



WEEK 1 COVENANT PARTNER CLASS VIDEO SCRIPT

Vow #1 (Salvation) By God's Grace, Jesus is my Savior and Lord

- God has saved me by grace, through faith, not because of anything I have or have not done (Ephesians 2:8-10).
- I am a new creation, a fundamentally different person, because of Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- The Holy Spirit lives in me and is continually transforming me as I live my life for Christ (Romans 8:9-11, John 14:26, John 15:1-17)
- Through Jesus Christ, God has given me eternal life (Romans 8:11) and I eagerly wait Christ's return (Revelation 21:3-4).

Outline

- It All Starts with Faith
- Embracing that We are a New Creation
- Developing a Personal Relationship with Jesus
 - ▶ Bible Study
 - ▶ Prayer
 - ▶ Reflection

The Covenant Partner Class Series consist of a weekly informational video related to one of the Covenant Partner Vows, questions to reflect on, and class discussion providing an opportunity to further reflect, share, and understand what is intended by that vow. The discussions also provide an opportunity to get to know the Elders who will lead discussions, along with the other prospective covenant partners in your class. It is my pleasure to join you for this video, discussing vow #1, Jesus is my Savior and Lord. I am Chris Ward, Lead Pastor at Westminster Presbyterian Church, and ... *[add any other brief introduction you like]*.

Faith walk is a term to describe the deepening of our faith and relationship with Christ as we walk with Jesus throughout every day of our life. This week focuses on the beginning of that faith walk. The recognition of our imperfection and the acceptance of God as our Savior and Redeemer.

It All Starts with Faith

Our *faith* in Christ comes from a belief, a firm conviction that all the Bible tells us of God is real. That is not a simple thing. There is no absolute evidence of that truth. Yet God gives us the ability to see evidence of Him in the world and in His followers in order to take that initial step of faith. As the Holy Spirit guides us and we learn more, we gain greater certainty of both the historical truth of the Bible and that God is still working in our lives today. It spurs us to obey and serve Christ all the time, in all of life, with all our heart. It will be a lifelong challenge, but one we pursue because Jesus is our Lord, and one we will fully realize when we are in His presence for eternity. (Hebrews 11 is a great description of faith if you want to read more.)

Take a moment to pause this video and think back to people, events, or other realizations of led you to take that initial step of faith to know Jesus as your Savior?

What does it mean to say, "Jesus is my Savior"?

1. We are admitting that we need saving, agreeing with Paul that our good intentions have been corrupted, "For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want it is no longer I who do it, but the sin that dwells within me" (Romans 7:15a & 19-20).

2. We accept God's grace, the unmerited gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, and only remedy. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Embracing that We are a New Creation

This is a life-transforming experience. By accepting Jesus as our Savior, we become "a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17b). We no longer live a life apart from God, plagued by doubts and fears that you will never be good enough, such as: you are worthless, you can never live up to your potential, you are stuck with the hand life has dealt you, you are powerless to make a difference in this world. Jesus frees us from the power of sin, frees us from guilt, and frees us from hopelessness about the future. The Holy Spirit lives in us, guiding our lives in a new direction, giving us new purpose. As a new creation, we are freed from all the labels and identities that the world wants to put on us. God gives us the most important identity we could ever have: a child of God, a son or daughter of the Creator of the Universe, one whom Jesus loves unconditionally and gave His life to save.

But this is just the beginning — at this point, we are just starting to get to know this Jesus. The one who was fully God, yet fully human. Born a baby in Bethlehem and growing into a man, He experienced all the struggles of human life in ancient Israel, ultimately dying a horrific death. Jesus' willing sacrifice enabled us to repair our relationship with God and have the life God intended for us. But it doesn't end there. He rose from the grave, spent time with His disciples, and then returned to heaven, from where He sent the Holy Spirit to live in and guide believers until we join Him in heaven.

What a story, what a miracle, what a gift! God has changed us, but where do we go from here? We cannot help but be grateful for this amazing gift and show that gratitude in the way we live our daily lives. Such amazing, unconditional love is hard to believe, but very, very real. It gives us the foundation and courage to live our lives differently, showing that same forgiveness and grace to those we encounter each day. It drives us to learn more about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the life He would have us live. It inspires us share our story and the amazing gift of grace with others. (Romans 12 gives a great picture of this new life.)

Take a moment to pause this video and think about how knowing Jesus as your Savior has changed who you are and how you approach life.

If now, or at any time during this video, you begin wondering, "I don't know that I've ever really given my life over to Jesus Christ," please reach out. Any of the pastors or elders would all be delighted to talk with you. You'll meet several over the course of the next four weeks. It only takes a short prayer to begin your faith walk, like the one shown on your screen now. You can take that step now!

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe You died for my sins and rose from the dead to set me free. Thank You for that gift, for forgiving my sins and creating a way for me to have a relationship with You. I no longer want to live my life for myself. I want to trust and follow You as my Lord and Savior. Send your Holy Spirit to guide and help me do just that. In Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.

What does it mean to say, "Jesus is my Lord"? It is to give Jesus absolute control of all aspects of your life, confidently knowing He has only your ultimate best in mind. That is easily said, and almost impossible to fully realize. It is the ultimate challenge and blessing of the Christian life. We can only seek to do this by the grace of God as we daily attempt to place His will before ours, to seek to do what He would have us do and not what we want to do. This is both a commitment and a process. It may be never be fully realized until we are with Christ in eternity, but something we can move closer to each and every day of our lives.

Developing a Personal Relationship with Jesus

Take a moment to pause this video and think about the steps you taken so far to develop your personal relationship with Jesus.

The **Bible** is a key way God communicates to us and the final authority how we live out our faith. We can learn from various Bible character's struggles, successes, and failures. We see that throughout time, God continually reaches out to reconcile people to Him. There are amazing teachings in Scripture that give us deeper insights into who God is and who we can be as His followers. If you aren't doing this already, you can start with just a simple reading plan, many are available online if you want help crafting one. As you read passages, make sure to pause to reflect on what you read. Though the Bible was written long ago, it has an amazing way of speaking to our situations now. Listen for the Holy Spirit to give you insights into how that passage may apply to you now.

Prayer is two-way communication with God. Ultimately, helping us align our desires with God's desires for us, even as Jesus prays, "not my will but your will must be done" (Luke 22:42). Through prayer, we are reminded of who God is, who we are, and our true identity in Christ. We build an intimate relationship with God, and continually affirm He is active and working in our world and lives.

There is no required formula or pattern to prayer. It is just a conversation with God. Most prayers involve one of more of these four components: praise, confession, petitions, and thanksgiving. Prayers can be spontaneous, such as calling out to God in times of distress or thanksgiving. Others can be regular times of prayer. In those times, you may want to structure your prayer to work through all four of these components as you talk with God. The Lord's Prayer found in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4, and also recited in our worship services also gives a pattern for prayer. Prayers often begin with an address: Heavenly Father, Dear Jesus, Lord, or other recognition that we are conversing with God. Prayers frequently end with, "in Jesus' name," recognizing it only through His sacrifice that we have access to God, and closing with "Amen," which is often translated "so be it."

When we **praise** God in prayer, it is for who He is, not just for the benefits we receive from God. It allows us to reflect on God's character. There may be particular characteristics that are forefront in your mind due to your current circumstances. To expand your reflections, some use the alphabet, coming up with an adjective for each letter. For example, awesome, beautiful, comforter, defender, eternal, forgiving, good, holy, inspiring, just, . . .

When we **confess**, we confront when we have blown it. However, confession is not a time to beat yourself up or dwell on your failures. It is a time for God to help you recognize where you have fallen short. It is a time for you to forgive yourself and seek God's help to not repeat that failure. It is also a time to remember that God forgave your sins through Jesus' death, long before you even sought His forgiveness. By recognizing that unmerited forgiveness, we learn to better forgive others. It also helps us to reach out to someone we may have wronged, seeking, and potentially receiving their forgiveness.

When we make **requests**, we are acknowledging our dependency on God, that we need His help, wisdom, healing, patience, love, . . . We bring our requests to God, *not to tell* God about these needs. He already knows our needs, both those we know about and those we don't realize are there. We bring are requests to God, *not to persuade* Him to take a particular action. He already knows what is best in the long run and acts out of His goodness for our betterment. We bring our requests to God to better align our desires with God's will, to recognize our need, and to acknowledge how He has, and will care for us.

When we **thank** God, we are recognizing God is active in our world and lives today. It should be a time when you pause and reflect on what God is doing. It can be about our world: for a glorious sunrise, bird singing, and other elements of creation. But it should also include more personal, possibly even trivial ways He is working in your day-to-day life: a friend's improving health, avoiding a car that almost hit you, a special time with friends, a child's first steps, finding a lost ring, or any other blessing you received.

In prayer, the Holy Spirit also communicates with us. It is important to pause and listen, not necessarily for an audible voice, but for insights or thoughts that the Spirit may prompt as you pray.

Reflection is a key component to solidifying our faith. Beyond reflecting on Bible passages and in prayer, it is important to make time to reflect on what God has done throughout your life, particularly after pivotal moments. That habit of reflection and sign-posting critical times you have seen God leading you can help get you through future challenges. In the midst of crisis, it is difficult to see God at work. We can even feel abandoned and alone in the moment. However, in hindsight, we can often see how God was guiding us, even carrying us as the “Footprints in the Sand” poem so beautifully describes. Take time to solidify and treasure those realizations. In times of crisis, remembering past challenges, and how God was with you then, can encourage and help you to persevere through the current challenge.

Take a moment to pause this video and think about one or more pivotal moments in your life where you can pinpoint God’s leading as He walked alongside you during that challenging time.

If you want to read more about deepening your relationship with Jesus, consider reading *Deeper, Real Change for Real Sinners*, by Dane C. Ortlund.

While all these things can be done in solitude, people were not created by be solitary creatures. We need community — friends, family, and others that pop into our lives for short or long periods. Similarly, our faith is strengthened though joining together in community with fellow believers. This will be the focus of week 2.

Closing

Thanks for watching this video! The next three weeks will begin with a similar short video, one for each of the Covenant Partner vows. However the next step is to participate in the Week 1 discussion. You should receive an email and/or text confirming time and place. In preparation for that discussion, please spend some time reflecting on the three questions that came out of this video in the Week 1 Handout.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion Slide & Handout

1. *What people, events, or other realizations of led you to take that initial step of faith to know Jesus as your Savior?*
2. *What habits (spiritual disciplines) have you nurtured to develop your personal relationship with Jesus?*
 - a. *Do regularly spend time reading or studying the Bible? What makes this time valuable to you? What makes it hard to carve out this time on a regular basis?*
 - b. *Do you regularly spend time in prayer? What about prayer do you find challenging or difficult? What do you love the most about prayer time with God?*
 - c. *What are the pivotal moments in your life where you can pinpoint God’s leading? Is there one you’d be willing the share with the group this week?*
3. *How has knowing Jesus as your Savior has changed who you are and how you approach life?*
 - a. *How are you different because of your relationship with Christ?*
 - b. *How is your relationship with Jesus impacting in your life right now?*
 - c. *How real has God/Jesus/the Holy Spirit been to you this week? Where have you seen God at work in your life or the lives of others this week?*
 - d. *How can you show God’s grace, love, forgiveness to someone today?*