

THE FOUNDING DOCUMENT

Why this exists

You didn't leave Jesus. You left what grew up around him.



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The person this is for

You didn't leave Jesus. You left what grew up around him.

Maybe you walked out years ago. Maybe you never walked in, because what you saw from the outside didn't look like him. Or maybe you're still there every Sunday — serving, singing, showing up — and quietly dying, because you can't say out loud what you've been thinking for years.

You still pray sometimes. You still feel something when you read the stories. You haven't stopped wanting him. You just don't know where you belong anymore.

You're not deconstructed. You're not lost. You're not a project for somebody to fix.

You're spiritually homeless. And you thought you were the only one.

You're not.

This exists so that people like you have somewhere to come home to — a table, a meal, people who will claim you before they agree with you, and Jesus at the center without everything we keep piling on top of him.

That's the whole reason. Everything else in this document just protects it.

What we hope happens to you here

Two things. In this order.

First, relief. Somewhere in the first few minutes — reading a page, sitting at a table, hearing someone else's story — we hope you exhale and think: *finally*.

Finally, I can ask my questions. Finally, someone's talking about Jesus instead of defending Christianity. Finally, nobody's trying to recruit me. Finally, I don't have to pretend.

Second, belonging. It usually comes a little later, when you look around the table and realize the person across from you has been carrying the same thing you have. I *thought I was the only one*.

That's it. That's what this is for. Not agreement. Not membership. Not getting you caught up on what we believe. Relief, and then belonging.

So this is the test everything here has to pass: does it make more people say those two sentences, or fewer? Every page, every practice, every decision. If something makes fewer people say them — no matter how smart or impressive it sounds — it goes.

And one promise underneath the promise: no one should ever leave a table feeling more alone than when they came. If that ever stops being true, we've failed, and nothing else we got right will matter.

Jesus stays at the center

Not Christianity. Not this project, its founder, or its future. Not any system of theology — including the ones we love. Jesus.

That sounds obvious. It never stays obvious. Every generation piles things on top of him — political agendas, institutional survival, doctrinal tests, cultural assumptions, celebrity leaders — until people can't see him under the stack. Most of it gets added by sincere people who thought they were helping.

So the center of this community isn't a statement about Jesus. It's the practice of asking one question, out loud, over and over, for as long as this exists:

What have we put between people and Jesus?

And then removing it. Not once. Every time it grows back.

We protect people's access to Jesus. Jesus doesn't need protecting — he's managed for two thousand years without us. The path to him does. The job of this community is to keep that path clear, not to build anything on it. The moment we start protecting our system, our reputation, or our way of talking about him instead of protecting people's access to him, we've become the thing people needed to leave.

Everything gets judged against his life and his teaching. That includes how we read the Bible — Scripture gets brought back to Jesus, not the other way around. When what we've built and what he taught come into conflict, what we've built loses.

You belong before you agree

Almost every religious system runs in the same order: agree first, then belong. Sign the statement, pass the class, get baptized into the right camp — and then you're one of us.

We run it backwards. You belong because you're a person. There is no entrance exam.

That doesn't mean every idea is equally true, or that nothing matters, or that the table has no shape. It means nobody earns a seat. Agreement grows and changes. Sometimes it falls apart and gets rebuilt. Belonging holds through all of it.

There's one house rule: come hungry. Hungry means curious. Come willing to listen to a story, sit with a question, and be honest about your own. That's the only posture we ask for — and we ask it of everyone, in both directions. The pattern is curious, open, accepting, loving — and it runs both ways across the table. The longtime believer extends it to the skeptic. The skeptic extends it to the longtime believer. Nobody at the table is somebody else's project.

Your questions are welcome here — not tolerated, welcome. Questions aren't threats to faith. They're usually how it grows. If you've been somewhere that treated your questions like a problem to be managed, you can set that down now.

And no one will try to catch you up. There's no "here's what we believe, get on board." There's a chair, a meal, and people who want to hear your story before they tell you theirs.

Practice matters more than certainty

This community is not trying to produce people who know more. It's trying to produce people who live differently.

That's not because belief doesn't matter. It's because Jesus almost never started with belief. He started with meals, stories, questions, and healing — and invited people to follow before they understood. Understanding came from walking with him, not the other way around. We keep that order.

So the curriculum here isn't a doctrine class. It's forgiveness. Generosity. Presence. Hospitality. Mercy. Peacemaking. Telling the truth. Keeping your word. The things Jesus actually taught, practiced until they start to become who you are.

The way we practice is simple, and it's built around a table. People gather, eat together, hear one of Jesus's stories told out loud, talk honestly about it, and then do something about it before they meet again. Story, conversation, action. Week after week. That's the whole engine — small enough to happen in any kitchen, and it's been changing people for two thousand years.

None of this can be done alone. Following Jesus was never a solo assignment — he never gave one. Everything he taught assumes other people: someone to forgive, someone to feed, someone who knows you well enough to notice when you're drowning. The private, personal, just-me-and-God version of faith is a modern invention, and for a lot of people it quietly became a lonelier one.

That's what a table is for. Done right, it gives you three things most people have gone years without: community — people who claim you; connection — being truly known, not just recognized; and a cause — something worth doing together that's bigger than any of you. Most of the loneliness people carry is the absence of one of those three.

How this stays honest

Everything above is easy to write and hard to keep. Movements drift. Not because bad people take over — because sincere people slowly start protecting the thing itself instead of the people it was built for. We're not arrogant enough to think we're the exception. So these guardrails go in at the foundation, while nobody's tempted yet.

Nobody owns this. Not the founder, not a board, not a church, not a denomination. It's given away — free to use, free to adapt, free to run without asking anyone's permission. What can't be done is capture it: nobody gets to fence it off, rebrand it as theirs, and sell it back to the people it was made for. It is stewarded, never owned.

It's built to outlive its founder. One man started this. His voice will matter in the early years, because somebody has to articulate the vision and guard the culture. His

name must not matter. From day one the architecture assumes he's gone — because if this only works with him at the center, he's become part of the message, and the message was supposed to be Jesus. The best compliment this could receive in fifty years is somebody asking, "Who started this?" and nobody being quite sure.

Money serves. It never steers. Everything essential here is free — nothing gated, no account, nothing to sign, no "unlock the full version." You can take all of it without telling us who you are. If you do tell us — because you're starting a table and want a person alongside you — your name is used for that and nothing else. Donations keep it running, and they buy exactly nothing: no influence, no naming rights, no seat at the head of the table. The moment anyone here feels marketed to instead of welcomed, drift has already begun, and it's everyone's job to say so out loud.

We expect to fail at this. No structure has ever made an institution incapable of drifting, and we won't be the first. What we can do is build the habit of repentance into the culture — asking regularly, publicly, "What have we put between people and Jesus?" and acting on the answer even when it costs us something we like.

What can change

Almost everything else.

The name. The materials. The format. The technology. The language. The size. The way tables run. Even the practices themselves, if better ones emerge. None of it is sacred, and none of it gets defended for sentiment's sake.

Hold the center tight. Hold everything else loosely.

The center is short enough to say in one breath: Jesus, a table, belonging before agreement, practice over certainty, and a door that's never locked.

Everything else is furniture. Furniture can be moved.

The last word

This wasn't built to be successful. It was built to be faithful — and those aren't the same goal.

If it works, here's what it looks like: somebody who spent years thinking they were the only one sits down at a table, eats a meal, hears a story, and exhales for the first time in a long time. Then one day, without anyone recruiting them to do it, they set a table for someone else.

That's the whole vision. Everything else in this document just protects it.

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