

 **R**  **O**  **O**  **T**  **S** 



ROOTS

Foundations of Growth in Christ

Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.

-Jeremiah 17:7-8

Introduction

By its roots, a tree extracts nutrients from where it is planted, stands upright, and reproduces by bearing fruit from its branches. This course will help us do the same by exploring the relationship God has established with us through Jesus.

As a tree grows, so must its root system to support it. This material is designed to support and impact Christians at every stage of maturity in Christ. *Roots* is based in Scripture, so it is relevant to people of all places, ages, and backgrounds in establishing lifelong personal and communal faith habits.

What is the purpose of *Roots*?

Discipleship is the heartbeat of *Roots*. The Bible can be intimidating to say the least, let alone leading our families and friends through it. *Roots* equips Jesus' followers to flourish wherever God places them. Over the next several weeks, we will:

- Explore the narrative and truths of God's Word.
- Engage relationships more deeply in the family of God.
- Express faith tangibly in service toward others.

Whom is *Roots* for?

Seeds :: anyone mostly unfamiliar with the pillar concepts of Scripture and God's overarching story of salvation from Genesis to Revelation.

Sprouts :: believers who have a working proficiency of Scripture. With knowledge of God's story, they will apply more abstract concepts and draw connections between God's Word and their daily life experiences.

Branches :: seasoned followers of Jesus seeking increased Scriptural, doctrinal, and relational maturity to bear spiritual fruit and make disciples.

These categories are not set by age or physical maturity. They are general guidelines according to maturity in faith and familiarity with God's Word and Christian doctrine. Challenge yourself. If you find your stage's content simple, delve more deeply into the next stage's content. The goal is not perfection or mastery but growth.

How does *Roots* work?

Format

- Unit 1 :: God Says (10 Commandments)
- Unit 2 :: God Is (Apostle's Creed)
- Unit 3 :: God Hears (Lord's Prayer)
- Unit 4 :: God Adopts (Baptism)
- Unit 5 :: God Forgives (Confession)
- Unit 6 :: God Connects (Communion)
- Unit 7 :: God Loves (Service)

These units include conversation-sparking, thought-provoking questions, readings, and content designed to foster growth with one another and with God.

Our goal is not just to ingest content but to develop lasting habits of discipleship. *Roots* is for individuals in their journals, families around the dinner table, small groups in a member's home, and any other setting where meaningful interaction with the material and discussion is possible.

May God bless and keep you throughout this time together with him! Amen!

Resources & Abbreviations

- *SC* :: Martin Luther's *Small Catechism*
- *JSB* :: *The Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd-Jones
- ESV Study Bible

GOD SAYS

GOD'S WORD & WILL

"Without the Law, the Gospel is not understood; without the Gospel, the Law benefits us nothing." -C.F.W. Walther

God Says | God's Word & Will

Session One

Opening Question

When have you felt helped by rules? When have you felt hindered by them?

Teaching

King David wrote, "More to be desired are [the rules of Yahweh] than gold.... Moreover, by them is your servant warned..." (Psalm 19:10-11). God has placed his Law in the heart of every man, woman, and child in the world to tell us how and how *not* to behave. But God's Law tells us even more than that. It tells us about God! It reveals the kind of place God wants his world to be. It reveals the kind of people God wants us to be. As you read the Ten Commandments in the coming days, do not read an arbitrary set of "do's" and "do not's" or a checklist of rules. See the heart and will of God who loves people, battles evil, and treasures holiness in his world.

Watch

"The Law" by The Bible Project:

<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/the-law/>

Read

All: *SC* The Ten Commandments: Commandments 1-3

Seeds: *JSB* "Ten Ways to Be Perfect" (pp. 100-107)

Sprouts: Matthew 5:17-20

Branches: Psalm 19

Journal / Discussion Prompts

How do God's rules help and/or hinder your relationship with God?

What was your biggest takeaway from this session? How will it impact your day?

God Says | God's Word & Will

Session Two

Opening Question

Who has done something good for you that you could never repay? How has that shaped your relationship with them?

Teaching

Although God's Law is to be treasured as a picture of God's will for us and his world, it is not exactly good news. It reveals God's perfect standard for our lives—a standard we can never achieve alone. So instead of giving life, the Law testifies we are broken, condemned, and unable to achieve salvation in our own power. But God sent his own Son, Jesus, to follow his Law perfectly, bear our sin, and include us in his righteousness. He took our death and condemnation on himself, and gave us new Life and his right standing before God. We did not earn it or even ask for it. God took the initiative to save us from ourselves. This Good News of God's grace is called the Gospel.

Watch

"Justice" by The Bible Project:

<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/justice/>

Read

All: *SC* The Ten Commandments: Commandments 4-7

Seeds: *JSB* "Let's Go!" (pp. 208-212)

Sprouts: John 3:16-17

Branches: Romans 7:7-25

Journal / Discussion Prompt

What is at least one way Jesus changed how you relate to God?

What was your biggest takeaway from this session? How will it impact your day?

God Says | God's Word & Will

Session Three

Opening Question

When was a time you had difficulty forgiving someone or a time someone had difficulty forgiving you? What were some of the emotions that can come with unforgiveness?

Teaching

God's Law can function as a *curb*, shaping the consciences and behavior of all people; a *mirror*, reflecting our sin against its perfect standard; and a *guide*, helping us navigate our new, holy Life in Christ. But no manner of our obedience to the Law can forge a relationship with God. Jesus does that. Although we are entrenched in a sinful world, even contributing to its brokenness, we are loved by God and received as perfectly holy and beloved in Christ. By *his* obedience, Jesus frees us from earning salvation through *our* obedience. Saved by grace, we are free to walk with Jesus and embody his love for our neighbor.

Watch

"The Gospel of the Kingdom" by The Bible Project:

<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/gospel-kingdom/>

Read

All: *SC* The Ten Commandments: Commandments 8-10

Seeds: *JSB* "A New Way to See" (pp. 334-341)

Sprouts: Romans 13:8-10

Branches: Romans 8:1-17

Journal / Discussion Prompt

How does Jesus show that God's Law is about loving people, not just obeying rules? What was your biggest takeaway from this session? How will it impact your day?

GOD IS

GOD'S IDENTITY

"When the Christian confesses, 'I believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,' he is saying, 'I believe in that God who is gracious to me, a sinner.'" -Francis Pieper

God Is | God's Identity

Session One

Opening Question

What is an invention you could not do without? Why couldn't you?

Teaching

Scripture reveals that God is “triune”—*three* persons, *one* divine nature. Each member—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are equally and totally God. Many efforts have been made to explain this reality in simple terms (one apple, three parts—skin, meat, seeds; one essence of water, three forms—vapor, liquid, solid; one clover, three leaves; and many others). But no comparison can fully explain the mystery of God, and any attempt twists Scripture to a degree. Instead, we are best served by receiving God as he is—unfathomable but made known to us in Jesus Christ. Jesus shows the world that our heavenly Father takes care of us as his beloved children.

Watch

“The Nature of God” by Lutheran Hour Ministries:

<https://www.lhm.org/godconnects/topic.asp?id=24050>

Read

All: *SC* The Apostle's Creed: First Article

Seeds: *JSB* “The Beginning: A Perfect Home” (pp. 18-27)

Sprouts: 2Corinthians 1:3-4; James 1:17

Branches: Genesis 2:4-25

Journal / Discussion Prompt

For which aspects of God's creation are you especially thankful today?

What was your biggest takeaway from this session? How will it impact your day?

God Is | God's Identity

Session Two

Opening Question

What is the most significant sacrifice someone has made for you? What is a sacrifice you have made for someone else?

Teaching

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is 100% divine and 100% human. That math may not add up to us, but it's how he carries out his mission in our lives. As man, he died sacrificially for us. As God, he forgives our sins. As man, he relates to our temptation (though he did not sin). As God, he shares his perfect life with us. His acceptance by God is ours. His mission to heal the world is ours. Fully God and fully man, Jesus is the bridge between heaven and earth, the very image of God and his love, and our anytime access to our heavenly Father, whenever we pray in his name.

Watch

"The Messiah" by The Bible Project:

<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/the-messiah/>

Read

All: *SC* The Apostle's Creed: Second Article

Seeds: *JSB* "The Sun Stops Shining" and "God's Wonderful Surprise" (pp. 302-317)

Sprouts: Colossians 1:15-20

Branches: Romans 5

Journal / Discussion Prompt

How does Jesus produce in you comfort, fear, wonder, doubt, inspiration, excitement? What was your biggest takeaway from this session? How will it impact your day?

God Is | God's Identity

Session Three

Opening Question

How do you feel when you need help? Whom do you usually ask for help? Why that person?

Teaching

The Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and by the Son to prepare the world for his work. Just as he prepared the world for creation (Genesis 1:2), he prepares our hearts to receive Jesus and be made new. This “Helper” enables us to believe Jesus is Lord, follow him, and speak his Word to others. But the Spirit does not just work for each of us individually. He binds together all believers of all times and places, so *we* become Jesus’ body, his tangible presence, in the world. When the world looks at us, they see Jesus. What greater honor is there?

Watch

“Holy Spirit” by The Bible Project:
<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/holy-spirit/>

Read

All: *SC* The Apostle’s Creed: Third Article
Seeds: *JSB* “God Sends Help” (pp. 326-333)
Sprouts: John 14:15-16, 25-26
Branches: Acts 2:1-13

Journal / Discussion Prompt

What are some ways you experience God’s help throughout the day?
What was your biggest takeaway from this session? How will it impact your day?

GOD HEARS

COMMUNICATING WITH GOD

"Pray, and let God worry."-Martin Luther

God Hears | Communicating with God

Session One

Opening Question

In your opinion, what makes a person easy to talk to?

Teaching

Jesus taught the Lord's Prayer to his disciples so they would know how to talk to God, and he was very purposeful in how he structured this timeless prayer. He starts the prayer with petitions specifically about his Father, his kingdom, and his will. As soon as we say, "Our Father," we are reminded of who God is and who we are. He is over us, but he loves us as a father loves his children. Therefore, we acknowledge his will and kingdom are above our own, but through them, he works what is best for us as well. When we pray, we come to God with deep affection and reverence.

Watch

"Prayer" by Lutheran Hour Ministries:

<https://www.lhm.org/godconnects/topic.asp?id=24053>

Read

All: *SC* Lord's Prayer: Introduction-2nd Petition

Seeds: *JSB* "How to Pray" (pp. 222-227)

Sprouts: Luke 11:9-10

Branches: Luke 11:1-13

Journal / Discussion Prompt

Do you feel like you can talk to God about anything? Why or why not?

What was your biggest takeaway from this session? How will it impact your day?

God Hears | Communicating with God

Session Two

Opening Question

Who is the most trustworthy person in your life? Why?

Teaching

Sometimes, we might feel uncomfortable praying, because we do not know if our request is worth God's time. Especially when we realize that God already knows everything. If he knows I need food, won't he just give it to me? If he knows I'm sad or frustrated or ashamed, why do I need to tell him? God does indeed know what we need before we tell him. Actually, he knows what we need better than we do! But he loves to hear from us. He is eager to talk to us, and we need to talk to him. Through prayer, we align our hearts and hands with his.

Read

All: *SC* Lord's Prayer: 3rd Petition-5th Petition

Seeds: *JSB* "The Singer" (pp. 228-235)

Sprouts: Romans 8:26; Philippians 4:6

Branches: Matthew 6:5-8, 25-33

Journal / Discussion Prompt

How does God let you know you can trust him to meet your needs?

What was your biggest takeaway from this session? How will it impact your day?

God Hears | Communicating with God

Session Three

Opening Question

What are some of your top life goals?

Teaching

As people of God, we pray with purpose. Prayer is more than an Amazon wish list or a letter to Santa. It is communicating with God relationally. It is joy in his presence and pleas for him to make earth like heaven and to make us like him. God has a goal in mind for his creation, an end of all things, when everything wrong will be made right and everything broken will be fixed. We join that mission in spreading his Gospel and his love to our neighbors, but only at Jesus' return will God complete that mission. Prayer is how we ask God to finish his work of restoration and quicken that Last Day.

Watch

"Heaven & Earth" by The Bible Project:

<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/heaven-earth/>

Read

All: *SC* Lord's Prayer: 6th Petition-Conclusion

Seeds: *JSB* "A Dream of Heaven" (pp. 342-350)

Sprouts: Revelation 22:12-13; Psalm 102:1-2

Branches: Matthew 25:31-46

Journal / Discussion Prompt

Are your current goals and worldview in line with God's? How so or why not?

What was your biggest takeaway from this session? How will it impact your day?

GOD ADOPTS

GOD'S IDENTITY & MISSION

*"To be baptized in God's name is to be baptized not by human beings
but by God himself." -Martin Luther*

God Adopts | God's Identity & Mission

Session One

Opening Question

What are some ways you use water every day? Which do you consider to be the most important?

Teaching

When someone is adopted, their story is woven into a new story. They become part of a new family and are given a new future. To finalize an adoption, agreements must become legal and official, promises must be made, and plans must become reality. Baptism is like finalizing an adoption. It is more than a symbol of words and water. It is the start of a sacramental (or “mysterious”) union with God through Jesus, an entrance into a new family. It is our old story woven into his new one. Our old life of sin covered by his New Life of righteousness. Our old will transformed by his Holy Spirit.

Watch

“Covenants” by The Bible Project:

<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/covenants/>

Read

All: *SC* Sacrament of Holy Baptism: First-Second

Seeds: *JSB* “A New Beginning” (pp. 38-47)

Sprouts: Genesis 9:11-13; Acts 2:38

Branches: 1Peter 3:13-22

Journal / Discussion Prompt

What is a way your life story has changed as you have gotten to know Jesus better?
What was your biggest takeaway from this session? How will it impact your day?

God Adopts | God's Identity & Mission

Session Two

Opening Question

What is an event or occurrence or process in which there is more happening than meets the eye?

Teaching

When a baby is baptized, the ceremony is so pristine, maybe even cute. But the spiritual reality of what happens at baptism should shock us. Theologian William Willimon called baptism “not the water that washes but the flood that drowns.” In baptism, God puts an end to a former life marked by sin and begins a new life in Christ, marked by holiness. It is a one-time act, because it is a one-time promise of God for forgiveness and renewal in his Spirit. Every day, every moment after baptism is a new beginning. Not symbolically. In reality. Because through baptism, Jesus is forever resurrecting our lives in him.

Watch

“Baptism” by Lutheran Hour Ministries:

<https://www.lhm.org/godconnects/topic.asp?id=24054>

Read

All: *SC* Sacrament of Holy Baptism: Third

Seeds: *JSB* “A Little Servant Girl and the Proud General” (pp. 136-143)

Sprouts: Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-4

Branches: Romans 6:1-14

Journal / Discussion Prompt

Is the notion of death and new life through baptism scary or comforting to you? Why? What was your biggest takeaway from this session? How will it impact your day?

God Adopts | God's Identity & Mission

Session Three

Opening Question

When was a time you were handpicked for a specific job? Why do you think you were chosen?

Teaching

Do you know what “anointing” is? It means to bless for a specific purpose. And God has been doing it for a very long time. He anointed prophets, priests, and kings to be his agents on earth. Jesus was baptized as a new kind of “anointing,” a commission from God to do what all those prophets, priests, and kings failed to do before him. When we are baptized, we are anointed into his New Life and mission as workers *with God* to save the world!

Read

All: *SC* Sacrament of Holy Baptism: Fourth

Seeds: *JSB* “Heaven Breaks Through” (pp. 200-207)

Sprouts: Mark 1:9-11

Branches: Mark 1:4-15

Journal / Discussion Prompt

What is most significant to you about being partners with God on a shared mission?
What was your biggest takeaway from this session? How will it impact your day?

GOD FORGIVES

GOD'S GLORIOUS GRACE

"Just as surely as God desires to lead us to a knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship, so surely must we be overwhelmed by a great disillusionment with others, with Christians in general, and, if we are fortunate, with ourselves."-Dietrich Bonhoeffer

God Forgives | God's Glorious Grace

Session One

Opening Question

Where have you most wanted to go that you were not allowed to enter? Why?

Teaching

One of the best words we can use to describe God is “holy,” which means “unique” or “set apart.” God is perfect. Beyond perfect, actually. So perfect, in fact, that we cannot even imagine how perfect he is. Let’s be clear. God is so perfect that nothing even sort of imperfect can even be near him. And that is a big problem for people who sin—us. How can we sinners, so far from God come close to him? The short answer is... we can’t. So he drew near to us through Jesus. Because Jesus forgives us and makes us holy like him, we are not only tolerated in his presence but welcomed and loved!

Watch

‘Holiness’ by The Bible Project:

<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/holiness/>

Read

All: *SC* Confession: “What is Confession?”, “What sins should we confess?”, and “Which are these?”

Seeds: *JSB* “The Friend of Little Children” (pp. 256-263)

Sprouts: Matthew 11:28

Branches: Hebrews 10:19-39

Journal / Discussion Prompt

What might you say to someone (or to yourself) who feels like they have no business being in God’s presence?

What was your biggest takeaway from this session? How will it impact your day?

God Forgives | God's Glorious Grace

Session Two

Opening Question

Do you think truth-telling is important? Why or why not?

Teaching

“Confess” literally means to “say the same” about something. When we confess our belief by the Apostle’s Creed, we say the same things about God that Scripture does. When we confess our sin, we say the same about it that God does. We call sin what it is—brokenness, evil, rebellion against the perfect holy God. Confession is not a pity party but a realignment of our hearts and our truth with God’s. He shows us True Life in him, but we try to live other ways. He loves us and our neighbors, but we often just love ourselves. Confession says we need saving and that God can *and does* save us.

Watch

“Word Study: Khata - Sin” by The Bible Project:

<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/bad-word-series/>

Read

All: *SC* Confession: “What is the Office of the Keys?” and “Where is this written?”

Seeds: *JSB* “A Giant Staircase to Heaven” (pp. 48-55)

Sprouts: 1John 1:8-9

Branches: Psalm 51

Journal / Discussion Prompt

What are some specific ways you have lived differently than what God commands? After you have made this list, confess in prayer (by yourself or as a group) how these sins harmed your relationship with God and with others.

What was your biggest takeaway from this session? How will it impact your day?

God Forgives | God's Glorious Grace

Session Three

Opening Question

In your opinion, what makes a gift a “good gift”?

Teaching

Sincere confession is almost always difficult. It can be embarrassing, shameful, and scary to name our mistakes to God and others, after we wrong them. What if they don't forgive us? We never have to wonder that with God. He knows our sins better than we do, and still he is eager to forgive us. Confession is not for his sake but for ours. It makes us eager for his forgiveness, thankful for his grace, and aware of his Lordship. While confession should be done with remorse, it should also be done with hope. Because without fail, in Jesus, God forgives our sins. All of them. No conditions. No exceptions.

Watch

“Confession and Absolution” by Lutheran Hour Ministries:

<https://www.lhm.org/godconnects/topic.asp?id=24055>

Read

All: *SC* Confession: “What do you believe according to these words?”

Seeds: *JSB* “Washed with Tears” (pp. 280-285)

Sprouts: Psalm 32:3-5

Branches: Matthew 18:15-20

Journal / Discussion Prompt

What, to you, is the most difficult part of forgiving someone? What is most difficult about confessing to someone after you have wronged them?

What was your biggest takeaway from this session? How will it impact your day?

GOD CONNECTS

GOD'S PRESENCE

"In order that we may be able to lay hold on Christ more intimately and retain him more firmly, not only did he himself assume our nature but he also restored it again for us by distributing his body and blood to us in the Supper, so that by this connection with his humanity... he might draw us into communion and union with the deity itself."

-Martin Chemnitz

God Connects | God's Presence

Session One

Opening Question

Who is someone that has made you feel included? What did they do to make you feel that way?

Teaching

One of the most baffling aspects of Christian worship has always been the Lord's Supper. Along with Baptism, the Lord's Supper holds the title "sacrament," which literally means "mystery". Bread and wine mysteriously become Jesus' actual body and blood while maintaining the physical properties of bread and wine. Perhaps even more curious is that in eating and drinking, *we* are made the body of Christ. In 1Corinthians, Paul placed emphasis on the equalizing and sacrificial unity taking place—between God and man as well as between believers. To partake is both a joy and a solemn vow of unity with God and the brothers and sisters with whom we commune.

Watch

"Communion" by Lutheran Hour Ministries:

<https://www.lhm.org/godconnects/topic.asp?id=24056>

Read

All: *SC* Sacrament of the Altar

Seeds: *JSB* "The Servant King" (pp. 286-293)

Sprouts: 1Corinthians 10:16-17

Branches: 1Corinthians 11:17-32

Journal / Discussion Prompt

What does Jesus do to make you feel included in his family?

What was your biggest takeaway from this session? How will it impact your day?

God Connects | God's Presence

Session Two

Opening Question

If you could share a meal with anyone, who would it be? Why?

Teaching

Passover was Israel's feast to commemorate their salvation from Egypt, when "the destroyer" passed over Israelite houses that were painted with a lamb's blood on their doorways (Ex. 12:23). Jesus gave new significance to this feast the last night he was alive with the disciples. He celebrated Passover with them and said the bread and wine they ate and drank were his body and blood for their forgiveness—their salvation. We now celebrate this feast every chance we get. Jesus became a final sacrifice for us on the cross, covering us so God's wrath passes over us and he sees us as children in need of rescue.

Watch

"Sacrifice & Atonement" by The Bible Project:

<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/sacrifice-atonement/>

Read

All: *SC* Sacrament of the Altar

Seeds: *JSB* "God to the Rescue!" (pp. 84-91)

Sprouts: Matthew 26:26-28

Branches: Exodus 12

Journal / Discussion Prompt

How does Communion feed your physical and spiritual needs?

What was your biggest takeaway from this session? How will it impact your day?

God Connects | God's Presence

Session Three

Opening Question

How does it feel to be caught unprepared?

Teaching

Passover was not only a feast about salvation but readiness. Israel had to be ready to flee Egypt at a moment's notice for a one-way trip to the promised land. In the same way, each time we eat the bread and drink the wine, we are preparing for Christ's return, when he will be with us face to face in his eternal Promised Land. Recalling our need for him, uniting and being united with our church family, and being equipped to participate with him in the world are all ways we prepare for his return through this meal. This is not just grace for the day or the week. It has everyday and eternal implications. This meal is our prayer: "Come, Lord Jesus."

Watch

"The Day of the Lord" by The Bible Project:

<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/day-lord/>

Read

All: *SC* Sacrament of the Altar

Seeds: JSB "A Dream of Heaven" (pp. 342-351)

Sprouts: Hebrews 10:24-25

Branches: Matthew 25:1-13

Journal / Discussion Prompt

As you prepare for Jesus' return, who else might you help prepare and how?

What was your biggest takeaway from this session? How will it impact your day?

GOD LOVES

GOD'S TANGIBLE WORK

"Good works are evidences of [God's] presence and indwelling." -The
Formula of Concord

God Loves | God's Tangible Work

When roots are doing their job, they are mostly invisible under the surface, but from them grows something visible. The beliefs and practices we have explored manifest in intentional acts of love and service. This is how Jesus makes us his presence in the world, starting with your own community. Use the following questions to plan a service event in your community.

Questions for Planning

Whom will I serve? (Specifically, who will benefit from this service?)

Why will I serve? (What is my underlying motivation to serve? Why have I chosen the group previously named?)

What will I do? (In detail, what is the need, and how will this event help to alleviate that need? What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of doing this event?)

What/who will this event involve? (Who will be your partners in service? Whose permission will you need? What materials will I need, and how much will they cost? Etc.)

When will this take place? (What is the date and time of the event? How long will it take to gather necessary materials and get the word out?)

How and when will I follow up on relationships I built through this event?

ROOTS

