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## Part 5: What now?

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### Quick Review:

#### The Big Picture: **Redemption**

- The broken relationship between God and humanity is and is being restored

### We've asked 4 of our 5 questions:

1. What is humanity?
  - a. God's children, created in his image and likeness, made to live in his presence and free to make moral decisions. And now, we are personally and universally in need of God's restoration.
2. How did the relationship go bad?
  - a. Adam & Eve began a cycle of rejecting God to pridefully pursue knowledge apart from their loving Father
3. Why would God want to restore us?
  - a. The OT rolls out in seasons of God's Preservation, Promises, Provision, Israel's Prostitution, and God's agents, the Prophets: 5 P's
  - b. OT history reveals a God of mercy and patient love as Israel remained locked in a cycle of:
    - Apostasy, Oppression, Distress & Deliverance
4. How did God restore the broken relationship?
  - Jesus showed us a clear picture of what salvation really means and who God's people really are.

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### 5<sup>th</sup> Question: What now?

#### We have the “ministry of reconciliation”

#### Read: **2 Corinthians 5:17-20**

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup> that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

## Children with the Father's heart...

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The Luke 15 parable of the wayward son very clearly shows us how God feels about his lost children – those who are spending their lives seeking fulfillment where they'll only find fading pleasure. Now that we have “come to our senses” as the story puts it, we should be engaged in leading our “siblings” home as Jesus has done for us. The temptation is to simply “live for God” by hanging around the house, so to speak, being religiously devoted and even insulated from the world. But chances are, someone who understood how the Father feels about you played an important role in telling you who you really are to him. Now it's our turn to carry the Father's love to the pigpen!

**What God has done for us in Jesus now becomes the core of our purpose on Earth. In all that we do, we are forwarding the cause of our Father and the Son he sent to recover us all. According to Jesus in Matthew 28:19, our primary aim in life is in the interest of our spiritual siblings, many of whom are still in the pigpen.**

Discussion Question:

**How is it possible for us to be God's ambassadors?**

**How do we do this?**

1. The Gospel
2. The Spirit
3. The Church

*We have the **message**,  
we have the **means**,  
and we have the **movement**.*

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## The Message:

**“Gospel” simply means “good news.”**

The word is used 96 times in the NT. 60 of them are Paul's.

Discussion Question:

**What is the essential good news of the Christian faith? (Let's rehearse)**

**Read: 2 Timothy 2:8-9**

<sup>8</sup> Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, <sup>9</sup> for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained.

The Gospel announces the fulfillment of what was promised by the Old Testament prophets – namely, Isaiah 52:7-8. Jesus as the Messiah, or Savior, overcame the real enemy – death. And his ancestry is consistent with prophecy (Isaiah 11:10). He was truly the one to come. The good news is that God did exactly what he always intended to do and what he said he would do.

**Read: Ephesians 3:6**

<sup>6</sup> This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

True humanity has been united in Christ. There is one people of God. We are the children of Abraham. The children of faith and promise!

**Some important reading: Isaiah 40-66**

These prophetic chapters are central to the understanding of the good news that YHWH (Israel's God) would return to Zion. Basically, this meant that all would again be made right between God and his people. There is so much in these chapters that look forward to Jesus, not to mention the very scripture Jesus used to announce his own ministry (Luke 4:17-21).

## The Means:

**Read: John 20:21-23**

<sup>21</sup> Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." <sup>22</sup> And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Discussion Question:

**Why do you think we need the Spirit of God?**

**To be and to do...**

In a world that is still fallen, it is impossible for us to act in ways that please God or to fulfill the mission he has for us without him being hands-on. God's spirit is a gift of his grace. He is our counselor, our motivator, and our power source. In essence, we are joining our efforts outwardly with what the Holy Spirit is doing inwardly – in ourselves and in others. Without the partnership of the actual presence of God, our efforts would be in vain.

**Read: 2 Timothy 1:7-9**

<sup>7</sup> For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

<sup>8</sup> So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, <sup>9</sup> who has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.

The task ahead of us is never as great as the power behind us!

**Some important reading: 1 Corinthians 12**

The Spirit gives specific gifts so that we as a church can be united and effective in the ministry of reconciliation. In this way, we are empowered and equipped to empower and equip.

## The Movement:

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:27

<sup>27</sup> Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Discussion Question:

**Why does the Church matter?**

**Read: Ephesians 4:11-13, 16**

<sup>11</sup> It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ...

<sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

### A Joint Effort

Though it might be easy (though I doubt it) to maintain high morals and a Biblical worldview on your own, it's not God's plan. Because none of us are gifted in every way, none of us can be to ourselves or others what is necessary for spiritual growth and effective ministry. The Church means we get to do this together. If we're going to obey Christ's command to reach out to our lost siblings, then we're going to need help.

### Why Gather?

Hebrews 10:25 instructs us to get together as the Church to encourage one another. That's what the worship, prayer, Communion and teaching are about. These expressions of faith are essential to keeping Christ in the center of our lives and out lives in the center of God's purpose.

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“Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”

Ecclesiastes 4:12

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## The Beautiful End...

**Read: John 14:2-3**

<sup>2</sup> In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

### “Blessed Hope”

As we said in the first session, Christianity is all about hope. God has saved us from ourselves and from wasting our lives on earth. But the most beautiful thing is this: one day the Lord will return triumphantly to Earth and will physically live with us again. All

that we know to be true right now will one day become visible. The spiritual salvation that guides our values and our perceptions now will become a physical reality. The death we know to be a painful transition will one day be a forgotten figment of our imaginations. And the sin we still must reckon with daily will have no place in God's new garden.

Read: 2 Peter 3:13

<sup>13</sup> But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

Read: Revelation 21:1-4

<sup>1</sup> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

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## Conclusion: Oil in our lamps

Matthew 25:1

In Matthew 25, there is another story Jesus told about ten virgin bridesmaids who were waiting for the bridegroom to show up for the wedding. They all brought oil lamps, but only 5 brought extra oil. The bridegroom was "a long time in coming." And then in verse 6, the groom returns at midnight under the cover of darkness. Some of the bridesmaids had oil and the others did not. Those who did went in to light the party while the others went away to get more oil. When they returned they weren't recognized by the groom. And Jesus says, "Keep watch."

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## Read & reflect:

Acts 1&2, 1 Corinthians 12-14, Ephesians 4