

THE BASICS

BEING CHRIST LINCOLN



christ lincoln
A LUTHERAN MINISTRY



THE BASICS COURSE SYLLABUS

WHAT IS THE BASICS?

Mission & Vision: Connecting others to Christ, together growing in his Word, so that all may know Jesus

The Basics Course serves as a training ground for anyone seeking to learn more about the foundations of our Christian faith and Lutheran tradition. It is designed to be a tool aiding you as you seek to be a disciple of Jesus within the context of your own life and as a part of our local church.

Secondly, The Basics serves as a way for those who belong here at Christ Lincoln to connect more deeply with their fellow church family and to find ways to engage in our discipleship settings of Rows (places of worship), Circles (small groups, bible studies, or fellowship groups), Arrows (service opportunities), and Dots (time and space for personal devotion and solitude).

And finally, The Basics is the process we use to welcome new people into membership here at Christ Lincoln. We believe membership to a church family is a commitment that honors God, honors others, and honors you! So as many of you are seeking membership we pray this course is a blessing to you in several ways as you commit yourselves to this local church family.

God has revealed himself to us in His creation and through his Word, which we will talk about in this course. It is a blessing that he has done this and we get to learn and grow together in understanding Him, ourselves, and what it all means for our lives. Course Topics Include:

- This church believes in Jesus
- This church believes in the Trinitarian God
- This church holds a Cross Centered Theology
- This church believes in the authority of The Bible and Prayer
- This church desires to hold a proper distinction between Law & Gospel
- This church believes in a Biblical view of Creation
- This church recognizes a Biblical view of Humanity & Sin
- This church believes in Justification & Sanctification
- This church recognizes God's gifts to his church through Sacraments
- This church is The Church & Christ Lincoln
- This church makes a Statement of Faith

WHAT WILL YOU LEARN?

As you walk through the Basics course, you will learn about what we believe here at Christ Lincoln, what our Lutheran tradition confesses, and what the broader christian church affirms. You will learn:

- why we believe the Bible is the true, inerrant Word of God
- what we believe about God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
- how we understand God's intended purposes of the Law and the Gospel
- why we practice the sacraments the way we do within our church life
- why we value confirmation and statements of faith

COURSE TOPIC OVERVIEWS

Jesus - This course begins with the object of our faith - the reason for our gathering together as a church at all. Jesus Christ, the Savior and King, who lives and reigns. All other “basics” of our christian and Lutheran traditions flow from our knowledge of and belief in Jesus Christ. So He is a natural place to begin. In this section we will discuss his nature, his roles, and why he is at the center of our church and lives.

God - Many religions throughout history have constructed ideas, or idols, of “gods.” In the Christian and Lutheran faith, we believe in one God who is triune in nature, having three distinct persons; the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We affirm these three persons as one God who is revealed to us as such in scripture. In this course we will discuss who God is and what we know about Him.

Theology - Christian Theology is the study of God as he reveals himself. Since God reveals himself in creation and in his Word, everyone is a theologian! The purpose of Christian Theology is to communicate the saving Gospel to all people and to nurture such faith within us. There are various divisions in theology that we won't dive into in this particular course, but it is important to mention that Lutheran theology insists that Holy Scripture must be the source of theology and standard by which we evaluate all theology (*sola scriptura*).

The Bible and Prayer - Lutherans believe that the primary, authoritative source of knowledge and revelation from God is his very word, the Bible. We believe that the bible is not just about man's search for God, but God's desire to communicate truth to his image bearers of creation - humanity. In this Basics course, we will look at what the Bible is, why we believe it is true, and how that impacts our lives today.

Law & Gospel - God's Word carries many themes, but few are more crucial than the themes of Law and Gospel. Both are truths revealed to us through his Word, but are entirely different in their purpose and their effect on the lives of man. The Law of God is his desired law for the lives of his image bearers. The Gospel is quite the opposite. It is the revealed truth that God has performed the actions required to fulfill the Law and thus redeeming those who are in condemnation. In this course we will define each of these themes, learn about their functions and purposes, and learn how to properly distinguish them in our lives.

Creation - In our modern world the idea of the Christian view of creation has become rather offensive or worthy of mockery. Even within the christian church the views on the origins of our world vary. In this course we hope to cover what we mean when we affirm a divine creation, what the Bible does and does not say about creation, and even how to engage science and scripture.

Humanity & Sin - As we wrestle with the age-old question, “who am I?” we look to the primary source for such an answer; the one who created us and told us what and who we are. We are the crown jewel of God's creation, the image bearers of the God who formed us and all that is. In this course we will consider this question of humanity and what it means for how we live our lives as disciples of Jesus. We'll learn about original sin and the natural consequences of a fallen race (humanity). Then we'll discover the actual sin that we see in our lives and that perpetuates throughout our world. In this course, we seek to understand our sin, its consequences, and our redemption.

Justification & Sanctification - After discussing humanity and its fallen state in sin, we look to the doctrines of Justification and Sanctification. Christ accomplished the task of justification and his Spirit goes on to sanctify those whom he calls. We will learn of our comfort and rest in the justification we've been given. Also, we'll consider biblical examples of sanctification and the goal of it.

Sacraments - What are the means of grace? What are the sacraments? We will first seek to know and understand the gifts of God. This will lead us to discussion on what the sacraments of the Lutheran Church are and how they reveal to us God's promised blessings.

The Church - The Church was created by God and is persevered by him. We hope to learn about the nature of the Church and some of its attributes. God gathers his people around Word and Sacrament and we seek to carry that gift out here in our local community. We will learn of the LCMS's beliefs about the local and global church, as well as dig into our local church here at Christ Lincoln.

Christ Lincoln - To elaborate on our understanding of the Body of Christ, the church, we want to dig into some additional details of our own family here at Christ Lincoln. We will review some of the church's history, its structure, staff, mission, vision, etc. We love our family and we love the church so we believe it is important for our members and attendees who belong here to understand these elements of our church.

Statement of Faith - Finally we will review what we've learned and encourage the class to craft a statement of faith. A profession of what you believe about these ultimate questions.

SAMPLE PERSONAL INFO PAGE



Meet Your Mentors! (save their info in your phone)

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Download Church Center App (please download now!)

Join your Basics Small Group in Church Center (please join @ Orientation)

Complete Your Personal Data Sheet (please complete by end of the 6 week course)

Complete Your Next Steps Form (please complete by end of week 3 of the course)

Here's Access To All Your Weekly Videos

WK1 | Jesus + God + Theology | The Basics

Jesus | Individual Study Section

Jonathan Edwards wrote a book called “The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God” and in it he mentions that a mark of the Spirit is a growing esteem for Jesus Christ. **As you grow in faith, what about Jesus compels you to think more highly of him?**

We learned that Jesus is both God and man. He is absolutely, truly both, not lacking in either nature. **When you think of Jesus as you know him, what comes to mind most? His humanity or his deity?**

When you consider your own personal relationship with Jesus, **what are some ways in which you invest in that relationship?** He tells us that he is with us and that he’s sent his Spirit to dwell within us. **In what ways do you experience Jesus with you on a daily basis?**

Spend some time with your Bible this week. Read Colossians 1:15-19 and John 1 and see what Paul and John believed about Jesus . In our small group time coming up, we’ll spend more time on this and hopefully address the questions that have arisen in this self study time.

God | Individual Study Section

Many people find themselves with an unbiblical view of God. We are told in scripture that God has revealed a knowledge of Himself in creation, in scripture, and of course in Jesus. Somewhere along the line, we often allow the world, our sin, and the devil access to our view of God and they twist it into something that He is not!

In your own words, how would you describe God?

We oftentimes will look to our authorities in life to craft a view of who God is. My experience being parented by my mother and father, being taught by teachers and coaches, and even watching pastors, civic leaders, and other adults shapes my view of the ultimate authority, God.

What has been your impression of God as you've grown from childhood until today?

The world would tell us that a “good” God wouldn’t allow such suffering. Satan would twist our thinking to say a “just” God wouldn’t allow such oppression and devastation to occur. And our sin clouds our hearts and minds from truly knowing all that is God. So what are we left to believe? We believe that God reveals Himself in creation, in scripture, and in Jesus.

What are some differences about God you notice when you read the OT and the NT? Is it possible that God is not different, but rather we are limited in our ability to understand all that He is doing?

What we believe about God will directly impact our relationship with Him. A central belief is whether we trust that He is what He says He is. Is the Father an almighty creator? Is the Son the perfect lamb who sacrificially saved us from our sin and condemnation? Is the Holy Spirit the powerful force that is moving to preserve the saints, forgive people of their sin, and point people to the truth of everlasting life?

How do you see God? What questions do you need answered to subscribe to the Lutheran doctrine of God as described in the video?

Spend some time with your Bible this week. Read Genesis 1-3. Read the first 3 Articles of Luther's Small Catechism (Free Online). In our small group time coming up, we'll spend more time on this and hopefully address the questions that have arisen in this self study time.

Theology | Individual Study Section

Our past clergy-centric model of church has led many of us to throw up our hands and leave theology to the professionals, but I think scripture would indicate that it is for all of us. Our hope at Christ Lincoln is that we become a place where lay people are empowered by connecting everyone to the revelation God has given us and grow together in it.

From watching this video, in your own words, what would you say is the value or purpose of studying theology?

The topic or discipline of theology has become a massive, complex field (probably always has been), but can also be dabbled in in the simplest of ways. God's revealed Word has taught us that childlike faith is cherished by him (Mt. 18:24). He says that faith the size of a mustard seed is powerful (Mt. 17:20-21). He also says that all the knowledge in the world without love means nothing (1 Cor. 13:2).

Knowing that it is not an intellectual ascent to knowledge of theology that saves us, why might we put so much emphasis on theology?

Think back over your life experiences, where have you learned about the things of God? In school? Church? Nature? Elsewhere? Share some thoughts.

Where might be a good place to continue learning about the true God as he revealed himself? What's your plan to do that?

Spend some time with your Bible this week. Read John 20:31. Read Colossians 1:9. See what the Apostle John and Paul believed studying the Word of God would do. In our small group time coming up, we'll spend more time on this and hopefully address the questions that have arisen in this self study time.

Small Group Discussion Section

Discuss the following questions with your group. In *Small Groups at Christ Lincoln* we begin with a common understanding of guidelines. Before we begin we will read these guidelines and ask that they are respected by everyone as we engage in small group discussions.

- 1. Please read through the Small Group Guidelines before beginning**
- 2. If you with new groupmates, take it around the table and share:**
 - a. Your name,
 - b. Where you're from,
 - c. How you made your way to Christ Lincoln,
 - d. Something about yourself that you're proud of.
- 3. Our desire at Christ Lincoln is to lift the name of Jesus high and lead the people in our circles of influence to know him more and grow in their esteem of him. In what ways do you feel we might be excelling in this? In what ways do you feel we might improve in this?**
- 4. Do you know anyone who seems to have a deep, intimate relationship with Jesus? What do you notice is different about this person? Does it affect how they live their lives or treat others around them?**
- 5. Do you ever feel like the God we read about in the Old Testament is different from the God we read about in the New Testament?**
- 6. Is there an attribute of God we believe in that you struggle with?**
- 7. Understanding who God is, and who you are: How does this affect how you live your life?**
- 8. What do you first think of when you hear the word "theology?"**
- 9. Review the 5 sources of information that inform theology. If we're honest, sometimes we lean on things other than scripture. What other source do you tend to elevate over God's Word? (Example: I have a tendency to elevate my experiences and how my brain reasons. Those aren't bad things to help inform me, but at times I can slip into a mindset of elevating them over God's Word.)**
- 10. The Lutheran Church believes that scripture alone is a way of stating that the Bible is the only absolute standard for truth and all other means of knowing things falls under the authority of scripture. In our culture this can be a hard truth to hold onto. What do you find most difficult about what the Bible seems to teach us?**

Guidelines for Small Groups

Respect the Safety and Confidence of Others

Sharing is optional, not required. Devote attention to each person who speaks. Be sensitive, kind, and generous to one another with your comments. Honor one another by maintaining confidentiality. Anything shared within the group should not be repeated outside the group (unless it will harm you or someone else).

Speak for Yourself

Limit your sharing to your own experiences by using “I” statements. For example, “I feel angry when he does that,” rather than, “He makes me angry.” Making “I” statements is a way to take responsibility for your thoughts and emotions rather than attributing them to someone else.

Refrain from Dominating Discussions

Be brief in your sharing so that everyone has an opportunity to speak. Some people are more open than others or quicker to speak than others - please be respectful of those that might benefit from sharing, but aren't as quick to dive in.

Turn to Wonder

If you feel judgmental or defensive when someone else is sharing, turn those feelings to wonder instead. Ask yourself, I wonder what brought her to this belief. I wonder what he is feeling right now. I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself. By turning to wonder we avoid making false or unfair assumptions about ourselves, our circumstances, or others.

Welcome Silence

Attentive listening includes silence. If that happens, refrain from rushing in with comments. Use any silence as an opportunity to continue listening - to what was just said, to your own heart, and/or to God's Spirit.

Say 'No' to Fixing, Saving, and Setting Others Straight

Respect each person's journey and trust the Holy Spirit to prompt and lead each person differently and at a different pace. Focus on providing support and acceptance rather than instruction, accountability, or correction. This applies at all times - not just in the context of the group time. If someone desires such instruction, accountability, or correction they can and should deliberately ask for it from the person they desire it from.

Next Steps Form:



WK2 | The Bible + Prayer + Law & Gospel | The Basics

The Bible | Individual Study Section

Many people have a hard time with “the Bible” because they misunderstand what kind of book (or books rather) they are dealing with. The Bible is not simply a text that Christians use to gather rules and govern their own lives and the lives of others - but it is an entire library of literature that tells us who our God is, and who we are.

Our hope at Christ Lincoln is that we would better understand what this library of literature is so that we might become so devoted to it that we read it, learn it, and let it draw us closer to the God who’s revealing himself through it.

From watching the videos, what are some of the characteristics of the bible that stand out to you?

If we look at The Bible as a unified library that contains various genres of literature (history, legal writings, poetry, letters, etc.) we can gather some important truths;

- God is the protagonist of the story. He is the hero, the object of our praise and love, and is powerfully in control of his creation.
- Satan is the antagonist of the story. He is our adversary who is attempting to combat God’s ends from Genesis to this day.
- Mankind, and a relationship with man, are God’s desire. God is glorified in the saving work of Jesus - restoring the relationship with man and restoring His creation to His Kingdom.

God is consistently, faithfully pursuing relationships with his people, his image bearing creation throughout the Bible.

What has been your impression of the Bible as you’ve grown from childhood until today?

Today we have this library that we call the Bible. In Jesus’s day, they had what we now call the Old Testament (OT), but they would have just called it “the scriptures.” They believed, and we do too, that the pages of the OT existed, in part, to teach about the coming Messiah’s (Jesus’s) nature, His work, and the salvation that He would bring.

What are some stories in the OT that you know of? Google a bit if you have to, but can you think of how those stories point towards Jesus?

What we believe about the Bible will directly impact the effect it has upon our lives. Is it the inerrant, inspired Word of God? If so, it will likely infiltrate every nook and cranny of my world. Is it just a collection of writings that are good, but not authoritative? If so, I might let it sit on my coffee table, but I'm far too busy to give it much time. Or is it a scam of the most epic proportions?

How do you see the Bible? What questions do you need answered to make such a decision?

Spend some time with your Bible this week. Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17. Read 2 Peter 1:12-21. See what the apostles Peter and Paul believed about the Bible. In our small group time coming up, we'll spend more time on this and hopefully address the questions that have arisen in this self study time.

Prayer | Individual Study Section

Prayer is an amazing gift that God gives to us. Think about it. The all powerful creator of the universe spoke all things into existence and then made us in his image and put us in charge. Instead of honoring God we utterly betrayed him and instead of enacting his full wrath, which he could have, he unravels a beautiful story of redemption just to get us back into right relationship with him. And as a tool for showing us this love he allows us to come to him in prayer and have a line of communication to his very ears and heart.

After watching the video, if someone asked you what prayer is, what would be your response in your own words?

As we look at the Lord's Prayer, we see many different "kinds" of prayer. When you think about your prayer life, or what you envision when you think of prayer, what "kind" of prayer comes to mind? (i.e. Adoration, Intercession, Confession, etc?)

Spend some time with your Bible this week. Read through some of the highlighted prayers from scripture and take note of what your notice about them.

- **Jesus's Prayer in John 17**
- **Moses and Miriam's prayer song in Exodus 15:2-21**
- **Hannah's prayer of praise in 1 Samuel 2:1-10**
- **David's repentance prayer in Psalm 51**
- **Asaph's prayer of despair in Psalm 77**
- **The Prayers of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in Luke 18:9-14**
- **Paul's Prayer for the church in Ephesians 1:15-23**

Law & Gospel | Individual Study Section

One of the most common traps self proclaimed Christians fall into is the pit of legalism. We look to the law not as a mirror, curb, or guide, but as something we can use to gain merit that will translate into a reward. In the complexity of life we forget that we were dead in our sin, enemies of God, and blind to the truth when Jesus renewed our hearts. We find ourselves believing that we can somehow achieve some kind of moral balance that will earn something.

What kinds of behavior do you catch yourself doing because you feel you “must” do them according to the law? Or not doing because you feel you “can’t” do according to the law?

Don't get me wrong, the legalism trap isn't the only twisting of law and gospel. The other extreme might be the trap of cheap grace. Many times we become aware of the gospel and find ourselves abusing the grace of God and living intentionally sinful lives expecting God's grace to abound. This, too, is not a proper outworking of God's law and gospel. Following Jesus does cost us something - our lives.

How does your life look differently after coming to faith in the Good News?

Many Christians in our culture today believe in Jesus and are secure in faith, but if they were to encounter a conversation with an unbeliever they struggle to articulate the gospel in a clear, concise manner. This is problematic for us. We tell the world that we are his and that Christ died for them too, but when they ask us the most basic of questions - what is the gospel? - we stumble over our words.

In your own words, and in 3 sentences or less, explain the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is not stagnant. It is the motivation for the greatest rescue mission the world has ever known. You have been enlisted as a soldier in this great army - the church. You've been promised to be sustained and preserved in your mission by the Spirit of God.

Given that this is true, we might agree then that soldiers on a rescue mission ought to be proactive in their assignment. "Go, make disciples..."

**Who in your life needs to be told, or reminded, of the good news of Jesus Christ today?
How could you begin that conversation with them?**

Spend some time with your Bible this week. Read Romans 6. In our small group time coming up, we'll spend more time on this and hopefully address the questions that have arisen in this self study time.

Small Group Discussion Section

Discuss the following questions with your group. In Small Groups at Christ Lincoln we begin with a common understanding of guidelines. No need to go through them in detail again, but remind everyone of each of them quickly.

- 1. Please call to memory the Small Group Guidelines before beginning**
- 2. When you encounter a teaching of the Bible that challenges your beliefs, what do you do?**
- 3. Is there a particular issue upon which you feel a tension with the Bible?**
- 4. Our culture has adopted the Post-Modern view that everyone is entitled to establish their own personal “truth,” and there is no absolute truth. If God’s Word in Scripture is not our standard of absolute truth, what is?**
- 5. What about prayer is difficult for you? What about prayer comes easy to you?**
- 6. Do you feel you have to think or behave a certain way when praying? Why?**
- 7. How do you understand our use of the law without becoming legalistic?**
- 8. Have 2-3 volunteers share the gospel in their own words.**
- 9. Who shared the gospel with you? How did they share it?**
- 10. Knowing that you were bought at a price and then gifted eternity with God, how does that change your daily life?**

Next Steps Form:



WK3 | Creation + Humanity & Sin + Justification & Sanctification | The Basics

Creation | Individual Study Section

Read Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. **Now, compare and contrast the two chapters.**

When God says “Let **us** make man in **our** image...” **What do you think that means when he uses plural pronouns?**

Why do you think it matters what we believe about Genesis 1, 2, and 3? How would what you believe about the origins of the world affect the way you live your life today?

Spend some time with your Bible this week. Read 1 - 2. In our small group time coming up, we'll spend more time on this and hopefully address the questions that have arisen in this self study time.

Humanity & Sin | Individual Study Section

Is it really any secret that humans are flawed? Our culture today has crafted a narrative that while humans are clearly not perfect, their imperfections are something worth celebrating.

Based on the video, what might a Christian say to someone who says that our sinfulness should be celebrated rather than repented of?

Who you are is a massive question. So many people, both young and old, wrestle with it for lifetimes. If someone asked you, 'who are you?' **How would you answer that question?**

How you view yourself affects your relationship with God and what you believe about him. John Calvin said, "The whole sum of our wisdom consists of two parts, knowledge of God and knowledge of ourselves." **What do you believe about humans? What do you believe about yourself?**

Spend some time with your Bible this week. Read Genesis 3 and Romans 5. See the history of the fall into sin and the result that Christ has won for us. In our small group time coming up, we'll spend more time on this and hopefully address the questions that have arisen in this self study time.

Justification & Sanctification | Individual Study Section

Justification and Sanctification have become pretty high churchy words that don't get used much. It's a sad reality, but Satan has high-jacked these concepts and lured many Christians into the ideas of cheap grace and self help, rather than true justification and sanctification.

When you look at the landscape of the American Christian church, what do you think of?

Did you say a group of people who do good things and help those in need? Or maybe a group of people who fight back against secular culture or gather in worship on Sunday's? Maybe we are those things, but the church should be the bride of Christ! A people who recognize that they are fully forgiven, dearly loved creatures and therefore overflow with forgiveness and love. That's the church and we are that because of these doctrines.

In your own words, what would you say the difference is between Justification and Sanctification?

How does a proper understanding of these things help you avoid the trap of "Americanized Christianity" and remain rooted in Jesus Christ?

Spend some time with your Bible this week. Read Romans 8:1-4. This passage helps us to understand the relationship between justification and sanctification.

Small Group Discussion Section

Discuss the following questions with your group. In Small Groups at Christ Lincoln we begin with a common understanding of guidelines. No need to go through them in detail again, but remind everyone of each of them quickly.

- 1. Please call to memory the Small Group Guidelines before beginning**
- If you had a friend that said, “I don’t believe in God because evolution has proven he doesn’t exist.” **How might you respond?**
- Read John 1:1-3, 14 and Hebrews 1:1-3. **What role do these verses indicate Jesus played in the Creation accounts?**
- Genesis says that we are “image bearers of God.” Sin has, of course, tainted that reflection that we were intended to bear, but God promises to restore us back to himself through Christ. **In what ways do you think God intends to “restore” his image within you?** (hint: it’s not something you can do ;))
- 5. Is all sin equal?** Discuss why you believe what you believe.
- Many times as people come to Christ, they recognize the extent of their own depravity and sin. They can experience profound guilt and shame. **How should Christians respond to recognizing their sin?**
- When you hear in a courtroom that someone’s verdict is “not guilty,” they are then free to go with no consequences from the court. In the same way, our justification is a verdict that is spoken once and for all. **When you think about how sanctification was discussed in the video, what are your feelings toward being entirely justified but not yet entirely sanctified? Frustrated? Disappointed? Thrilled?**

Next Steps Form:



WK4 | Sacraments + The Church + Testimony | The Basics

Sacraments | Individual Study Section

The Lutheran Church defines a sacrament as a sacred act that is (1) instituted by God, in which (2) God Himself has joined His Word of promise to a visible element, and (3) by which He offers, gives, and seals the forgiveness of sins earned by Christ. So God told us to, he ties it to a physical thing, and it offers forgiveness of sins. **What was your understanding of what a sacrament was growing up?**

Some churches hold a much lower view of sacraments and some hold a different view that opens them up to more sacraments. **When you remember your baptism or partake in communion, what are some thoughts that come to your mind? What do they mean to you?**

Some illustrations of what is happening in Christian Baptism are adoption, being born again, or planting a plant. **Which of these illustrations or metaphors resonates best with your understanding of baptism? Why?**

Many people will take time before and/or after communion to reflect, pray, or meditate on a passage of scripture. If you practice this, what do you think, say, or do?

Spend some time with your Bible this week. Read Romans 6:4. In our small group time coming up, we'll spend more time on this and hopefully address the questions that have arisen in this self study time.

The Church | Individual Study Section

How do you view church membership? What is the purpose of being a member of a church?

The mission and vision of Christ Lincoln is to *connect people to Christ, together growing in his Word so that we may see all know Jesus.*

When you look at our church community, where do you see this mission being carried out? How are you contributing to this local church in order to carry out this mission?

Spend some time reading Acts 2:42-47 reflecting on what the early church committed to as a community of believers. In our small group time coming up, we'll spend more time on this and hopefully address the questions that have arisen in this self study time.

Statement of Faith | Individual Study Section

We all have a story to tell about how we come to know and love Jesus. In some fashion Christ has called us to follow him and to varying extents we have answered that call. Sharing our story is important because it helps us move from strangers to family. All our stories are different, but there is one enemy and one hero (hint: it's not you). When we hear the testimonies of how we've come to know and love Jesus, we see how much we have in common in the saving work of Jesus.

If you've never shared your story - or need some help recrafting in a concise manner - use the three sections/questions to help:

Before I Knew Jesus

What did my life look like? How did I behave and make decisions? What did my life revolve around the most? Where did I find security and happiness? How did those things let me down?

What Events or Seasons Led Me To Knowing Jesus

How did you first hear the Gospel? Or for those grown in nominally christian homes - How did the Gospel truly sink into your heart? What was your initial reaction to the Good News? When and How did your attitude change? What events or seasons did Christ use to call you into discipleship?

After Coming to Saving Faith in Jesus

What changes have taken place in your life? How are your motivations different? Where do you find security and joy now?

Helpful Hints

Write it out and practice it so that it is concise and authentic/natural

Keep it short - 5-10 minutes. At this length it's easily used in a normal conversation when opportunities arise. Your testimony is NOT the Gospel. Sorry to be so direct - but your testimony is entirely worthless if it doesn't end with a profession of the Good News that you were dead in sin and blind to the truth and that Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection carried you to a place of regenerating faith and that because of it you will one day trade in this cross of discipleship for a crown in glory. So yes, it is your story. But it's only worth telling to share the good news of Christ.

Write out your testimony and be prepared to share it with a small group. Don't worry, you won't be asked to share it on the mic, but it's an important part of your journey as a disciple. Sharing it with a few people in a small, safe place will help you get comfortable telling people about what Christ has done.

Small Group Discussion Section

Discuss the following questions with your group. In *Small Groups at Christ Lincoln* we begin with a common understanding of guidelines. No need to go through them in detail again, but remind everyone of each of them quickly.

1. **Please call to memory the Small Group Guidelines before beginning**
2. **If you're a communing Christian, what are some things you might do, think, or say before and/or after partaking in communion?**
3. **Share the story of your baptism with your table mates. Whether you were baptized as an infant or an adult, what does your baptism remind you of?** If you haven't been baptized, there is no shame in that whatsoever. In fact, what a beautiful opportunity to learn more about becoming baptized! *You're in the right place!*
4. **Even after these teachings, what are some things that still puzzle you about sacraments?**
5. **After all the teaching in the course, what are still some of your challenges with the church or your own commitment to the Christian faith?** **Please remember that we desire to speak honorably and put things in the kindest way possible when speaking about others.*
6. **Share your testimony with the people at your table.** Please take the number of people in your group, and divide the remaining time by that number so you know how much time you have to share while respecting everyone else's right to share their testimony as well. *(Example: 30 minutes divided by 5 people = each person has 6 minutes to share.)*
 - a. **If you're uncomfortable sharing your full testimony, then offer a clear, thoughtful statement of faith.** This would be what you believe about who God is, what He has done, and what that means for your life.

WK5 | Christ Lincoln | The Basics

Christ Lincoln | Individual Study Section

The mission and vision of Christ Lincoln is *to connect people to Christ, together growing in his Word so that we may see all know Jesus.*

Write down a few things that stood out to you from Pastor Eckelkamp's video on Christ Lincoln and the kind of church we desire to be.

As you anticipate meeting with our Connections Team, be thinking of ways

Next Steps Form:

