper into chaos and rebellion, God embarks upon a long road of redemption: he cleanses the earth through a flood, he calls Abraham and from him a nation of people, and then God promises that through them, he will bless the whole earth.
12. God pledges himself to this people with loving faithfulness as he delivers them from the cruelty of bondage to slavery in Egypt in a way that foreshadows human deliverance from their slavery to sin. God calls these people to be, “a kingdom of priests, a holy people,” and teaches them to worship and live as people who, once again, reflect his glory and goodness to the world.
13. Rather than reflect the light of God's presence and goodness to the nations around them, these people display the stubborn tenacity of sin. Rejecting God as their King, they are unable to have a transformative effect on the world; instead they reflect the brokenness and rebellion of the world in ever-increasing measure.
14. With unmatched patience, God spends long centuries raising up leaders who, with his Spirit upon them, call his people to return to God. These prophets, and occasionally, priests, and kings, repeatedly implore God's people to submit to his Kingship and live faithful lives of righteousness, justice, and holiness.



15. Even as it becomes clear that his people cannot produce this righteousness in their own strength, Old Testament prophets begin to herald the coming of a Messiah who will crush evil, deliver people from their sins, and fill them with the very Spirit of God. The Messiah will be a Prophet who speaks the true words of God, a Priest who brings healing and makes full atonement for the sins of his people, and a King who ushers in a new, worldwide era of righteousness, joy, and peace.
16. In the fullness of time, Jesus, the Messiah, began to do all that was prophesied about him. God the Son became human: Jesus is fully human, and yet, still fully divine. Reversing the pattern of our first parents, Adam and Eve, Jesus lived the life we were created for. He modeled perfect trust, loving submission, and intimate union with God the Father.
17. Conceived by and filled with the Holy Spirit from birth, Jesus began his widespread, public earthly ministry of ushering in God's kingdom only after the Holy Spirit came upon him for power at his baptism. Jesus embodied, proclaimed, and advanced the kingdom of God on the earth by healing and delivering the bodies and souls of all who came to him. Jesus showed the world God's intention to restore all of life and creation to once again live and flourish under his gracious rule.
18. In Jesus, we see the full image and likeness of God! Rich in mercy, compassion, and forgiveness, yet unwavering in truth, justice, and righteousness; Jesus clarifies that all of God's laws and all of God's prophets point to this: loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and loving our neighbor as ourselves.
19. As the only true way to know and relate to God, Jesus calls all people to follow, and therefore to re-shape their entire lives around him. He redeems and restores each man, woman, and child who learns to love and obey him more than they love their own life. This requires humility and repentance.
20. Jesus models this love for and obedience to God the Father through his own life by allowing himself to be unjustly crucified; through his death, Jesus makes payment for sin and reconciles all who believe in him with God the Father. Jesus also liberates his followers from Satan and all the powers of darkness.
21. Rising from the dead, Jesus inaugurates a new creation where sin and death no longer reign! He is the first fruits of this new creation; his resurrection is a promise of ours to come. As our descent into and rising out of the waters of baptism signify, our old self has truly died with Jesus, and a new life, in Christ, has begun; we are a new creation!



22. True faith in Jesus brings us into the most glorious inheritance: adopted as dearly loved children of God the Father, all guilt and shame are washed away as we are clothed in Jesus' righteousness. Filled with his Spirit and united to him, nothing can separate us from the love of God. Our entire inheritance is rooted in Jesus' perfect performance, and not in our own. This grace produces a joyful willingness to reject sin and grow in true devotion to Christ.
23. Jesus is Lord! Having received all authority in heaven and on earth, Jesus fully restores our identity and purpose. As the Father sent him, Jesus commissions his followers to spread the good news of God's reign and make disciples of all people. Jesus promises his continual presence as we embody, proclaim, and advance his kingdom in the power of his Holy Spirit.
24. From heaven, where Jesus now reigns, he sends the Holy Spirit to draw people to repentance and faith in him, move us to righteousness, fill us with joy and peace, empower us for witness to others, and bind us together in love with the community of all those who trust in and obey him. Our lives are now filled with fresh purpose and meaning as we join God in his mission to renew all things.
25. In his death and resurrection, Jesus not only heals our relationship with God the Father, but also with each other. Just as we receive grace generously from God, so we are to extend it to every other person. As we are restored in the image of God, we are brought to unity and community as one family of God. There are to be no dividing walls of hostility.
26. God's grace produces a willingness to forgive others as we have been forgiven by God. Although not all forgiveness leads to reconciliation, God's children reflect our Father's image by forgiving sins and learning to bless even our enemies.
27. As we increasingly yield ourselves to the one who has saved us, his life flows through us to family and friends, strangers, and enemies alike. Jesus' love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are increasingly ours as we are renewed in the image and likeness of God. God's laws—his ways—are truly written on our hearts.
28. Along with these fruits of God's Spirit, all true followers of Jesus Christ grow in love for and submission to the Holy Bible as the Word of God. Through the Bible, God himself feeds, instructs, warns, guides, counsels, and comforts us.



29. Followers of Jesus also grow in the joy of direct communion with God through prayer. Prayer involves bringing worship and thanksgiving, confessing sins and receiving forgiveness, learning to not only lament the brokenness within our lives and the world, but also to join with Jesus in his ministry of intercession.
30. Even now, we share in Jesus' reign. The work of intercessory prayer is a primary means by which we exercise our delegated authority to shape the earth for God's glory. As we intercede, the Holy Spirit works with and through us to pray for God's kingdom to come and his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.
31. Prayer is always to be partnered with godly action--positively impacting the cities and nations in which God calls us to live by caring for the poor, feeding the hungry, standing against injustice and oppression, and representing Jesus, who is restoring all things.
32. In all of this, the Church has an incredibly high calling. As the body of the Lord Jesus on earth, we are to be a foretaste of the coming kingdom of God in its fullness: humble, loving, holy, just, righteous, gifted, and full of worship.
33. For fulfilling our part of this calling, God generously provides us with spiritual gifts. These are talents that seem to flow out of the unique way we image God. They are also supernatural expressions of the Holy Spirit given for specific ministry needs. God also provides particular people as gifts to lead, teach, care for, encourage, and build us up in Christ.
34. These gifts and Christ's continual presence are necessary because life in a world that is in rebellion against God is very difficult for followers of Jesus. Our bodies break down; the chaos and brokenness of the world affect us deeply; we are constantly tempted toward indulging our old, sinful selves, and we experience sustained pressure from the kingdom of darkness.
35. Yet, Jesus promises a reward to all who overcome: to all who through faithful endurance, persevere to the end. This requires being prayerful, alert, and full of the Holy Spirit because Jesus warns that his return will be preceded by a period of increased wickedness and great deception. During this period, the love of most will grow cold, and many will turn away from the faith; they will betray and hate one another.



36. This period will culminate in the revealing of a man of lawlessness: one who will not only oppose Jesus Christ, but will also exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped. He will have the power to deceive many through counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders, and will delude all who do not love the truth.
37. However, after the good news of the kingdom of God has reached all nations, Jesus will return, and he will overthrow the lawless one. Jesus will then proceed to destroy all rulers, authorities, and powers that resist God, eliminating each of God's enemies as He ushers in his kingdom in its fullness.
38. All people will be resurrected. Believers will receive new, glorified bodies. And Jesus, our merciful high priest, will judge the living and the dead. The righteous: those who have faith in and obey Jesus, will receive a rich welcome into Jesus' eternal kingdom, while the wicked: those who reject Jesus and persist in evil, will be assigned a place with Satan and his angels, and will be forever separated from God and all goodness.
39. Followers of Jesus who are saved by faith in God's grace alone will experience a judgment of our works; this means that there will be an inspection of our lives to see what of our motives, work, and ministry are of eternal value. While for some this will be quite sobering, for others it is incredibly hopeful as Jesus promises great reward to those who make sacrifices for him and his kingdom in this life.
40. After Satan, sin, and evil have been completely overcome, even death will be destroyed. Finally, mourning, crying, and pain will be no more! Jesus will hand over the kingdom to his Father and welcome all his followers into a renewed heaven and earth. In this new creation the presence and glory of God will be full and unhindered. A great banquet awaits as God will once again dwell with his people, and everything will be set right! Hallelujah!