

What makes this series so valuable is that each Bible event leads the reader or the group to discover the deepest truths of the Bible for themselves. This is done through insightful multiple choice questions which draw the readers to enter into the story and find for themselves its meanings and implications which they then can apply to their own lives.

The series is best “taught” by persons who encourage the group to do most of the talking and thinking. The teacher best acts as a leader in which the group discovers its way through the Scriptural events. The teacher may help the group when he or she believes that valuable truths have been overlooked, but the first discoverers should be members of the group itself. This stirs tremendous interest on the part of the group. This also relieves the teacher of the responsibility, under older systems of teaching, to carefully master all the truths of the text and present them in a way that would hopefully interest and “teach” the group.

Individuals who use these lessons for their own personal study find this investigative method interesting and meaningful. The reader is invited to sense the drama of each story in his or her own Bible and be led to discern the spiritual truths that are packed into each story.



First Steps in **CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP**

Interactive Bible Study

**NATIONAL BIBLE READING
CAMPAIGN**



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Now I Am a Disciple of Christ

Start Here...

Jesus commanded His church: ***Go and make disciples... baptizing them, teaching them to do all things I have commanded (Matthew 28:19-20)***. The church can only disciple those who are willing to be disciplined and trained. You must decide for yourself whether you will truly follow Jesus Christ and be an active disciple or if you will be careless and drift back to the ways of the world. What you do now will probably determine how you will live the rest of your life with joy and victory in the Lord or in failure, led downward by ugly self-centeredness. This booklet offers you an opportunity to begin well as a follower of Jesus Christ as His faithful and joyful disciple.

Every new Christian urgently needs to be disciplined. Sadly, many who have been Christians for years say that they have never been personally disciplined. The experiences you will have through studying the following pages with others will be a definite and beginning discipling experience that should help you in many ways. Even so, you should continue to learn and serve as a disciple of Jesus Christ all the rest of your life.

Other discipling experiences that should be available to you as a member of a Full Circle Discipleship include: personal or family studies given through the National Bible Reading Campaign, weekly studies in friendship groups, personal development as a member of a ROCK, and active enrollment in the church's Bible institute. Bible study in Sunday School is another form of continued discipling. In addition to the need to study, it is important to know that few believers ever grow in their Christian lives apart from faithful attendance and active service in their churches or in the lives of missions of their churches.

Decide now to be an active disciple of Jesus Christ. When you have completed the following studies, you should be on your way to victorious discipleship in the knowledge and service of Jesus Christ, your Lord.

An advice to wise students: In this page and in all which follow, we will refer to key verses of the Bible. Therefore, we will be going through different books of the Bible and to several chapters and verses. While this is necessary for this kind of thematic study, it is always slightly dangerous, since the verses can be misinterpreted being brought out of their context. For this reason, we encourage each reader to look up each studied verse after the class and to read the verses found before and after it. Doing so will not only keep the reader from the danger of misinterpreting a verse, but will also improve the student's understanding of the given verses. Furthermore, it is a way to examine personally the study received in class and to become more familiar with the Bible.



First Step

Getting Started As a Disciple of Jesus Christ

It is only possible to be a disciple of Jesus Christ when you meet and know Him personally. It is not enough to be a “good” person or even a faithful church member. Many “good” people and many church members do not really know God nor have they been saved by Jesus Christ. We must begin, therefore, by carefully studying what the Bible says is necessary to be a child of God, saved by Jesus Christ from all sins.

How to Be Saved and Be Sure You Are Saved

What God Does to Save Us: Many people work hard to be accepted by God. They go to church every day; they give to the church and the poor; they obey the rules they have been given, and do many other things. Some think that just by raising their hand in a church service or by being baptized they will be saved. Such people think that by these good works God will have to accept them. However, the Bible says very clearly that we can never save ourselves; only God can save us. The Bible clearly explains what God has done to save us and how we can receive the blessing of salvation.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith --- and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.

1. This verse says we are saved in the following ways:

- By God’s grace.
- As a gift of God.
- By our faith in God’s gift.
- By living a perfect life.
- By being baptized.
- By belonging to the right church.

2. Why can we not be saved by our good works?

- Because we also must give God money.
- To keep us from boasting about our earning our own salvation.

3. What is the one thing by which we must be saved?

- We must be saved by faith alone.
- We must never sin.
- We must belong to the right church.



This verse leaves us with several questions, such as: Why do we need to be saved, anyway? Why can’t we be saved by good works? What kind of faith must we have to be saved? Why can salvation only be a free gift of God to those who believe?

Why We Need to Be Saved: Many people believe that they do not need to be saved because they consider themselves to be “good” people, certainly better than many others. This is simply a form of human pride and shows their ignorance of the absolute holiness of God. The Bible is clear: we are all sinners in God’s holy eyes.

Romans 3:23 ...all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

4. According to this verse:

- Everyone has sinned.
- No one has the righteousness that God demands.
- A few people are saved because they are better than others.

Romans 6:23 ...the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

5. Here, the Bible teaches that:

- We deserve death (eternal separation from God) as our just payment for sin.
- Now, we must live without sin in order to be forgiven.
- It is not by our works. Instead, God freely gives us eternal life.
- Eternal life is only given in Jesus Christ.

The Bible teaches that God only receives the righteous into His kingdom, and only the righteous will spend eternity with Him. If we are all sinners, where will we get this kind of righteousness that saves us from our sins?

Romans 3:21-22a ...now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

Because all people are sinners, God had to provide a righteousness that did not depend on our keeping the law or obeying the rules of religion.

6. Paul explains that this righteousness comes to us in the following ways:

- It is a righteousness given to us by God Himself.
- It only comes to us by our faith in Christ.
- It only comes to those who are without sin.
- It comes to those who believe in Christ as Savior.

Romans 3:22-25a *There is no difference, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood.*

7. According to the Bible, how many people have sinned against God and how many fall short of what God has a right to expect? _____

8. We are counted as being just before God:

- As something given to us by God's pure grace, without earning it ourselves.
- At the price of our own sacrifices and acting without sin.
- Made possible only by the sacrifice for sin by our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Requiring our faith in the forgiving power of the blood of Christ.

What We Must Do for God to Save Us: Only God can save us from our sins, but what must we do for Him to be able to save us? The verses already studied show clearly that the one thing we must do is to believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior; we must believe exclusively in the power of His blood sacrifice to save us. That means we must not trust anything else to save us because to trust our own good works or religious acts is to distrust in the exclusive power of Christ to save us.

Nevertheless, the question is often raised: What kind of faith do I need in Jesus to be able to be saved? The Bible itself says, ***You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that and shudder (James 2:19).*** Many people sincerely say that they believe in God, but their lives do not show that they really belong to God or that they have been saved by Him.



The Apostles, in their preaching, made clear what kind of faith is necessary for God to save us. Peter preached, ***God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out (Acts 3:18-19a).***

9. Peter said, in these words, that:

- Christ's death for our sins was predicted by the prophets.
- We have to respond by repenting and turning to God.
- All we have to do is to believe that God exists.

The demons believe and tremble, but they have never repented or turned to God. Many people who say they believe in God have never repented or turned to God. Some may wonder what it is to repent; it means to repent means to make a 180° turn in life from selfishness and disobedience to serve and obey Jesus Christ. One sign of repentance is to be baptized. While only Christ saves, and not baptism, your baptism as a believer is an initial evidence of the sincerity of your faith in Christ as your new Lord.

In this same message, Peter said, ***Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).***

10. Peter told his listeners:

- To repent of their old way of life.
- To demonstrate their repentance by being publicly baptized.
- To only raise their hands showing they believed in Jesus.
- That God would give the Holy Spirit to all who sincerely turn away from their sins

In a later lesson, we will learn much more about the power of the Holy Spirit to change us and to give us power to live a godly life. For the Holy Spirit to enter us and give us power to live differently, we must repent and give our lives to God, confessing that Jesus Christ is now the Lord of our lives.

How will our lives be different with Jesus in control? The Apostle Paul tells us things we are to leave behind and things that we now take on us in the power of the Holy Spirit who comes to all who truly repent:

To Leave Behind: *You must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips (Colossians 3:8).*



To Put On: *As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience (Colossians 3:12).*

Your Personal Spiritual Evaluation

Mark as many as you sincerely can:

- I know that I am a sinner and that I can never be good enough in my own power to be accepted by God.
- I know that God gave His only begotten Son to die for my sins.
- I know that only by repenting and trusting in Christ can I be saved.
- I do repent of my sinful life and I give myself to God, receiving God's forgiveness and His Holy Spirit, trusting in Christ for my salvation.
- I am confident that God has forgiven me and given me eternal life.
- I wish to be baptized as a sign of my faith in Christ and the beginning of my new life in God.

Later Bible studies in this booklet may help you to be sure that you are saved. There will also be more explanation about the purpose and blessing of baptism. You will never be forced to make a decision you do not want to make. God only receives those who voluntarily come to Him.

Second Step



Trust the Lord

We are saved when we repent of our old sinful ways and fully trust the Lord. Saving faith is not something you have only at the beginning of your Christian life. Saving faith is the lasting faith of all who are truly saved. The world, the flesh and the devil warn you that you dare not fully trust the Lord for your salvation, but now must depend on uncertain things, like your good works, your religious acts, or your unfailing faithfulness. You will not have these in perfection until the Day of Jesus Christ, when He will totally transform you into His image. Only your faith in Christ will save you and keep you saved.

Why You Can Fully Trust the Lord Alone for Salvation? The Bible is full of promises that prove that you can fully trust God alone to save you. The following verses express two of these promises:

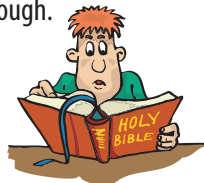
Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life for God's wrath remains on him (John 3:36).

1. Here, the Bible says that whoever, meaning anybody, who believes on Jesus:
- May someday have eternal life if they are faithful and good enough.
 - Already have eternal life.
 - May receive eternal life when they die.

2. Who will not see eternal life because God's wrath is still on him?

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life (John 5:24).

3. What does Jesus say is the truth about whoever hears His word and believes in God's promise to save?
- That person may someday have eternal life if he is faithful enough.
 - That person has less chance of being condemned.
 - That person now has eternal life.
 - That person will not be condemned.
 - That person has already crossed over from death to life.



Most people recognize that only God has the right to adopt us and to make us to be His own children, but how do we get such a right?

He came into that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, He gave the right to become children of God (John 1:11-12).

In fulfillment of His promises, God sent the Savior to His chosen people, Israel.

4. Generally speaking, what did the Jewish people do in regard to Jesus?

5. To whom did God provide, as a free gift, the right to become His children?



- To those who sinned the least.
- To those who deserved to become God's children.
- To those who were baptized.
- To those who believed in the name and authority of Jesus Christ.
- To those who received Jesus into their hearts and lives.
- To those who are Jewish.

6. Do you have eternal life? Why or why not?

What Happens to You When You Trust the Lord? God does wonderful things to you when you fully trust His Son to save you.

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession... (Ephesians 1:13-14).

7. This word from God tells about three things that happen to those who are saved. They are the following:
- They hear the word of truth, the good news how to be saved.
 - They believe the good news and trust in Christ.
 - They start having visions and speaking in tongues.
 - They are sealed as God's own possession by the Holy Spirit.

8. What is the guarantee of our receiving the inheritance promised us?

Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God (1 John 5:4-5).

9. What power overcomes the world and its effort to pull us away from God?

- Our determination to not fail God.
- Our faith in God's power to save us.

10. Who overcomes the power of the world? Only he who:

- Never sins.
- Fully lives up to his promises to God.
- Trusts in Jesus as the powerful Son of God.

11. Opinions: What kind of belief is needed for this to happen in one's life?

- A person only needs to believe the doctrine of Jesus as Son of God.
- A person needs to believe that Jesus is the Son of God and trust only Him to save.

New Christians, like older ones, know that they are weak in the face of the many temptations that will come their way. What hope do they have to resist such temptations when they come? God gives His children a special promise: **No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so you can stand up under it (1 Corinthians 10:13).**

12. According to this, do you face temptations that no one else has ever faced?

- Yes
- No

13. How will God act to enable you to resist any temptation that comes to you?

- God Himself will keep me from being tempted more than I can bear.
- God will keep me from being tempted.
- God will give me a way to escape from the temptation.

14. Opinions: Why do Christians give in to temptation in spite of God's help?

- They think that yielding to the temptation will be better for them than to obey God.
- They cannot realize how much pain and harm will come from doing wrong.
- They blame the temptation on God or on the circumstances in which He put them.
- They blame God because they are "too weak" to resist it.
- They fail to run away from temptation, and escape its power.

To obey God is not simply to resist temptation. More importantly, it is to do everything He wants and plans for your life. The next step in your discipleship will help you to understand the will of God for your life and to do it successfully.

Third Step

Declare Your Faith

Jesus said, **If anyone declares publicly that he belongs to me, I will do the same for him before my Father in heaven (Matthew 10:32).** When we devote our lives to Christ, it is natural that we tell others about it, that we "declare" our relationship with Christ to others. We do this in many ways. For instance, we do it through evident changes that God brings to our lives. We openly tell people that we belong to Christ; and we demonstrate our acceptance of Christ as Lord when we are baptized.



The Bible never speaks of "secret Christians" because it is impossible for a true Christian to keep secret his or her experience with Jesus Christ. One of the most touching stories in the Bible is that of the man who was possessed by a multitude of demons, but who was freed of all of them by the Lord Jesus. He asked Jesus if he might be added to the group of the Apostles and follow Jesus wherever he might go.

Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you." So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis (ten cities) how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed (Mark 5:19-20).

1. What does the Bible say about this experience?

- Jesus thought that the most important thing the man could do would be to go home and tell his family about Jesus' power in his life.
- The man was afraid to tell anyone what had happened to him.
- The man not only told his family, but went to the ten neighboring cities, called "Decapolis," telling what Jesus had done for him.
- The people were not interested in what the man told them.

Changes that Jesus Makes. Of course, most of us do not have as dramatic a change in life as did the demon possessed man. Even so, the Bible plainly says: **If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old has gone, the new has come! (2 Corinthians 5:17).**

2. Opinions: Why is every Christian a new creature? He or she:

- Is forgiven of all sins.
- Is given the right to be the son or daughter of God.
- Has suddenly changed both in height and weight.
- Now has eternal life and peace with God.
- Now has the Holy Spirit dwelling within.
- Has a new purpose in life.
- Has a new eternal destiny: heaven instead of hell.

3. People are usually most impressed by:

- What changes they can actually see in our lives.
- What arguments we can give to them so they will change.

4. What changes has Jesus made in your life that you can tell others about? To whom can you tell about these things?

Every new Christian has been changed by God and as he or she follows the Lord, each one's life will continue to change, including one's character and appearance. This will be seen by those who might oppose your becoming a Christian. Peter and John were arrested and brought before the Jewish rulers who had condemned Jesus to death. A few days before, Peter had denied Jesus, but read as he now tells the enemies about Jesus' power to save:



“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus (Acts 4:12-13).

5. What was the message that Peter gave about Jesus Christ?

6. What did the enemies notice about Peter and John?

- They were obviously university graduates.
- They had a great deal of courage to speak as they did.
- They had been with Jesus.

The Testimony of Christian Baptism. Today, there are many different ideas about baptism. For many centuries, babies have been baptized with the idea that this would save them from original sin. For about 1000 years, baptism has been changed from immersion to sprinkling by many churches. It should never be our purpose to argue with those who believe and practice such things, but it is our responsibility to learn what the Bible says about baptism and what we should do as a result. Above everything else, we should note that Christian baptism is a way that we testify that we now belong to Jesus.

Jesus' last words to His church were: Go 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 I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20a).

7. Carefully analyze this command and decide what it means:

- Christians should go out into the world and make disciples of all people.
- Christians should wait until the world comes to them to hear the gospel.
- Baptism should be a result of teaching the people about Jesus.

- The church is responsible to baptize all those who receive Christ as Lord.
- The church should make it difficult to be baptized.
- After baptism, the new believers should be taught to obey everything Jesus has commanded of us.
- After baptism, there is little need to teach people any more.
- Babies make good disciples and therefore need to be baptized.

What are the just requirements for baptism and how should baptism be administered? There are numerous examples in the book of the Acts of the Apostles. One example is when the deacon Philip met a man on a desert road and spoke to him about Jesus as Savior. Suddenly, the man asked an important question:

And as they went along the road they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?” And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water. Philip as well as the eunuch; and he baptized him (Acts 8:36-38 NASB).

8. What does this passage teach about baptism?

- The one requirement Philip made for baptism was that the man believes in Jesus Christ with all his heart.
- Philip said the man would have to be proven before he could be baptized.
- The man had many doubts about the gospel.
- The man personally confessed his faith in Jesus Christ.
- Philip took some water from a bottle and sprinkled the man.
- Philip and the man both went down into the water and Philip dipped the man in the water.

Note: Bible scholars of all churches recognize that baptism in the New Testament times was by full immersion in the water. The Greek word for “baptism” is the word “to immerse”. The New Testament was originally written in Greek and “baptism,” from the beginning, was understood by everyone to mean immersion. In approximately the year 1000, the pope changed the mode of baptism from immersion to sprinkling. The Greek and Russian Orthodox churches never changed, and continue to baptize only by immersion. However, they, like the Roman Catholic and some other churches, baptize babies, not requiring personal faith for baptism.



Personal Testimony:

Mark the statements that best describe you:

- I was “baptized” as a baby in accordance with tradition.
- I have personally received Christ as my Lord and Savior.
- I have been baptized by immersion as a testimony of my personal faith in Jesus Christ.
- I would like to testify of my faith in Christ by being baptized as the Bible teaches.

Fourth Step

Join God's People

It is very apparent that believers' baptism was very important in the time of the Apostles. Many Scriptures let us know that we are only saved by repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus and, therefore, that baptism does not save. We can also see in the Scriptures that everyone who received Christ as Lord was subsequently baptized and received as a member of the church. An example of this follows:

With many other words Peter warned them and pleaded with them, ***"Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day (Acts 2:40-41).***

1. In the two verses quoted above we see that:

- Saving faith in Jesus Christ includes a moral decision to leave the corrupt practices of the world.
- All those who accepted Christ were baptized.
- Many of those who accepted Christ were baptized.
- Those who were baptized were added to the membership of the church.



Two things become apparent from these and other Bible passages we might study.

- 1) Baptism is the normal way to declare that we now belong to Christ. It says that we have died to our old life, and that we have risen to a new life.
- 2) Not only is baptism the normal experience for those who are truly saved, but church membership is also.

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:47).

2. The Bible tells us in this passage:

- Everyone who was saved was added to the church.
- Only those who were saved were received as members of the church.
- Only the best of those who are saved became members of the church.
- Church membership is God's will for all who are saved.
- Church membership is given only to those who prove to be faithful.

3. Your Opinion: Why should all who are saved be baptized and become members of the church?

- The church needs to spiritually care for all those who are saved, the weak along with the strong. To reject the weak is to refuse to accept responsibility to care for them.
- To be saved by the Lord is to become a member of His body.
- Not all who are saved should be members of the church. They might bring shame to the church, if later they fail.
- Every Christian needs to be a part of this spiritual family to be cared for and to have a place to grow and serve.
- We are saved by grace; we become members of Christ's church by grace.

Life as a Member of the Church. It is almost impossible for a Christian to grow spiritually outside the fellowship of a church which formed according to the New Testament pattern. Church membership not only helps greatly in your spiritual growth, but should also give you training and special opportunities to serve the Lord in companionship with others. Real church membership means much more than just having your name written on the members roll. Church membership means that you regularly meet with the members in worship and other meetings and efforts of the church. The writer to the Hebrews wrote: ***Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another as we see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:25).***



4. Here, the Bible says:

- It makes little difference if we are faithful to meet together or not.
- Even in New Testament times, some had the bad habit of not regularly attending church.
- We need to meet together to encourage one another while we await the coming of the Lord.
- The Bible is very clear about different kinds of workers in the church and how they are placed there to help you as a member of the church.

It was He (Jesus Christ) who gave some to be apostles (missionaries), some to be prophets (preachers), some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4:11).

5. This verse tells us:

- God gives special kinds of workers to the church.
- The aim of all these workers is to prepare all of God's people for works of service.
- These works of service are meant to help build up the body of Christ, the church.
- It is doubtful that God has works of service for all of us to do.
- It is our responsibility as Christians to do our part to build up the church.



The New Testament has much to say about how church membership helps us personally and how we should live in the church. The following Scripture passages are examples. ***As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity (Colossians 3:12-14).***

6. How does the Lord say we should be dressed in church?

- Men should wear a tie and women should wear long dresses.
- No matter what we wear physically, we should “be dressed” with compassion, kindness, humility, and gentleness, and always be patient.

7. Why is so much said about forgiveness in church?

- Like any family, we should not be surprised when a member says or does something that offends others.
- Like in a family, we must forgive and overlook the faults of others, and desire that they overlook our faults as well.
- Love for each other is what we most need in the church.
- Since all church members are perfect, forgiveness is not needed.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him (Colossians 3:15-17).

8. What does this part of the Bible tell you about enjoying God’s peace?

- As a church and its members, we must let the peace of Christ rule us.
- We have a right to say anything we want in the church, even though it may hurt some who are there.
- The Christian life is meant to be a life of peace.

9. What does the Bible tell us we should do in the church?

- Whatever we do, the Word of God about Christ should dominate our study, our preaching and our worship.
- In the church, we should teach and admonish one another.
- We should sing with joy and gratitude in our hearts to Christ.
- We should stand and sing for an hour or more as a punishment and sacrifice of our sins to God.
- We should do everything in the name of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God through Jesus.
- We should do everything in the name of Jehovah.

Fifth Step

Obey Your Lord

Before we knew Christ, we were “sons of disobedience” by nature, living apart from God and His will for our lives. When we received Christ as our Lord, we promised to follow and serve him, entering into a life of obedience to God. We repented of our sinful, disobedient life and took on a life of obedience and the many blessings this kind of life offers.



The Command to Obey and Promises for the Obedient.

Jesus’ final command to his people was the following: ***Go, then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20a Today’s English version).***

1. In this great command or commission to His people Jesus told us to:

- Go to people everywhere and make them learners of Jesus and His Word.
- Baptize those who decide to follow Jesus.
- Tell those who are baptized to live any way they wish to as long as they believe.
- Tell those who are baptized to obey Jesus in everything He commanded.

2. Your opinions: Why do you think it is so important to Jesus that we obey Him in everything He has told us to do?

God chose Joshua to do a great task, leading Israel into the Promised Land. He gave him the following instructions which are useful for every one of us: ***Be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you; turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go (Joshua 1:7).***

3. Mark with a check mark below the instructions God gave to His servant Joshua:

- Be strong and full of courage as he follows God.
- Be careful to obey the law and instructions God had already given to Moses and to God’s people.
- Not to worry about how closely he follows God.
- If he follows God’s way carefully, he will have good success wherever he goes.

4. Your opinions: How much did Joshua’s obedience to God have to do with the great success he had in life?

5. Who is most likely to be a coward in life?

- The person who lives by his or her own wisdom and selfish choices.
- The person who is careful to do what God wants.

Jesus, Himself, made a great promise to those who obey Him: ***Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock (Matthew 7:24-25).***



6. Jesus makes it plain that:

- To hear Jesus' teachings and commands and do them is very wise.
- True Christians will never have to endure storms in life.
- Storms come to every life, including to the lives of Christians.
- The person who lives by Jesus' teachings will not fall when the storms come.

The Danger of Disobedience. Jesus continued with this warning: ***And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it (Matthew 7:26-27).***

7. What did Jesus say would happen to those who hear His commands but choose to live in their own way instead?

Forgiveness for Disobedience. We know we sinned before we accepted Christ as Lord. We soon learn that even when we choose to follow Christ that we also fail him and sin even as Christians. Can God forgive us if we sin as Christians? Paul says: ***In Him (Jesus) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished upon us (Ephesians 1:7-8).***

8. Writing to Christians, Paul says the following:

- Jesus paid for our sins through His blood sacrifice for us.
- We Christians are given forgiveness of our sins through Christ.
- It is hard for us to get God's forgiveness.
- God lavishes His grace on us, including the forgiveness of all sins.

Can it be that Christians still sin after knowing Christ, and, if so, how can we get God's complete forgiveness? John the Apostle answers: ***If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:8-9).***

9. John makes clear the following:

- Christians who say they have no sin are only fooling themselves.
- When we find ourselves sinning, we should stop and confess to God what our sin is.
- When we agree with God what sin we have committed, God will forgive us of that sin and cleanse us.
- According to John, there are many sins God cannot forgive.

The Cost of All Disobedience. Some people foolishly think, "If God can and will forgive me of every sin I commit, I might as well sin all I want and just remember to ask His forgiveness." These people do not know what it is to be a Christian, because a Christian is a person who has repented of his or her sinful life to follow Jesus' way.

Those true Christians who sin and sincerely come to God for forgiveness need to know that there is a dangerous price for every sin, including sins that God forgives. Paul writes: ***Do not be deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap (Galatians 6:7).***



10. Your opinions: If a Christian decides to drink, smoke or use drugs, will God's forgiveness keep that person from being sick, ruined or from dying early in life?

11. Mark ways that a person can sow in life and later reap terrible consequences:

- Neglecting fellowship with Christians and having most friendships with people who do not know God.
- Being dishonest in one's studies, work or business.
- Having sexual "adventures" of any kind.
- Living selfishly rather than for the Lord and the blessing of others.
- Being unkind and unforgiving to others.

Private Personal Evaluation. Ask yourself what there might be in your life right now that does not please God. Confess it to God and ask Him to cleanse you of it. Start living now in the victory of God's forgiveness and cleansing.

Sixth Step

Cultivate Your Friendship with the Lord

From now on, the quality of your life will depend, more than anything else, on your growing friendship with the Lord. For this reason, Peter wrote: **Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18)**. Jesus, Himself, said to Christians, **Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me (Revelation 3:20)**.

1. From Jesus' words, we can understand the following:

- Jesus is far away from us most of the time.
- Jesus is always near us and wants to come into our lives and our thoughts and actions.
- Jesus will break in on us whether we want Him to or not.
- Jesus will only fellowship with us if we will invite Him.
- It is important for us to be attentive to the Lord, to hear Him when He speaks and invite Him to participate in our lives.
- Jesus wants intimacy with us, as if He were sitting at the table and eating with us.

We have to ask ourselves: how can we invite Jesus into our daily lives and enjoy fellowship with Him? In practical ways, how can this be done? The answer is that we need to have regular communication with Him, both by hearing Him and speaking to Him.

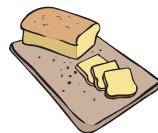


How We Can Hear the Lord: Sometimes, the Lord will speak to you and reveal Himself in things that happen in your life or among those you live with. Sometimes, He will give you a strong sense of what He wants or of how He feels, speaking directly to your spirit. However, we can also deceive ourselves when we rely mostly on our feelings, and can confuse the Lord's Spirit with other spirits. For this reason, the Lord has given you His inspired and unmistakable Word, which is the Bible.

Repeatedly, God tells us how to hear from Him and how to get our spiritual nourishment directly from the Word of God. Again, we hear from Peter, who wrote: **Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good (1 Peter 2:2)**.

2. Here, we are told:

- Like any baby who cries for milk, we should constantly cry for God's pure spiritual milk in the Bible.
- This milk will help us to grow up spiritually.
- If we have been saved and found that the Lord is good, we no longer need the Bible.



Jesus answered, **"It is written: 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"** (Matthew 4:4).

3. Jesus tells us that:

- God's Word is "bread" that gives us life and strength.
- Our main concern should be for our physical stomach, and try not to miss a meal.

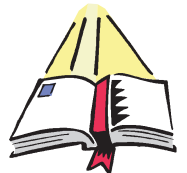
This means that every day, perhaps several times a day, we should open the Bible and read it. The strange thing about the Bible is that almost whatever you read, you will find yourself and your circumstances there. By what you read, the Lord will be able to talk to you about your current needs and situation. This does not mean, however, that you should just open your Bible and with your eyes closed, put your finger down where you should read!

It is important to have a plan for reading the Bible systematically. There are many good plans available, and you might talk to your teacher or your pastor about the plan they use. Here are a few ideas: Start in the New Testament, especially in the Gospels, reading and thinking about Jesus, his example, his teachings, and his love. Later, read some of the shorter letters of the Apostles, like Philippians, Colossians, and 1 Peter. Then, worship the Lord by meditating on the Psalms and discover God's practical advice found in the Proverbs. Later, read some each day from both the Old Testament and the New Testament, starting with Genesis and perhaps the Acts of the Apostles. Have a regular time each day when you read the Bible.

When Joshua started out his great work, God spoke to him directly about how to be successful. He said, **"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."** (Joshua 1:8).

4. What did God Himself say about His Word?

- We should talk about it to others.
- We should carefully think about it both day and night.
- Whether we pay attention to God's Word or not, as Christians we will be successful and prosperous in all we do.
- If we carefully obey God's Word, we can be successful and prosperous.



How We Can Speak With the Lord? Not only are we to hear the Lord speaking to us, we are also to speak to Him freely. Remember that God knows every one of your thoughts and everything you do. So be honest with Him and talk to Him regularly. Paul tells us what our prayers should be like: **Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)**.

5. What should be our attitude as we talk to God?

- We have reason to always be happy with the Lord at our side.
- We should talk to the Lord frequently since He is our best Friend on earth.
- We should give thanks to Him in every kind of circumstance, knowing that He will deliver us.
- It really doesn't matter to God if we pray this way or not.



Jesus prayed often and with great effect, so, His disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray. He then gave the “model prayer,” not as something to be repeated without even thinking about, but as an outline of elements that should be in any prayer we make.

This, then, is how you should pray: **“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name; your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (Matthew 6:9-13).**

6. What ideas do you find in this model prayer?

- We should talk to God as to our Father.
- We should start right out asking for what we want.
- We should recognize the power, the glory, and the holiness of God.
- We should ask that He take charge of everything and rule us.
- We should ask that everything be done only according to His will.
- We should not ask for material things, like food, clothing, and housing.
- We should ask Him to forgive us.
- We should forgive those who have done wrong to us.
- We should ask Him to keep us out of the way of the devil and temptation.

In the model prayer, Jesus tells us that God will forgive us in the same measure we forgive those who have wronged us. This is a condition for successful prayer. Another condition is to be cleansed by God of sin that stands in the way of our fellowship with Him. God spoke to His rebellious people of Israel, saying: **Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear (Isaiah 59:1-2).**

7. What was God’s message to His sinful people?

- God’s arm is always powerful to save.
- People should never think that God is poor of hearing.
- Sin in the lives of His people makes little difference to God.
- Sin in the lives of God’s people causes Him to turn His face from them and not even hear their prayers.

What Are We to do Daily with Our Sins? John tells us: **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).**

8. According to John, what do we need to do to have our sins forgiven and to be in a spiritual condition that God can hear and answer our prayers?

We close with Jesus’ great promise regarding prayer: **Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive and your joy will be complete (John 16:24).**

Seventh Step

Use Your Spiritual Gifts

When you were saved, the Lord did many things in your life. This included forgiving all your sins, living in you and sealing you with His Holy Spirit, giving you a share in Jesus’ eternal inheritance and many more things as well. It is God’s purpose that every child of His belongs to His spiritual family, the church, and the Lord Himself added you to the church. This was true from the beginning: **And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:47b).** And it is true today as well!

Gifts You Have Received From the Holy Spirit: When you were saved and added by the Lord to His church by the Holy Spirit, Who now lives in you, He gave you special gifts to bring to the church. These special gifts are special abilities that He has given you for the benefit of all your spiritual family. At the same time, the gifts He gave other members of the church are there to help you. Paul explains this clearly: **Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others (Romans 12:4-5).**



1. Talk about how the human body might compare with the church.

2. Your opinions: Why are the members of the human body different from one another? In what sense do all the members of one human body “belong” to all the other members of that body?

Paul goes on to talk about us as “members” or important parts of the church and how these parts should work together. **We have different gifts, according to the grace given us (Romans 12:6a).**

3. What can we know about our spiritual gifts?

- People in the church are different in the gifts they have.
- These are unearned. They are gifts of God given according to His grace.
- They are earned by those who most deserve them.

If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully (Romans 12:6b-8).

4. Underline the seven gifts mentioned in this passage. Which of these gifts do you believe you see in the members of your group?

5. In summary, what does Paul say we should do with our spiritual gifts?

- It does not matter to God whether we use them or not.
- We should serve others according to the gift or gifts we have.
- We should use the gifts as well as we possibly can.



There are several passages in the New Testament that speak about the Spiritual gifts which are given to every Christian. At least 22 different spiritual gifts are mentioned in the New Testament. Only Jesus Christ had all these gifts. Every Christian has at least one gift and most Christians have several. These gifts are provided by the Holy Spirit who now dwells in you and every other Christian. They are different from natural talents, though they might be related to them. For example, a person may have the natural talent of being a good public speaker, but only the gift of the Holy Spirit can make him or her a “prophet,” a person who preaches or otherwise speaks for God.

The Apostle Peter agrees with Paul in regard to the spiritual gifts. He wrote: ***Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 4:10-11a).***

6. What does Peter say about our spiritual gifts?

- Our personal ministry should be based on the spiritual gifts we have.
- Our spiritual gifts are given to us for the purpose of enabling us to serve others.
- We are not owners, but simply administrators of these different abilities God has given us.
- The spiritual gifts are ours to use however we want, primarily for our own benefit.
- When we use our spiritual gifts, we should use them with all confidence in the power of God.

How to Know What Your Spiritual Gifts Are. The Bible does not specifically tell us how to know what our spiritual gifts are. These gifts become apparent to us and to others as we grow in the Lord and in His service. In 1 Corinthians, chapters 12, 13, and 14, Paul writes extensively about the gifts and names many of them. His emphasis in those chapters is that the spiritual gifts are to be used for the benefit of others, and that some gifts are much more important and useful than others. The greatest gift of all, as he writes in 1 Corinthians 13, is the gift of the love of Christ in our hearts. Here are some practical suggestions regarding how you can know which your spiritual gifts are:



1. As a blessing from the Lord, we almost always enjoy using the spiritual gifts we have. For example, the person who has the gift of service simply loves to serve. These people are always the first to rush to help in any way they can. A person who has the gift of prophecy (speaker for God) loves the opportunity to speak. Simon Peter, for example, who became a great preacher, was almost always the first to speak within the group of the Apostles.

2. Your friends and spiritual family may help you by telling you which gifts or special skills they see in your life. You will notice many of these gifts in yourself.

3. You may try different ministries where your help might be necessary. Spiritual gifts are developed with use. For example, most Christians have the gift of teaching, if they have access to easy-to-use materials. The more they teach the better they become. If you try to develop a ministry, but do not feel blessed or feel you’re not being a blessing to others, find another ministry in which you and others may be blessed. Do not accept permanent responsibilities in which you do not feel blessing. Instead, look for ministries in which you may grow and experience God’s blessings in your life.

The Reward of a Faithful Ministry. While your spiritual gifts are important, you must remember that they are only tools God has given you for your personal ministry. Each Christian has been “Saved to Serve” and that is what the Lord expects from you. He bought you with His own blood and has called you to His service. You voluntarily received Him as your Lord, and the purpose of your life now is to serve Him in the best way and in any necessary way.

Jesus told, in chapter 25 of Matthew, a parable about a master who gave great amounts of money to three servants so they would earn a profit from him. Two of the servants were faithful and the third one simply hid the money to give it back to his master without any profit. We will listen now to what the master said to one of the faithful servants: ***After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. “Master,” he said, “you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gathered five more.” The master replied, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” (Matthew 25:19-21).***



7. What do you think Jesus was trying to say with this part of the parable?

- Someday, the Lord will come to us and will demand accounts on how we used our lives and the spiritual gifts He gave us.
- The Lord does not care if we are faithful or not at serving Him.
- The Lord will express His happiness for the profits that our lives have given Him and His kingdom.
- If we are faithful with the gifts we have received, the Lord will give us many more privileges for eternity.
- Both the Lord and we will be joyful while working for Him on earth.

Eighth Step

Be a Prosperous Administrator



Many people believe that God's work in our lives has only to do with questions of the spirit and of eternity, but has little to do with our financial, physical, and material well-being. In this, they are tragically mistaken, because the Lord wants to both bless us and use us in our financial, physical, and material lives as well as in our spiritual lives.

The Lord's Promised Blessings: Jesus said, I have come that they may have life and have it to the full (John 10:10b).

1. Opinions: What do you think Jesus meant by this promise?

- He was talking about life in all its aspects.
- He was only talking about eternal life.
- His purpose is not only that we have life in Him but that it be a full life.

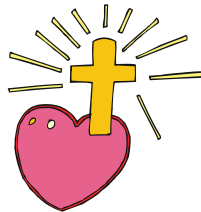
Paul had great confidence in God's desire and ability to meet all the needs of His people. He wrote to the faithful Christians in Philippi: ***And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:9).***

2. What did Paul say God would do for His faithful people?

- He would meet only their spiritual needs.
- He would meet all their needs.
- He promised not only to meet their needs but to give them everything they want.
- This promise is based on His riches provided through Jesus Christ our Lord.

God Is the Owner of Everything. God is able to promise to meet all our needs because He is the owner of everything. ***"The silver is mine and the gold is mine, declares the Lord Almighty" (Haggai 2:8).***

This also means that God is the owner of everything we have. He is the owner of our bodies, of our lives, of our family, and of our possessions. He is the owner because He created everything, and He is also the owner by right of His purchase on the Cross. Peter wrote: ***For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect (1 Peter 1:18-19).***



The empty way of life was one of sin, self-centeredness and separation from God. Christ's blood sacrifice saved us from that and made us fully His. For that reason, we call Him "Lord," because He bought and paid for us and we are His.

Paul also makes this clear: ***You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body (1 Corinthians 6:19b).***

3. Paul tells us:

- We are a bought people, no longer our own.
- We are free to live anyway we want.
- We are to honor God with our body.

4. Opinions: How can we honor God with our bodies?

- Serving others in practical ways.
- Keeping ourselves free from sexual immorality.
- Earning our support and the support of the family God gave us.
- Singing and praising God with our voices.
- Drinking alcohol, smoking, and using drugs.
- Caring for our health as we best know how to do.

You Are God's Administrator: If God is the owner of everything, then it is obvious that we really own nothing. What, then, is our relationship with those things we once thought we owned? In many verses, the Bible tells us that we are "administrators" or "stewards" of what we have. We are "the person in charge" of what the Lord has placed under our control. And Paul writes, ***"The one thing required of such a servant is that he be faithful to his master" (1 Corinthians 4:2 Today's English Version).***

5. Opinions: What do you think it means to be an "administrator" or "the man in charge" of what God has placed under your control?

- I am not the owner of any of these things.
- I am responsible for what I do with them.
- I can do whatever pleases me with them.
- I must be faithful to manage them in a way that is faithful to God, the true owner.

To be God's administrator is a great privilege and blessing. It means that our material and financial lives really belong to Him and that, when we recognize this, He accepts full responsibility for our well-being. God cares well for everything that is His. The alternative is to live as we did before, assume full responsibility for our own well-being, and let God understand that He is not responsible for our well-being. Of course, we are right to be concerned about the basic necessities of life, and Jesus said: ***But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well (Matthew 6:33).***

6. Opinions: I believe that Jesus was saying:

- My first concern should be to love and serve God with all my heart.
- I better take care of my own interests before thinking about what God wants.
- God rewards those whose greatest goal is to serve Him by providing all the things we need.

7. Opinions: How do you think God will provide your needs?

- I'll no longer have to work for a living.
- God will prosper me in my work.
- God will guide me and bless me as I live for Him.

The Test and the Promise of Tithing. It is easy for us to say that everything we have and everything we do is for God, but this may or may not be true. God has given us a test about our sincerity, and it is, at the same time, a great promise. Beginning with Abraham, God's people have given Him the tithe (10%) of their income as a sign of their sincere stewardship and as a provision for God's work on earth. Here, God makes a great promise to those who bring Him the full tithe.

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it" (Malachi 3:10).

8. Opinions: What do you think this verse should mean to your life?

- Only 10% of what I earn belongs to God.
- Everything I earn belongs to God, but at least 10% should be given to Him for "food in His house."
- God is hungry and we must feed Him.
- God's house is the church, where God wants to "feed" all who come.
- God's work, to meet the needs of those who come, must have financing.
- Tithers, whether rich or poor, give the same amount in the eyes of God.
- God promises every kind of blessing on those who have the faith to tithe.
- God promises to make every tither a millionaire.

We close our study with Paul's practical advice about giving to God. Remember this: ***Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:6-7).***

Our giving, like our living, is a good indicator of how we truly feel about God's mastery of our lives.

