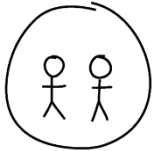


What is Faith?

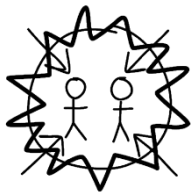
We don't want to just talk about the Bible; we want to put it into action. We want to live lives full of love and courage, and today we will be invited to grow in both love and courage. First, let's consider what Christians believe and what it means to follow Jesus.

Read the Big Story together



DESIGNED FOR GOOD

In Genesis, we see that God created the world to be a perfect place. He created us for right relationship with him, with each other, and with creation. Things were perfect!



DAMAGED BY EVIL

We long for these kinds of right relationships. But we thought we could run our lives better than God. Instead of placing God at the center, we put our own selfish desires at the center. Then everything fell apart. We damaged our relationship with God, with each other, and with all creation. Today we live in a broken, messed-up world. We have war, depression, anxiety, loneliness, abuse, suicide, drug addiction, shootings, etc. We deeply long for every relationship to be restored. Fortunately, God didn't leave us in this mess.



RESTORED FOR BETTER

God relocated into our world in the person of Jesus. He took all our brokenness onto himself. By dying on the cross and rising again, Jesus broke the power of our broken world. If we're willing to let God take his place at the center of our lives again, and if we are willing to trust Jesus with our lives, we can be restored to a right relationship with God. But that's not the end of the story.



SENT TO HEAL

Once we choose to follow Jesus, he sends us into the world to bring his love and hope, power and justice wherever we go. We get to live and declare this good news.

WHO IS AT THE CENTER?

Now we have a decision to make. Will we live with ourselves at the center of the story, or will we let God become the center? In order to be sent to heal, we must turn from our selfishness and trust Jesus with our lives. This is what the Bible means when it says, "Repent of your sins." If we are at the center of the story, our attempts to heal will be warped by our brokenness, which is not very effective. What would it take for you to trust Jesus with your life and relationships?

* This gospel summary is adapted from James Choung's book, *True Story: A Christianity Worth Believing In* (IVP, 2008).

Ponder Your Response

Read below, then share how each of us are feeling and how we want to respond today.

LOVE COURAGE

I'm a follower of Jesus.

For those of us following Jesus, our challenge is to grow as a courageous witness by sharing God's love with others. Look at this Love and Courage diagram. Which category best describes you this week?



Take a moment to pray and ask Jesus, "Who are you calling me to love? Jesus, bring a few people to mind. What is one step I can take to grow as a courageous witness?"

I'm considering following Jesus.

Trusting Jesus includes embracing, through the cross and resurrection, that we can be different people and receive a change of heart, both now and for eternity. This means making Jesus the center of your life, following his leadership. Are you ready to do that?

It's important to interact with God about this. Let's take a moment of silence. Ask God if he is inviting you to follow him. (20 seconds of silence)

Get a follow-up conversation with your small group leader to consider next steps you might want to take to grow in faith.