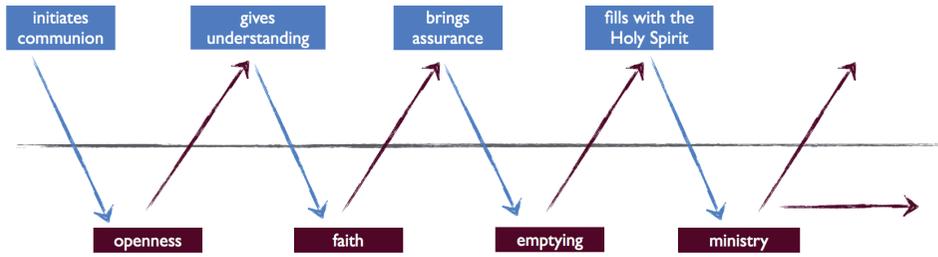


# UNTIL CHRIST IS FORMED IN YOU



## connect to reflect

### UNDERSTANDING COMMUNION

understanding for faith  
as God gives us understanding, we put our faith in what he reveals



### the challenge to believe

Solomon wrote, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding... (Proverbs 3:5). It's one thing to say we are dependant on God for wisdom, but altogether different to *actually* be dependant on God. In what areas do you find it difficult trust God to give you wisdom and understanding?"



### deepening dependence

Peter wrote, "His power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these, he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruptions in the world caused by evil desires." (2 Peter 1:3-4.) What promises has God made which call you to a deeper faith?



### steps for re-connecting our hearts to God

1. Ask the Holy Spirit what he wants you to learn from this lesson. What do you sense the Holy Spirit teaching you?
2. This week, what practical steps do you need to take to apply what the Holy Spirit is teaching you?
3. What evidence will you see that indicates that you are successfully applying what the Holy Spirit is teaching you?



### passing it on

- INTERCESSION** Who can you pray for, that they may grow in faith?
- WORDS** With whom can you share the significance of faith?
- CHARACTER** How can your life reflect dependence on godly wisdom and understanding?



## opening to God's words

We cannot discover God. God is not found like we might find a lost penny. Rather, God must reveal himself. Just as Paul says that there is “no one who seeks God” (Romans 3:11), so none of us are able to understand anything in the supernatural realm unless someone from that realm explains it to us. A human being who is by nature sinful, cannot—even with the greatest of effort—understand the sinless, infinite, eternal God and his plans for us. As Paul writes elsewhere, “No one can know what anyone else is really thinking except that person alone, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 2:11) God must explain himself to us himself, and he does this through his Holy Spirit. We are responsible for choosing to be open and impressionable to God (which still requires the Holy Spirit's work), but the Holy Spirit is the only one who can “guide you into all truth” (John 16:13).

All ability to understand spiritual things is given to us by God, which means we are completely dependent on God for any understanding. However, God longs to give understanding into spiritual things for those who are truly seeking.

Read James 1:5-8. According to this verse, what are the conditions for gaining wisdom from God?

It is important to note that James does not say you have to be baptised or even “good” before God will give us wisdom. Godly wisdom comes from asking.

We can ask for such wisdom for ourselves, but we can also ask for it on behalf of others.

Read Ephesians 1:15-20. What wisdom does Paul expect his prayers to bring for the Ephesians?

Let's return to the example of the family standing outside their tent at the time of the morning and evening offerings. The family is there because they are open to God in recognising their need for a saviour and to consecrate their lives to God for that day. However, after some time they may participate only because it has become a habit.

In the study on openness, we saw how the Old Testament uses the symbols of a hard and soft heart for being closed and open to God. However, the Bible also describes the heart as being circumcised or uncircumcised. While the meanings overlap, the idea of a circumcised heart is slightly different and illustrates another important spiritual principle.

Read Genesis 17:10-26 and Exodus 12:44, 48. What does the Bible teach about the significance of circumcision?

At the time of the Israelites, the central significance of circumcision was that it indicated entrance into the community of God. While anyone could be open to God, only those males and their families who were circumcised were considered part of God's people. However, this physical symbol was intended to highlight an important spiritual reality—faith in the covenant of God. Therefore, if the physical sign was present, but the spiritual reality was missing, God's people would delude themselves into believing that their relationship with God was alive.

However, as the Bible makes clear, “without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6) Indeed, it is not just about pleasing God. Throughout the gospels Jesus makes continually clear that miracles are only possible if faith is present. And just as faith in Jesus was required for physical healing, so faith today is required for the miracle of a life re-formed in the character of God.

Read Jesus' comments on faith in Matthew 8:10; 9:2, 29-30; 15:28. What do you think enabled these people to take Jesus seriously, while many others did not?

Some people say that faith is a leap in the dark. It is not. Faith is based on God's clear revelation of himself to us through the Bible and through nature. In Romans, Paul writes,

*For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.” (Romans 1:20).*

So faith in God is possible even through God's revelation of himself in nature. While nature has been affected by sin, the word of God continues to give the clearest revelation of God to us. In this we can put our faith securely.