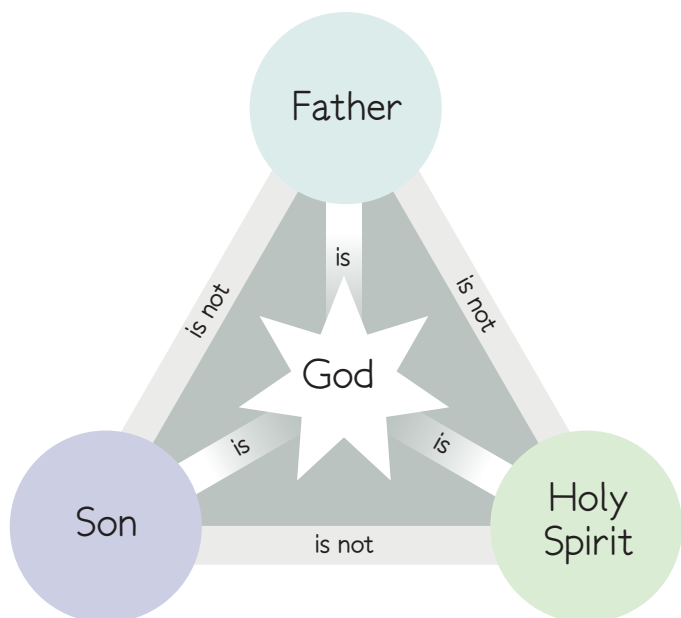


# THE APOSTLES' CREED



The creed provides an important answer to the question "What do you believe?" It was designed to help Christians understand and proclaim the most basic beliefs of our shared faith. Associated with baptism, our oldest creed was developed over 600 years and finalized in the 8th century.

I believe in God  
the Father Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ  
his only Son, our Lord;  
who was conceived by  
the Holy Ghost,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried;  
he descended into hell;  
the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and sitteth on the right hand  
of God the Father Almighty;  
from thence he shall come  
to judge the quick and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Ghost;  
the holy catholic church;  
the communion of saints;  
the forgiveness of sins;  
the resurrection of the body;  
and the life everlasting.  
Amen.



*Pontius Pilate:* a Roman official, who sentenced Jesus to be crucified.



*hell:* "place of the dead." Not all churches say this line. It was added in the 5th century.

*quick:* Some translations use "living" instead.



*catholic vs. Catholic:*  
*catholic* (little "c");  
the church universal.  
*church universal:* "in every  
age and in every place."  
*Catholic* (capital "C");  
the Roman Catholic Church.

A *creed* is a statement of belief, from the Latin word *credo*. *Credo* is translated, "I believe," which means, "to give one's heart." Say the creed and replace the words "I believe in" with "I give my heart to."

A creed outlines the important beliefs of a community, in a few concise statements.

**Other Creeds:**  
Biblical creeds include Deuteronomy 6:4; Philippians 2:5-11; I Timothy 3:16; and Romans 10:9.  
  
Historical creeds include the Apostles' Creed (finalized 8th century) and the Nicene Creed (4th century). Later confessions went into more detail about the three sections of the Apostles' Creed.



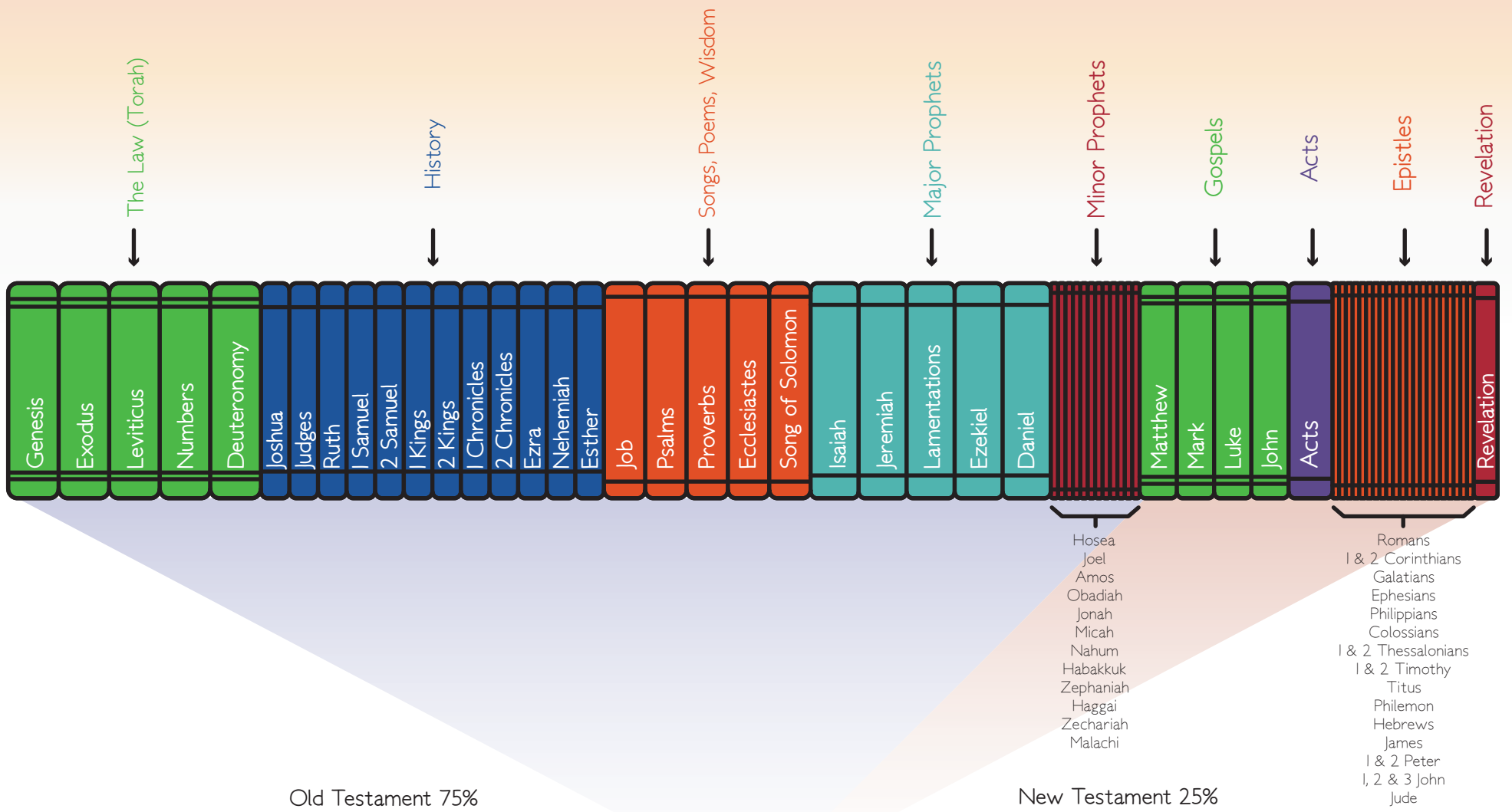
*Ghost and Spirit:*  
Both words can mean "breath," "wind," or "supernatural being."

*thence:* "a place previously mentioned" (the right hand of God).



*judge:* Sitting at the authoritative right hand of God, Jesus will make things right and restore justice to the world.

# THE BIBLE



The Bible

66 books

1,189 chapters

31,173 verses

808,000 words

## The Old Testament

Written in Hebrew (A few chapters are written in Aramaic.)

Written between 1400–450 BCE

The law, histories, writings, and prophecies that show God's relationship with ancient Israel

39 books

929 chapters

23,214 verses

Longest verse: Esther 8:9

623,000 words

## The New Testament

Written in common Greek

Written between 50–100 CE

The gospel of Jesus and the growth of the early church

27 books

260 chapters

7,959 verses

Shortest verse: John 11:35

185,000 words

What do the numbers mean?  
See: John 3:2 Say: John, chapter 3, verse 2

Book Name

Verse

Chapter

Translation Notes:  
notes that help us understand the choices people made while translating the Bible

JOHN

3

1

2

3

b

4

5

b

2,600 people named, including three Josephs and 31 Zechariahs

Longest name: Mahershalahashbaz  
Shortest name: Og

The Bible has been translated into 670 languages and the New Testament into 1,521 languages.

(source: <http://www.wycliffe.net/statistics>)

Hapax Legomenon: Words that appear only once in the Bible, including grandmother, garlic, and ceiling

Apocrypha: Protestants do not consider these writings to be Scripture, but they are of historical and spiritual importance.

# THE BIG QUESTIONS

**Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, do you turn from the ways of sin and renounce evil and its power in the world?**

**Who is your Lord and Savior?**



**Will you be Christ's faithful disciple, obeying his Word and showing his love?**

**Will you devote yourself to the church's teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers?**




# THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS

Creeds, confessions, and catechisms establish the historical boundaries of our beliefs, provide structure for our practices, and claim what is biblically just.


## Early Church | Ecumenical Creeds

Apostles' Creed	 <p><b>Date</b> 8th century</p> <p><b>Numbers</b> 3 sections 110 words</p> <p><b>Big Question</b> What are the most basic things Christians believe?</p> <p><b>Quote</b> "I believe . . ."</p> <p><b>Background</b> This creed is used widely in Protestant and Catholic communities. It is our oldest creed, used in a variety of renditions for over 600 years before being finalized in the 8th century.</p>	Nicene Creed	 <p><b>Date</b> 4th century</p> <p><b>Numbers</b> 3 sections 222 words</p> <p><b>Big Question</b> Who is Jesus? How is Jesus related to God the Father?</p> <p><b>Quote</b> "God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God, Begotten and not made."</p> <p><b>Background</b> The ancient church confessed Jesus Christ's humanity and divinity. This creed is affirmed by most churches in the world.</p>
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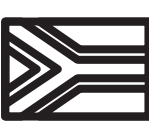
## Historic Confessions from the Reformation

The Scots Confession	 <p><b>Date</b> 1560</p> <p><b>Numbers</b> 25 chapters 7,102 words</p> <p><b>Big Question</b> How will the church in Scotland be faithful and distinct?</p> <p><b>Quote</b> "Give thy servants strength to speak thy Word with boldness."</p> <p><b>Background</b> Written as a theological foundation for Scotland and ratified by the British Parliament, the Scots Confession reflects a deep trust in God's presence and grace.</p>	The Heidelberg Catechism	 <p><b>Date</b> 1563</p> <p><b>Numbers</b> 129 questions 8,197 words</p> <p><b>Big Question</b> What is the foundation for all Protestant believers?</p> <p><b>Quote</b> "That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ."</p> <p><b>Background</b> Fights over the meaning of communion led two young men to write a catechism that was acceptable to both Lutherans and the Reformed churches.</p>	Second Helvetic Confession	 <p><b>Date</b> 1566</p> <p><b>Numbers</b> 30 chapters 34,095 words</p> <p><b>Big Question</b> How do Reformed Christians explain and practice our beliefs?</p> <p><b>Quote</b> "They are Christ's disciples by persevering in the bond of peace and holy unity."</p> <p><b>Background</b> The confession was written to help Reformed churches express their theological beliefs and practice their faith.</p>
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## The Westminster Standards

 <p><b>Quote</b> "What is the chief end of humanity? Humanity's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy God forever."</p>	<p><b>Date</b> 1647</p> <p><b>Big Question</b> In a broken world, how do we live according to God's will and responding to God's grace?</p>	<p><b>Background</b> In 1643, the English Parliament established a distinctly Presbyterian model for governance and liturgy of the church in England and abroad.</p>	<p>A catechism promotes conversation by providing questions and answers about the principles of Christian faith and practices.</p>
<p><b>The Westminster Confession of Faith</b> 35 chapters Over 12,000 words</p>	<p><b>The Shorter Catechism</b> 107 questions 5,020 words</p>	<p><b>The Longer Catechism</b> 196 questions 15,868 words</p>	

## Contemporary Confessions

Barmen Declaration	 <p><b>Date</b> 1934</p> <p><b>Numbers</b> 6 major arguments 1,806 words</p> <p><b>Big Question</b> If Jesus Christ is our Lord, can we support Nazi doctrines?</p> <p><b>Quote</b> "We may not keep silent, since we believe that we have been given a common message to utter in a time of common need and temptation."</p> <p><b>Background</b> Barmen was written in response to the rise of Nazi Germany, and the churches and church leaders that embraced it faced persecution and death.</p>	A Brief Statement of Faith	 <p><b>Date</b> 1983, adopted in 1991</p> <p><b>Numbers</b> 557 words</p> <p><b>Big Question</b> How do we celebrate the reunion of two long-divided denominations?</p> <p><b>Quote</b> "In life and in death we belong to God. Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel, whom alone we worship and serve."</p> <p><b>Background</b> After over 100 years of division, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) reunited two Presbyterian denominations. This statement expresses our shared identity and faith.</p>
Confession of 1967	 <p><b>Date</b> 1967</p> <p><b>Numbers</b> 4,634 words</p> <p><b>Big Question</b> How does the church respond to a changing world?</p> <p><b>Quote</b> "In the power of the risen Christ and the hope of his coming, the church sees the promise of God's renewal of our life in society and of God's victory over wrong."</p> <p><b>Background</b> Responding to deep-seated problems (racism, poverty, and violence), the confession called the church to work for repentance and reconciliation.</p>	Belhar Confession	 <p><b>Date</b> 1986, adopted in 2016</p> <p><b>Numbers</b> 1,167 words</p> <p><b>Big Question</b> What does the church do when sin constructs unjust systems of oppression?</p> <p><b>Quote</b> "The variety of spiritual gifts, opportunities, backgrounds, convictions, as well as the various languages and cultures, are by virtue of the reconciliation in Christ, opportunities for mutual service and enrichment within the one visible people of God."</p> <p><b>Background</b> Written in response to apartheid (a system of laws that gave privilege to white South Africans), the confession calls the church to work for justice.</p>

How do you add a new confession? To be included in the *Book of Confessions*, a statement must be approved twice by the General Assembly and by two-thirds of all presbyteries. Our newest confession was approved in 2016.

# THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

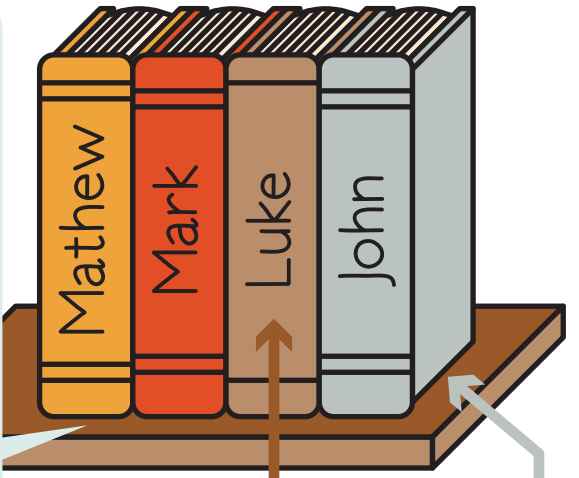


Christianity spread throughout the Mediterranean region as the stories of Jesus were told and the letters of Paul and other church leaders were circulated.

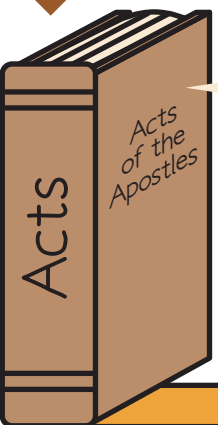
The New Testament was written in Greek, the common language of the 1st century.

Gospel means "good news" and tells the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The gospel is told in four unique books called Gospels.

Modern scholars agree that Mark was written first, ca. 70 CE. Matthew and Luke were written about 10 years later, adding stories of Jesus' birth and post-resurrection events. John was written ca. 90 CE, adding a hymn that offers a cosmic view of Jesus Christ.



The Old Testament is in the New Testament. The writers of the New Testament knew and referenced the Hebrew scriptures.



Acts is an account of the early church and its growth by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Acts and Luke share the same author and are two halves of one story.

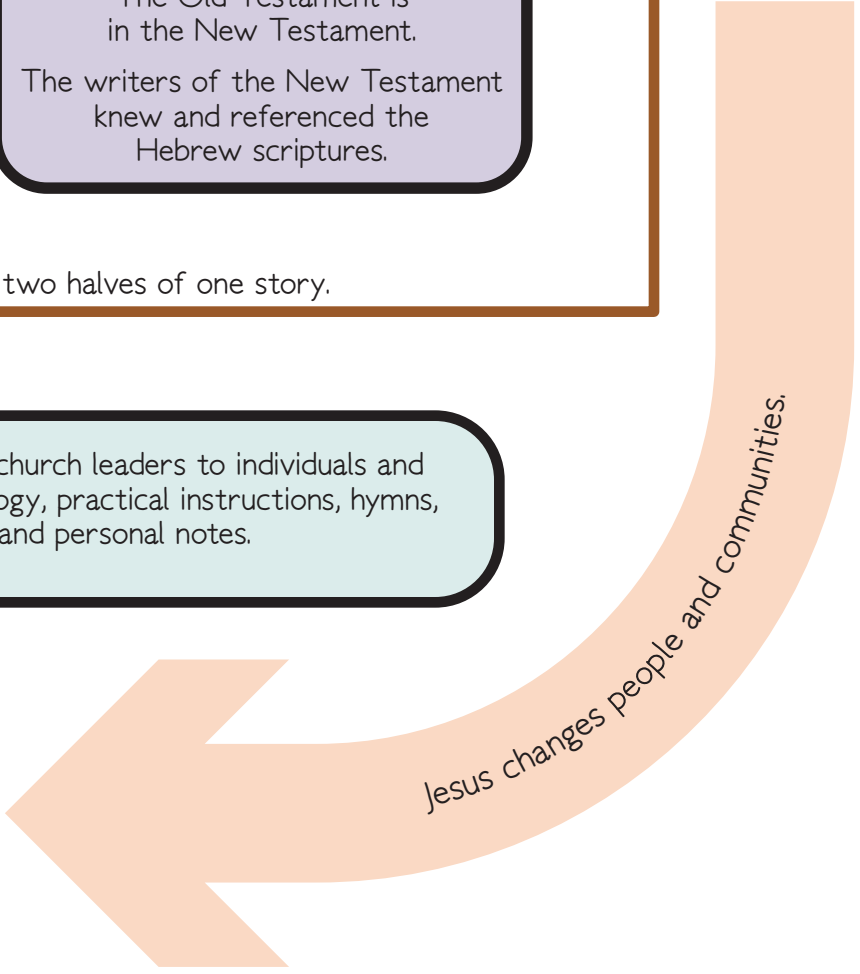


Epistles are letters written by church leaders to individuals and communities. They include theology, practical instructions, hymns, sermons, prayers, and personal notes.

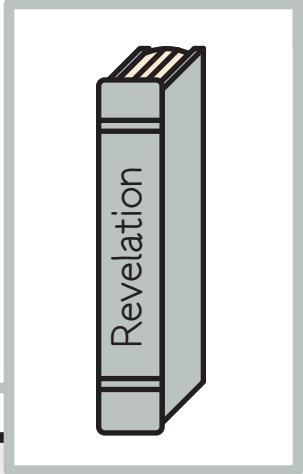
The Pauline epistles, written by the apostle Paul and his followers, are often directed to specific communities or people.

The pastoral epistles are written to church leaders about their role and work.

The general epistles are addressed to the "whole church" rather than just one community.



The Gospel of John, John's Epistles, and Revelation are addressed to similar communities.



When the early church was debating which books belonged in the Bible, Hebrews and Revelation were the most contested.

Revelation: In the face of destruction and evil, Christians are reminded that God is at work and sovereign in the world.

**Spoiler Alert! God Wins!**

# CHURCH HISTORY

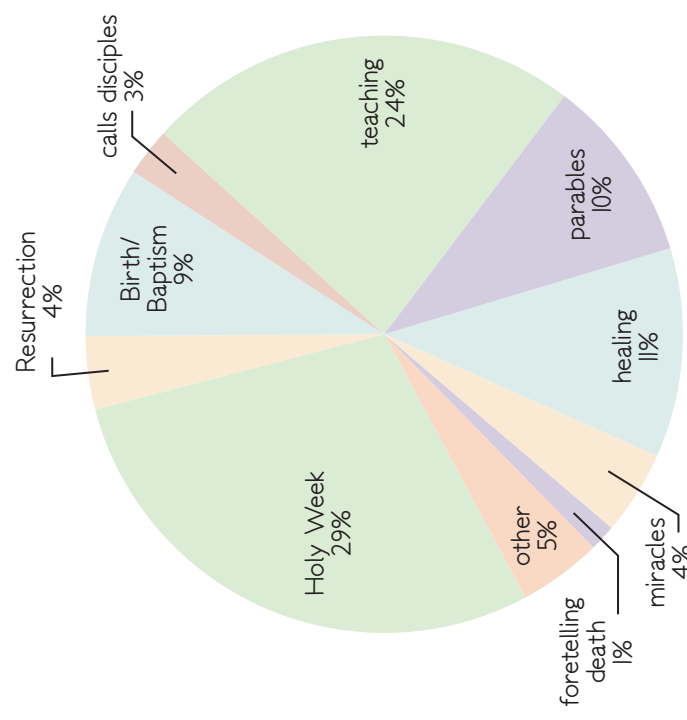


Throughout history, the church has continued to grow. Today, Presbyterians worship all around the world.

# THE GOSPELS

## What is a Gospel?

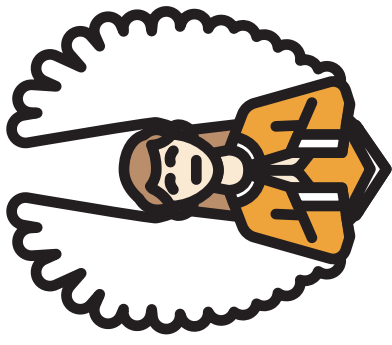
From the Greek word *euangelion*, which means “good news,” a Gospel is a written account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The four Gospels are unique ways of sharing the same information.



Each Gospel includes common themes, stories, and events with different emphases. All four Gospels end with an account of Holy Week and Jesus' death and resurrection. The pie chart above shows the thematic distribution of the four Gospels combined.

## The Synoptic (look-alike) Gospels:

Matthew, Mark, and Luke follow a similar structure and include common material.



## Matthew

Winged man: Jesus Christ's advent as a human being

- Numbers**
- 28 chapters
  - 1,071 verses
  - 18,346 words
  - Written between 80-90 CE

### Background

Matthew presents Jesus through stories and teachings to people who knew and understood Jewish customs and religious texts.

### Important Verses

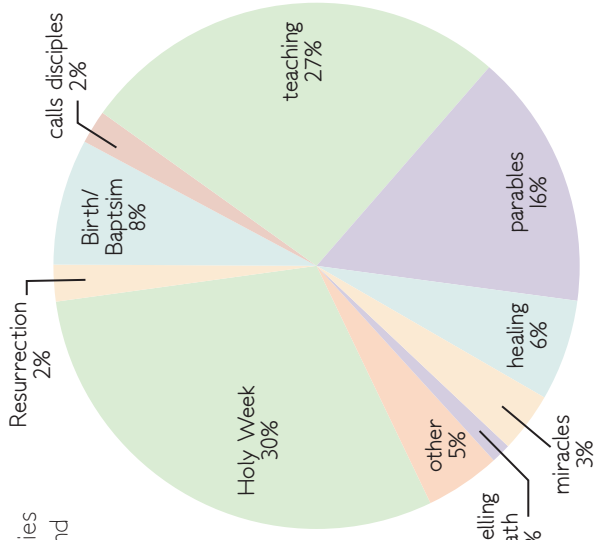
Matthew 11:18-25

### How does it start

Jesus' genealogy links him to Abraham.

### Unique to Gospel

Matthew is the only Gospel to use the word “church.” Jesus is called the “Son of God,” “Messiah,” “Teacher,” and “Lord.” The reign of God is set against the kingdom of this world or the Kingdom of Satan.



## Mark

Lion: Jesus Christ's leadership and royal power

- Numbers**
- 16 chapters
  - 678 verses
  - 11,304 words
  - Written between 60-70 CE

### Background

Teachings, miracles, and stories are combined in a fast-paced narrative that takes Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem.

### Important Verses

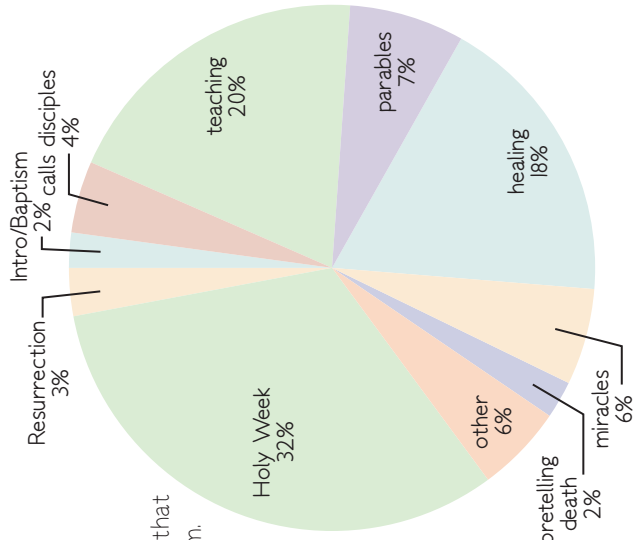
Mark 8:27-29

### How does it start

Jesus' baptism

### Unique to Gospel

In Mark, everything happens “immediately.” Jesus tells people to “tell no one” about the miracles he performs. Jesus announces the “kingdom of God” and defeats demons and diseases.



## Luke

Ox: Jesus Christ's sacrificial and priestly ministry

- Numbers**
- 24 chapters
  - 1,151 verses
  - 19,482 words
  - Written between 80-110 CE

### Background

Luke tells an orderly and measured account of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection to a group of people who were not familiar with the land and customs of Jesus.

### Important Verses

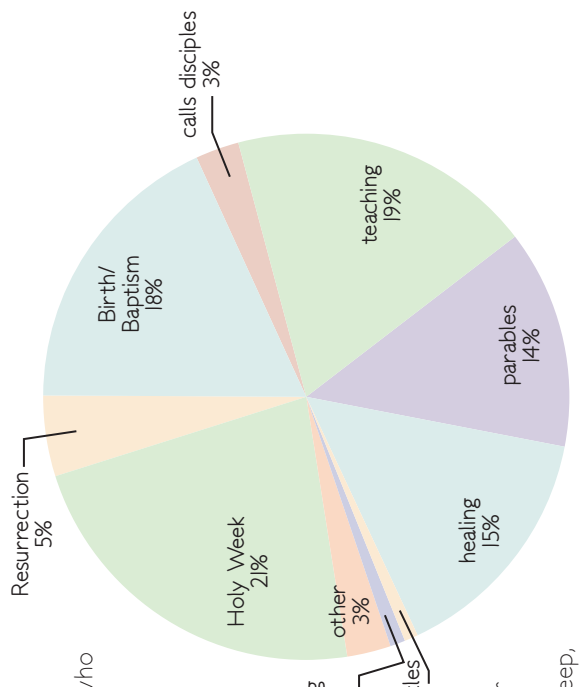
Luke 4:16-21

### How does it start

The birth of John the Baptist

### Unique to Gospel

Jesus is called the “Savior” and brings “salvation.” Luke includes more stories about women and outcasts than the other Gospels. Luke is the only Gospel to include the parables of the Lost Sheep, the Prodigal Son, and the Good Samaritan.



## John

Eagle: the gift of the Spirit hovering over the church.

- Numbers**
- 21 chapters
  - 879 verses
  - 15,635 words
  - Written between 90-110 CE

### Background

In John, the story of Jesus begins at creation. He is the Word (logos) in the flesh and describes himself with “I am” statements (the Old Testament name for God is YHWH, “I AM”). Jesus Christ is one with God.

### Important Verse

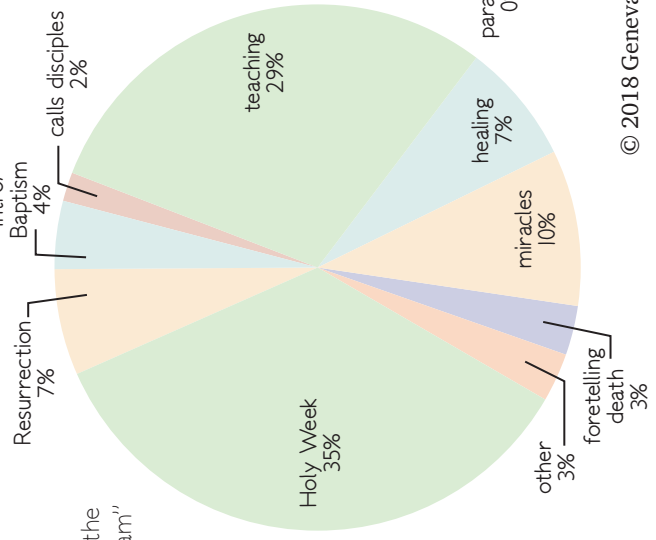
John 20:31

### How does it start

The beginning of creation.

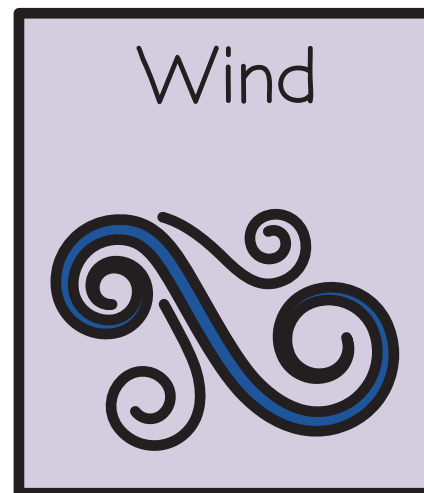
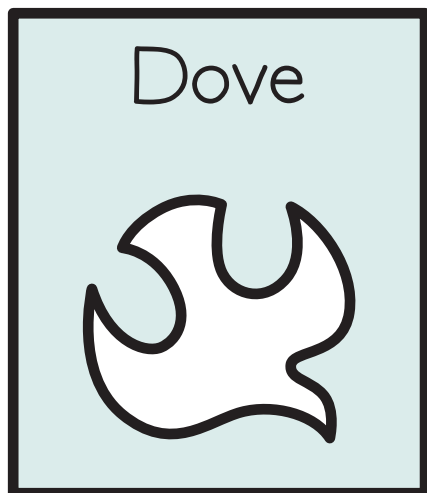
### Unique to Gospel

John includes “I am” statements, miracles that are “signs,” no parables, and Jesus washing the disciples' feet.



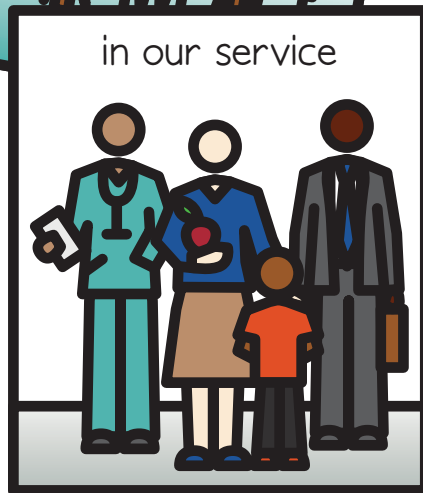
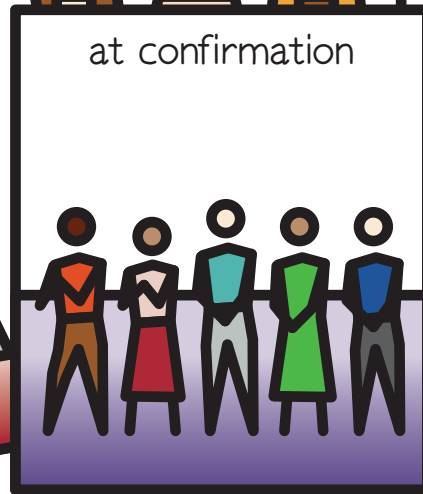
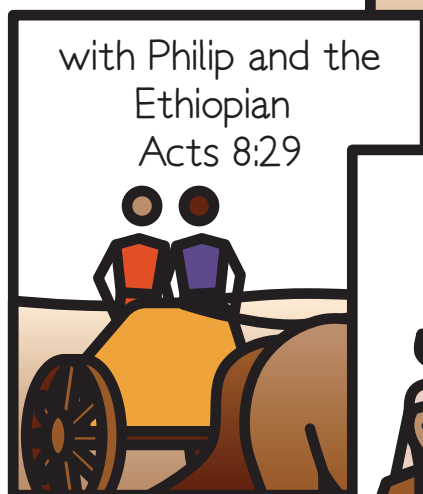
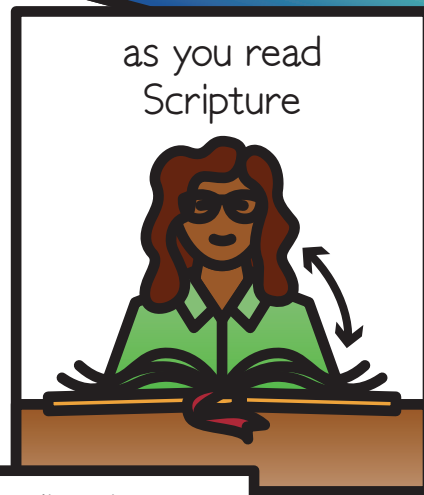
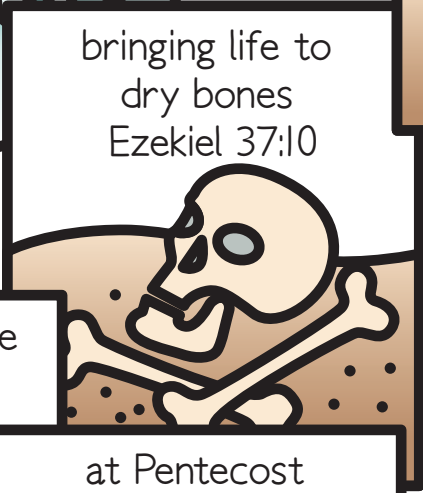
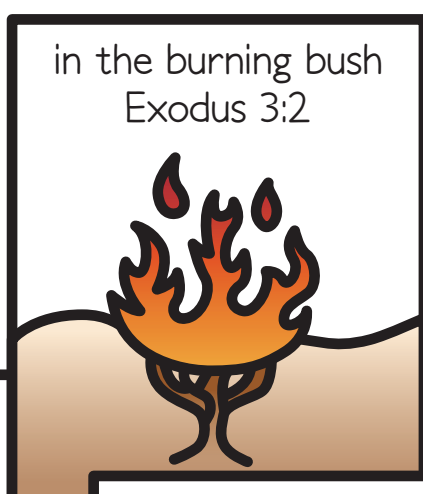
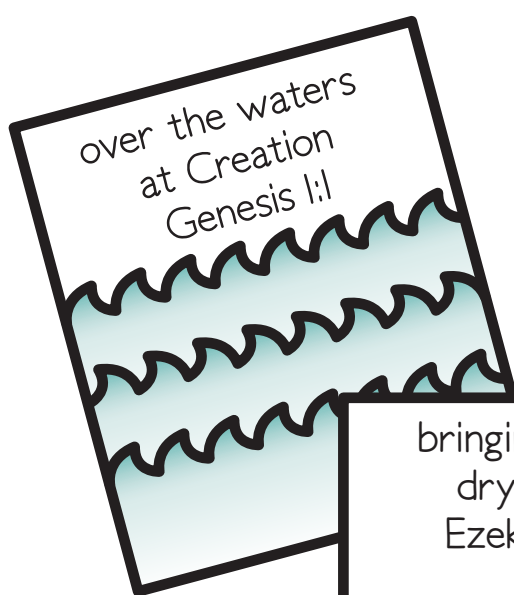
# THE HOLY SPIRIT

AKA: the Advocate, Comforter, Intercessor, Illuminator, third person of the Trinity



God sends the Holy Spirit . . . it burns within you . . . it is all around you.

Liturgical Color: **Red**



The Spirit moves, breathes, animates, authors, comforts, counsels, advocates, convicts, seals, guides, indwells, intercedes, binds, sanctifies, reveals, brings life, teaches, brings peace, brings truth, witnesses, produces, lives, enables, and helps.



# THE LORD'S PRAYER

## ★ OUR FATHER

Prayer is a conversation with God.

Which Father?

Who **art** in heaven, **(is)**  
(Be specific when you talk to God.)



Our translation of the Lord's Prayer dates back to the 1500s, when Shakespeare's English was popular.

Hallowed **(Holy)** be Thy **(your)** name.  
God is holy, separate, worthy of worship.

Thy **(your)** Kingdom come,  
Thy **(your)** will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.

What is God's deep hope? What does God want for the world?

### The Petitions

Each part of the prayer asks for God's help in a different way—to sustain, forgive, help, and protect us.

Give us this day our daily bread.

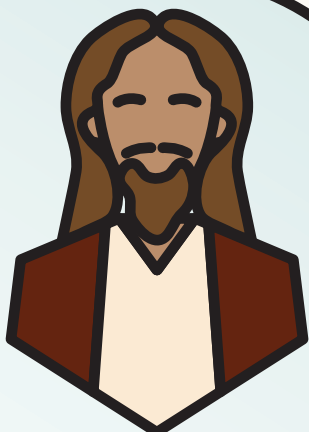
Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

Some congregations use the following:  
Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
or  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

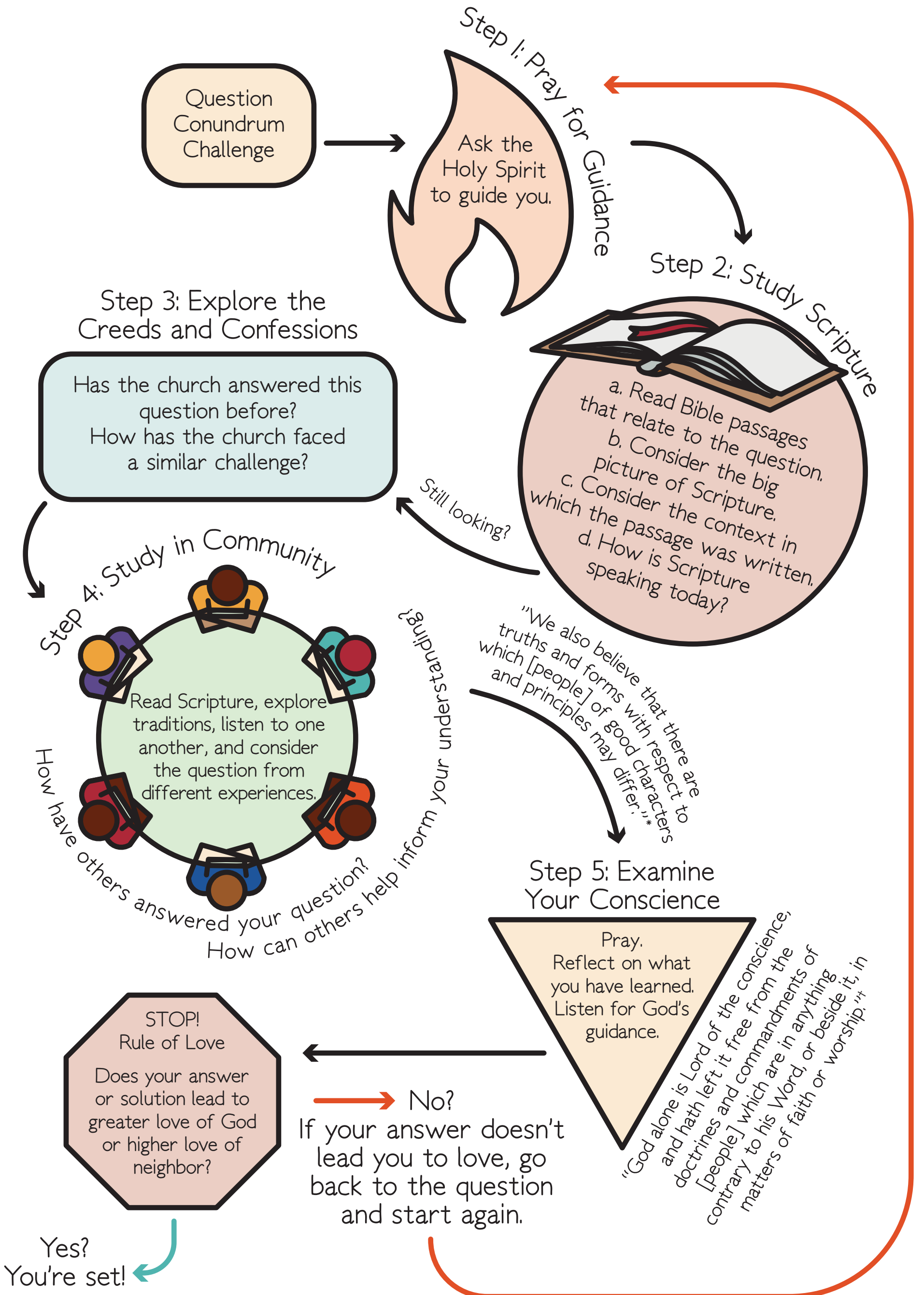
In Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke, the word for "debt" and "sin" is the same. "Trespasses" comes from a 1395 English translation by John Wycliffe.

The Lord's Prayer combines the prayers Jesus taught his disciples in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4. While individual words have changed, the church has prayed the Lord's Prayer for centuries. The Lord's Prayer provides a model of how to pray.



For thine **(yours)** is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever (and ever). Amen.\*

# MAKING A FAITHFUL DECISION



The church seeks not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect (based on Romans 12:2).

\* Westminster Confession of Faith, *Book of Confessions*, 6.109

† Ibid.

# THE OLD TESTAMENT STORIES

**Stories of Creation**

Adam & Eve  
Cain & Abel  
Noah  
Tower of Babel

**A Family Becomes a Nation**

Joseph  
Leah, Bilhah & Zilpah  
Jacob & Rachel  
Jacob & Esau  
Isaac & Rebekah  
Hagar & Ishmael are sent away  
Abraham, Sarah & Isaac

**God Sends a Leader**

Slavery in Egypt  
Moses  
Moses flees to Midian

**The Law**

Wilderness  
Exodus to freedom  
"Let my people go!"  
Ten plagues  
Golden calf  
Ten Commandments  
Ark of the Covenant

**Possessing the Land**

Crossing the Jordan  
Rahab  
Canaan  
Judges Lead

**A Nation Becomes a Kingdom**

King Solomon  
King David  
David & Goliath  
King Saul  
Ruth  
Deborah & Barak lead the Israelites

**Nation Divided: Northern/Southern Kingdoms**

**Northern: Israel**

Kings  
Prophets such as Elijah, Amos, and Hosea  
Assyria attacks Israel  
Exile and end of Northern Kingdom

**Southern: Judah**

Kings  
Prophets such as Micah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah  
Babylon attacks Judah  
Isaiah  
Exile

**Old Testament Writing Genres**

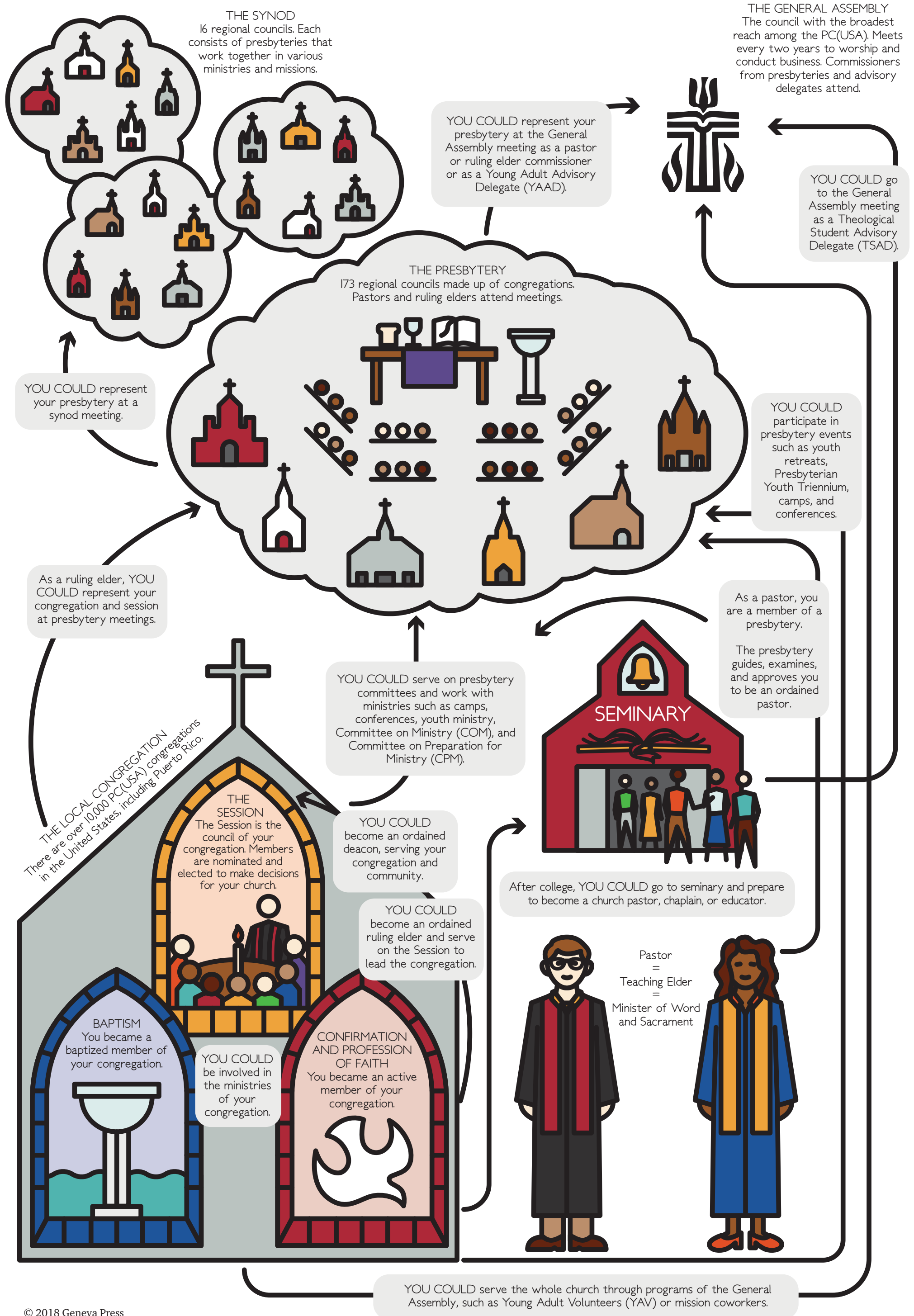
Stories of Jesus and the Early Church infographic  
Rebuilding Jerusalem  
Nehemiah (the cup bearer) is faithful  
Exile in Babylon

**The Law: Guidance & Structure**

Histories & Narratives of God's People  
Poetry, Prayers, Psalms & Words of Wisdom  
Prophets: Listen to God, Point to the Promise & Speak to the People

# PRESBYTERIAN POSSIBILITIES

OH, THE PLACES YOU COULD GO

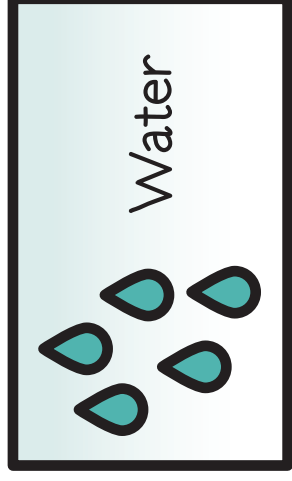


# THE SACRAMENTS

## Baptism

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19–20)

Happens once. Age doesn't matter. Although we are baptized once, every baptism helps us remember our own.

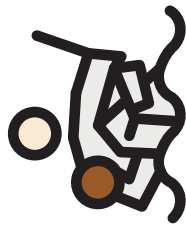


Marks us as God's children—members of the covenant and the household of God.

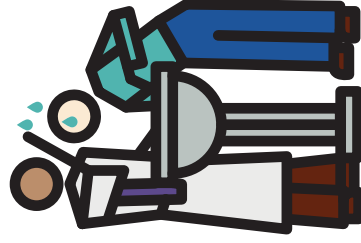
I baptize you “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19b)

## Types of Baptism

Immersion



Sprinkle



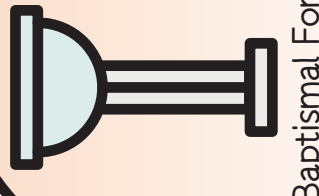
Pour



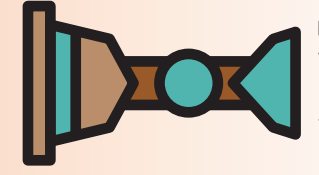
## “An outward expression of an inward grace”

- Jesus told his disciples to continue the practice.
- The church uses elements common to the people.
- The Holy Spirit connects us to God and the community.
- The sacraments take place during a worship service.
- We prepare spiritually to take part.
- The Session approves the sacraments and ministers officiate.

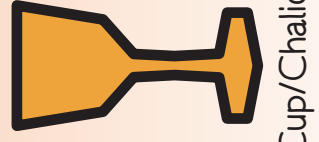
## Name it!



Baptismal Font



Baptismal Font



Cup/Chalice



Cup



Cup/Chalice



Plate/Platen



Baptismal Pool

## Communion

“Then [Jesus] took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:19)

Happens regularly throughout a believer's life.



Which is it: wine or juice? Most churches offer grape juice. Some churches provide both.

Lifts us into Christ's presence and joins us with all believers at the table.

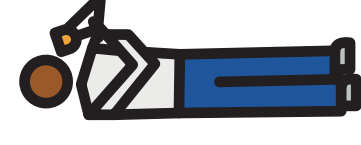
“This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:19b)

## Types of Communion

Served



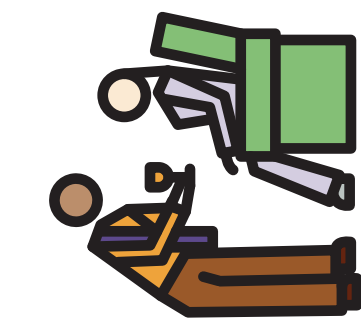
Common Cup



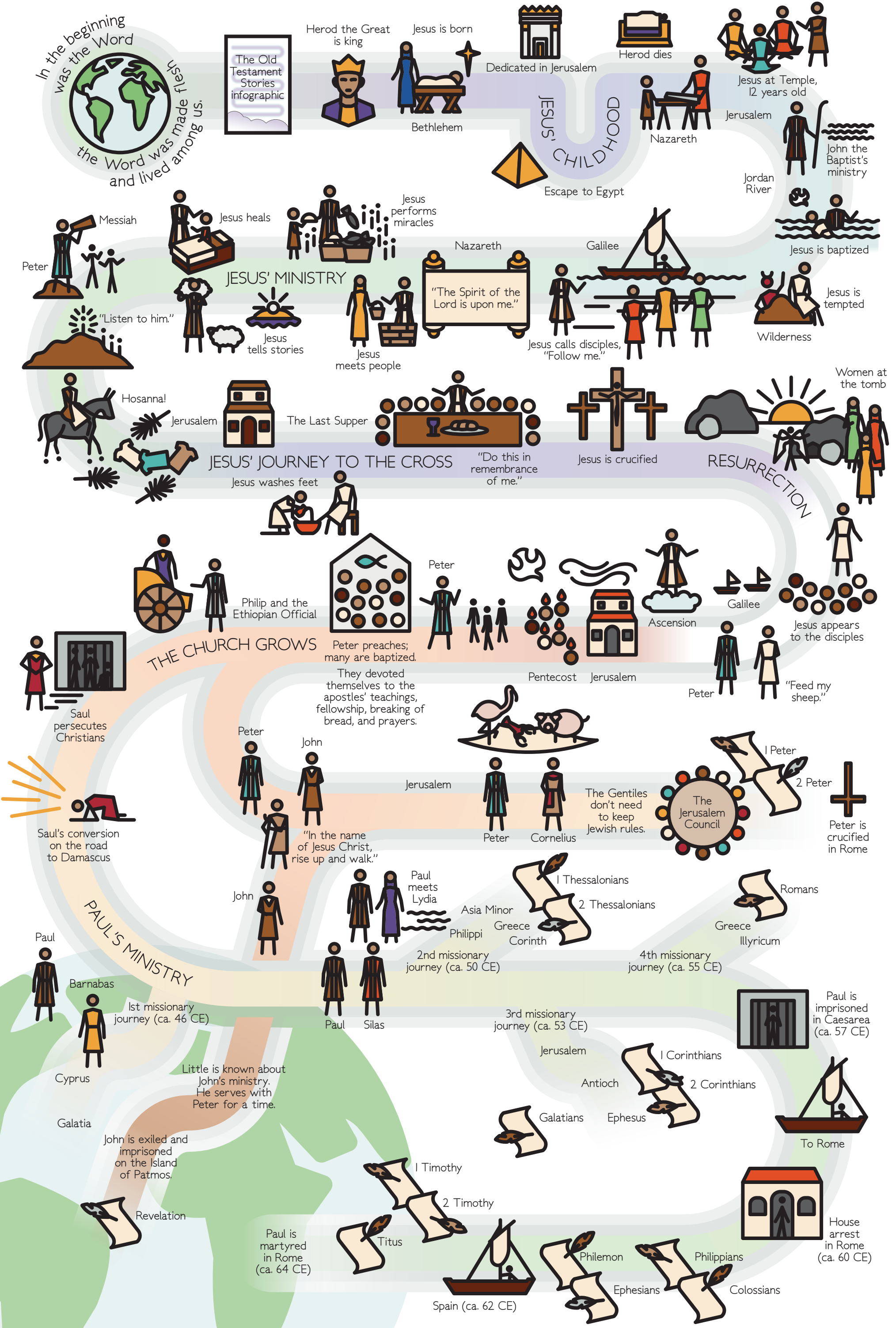
Intinction



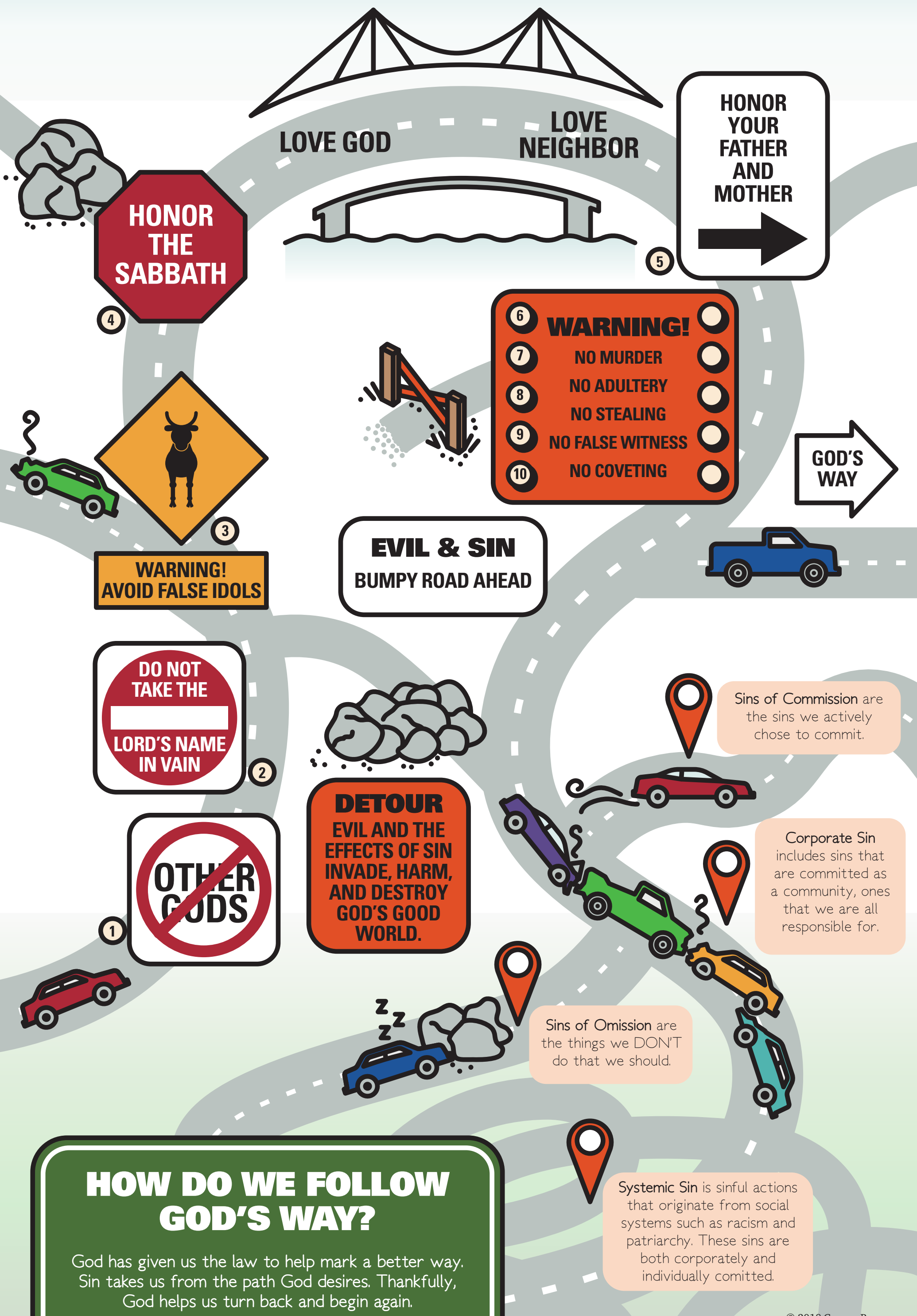
Home Communion



# STORIES OF JESUS AND THE EARLY CHURCH



# THE TEN COMMANDMENTS



**4**  
**HONOR THE SABBATH**

**3**  
**WARNING!  
AVOID FALSE IDOLS**

**2**  
**DO NOT TAKE THE LORD'S NAME IN VAIN**

**1**  
**OTHER GODS**

**LOVE GOD**

**LOVE NEIGHBOR**

**HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER**

**6** **WARNING!**  
**7** NO MURDER  
**8** NO ADULTERY  
**9** NO STEALING  
**10** NO FALSE WITNESS  
NO COVETING

**EVIL & SIN  
BUMPY ROAD AHEAD**

**GOD'S WAY**

**DETOUR  
EVIL AND THE EFFECTS OF SIN  
INVADE, HARM,  
AND DESTROY  
GOD'S GOOD  
WORLD.**

Sins of Commission are the sins we actively chose to commit.

Corporate Sin includes sins that are committed as a community, ones that we are all responsible for.

Sins of Omission are the things we DON'T do that we should.


Systemic Sin is sinful actions that originate from social systems such as racism and patriarchy. These sins are both corporately and individually committed.

**HOW DO WE FOLLOW GOD'S WAY?**  
God has given us the law to help mark a better way. Sin takes us from the path God desires. Thankfully, God helps us turn back and begin again.

# WHO IS JESUS?

## The Nicene Creed

The early church struggled to define who Jesus is. Different questions led the church to define the boundaries of our beliefs (orthodoxy). The Nicene Creed helped define the boundaries. Thus, Jesus is fully human and fully divine, a mystery that is a challenge to understand.

 Heresy, an idea that is different from what the church teaches.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,

eternally begotten of the Father,

God from God, Light from Light, true God  
from true God, begotten, not made,

of one Being with the Father;

through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation

he came down from heaven,

was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary

and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.


On the third day he rose again in  
accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven and is  
seated at the right hand of the  
Father. He will come again in  
glory to judge the living and  
the dead, and his kingdom will  
have no end.

Was there a time when Jesus was not?


 Arian answer: Jesus did not always exist but was created.

How is Jesus related to God?

 Apollinarian answer: Jesus had a human body and a divine mind.

 Ebionite answer: Jesus was a good person who was blessed by God.


How did Jesus save us?


 Gnostic answer: Jesus was a divine spirit who shared the secret of salvation with only a few.


Was Jesus both human and divine before he was born?

Theotokos/Christotokos debate: Mary was the mother of Jesus Christ—fully human and fully divine.


How human was Jesus?

 Monarchian answer: God is the Father, Jesus is only human, and the Spirit is the presence of God the Father.

 Docetic answer: Jesus is the divine pretending to be human.

 Monophysite answer: Jesus is a divine being inside a unique human.

Did Jesus really suffer?

 Nestorian answer: His human side suffered; the divine in him did not.