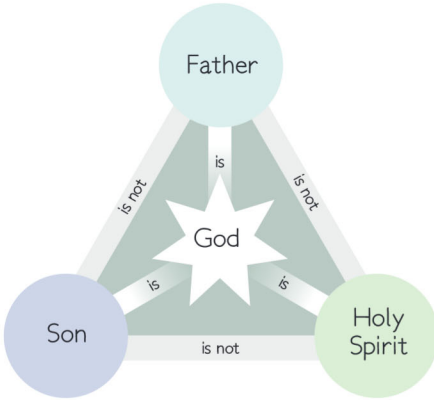


THE APOSTLES' CREED



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.



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

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.

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.

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."

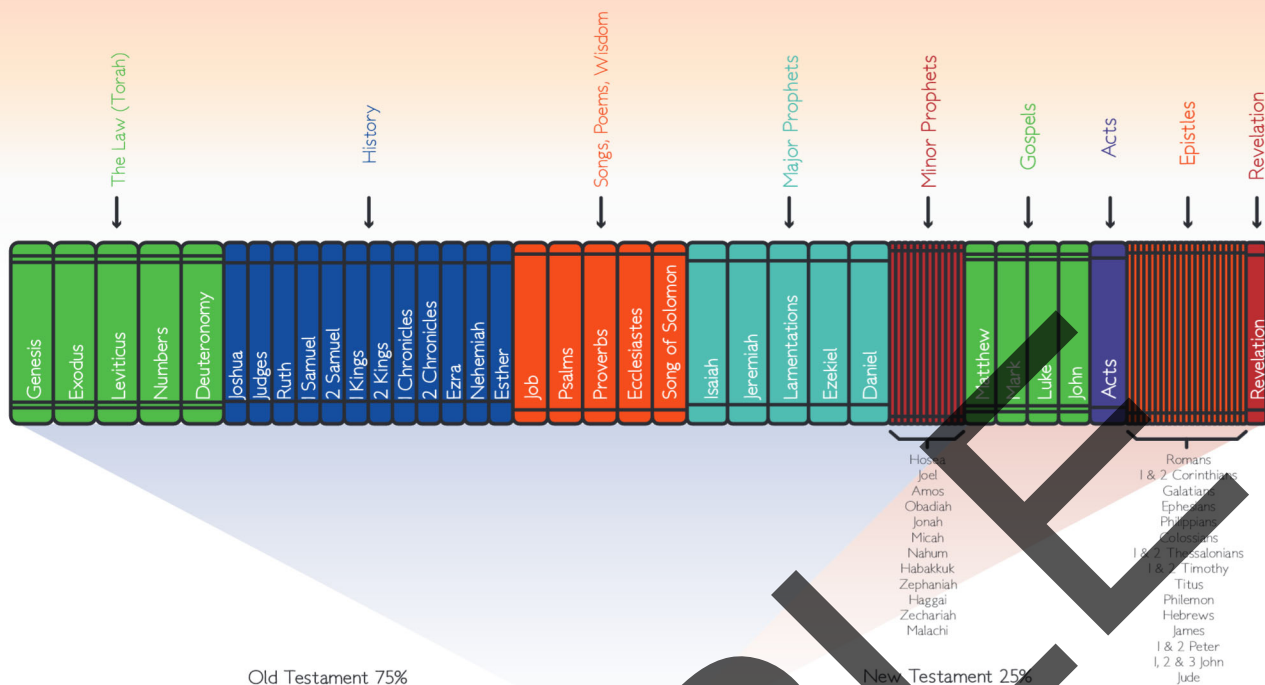
A creed outlines the important beliefs of a community, in a few concise statements.

Other Creeds:

Biblical creeds include Deuteronomy 6:4; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 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.

THE BIBLE



The Bible			
66 books	1,189 chapters	31,173 verses	808,000 words
The Old Testament		The New Testament	
Written in Hebrew (A few chapters are written in Aramaic)		Written in common Greek	
Written between 1400–450 BCE		Written between 50–100 CE	
The law, histories, writings, and prophecies that show God's relationship with ancient Israel		The gospel of Jesus and the growth of the early church	
39 books		27 books	
929 chapters		260 chapters	
23,214 verses		7,959 verses	
Longest verse: Esther 8:9		Shortest verse: John 11:35	
623,000 words		185,000 words	

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

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

Longest name: Mahershalhashbaz
Shortest name: Og

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

(source: <http://www.wycliffenet/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.

All numbers and percentages are approximate.

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

Chapter

Book Name

Verse

JOHN

3

b

1 ~ 2 ~ 3 ~ 4 ~ 5 ~
a b

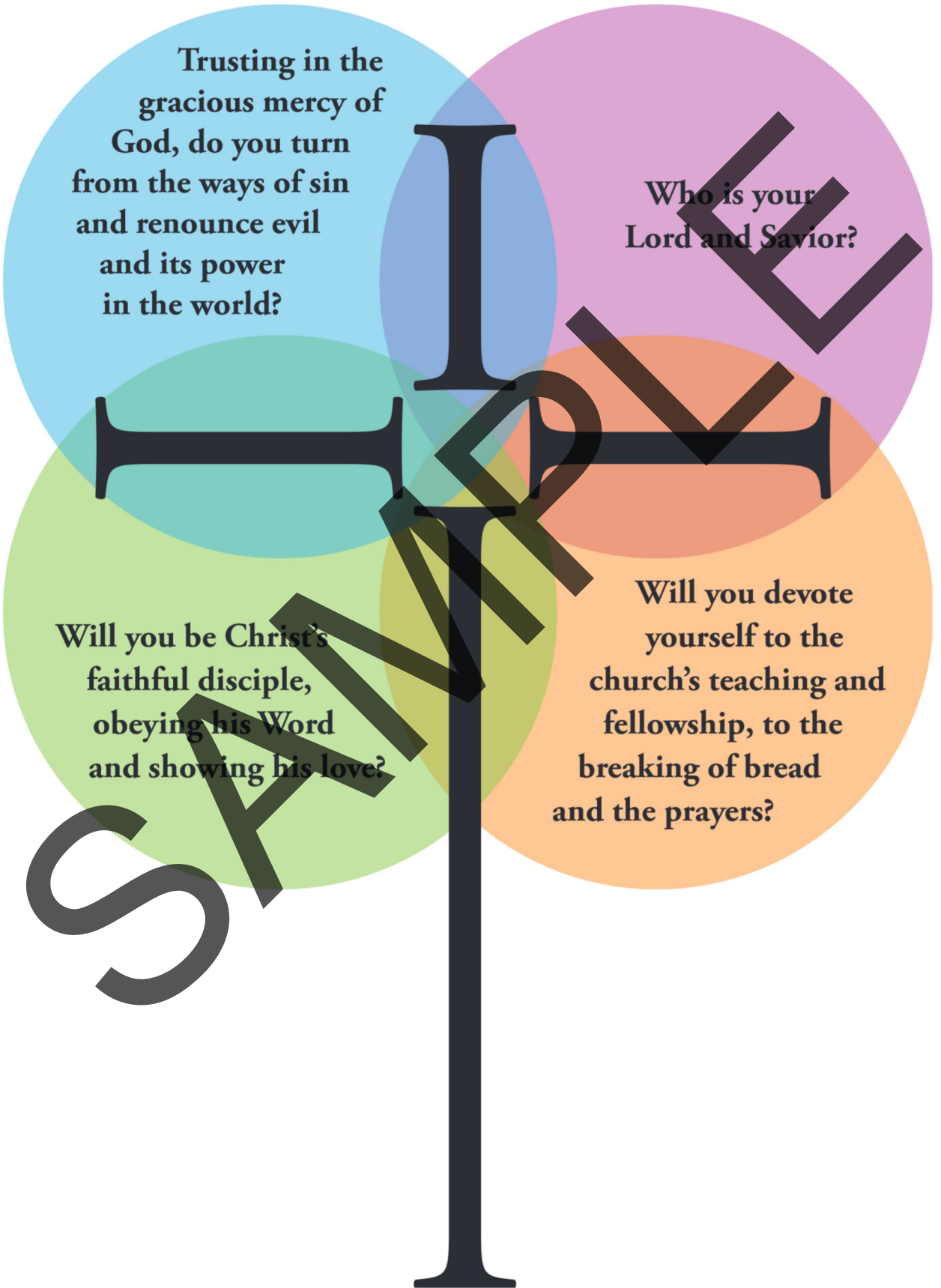
THE BIG QUESTIONS

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		Big Question What are the most basic things Christians believe? Quote "I believe..." Background 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.	Nicene Creed		Big Question Who is Jesus? How is Jesus related to God the Father? Quote "God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God, Begotten and not made." Background The ancient church confessed Jesus Christ's humanity and divinity. This creed is affirmed by most churches in the world.
	Date 8th century Numbers 3 sections 110 words			Date 4th century Numbers 3 sections 222 words	




Historic Confessions from the Reformation

The Scots Confession		Big Question How will the church in Scotland be faithful and distinct? Quote "Give thy servants strength to speak thy Word with boldness." Background 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.	The Heidelberg Catechism		Big Question What is the foundation for all Protestant believers? Quote "That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ." Background Fights over the meaning of communion led two young men to write a catechism that was acceptable to both Lutherans and the Reformed churches.	Second Helvetic Confession		Big Question How do Reformed Christians explain and practice our beliefs? Quote "They are Christ's disciples by persevering in the bond of peace and holy unity." Background The confession was written to help Reformed churches express their theological beliefs and practice their faith.
	Date 1560 Numbers 25 chapters 7,102 words			Date 1563 Numbers 129 questions 8,197 words			Date 1566 Numbers 30 chapters 24,095 words	

The Westminster Standards

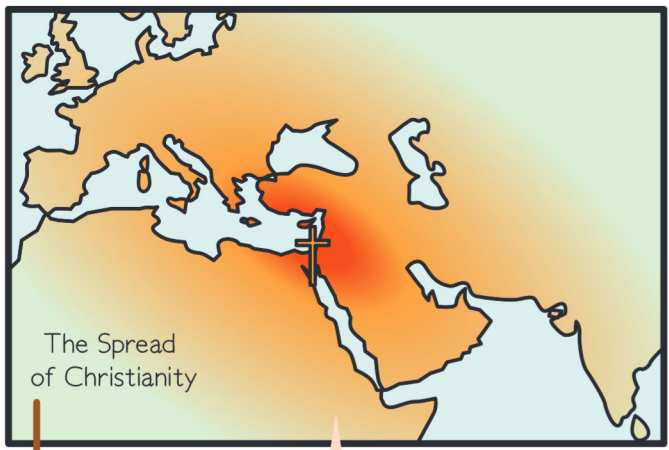
	Date 1647	Big Question In a broken world, how do we live according to God's will and responding to God's grace?	Background In 1643, the English Parliament established a distinctly Presbyterian model for governance and liturgy of the church in England and abroad.	A catechism promotes conversation by providing questions and answers about the principles of Christian faith and practices.
	Quote "What is the chief end of humanity? Humanity's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy God forever."	The Westminster Confession of Faith 35 chapters Over 12,000 words	The Shorter Catechism 107 questions 5,028 words	
			The Longer Catechism 196 questions 15,868 words	

Contemporary Confessions

Barmen Declaration		Big Question If Jesus Christ is our Lord, can we support Nazi doctrines? Quote "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." Background Barmen was written in response to the rise of Nazi Germany, and the churches and church leaders that embraced it faced persecution and death.	A Brief Statement of Faith		Big Question How do we celebrate the reunion of two long-divided denominations? Quote "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." Background After over 100 years of division, the Presbyterian Church (USA.) reunited two Presbyterian denominations. This statement expresses our shared identity and faith.
	Date 1934 Numbers 6 major arguments 1,806 words			Date 1983, adopted in 1991 Numbers 557 words	
Confession of 1967		Big Question How does the church respond to a changing world? Quote "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." Background Responding to deep-seated problems (racism, poverty, and violence), the confession called the church to work for repentance and reconciliation.	Belhar Confession		Big Question What does the church do when sin constructs unjust systems of oppression? Quote "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." Background 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.
	Date 1967 Numbers 4,634 words			Date 1986, adopted in 2016 Numbers 1,167 words	

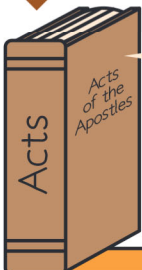
How do you add a new confession? To be included in the *Book of Confessions*, a statement must be approved twice by the General Assembly and by two-thirds of all presbyteries. Our newest confession was approved in 2016.

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.



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.

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.

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

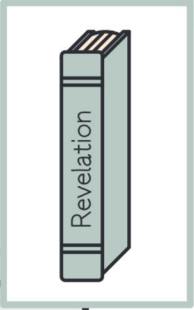
The Pauline epistles, written by the apostle Paul and his followers, are often directed to specific communities or people.

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.

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

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



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!

The Great Schism of 1054 divided Christianity into the Eastern Church and the Western Church.

Eastern Church

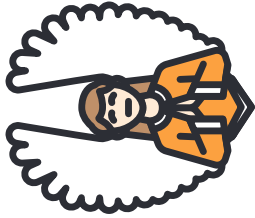
- Orthodox Community
- Armenian
- Syriac
- Coptic
- Ethiopian Eritrean

Western Church

- Catholic Church



THE GOSPELS



Matthew

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

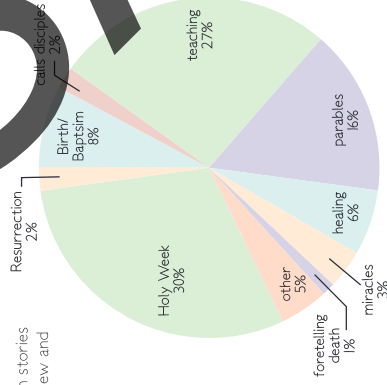
- Numbers**
- 28 chapters
 - 1071 verses
 - 18,346 words
 - Written between 80-90 CE

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

Important Verses
Matthew 1:18-25

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 Satan.



Mark

Lion, Jesus Christ's leadership and royal power

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

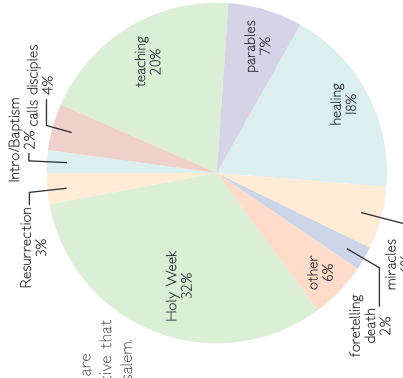
Background
Teachings, miracles, and stories are combined in a fast-paced narrative that takes Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem.

Important Verses
Mark 8:27-29

How does it start
Jesus' baptism

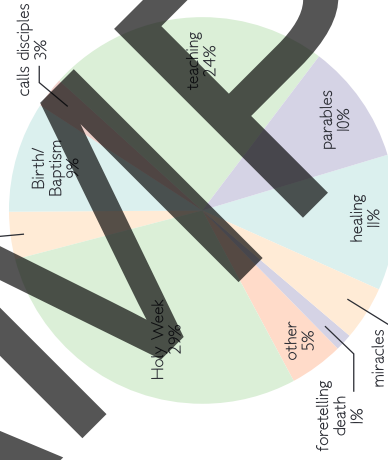
Unique to Gospel

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.



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.



Luke

Ox: Jesus Christ's sacrificial and priestly ministry

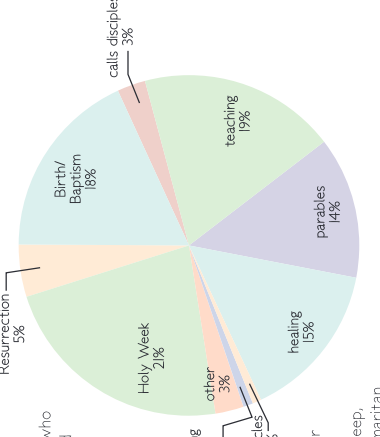
- Numbers**
- 24 chapters
 - 1,151 verses
 - 19,482 words
 - Written between 80-110 CE

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

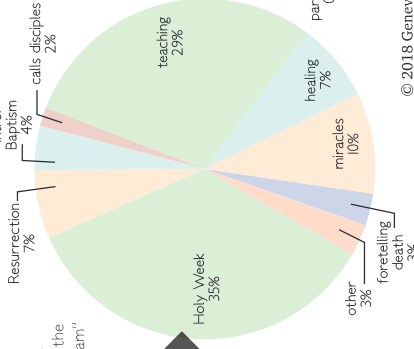
Background
In John, the story of Jesus begins at creation. He is the Word (logos) in the flesh and describes himself with "I am" statements (the Old Testament name for God's YHWH "I am"). Jesus Christ is one with God.

Important Verse
John 20:31

How does it start
The beginning of creation.

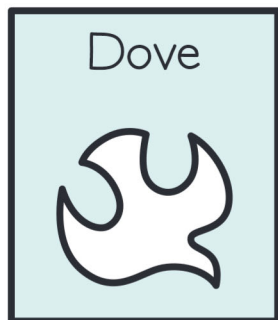
Unique to Gospel

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



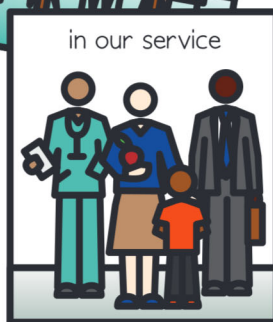
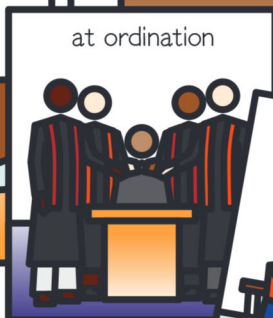
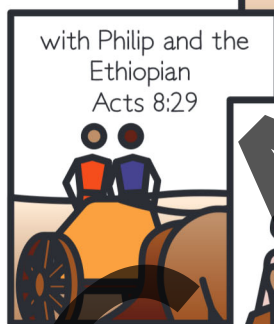
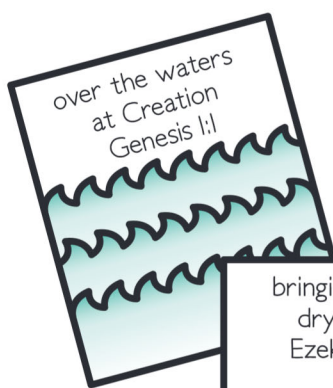
THE HOLY SPIRIT

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

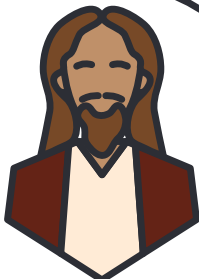
OUR FATHER



Start Here

Prayer is a conversation with God.

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.



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.

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.

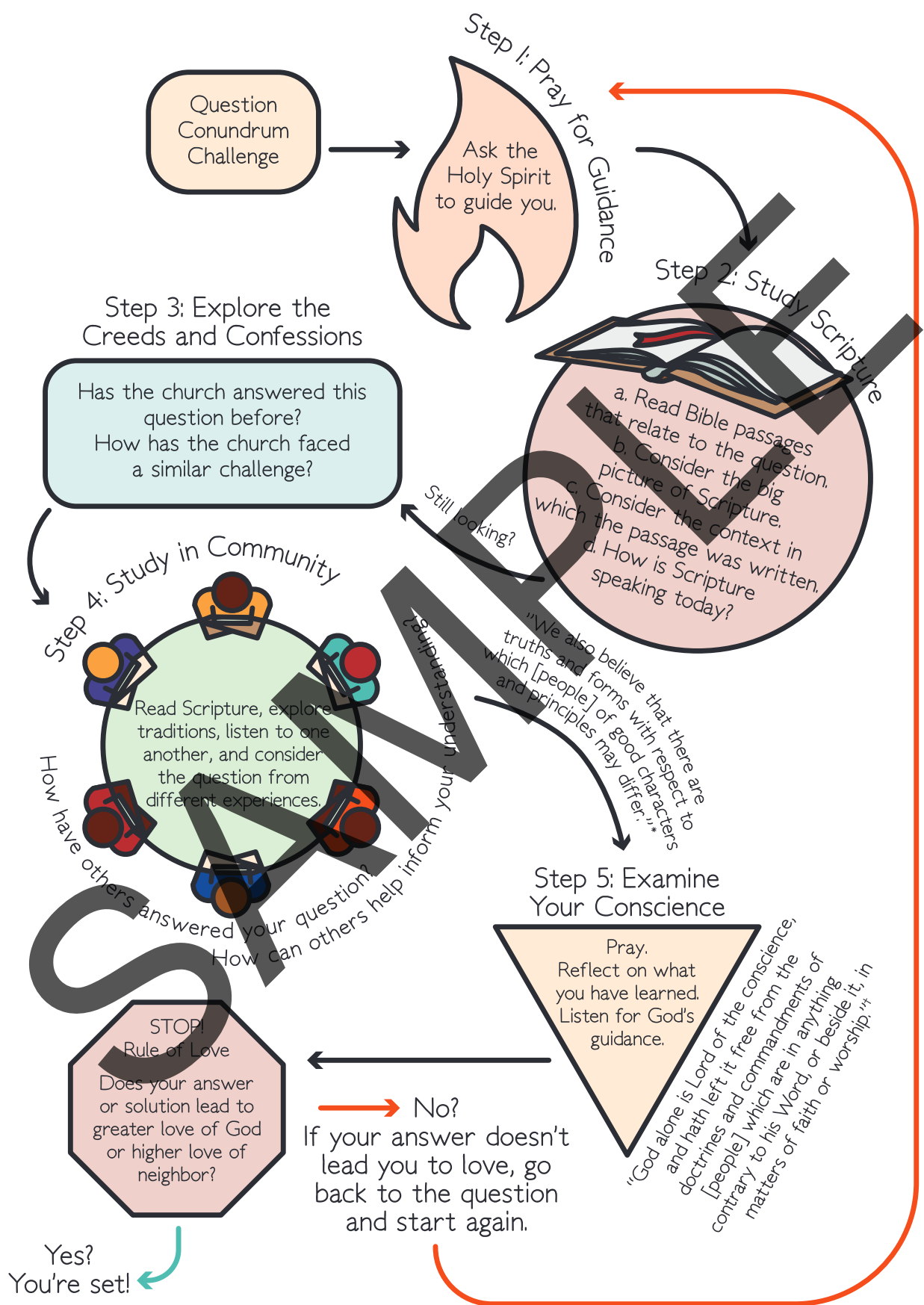
And lead
us not into
temptation
but deliver
us from evil.

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.

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

*Not all faith traditions add these closing words of praise (doxology).

MAKING A FAITHFUL DECISION

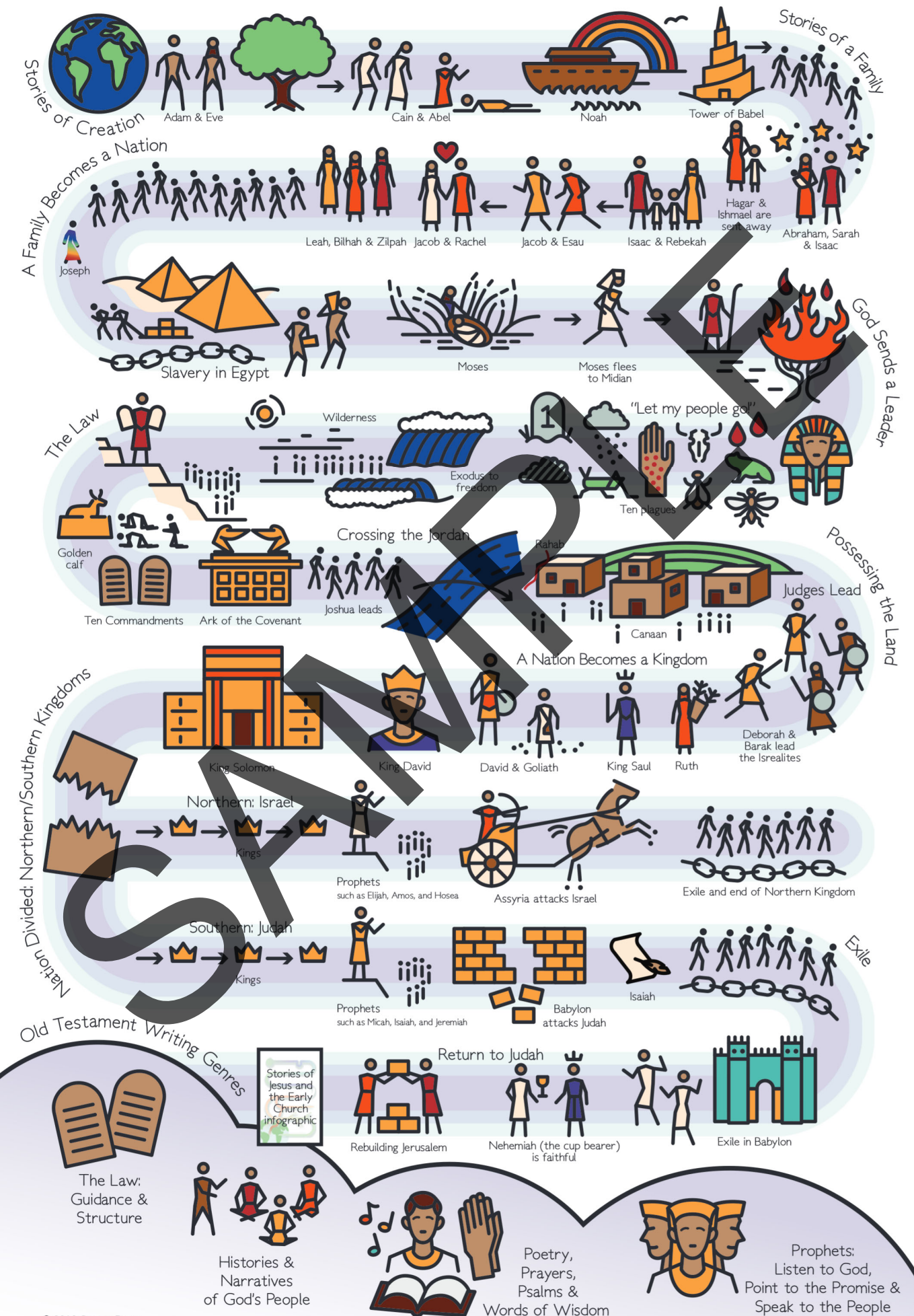


The church seeks not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect (based on Romans 12:2).

^{*} Westminster Confession of Faith, *Book of Confessions*, 6:109

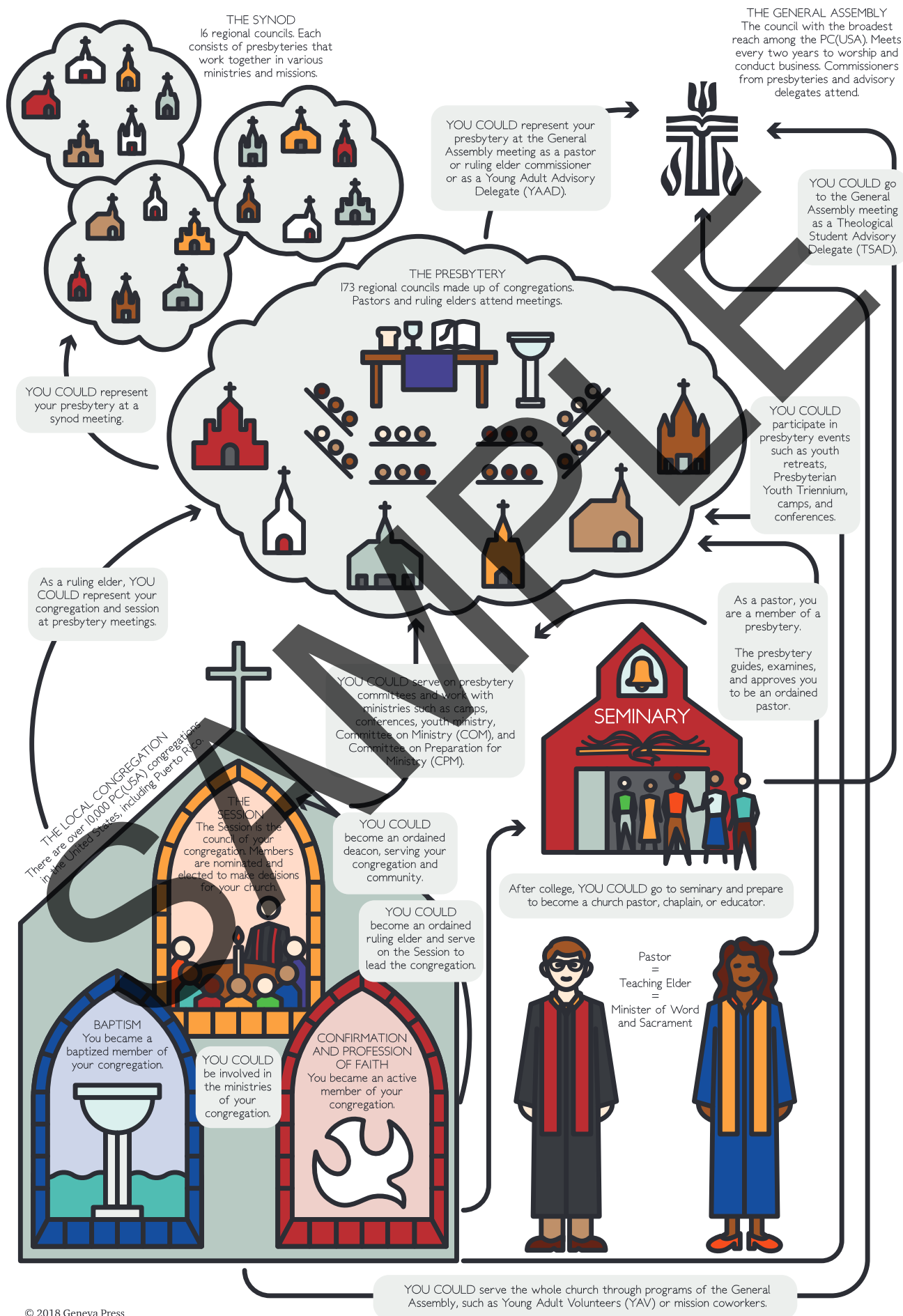
[†] Ibid.

THE OLD TESTAMENT STORIES



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)

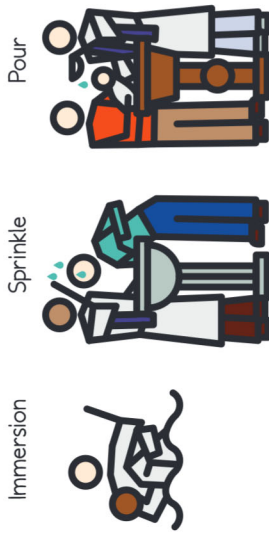
Happens once. Age doesn't matter. Although we are baptized once, every baptism helps us remember our own.



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



"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.

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.

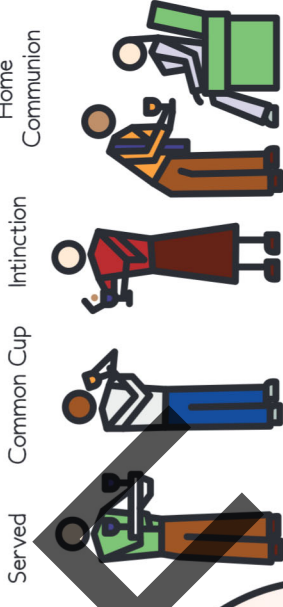


Which is it: wine or juice? Most churches offer grape juice. Some churches provide both.

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

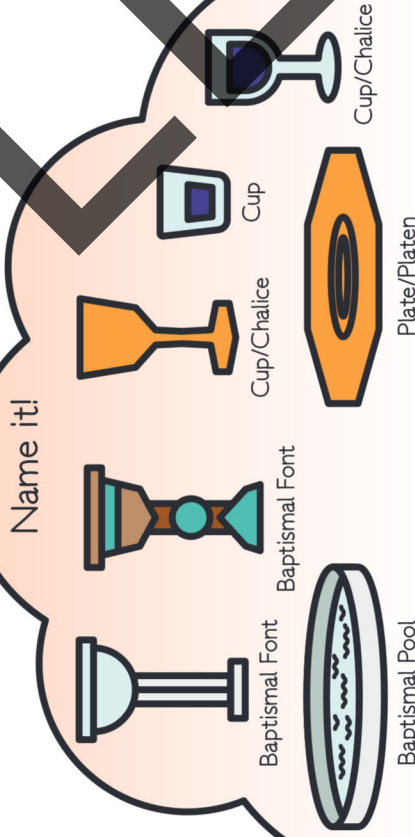


Home Communion

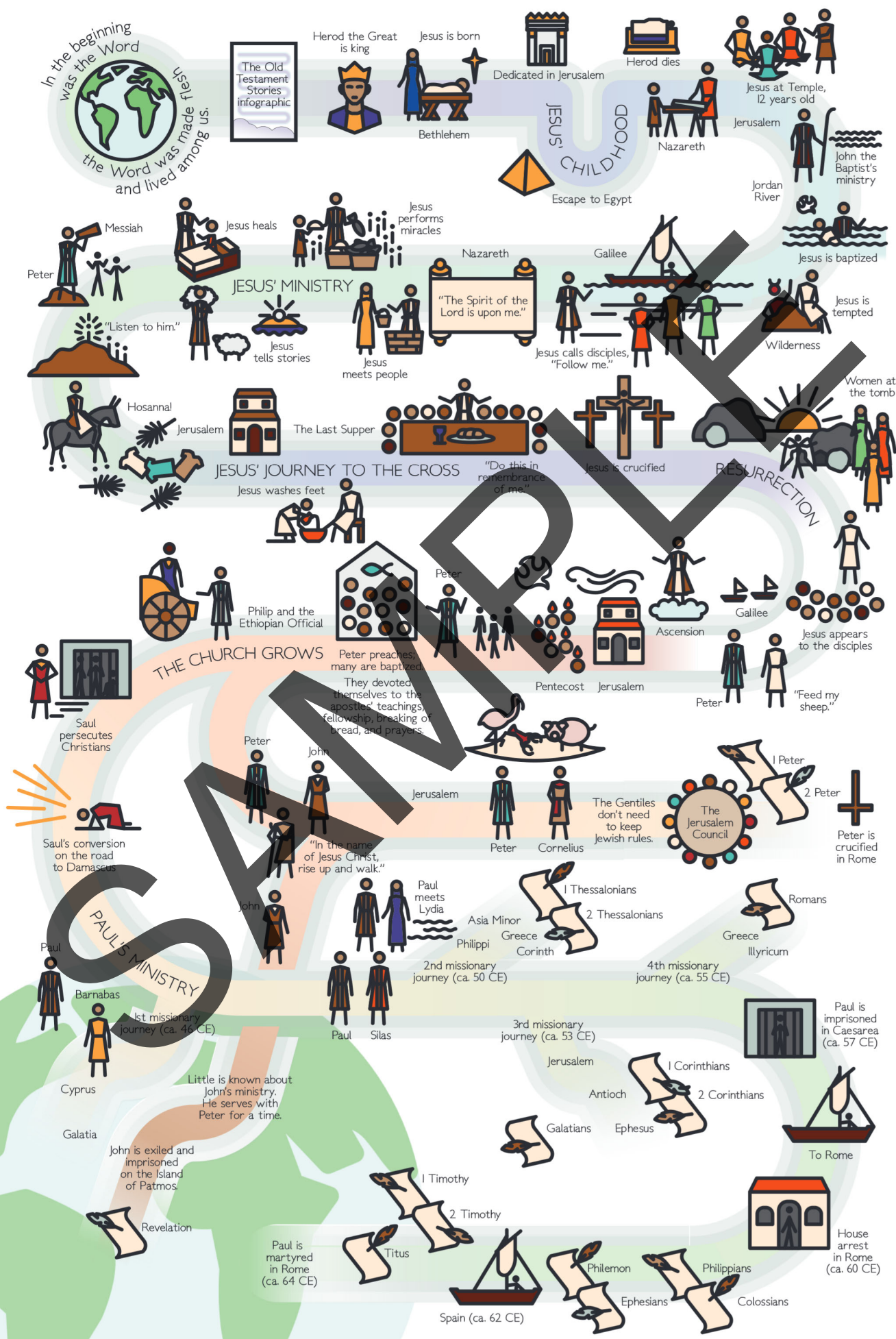
Intinction

Common Cup

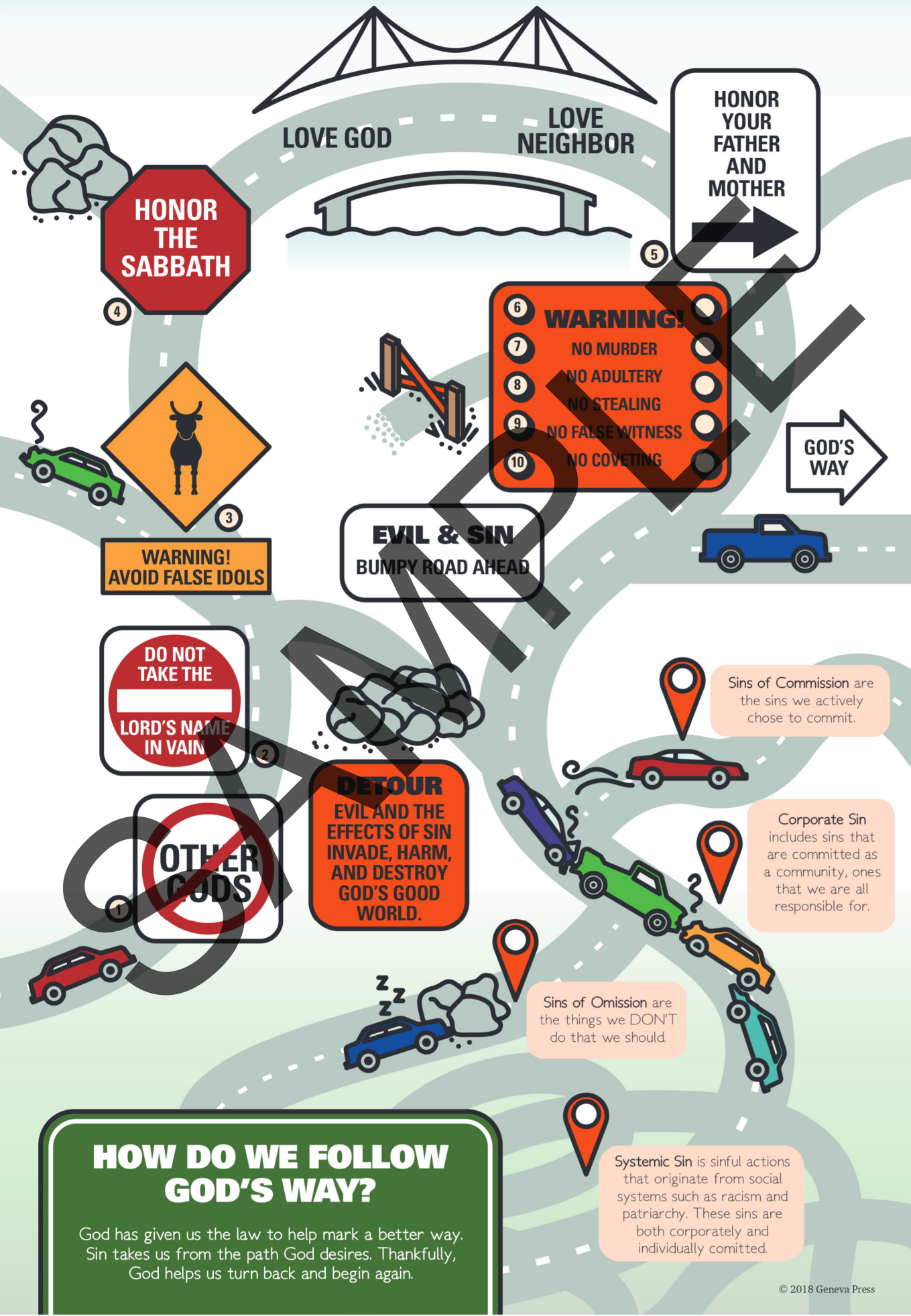
Served



STORIES OF JESUS AND THE EARLY CHURCH



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS



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.