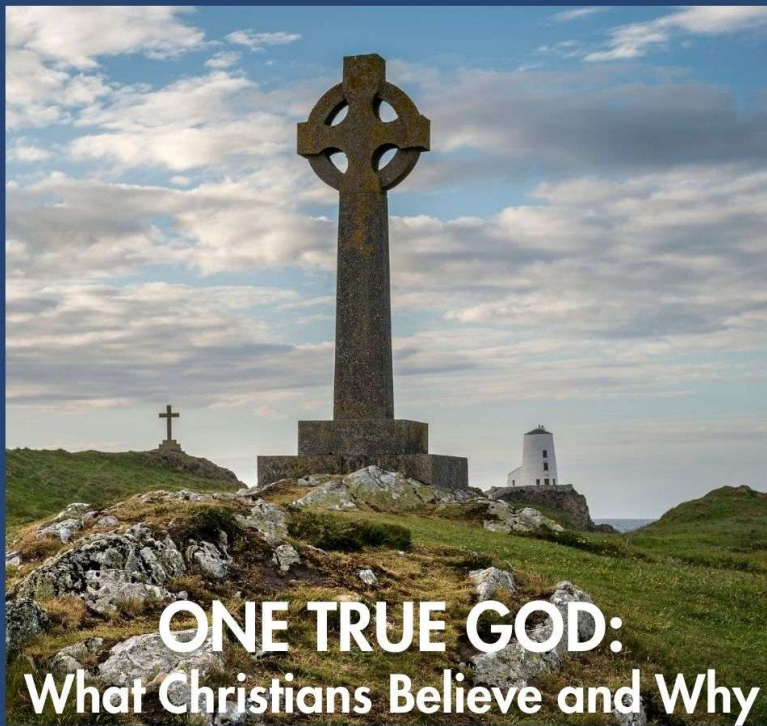


# STUDY GUIDE

## Summer 2026



 **CONCORDUNITED**

**One True God:  
What Christians Believe and Why**  
Concord United Methodist Church  
Summer 2026

## **Introduction**

Christian beliefs are the story of the One True God's self-revealing love. Rather than mere speculative abstract beliefs, they disclose the nature and character of the God who created out of nothing, dwelt among us in the person of Jesus Christ, and is present with us through the Holy Spirit. Our understanding of the purpose of life, morality, and spirituality comes from these basic beliefs about God's work in history and our lives.

In this series, the church explores several foundational Christian convictions: the resurrection of Jesus, Christ's full divinity and humanity, the love of God, the purpose of the church, the Trinity, the authority of Scripture, and several modern distortions of the faith. These sessions are designed to help groups and individuals understand not only *what* Christians believe, but also *why* those beliefs matter for faithful living today.

## **How to Use This Guide**

This study guide is designed for both groups and individuals.

Each session includes:

- *Let's Pray* – Opening and closing prayers to focus the heart on God.
- *Let's Get Started* – Questions to help connect the theme to everyday life. These are discussion questions with no right or wrong answer.
- *Let's Review* – A brief reflection on the previous session's weekly practice; Session 1 has no review.
- *Let's Gain Information* – Teaching content that explains the main idea of the session.
- *Let's Search Scripture* – Key Bible passages and discussion questions.
- *Let's Engage* – A practical next step for applying content to our daily lives.

## Session 1

### The Resurrection and the Life

Week of June 7, 2026

#### Let's Pray

*Risen Lord, you are not merely a teacher from the past but the living Christ who conquered death. As this series begins, open our minds and hearts to the truth of who you are. Help us see why the resurrection matters, why grace matters, and why your life still calls for our trust and obedience today. Strengthen faith, awaken hope, and draw us deeper into your saving life. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

#### Let's Get Started

- When you hear the word “resurrection,” what comes to mind first: hope, confusion, skepticism, comfort, or something else?
- Why do you think the resurrection has always been central to Christian faith?
- In everyday life, what difference would it make if Jesus is truly alive?

#### Let's Gain Information

The earliest church was based around three core convictions: Jesus was raised from the dead, God was uniquely made known in Jesus, and salvation by grace was offered to all. These beliefs were not later inventions but the heart of the apostolic message and the foundation from which the church's later theology developed.

The resurrection matters because it vindicates Jesus' identity, confirms the truth of his message, and grounds Christian hope in something more than memory or moral inspiration. If Jesus is risen, then death is not final, grace is real, and discipleship is a response to a living Lord rather than admiration for a dead hero.

## Let's Search Scripture

Read Acts 2:22–24, 36, and Acts 15:7–11.

- According to Peter, what does the resurrection reveal about Jesus?
- Why is salvation by grace such an essential companion to belief in the risen Christ?
- How do these passages show the earliest church centered on Jesus himself?

If time allows, also read John 11:17–27 and Matthew 28.

- How does Jesus' claim, "I am the resurrection and the life," deepen your understanding of salvation and hope?
- What do the resurrection narratives invite believers to do in response?

## Let's Engage

Over the next week:

- Read one resurrection passage each day and ask, "What does this show me about who Jesus is?"
- Notice one place in your life where fear of loss, failure, or death shapes your thinking, and bring it to the risen Christ in prayer.
- Be ready next session to share one way the truth of the resurrection affects daily life, not just future hope.

Let's close in prayer:

*Living Christ, thank you that you are risen indeed. Anchor your people in resurrection hope, grace, and courage. Teach your church to live as those who belong to the Lord of life. Amen.*

## Session 2

### Truly God and Truly Human

Week of June 14, 2026

#### Let's Pray

*Lord Jesus Christ, Word made flesh, thank you that in you God has truly come near. Help your people understand more deeply that you are fully God and fully human. Guard us from false ideas that make you smaller than Scripture reveals, and help us trust you as the Savior who both understands our weakness and has the power to redeem us. In your holy name. Amen.*

#### Let's Get Started

- Why do you think people often prefer a version of Jesus that feels easier to explain or control?
- Which truth is harder for people today to accept—that Jesus is fully God, or that Jesus is fully human? Why?
- How does it help to know that Jesus both shares human struggle and has divine authority?

#### Let's Review

Last session focused on the resurrection and the earliest church's confidence that Jesus is alive, uniquely reveals God, and offers salvation by grace. Share anything you noticed this week:

- What resurrection passage stood out to you?
- Did the resurrection speak into a fear, burden, or hope in a fresh way?

## Let's Gain Information

The early church affirmed that Jesus is both truly God and truly human. If Jesus were not truly God, he could not save or forgive; if he were not truly human, he could not fully represent faithful human life or truly identify with our struggle.

The early church rejected views that denied either Christ's divinity or humanity because both are essential to the gospel. As fully human and fully God, Jesus can both sympathize with human weakness and accomplish a salvation no mere human could achieve.

## Let's Search Scripture

Read John 1:1–18, especially verse 14.

- What does it mean that “the Word became flesh and lived among us”?
- What does this passage reveal about Jesus' identity?

You may also read Philippians 2:5–11 or Hebrews 2:14–18.

- Why does it matter that Jesus fully entered human life?
- How do these passages help explain why Jesus can both save and relate to us?

## Let's Engage

Over the next week:

- Reflect on one part of your life where you need Jesus' saving power, and one part where you need his understanding presence.
- Pray each day using both truths: “Jesus, fully God, save me,” and “Jesus, fully human, understand and guide me.”
- Consider how your view of Jesus may have been too limited, and write down one truth from Scripture that expands it.

Let's close in prayer:

*Jesus, Son of God and Son of Man, thank you that you are able to save completely and to meet us fully in our weakness. Draw your church into deeper trust, worship, and obedience. Amen.*

## Session 3

### God Is Love

Week of June 21, 2026

#### Let's Pray

*God of love, thank you that your deepest nature is not cruelty, indifference, or mere power, but holy love. Open our hearts to receive your love and to be changed by it. Teach your people to see your love clearly in Jesus Christ and to reflect that love in the way they live, forgive, and serve. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

#### Let's Get Started

- When people say “God is love,” what do they usually mean?
- How is biblical love different from sentimental feelings or vague niceness?
- Where have you seen God's love most clearly in your own life?

#### Let's Review

Last week, the focus was on Jesus as truly God and truly human. Share any reflection from your weekly practice:

- Where did you most need Jesus' saving power?
- Where did you most need his human compassion and understanding?

## Let's Gain Information

As the early church reflected on God as revealed in Christ, it came to the striking conclusion that God's most fundamental nature is love. This did not mean God lacks power or wisdom, but that divine power and wisdom are expressed in the character of holy, self-giving love.

This conviction would have been startling in many ancient settings, where the gods were often viewed as capricious, distant, or violent. Christian faith instead declares that God's essence is love, seen supremely in God's sending of the Son for the life of the world.

## Let's Search Scripture

Read 1 John 4:7–12.

- What does this passage say about the source of love?
- How does John connect God's love to Jesus' coming into the world?
- Why is love for others presented as evidence of knowing God?

Also read John 3:16–17 and Psalm 86:15.

- How do these passages add depth to the claim that God is love?
- What false pictures of God do these verses challenge?

## Let's Engage

Over the next week:

- Ask God each morning to help you receive his love before trying to prove yourself.
- Choose one concrete act of sacrificial love—toward a family member, coworker, neighbor, or someone difficult.
- Reflect on whether your picture of God tends to be shaped more by fear, performance, or love, and bring that honestly to prayer.

Let's close in prayer:

*God of steadfast love, thank you for making your heart known in Jesus. Let your love cast out fear, soften what is hard in us, and make us people who love because you first loved us. Amen.*

## Session 4

### The Church Is a Hospital for Sinners

Week of June 28, 2026

#### Let's Pray

*Lord Jesus, thank you for loving your church and calling a people to yourself. Forgive us for the ways we misunderstand, neglect, or misuse the church. Teach us to see the church not as a showcase for the strong but as a place of grace, healing, truth, and growth. Form us into a humble and faithful people who belong to you and to one another. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

#### Let's Get Started

- When you think of the church at its best, what do you picture?
- When people are hurt by the church, what false expectations or distortions are often involved?
- Why do many people today feel they can follow Christ privately without deep involvement in a local church?

#### Let's Review

In Session 3, the group reflected on the truth that God is love and on how God's love reshapes both theology and daily life. Share briefly:

- What act of sacrificial love did you attempt this week?
- Did your understanding of God's love shift in any way?

## **Let's Gain Information**

The church was Jesus' idea, not a later human plan to institutionalize his message. The church exists as a "hospital for sinners," not a "hotel for saints," meaning it is a place where grace restores imperfect people rather than a reward system for the already righteous.

The early church rejected movements that made belonging to the church depend mainly on personal moral achievement, and the New Testament also warns against individualism (Hebrews 10:24-25), which treats faith as private and detached from the local church. Instead, the church teaches that a personal relationship with Christ creates the common ground for a community of mutual dependence, equality, and spiritual nourishment.

## **Let's Search Scripture**

Read Matthew 16:13–20 and Hebrews 10:24–25.

- What do these passages teach about the identity and purpose of the church?
- Why does Christian faith require more than isolated belief?

Also read Romans 12:4–5, Ephesians 1:22–23, and 1 Corinthians 12:12–14.

- How do these images of the body shape your understanding of belonging in the church?
- Where are you tempted toward either perfectionism or individualism?

## Let's Engage

Over the next week:

- Pray for your local church, not just its leaders but its whole body.
- Take one intentional step toward deeper participation: worship, prayer, service, reconciliation, or encouraging another member.
- Reflect on this question: "Do I treat church more like a consumer, a critic, or a member of Christ's body?"

Let's close in prayer:

*Lord of the church, heal what is wounded in your people, correct what is distorted, and deepen our commitment to one another. Make your church a place where grace is real, truth is spoken, and sinners are led into wholeness. Amen.*

## Session 5

### God Is Trinity

Week of July 5, 2026

#### Let's Pray

*Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God forever blessed, open our minds to the mystery and beauty of your life. Keep your people from reducing you to something smaller than your self-revelation in Scripture. Teach us to worship you rightly, trust you deeply, and live in the love that flows from your eternal communion. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

#### Let's Get Started

- What has been your experience of the doctrine of the Trinity—confusing, beautiful, abstract, essential?
- Why do you think Christians have insisted so strongly that God is one God in three persons?
- How might belief in the Trinity affect prayer, worship, and everyday discipleship?

#### Let's Review

Last session centered on the church as Christ's community of grace rather than a showcase for the spiritually impressive. Share briefly:

- What step did you take toward deeper participation in the life of the church?
- Did you notice any shift in how you think about belonging to the body of Christ?

## **Let's Gain Information**

The early church taught belief in one God in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each person is co-equal and co-eternal, and this teaching was not adopted because it was socially convenient or philosophically tidy, but because it matched the God revealed through Jesus Christ and the Spirit.

The church rejected errors that blurred the distinction between the persons or split the one God into three gods. The doctrine of the Trinity protects the church's confession that the God Christians worship is one and yet truly known as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

## **Let's Search Scripture**

Read Matthew 28:16–20 and 2 Corinthians 13:14.

- How do these passages speak of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together?
- What do they suggest about Christian baptism and worship?

Also read John 10:25–29 and John 14:25–27.

- What do these texts reveal about the relationship between Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit?
- Why does this doctrine matter for more than just theological precision?

## Let's Engage

Over the next week:

- Begin your prayers consciously addressing God as Father, through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Consider how Scripture, worship, and a life of discipleship reflect the Trinity more often than you realized.
- Write down one way the Trinity helps you understand God as relational, loving, and present.

Let's close in prayer:

*Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, receive the worship of your people. Draw your church into deeper wonder, faithful confession, and joyful communion with You, the one true God. Amen.*

## Session 6

### The Authority of Scripture

Week of July 12, 2026

#### Let's Pray

*God of truth, thank you for speaking through the prophets, apostles, and above all through your Son. As your people study the authority of Scripture, give them reverence, wisdom, humility, and discernment. Teach them to love your word, to read it faithfully, and to be shaped by its truth. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

#### Let's Get Started

- What shaped your view of the Bible most—family, church, personal study, doubt, or experience?
- When people talk about the Bible's authority, what do they usually mean?
- Why is it important to ask not only whether Scripture is authoritative, but how it should be interpreted?

#### Let's Review

Last week focused on the Trinity and the church's confession of one God in three persons. Share anything you noticed:

- Did thinking more consciously about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit change your prayer or worship?
- What new insight about God stood out to you?

## **Let's Gain Information**

The early church first received the message of Jesus through apostolic preaching and later through apostolic writings. The church received the Old Testament as Scripture in continuity with Jesus, and it gradually recognized New Testament writings using criteria such as apostolic origin, orthodoxy, widespread usage, and antiquity. Church councils such as Hippo in 393 AD and Carthage in 397 AD helped confirm a unified New Testament canon.

Later, based on the church's historic teachings about scripture and the witness of John Wesley, followers of Christ in the Methodist tradition came to believe that truth is found primarily in Scripture, and Scripture is interpreted through tradition, reason, and experience.

## **Let's Search Scripture**

Read 2 Timothy 3:16–17.

- What does this passage teach about what Scripture is and what it is for?
- How does Scripture equip believers for faithful living?

Also read 2 Peter 1:20–21, Proverbs 30:5, and Psalm 119:105.

- What do these texts reveal about the reliability and purpose of God's word?
- How can Christians hold together confidence in Scripture with humility in interpretation?

## Let's Engage

Over the next week:

- Read one short passage of Scripture each day and ask: “What does this reveal about God, and how should I respond?”
- Notice whether you tend to treat Scripture as background noise, a weapon, a comfort only, or God’s authoritative word.
- Choose one practice to strengthen your relationship with Scripture: daily reading, memorization, journaling, or discussing it with another Christian.

Let’s close in prayer:

*God of truth, plant your word deeply in your people. Guard them from error, laziness, and pride. Make them readers, hearers, and doers of your word for the sake of Christ and his church. Amen.*

## Session 7

### 3 Lies About God and the Truth That Sets Us Free

Week of July 19, 2026

#### Let's Pray

*Lord Jesus, you promised that your followers would know the truth and that the truth would set them free. Expose the falsehoods that distort faith, weaken discipleship, and confuse your church. Give your people wisdom to recognize lies, courage to reject them, and grace to hold fast to what is true. In your name we pray. Amen.*

#### Let's Get Started

- Why do distorted versions of Christianity often spread so easily?
- Which is more dangerous in your view: obvious false teaching or subtle half-truths? Why?
- What false ideas about God seem most common in churches or culture right now?

#### Let's Review

Session 6 focused on the authority of Scripture and on learning to receive the Bible as God's trustworthy word. Share briefly:

- What practice did you choose to strengthen your relationship with Scripture?
- Did God bring any passage or truth to your attention in a fresh way?

## **Let's Gain Information**

Three modern distortions threaten the church: the prosperity gospel, which looks to God for success rather than faithfulness; moral therapeutic deism, which sees God as a counselor primarily concerned with emotional comfort rather than holiness; and nationalism or tribalism, which sees God as prioritizing one group over others. These lies reshape God into an idol that serves human desires for success, comfort, or group superiority rather than revealing the God who calls people to faithfulness, holiness, and discipleship across every boundary.

Against these distortions, three Gospel truths offer corrections: Jesus came not to make people successful but faithful; God's primary aim is not emotional comfort but holiness; and Christ came not to exalt one nation or culture but to make disciples of all nations, races, and peoples. Christian truth liberates by re-centering believers on Christ rather than on self-interest or tribal identity.

## **Let's Search Scripture**

Read John 8:31–32, Matthew 16:24–26, and Galatians 3:26–29.

- What does Jesus say truth does in the life of a disciple?
- How do these passages challenge success-centered, comfort-centered, or tribe-centered religion?
- Where do you see these distortions showing up in Christian culture today?

Also read Proverbs 12:19–23.

- What does this passage teach about truthfulness and falsehood?
- Why is truth spiritually freeing even when it is uncomfortable?

## Let's Engage

Over the next week:

- Ask God to reveal any lie about him that you have quietly believed—about success, comfort, identity, politics, control, or worth.
- Compare that lie with one specific truth from Scripture.
- Take one concrete step of obedience that reflects truth rather than distortion, even if it costs comfort or reputation.

Let's close in prayer:

*God of truth and freedom, tear down every false image of you that competes for our allegiance. Set your church free from self-centered religion and make your people faithful, holy, and rooted in Christ alone. Amen.*