FIRSTHAND FAITH

Knowing Jesus and Helping Others Know Him

John 5 invites us to come to Jesus and receive life. This workbook helps us consider how we can know God personally and help others respond in saving faith. **Are we living this relationship, and helping people discover it for themselves?**

1. We live the relationship we are inviting others into

John 15:4-5, 9-12

Jesus describes His disciples as branches whose life and fruitfulness depend on remaining in Him. He connects this abiding life with His words, His love, and obedience. Ministry grows from that relationship.

We can become occupied with helping other people know God while neglecting our own response to Him. Serving others does not remove our need to listen, repent, receive, and obey.

Where is Jesus changing me today? Perhaps He is teaching me patience, bringing an apology to mind, or helping me trust Him with something I cannot resolve.

We can share honestly while still growing. A present testimony may simply acknowledge where we needed grace and how we are learning to respond.

Teaching point: Our invitation becomes credible as we keep receiving the life of Jesus and allowing Him to shape us.

2. The gospel clearly invites people to trust Jesus

1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Ephesians 2:8-10; Mark 1:14-15

Paul places Christ's death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection at the heart of the gospel. Our invitation rests on what Jesus has accomplished.

God made us for relationship with Him. Sin has broken that relationship, and we cannot repair it through good behavior. Jesus, the Son of God, died for our sins and rose again. Through Him, God offers forgiveness and new life. We respond by turning to Him in repentance and trusting Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Repentance means turning from sin toward God. Faith means entrusting ourselves to Jesus. This life is God's gift, and the Holy Spirit forms a new way of living in us.

Someone unfamiliar with church should be able to understand why Jesus matters, what He offers, and how to respond.

Teaching point: Speak about Jesus clearly enough that someone can understand what it means to trust Him.

3. Firsthand faith means personally receiving the Jesus we have heard about

John 4:39-42; John 17:3; Romans 8:15-16

The Samaritan woman's testimony brings people to Jesus. After hearing Him themselves, they express their own confidence that He is the Savior of the world. Her witness has helped them come into personal faith.

Firsthand faith does not require us to discover a different Jesus or receive a private gospel. We personally trust the same Lord to whom Scripture and faithful witnesses testify. What we have heard becomes a relationship in which we respond to Him ourselves.

That response may include deep emotion. It may also begin quietly as we recognize our need for forgiveness, understand Scripture, receive prayer, or discover a growing desire to obey. The Holy Spirit assures believers of their relationship with the Father.

We discern experiences through Scripture and their fruit over time. Strong feelings alone cannot establish truth, and a difficult or emotionally quiet season does not cancel the promise of Jesus.

Teaching point: Firsthand faith is personal trust in the living Christ, sustained by His truth and the work of the Holy Spirit.

4. The people within reach of our lives matter to God

John 1:40-46; Mark 5:18-20

Andrew brings his brother Simon to Jesus. Philip finds Nathanael and invites him to come and see. Their relationships become places where the invitation to know Jesus is carried from one person to another.

In Mark 5, Jesus sends the restored man home to tell his own people what the Lord has done for him. His witness begins among people connected to his life.

We can begin by noticing who already shares our days: family, neighbors, coworkers, customers, friends, and people we regularly encounter. Some know Christian language. Some carry disappointment with church. Others have little understanding of Jesus at all.

Knowing someone gives us an opportunity to love them attentively. It also calls for respect. At work, especially when we hold authority, an invitation must leave the other person free to decline.

The person before us has a name, a history, and concerns worth hearing. Paying attention is a meaningful beginning.

Teaching point: God can work through ordinary relationships as we notice people, love them, and speak honestly about Jesus.

5. Listening helps us speak into the life someone is actually living

John 4:7-26; James 1:19

At the well, Jesus engages a particular woman in a real conversation. Water, her personal life, questions about worship, and the hope of the Messiah all enter the exchange. He brings truth into contact with her actual life.

We need to hear what people mean when they use words such as God, faith, or church. One person may be thinking about a loving parent. Another may remember pressure, hypocrisy, grief, or a prayer that seemed unanswered.

Someone asking whether God can be trusted may be carrying a painful story. Someone who appears uninterested may be unsure whether there is room for honest questions. Listening helps us recognize what we have not yet understood.

We can ask what has shaped their view of God and what they most want to understand. Then we give them time to answer. We can speak truth with patience and acknowledge when we do not know.

Teaching point: Listening with love helps us explain the gospel in ways that address the person and their real questions.

6. The way we treat people gives weight to what we say about God

John 13:34-35; James 2:1-4

Jesus identifies love among His disciples as a visible mark of belonging to Him. James exposes the contradiction of honoring a wealthy visitor while treating a poor person as less important. Our conduct communicates what we value.

People need to experience consistency between our words about God and our treatment of them. Remembering a name, making space at a table, following through on a promise, and acknowledging a mistake all matter.

Our care should continue when someone disagrees, declines prayer, or needs time. Love can remain steady while we hold our convictions clearly. When we have hurt someone, an honest apology and changed behavior help make repentance visible.

This also shapes how we accompany grief. We can stay close, provide practical help, and pray without pretending to explain every loss. A person should be able to bring pain into the church without being required to hide it behind religious language.

Teaching point: People should encounter patient, truthful, dependable love as they explore the God we proclaim.

7. We can remove unnecessary barriers while remaining faithful to Jesus

Acts 15:1-11, 19-21; 1 Corinthians 14:9, 16-19

Acts 15 addresses the claim that Gentiles must be circumcised to be saved. Peter points to salvation through the grace of Jesus, and James urges the church to avoid burdening Gentiles turning to God. The council also gives concrete moral and communal instructions.

The passage concerns a specific dispute, but it gives us a searching question: Have we added requirements that obscure the grace we are proclaiming?

At Deep River, we can examine assumptions about what newcomers already understand. Kingdom means God's reign. Prayer is speaking and listening to God. Worship is our response of love, trust, and honor to Him. We can explain communion and how someone may participate.

Clear directions, understandable language, and accessible spaces can help people engage. We can ask someone unfamiliar with our gatherings what was confusing and listen carefully. Our preferences deserve examination whenever they make it harder for someone to understand the invitation.

Teaching point: Keep the call of Jesus clear, and make the path toward understanding Him easier to find.

8. A clear invitation gives people room to respond honestly

Mark 1:14-15; John 1:12; 2 Corinthians 4:2

Jesus calls people to repent and believe the good news. John describes receiving Him and believing in His name. Paul rejects deception and commends the open presentation of truth. Together, these passages help shape a clear and honest invitation.

Someone can attend church and still be unsure what to do with what they have heard. We can explain that they may turn to Jesus, ask for forgiveness, place their trust in Him, and begin following Him today.

We can offer to pray with them and invite them to speak in their own words. Someone may also need to say that they have questions or are not ready. An honest response gives us a real place to continue the conversation.

The invitation carries weight because Jesus is Lord and His offer of life matters. We can communicate that seriousness with patience. A particular emotion, public gesture, or polished prayer is not the measure of saving faith.

Teaching point: Explain how to respond to Jesus, offer personal help, and leave room for an honest, willing response.

9. A response to Jesus begins a life of learning to follow Him

Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-47

Jesus commissions His followers to make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to obey His commands. In Acts 2, those who receive the message enter a shared life of teaching, fellowship, prayer, and practical care.

A person who responds to Jesus needs people who will continue walking with them. They need room to ask questions, learn Scripture, understand baptism, build relationships, and discover what obedience looks like in ordinary life.

This makes the next day important. With their permission, someone can contact them, listen to how they are doing, and arrange a next conversation. A simple beginning might be reading a passage from John together and discussing what it reveals about Jesus.

Responsibility needs a name. Assuming that someone else will follow up can leave a new believer alone. Healthy care helps people grow in their own relationship with Christ while becoming connected to the wider church.

Teaching point: Welcome each response to Jesus with continuing relationship and a clear next step in discipleship.

10. The whole church has a part in helping people know Jesus

Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 3:15

Paul describes leaders equipping the saints for ministry and the whole body growing as each part contributes. Peter encourages believers to be ready to explain their hope with gentleness and respect.

This work belongs throughout the church. Someone may notice the person standing alone. Another may explain a passage, pray with a coworker, share a meal, or accompany a neighbor through a difficult season. These ordinary acts can create space for meaningful conversations about Jesus.

We can help one another grow in simple practices: explaining the gospel, sharing a truthful testimony, asking permission before praying, and listening without immediately trying to solve everything.

We do not need to know every answer before we begin. We can acknowledge a question, search Scripture together, and seek help when needed. A humble witness keeps pointing people toward Jesus while continuing to learn.

Teaching point: Every believer can participate through the gifts, relationships, and opportunities God has given them.

11. We look for fruit while trusting God with the growth

1 Corinthians 3:5-9; Galatians 5:22-23

Paul describes himself and Apollos as servants with different responsibilities. One planted and another watered, while God caused the growth. Their labor matters, and the life that emerges depends on God.

This gives us both responsibility and humility. We can examine whether we are speaking clearly, caring faithfully, and following through. We can also release the demand to control another person's heart or timetable.

Attendance and participation tell part of the story. We also want to notice honest conversations, expressed faith, baptism, continuing relationships, and growing love, patience, and self-control. Someone who begins asking sincere questions may be taking a meaningful step, even before they express faith.

We should listen to people who stay, people who remain uncertain, and people who leave. Their experience may help us recognize an obstacle we have missed. We can learn from what is visible while remembering that only God fully knows the heart.

Teaching point: Pay attention to the fruit, learn from people, and trust God to bring the growth we cannot manufacture.

12. Faithfulness becomes concrete in the next step we take

James 1:22-25; Colossians 4:2-6

James calls us to put the word into practice. Paul connects devoted prayer with open opportunities, wise conduct toward outsiders, and gracious speech. Reflection is meant to shape how we live.

The workbook asks what we should stop, strengthen, or try. These questions help us turn a broad desire into a faithful action. We might stop using an unexplained phrase, strengthen a relationship we have neglected, or try reading Scripture with someone who is curious.

Choose a step small enough to carry out and meaningful enough to serve a real person. Name who will take responsibility, when to begin, and what you will listen for afterward. An invitation to a conversation this week is something we can actually do.

Our shared purpose can guide these decisions: How will this help someone know God personally and respond to Jesus? We can return to that question as we pray, serve, teach, and make plans.

Teaching point: Respond to what God has made clear with one practical act of love and obedience.

Bringing the teaching together

The workbook begins with our own life with God and moves outward into gospel clarity, relationships, welcome, response, and discipleship. These belong together. A church that invites people to know Jesus must keep learning to follow Him in its own shared life.

At Deep River, we want people to encounter a community where they can hear the truth about Jesus, ask honest questions, receive prayer, and find someone willing to walk with them. Our desire is for them to know the Father, trust the Son, and experience the Holy Spirit's continuing work.

The central invitation is personal: Come to Jesus, receive His life, and help someone else take their next step toward Him.

A personal response this morning

If you are ready to trust Jesus, you can begin by speaking to Him honestly: Jesus, I need Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins and rose again. I turn to You and place my trust in You. Teach me to follow You.

A prayer expresses the trust we are placing in Jesus; the words themselves have no power to save. Our confidence rests in Him. Share your response with someone who can pray with you and help you begin learning about Scripture, baptism, and life in the church.

If you already follow Jesus, consider where He is inviting a fresh response. Bring Him the question, habit, disappointment, or next act of obedience that needs your attention. You can respond honestly even when your feelings are unsettled.

Choose one next step this week

One person. Name someone you will pray for and listen to with greater attention.

One action. Choose something to stop, strengthen, or try. This might be a conversation, an invitation, a shared meal, or reading Scripture together.

One commitment. Decide who will act and when. Then listen to the person affected and reflect on what you learn.

A closing prayer

Father, help us know You more deeply through Jesus. Keep our hearts open to Your Word and our lives responsive to Your Spirit. Give us clear words for the gospel, attentive ears, and patient love. Forgive us where our habits have made approaching You confusing. Help us welcome people honestly and walk beside them faithfully. Show each of us one next step, and give us grace to take it. We trust You to bring the growth. Amen.

Developed from the Firsthand Faith ministry reflection workbook, questions 1-12. Scripture references link to the Amplified Bible (AMP). Biblical explanations are paraphrases; the prayers are original.