



START

**HOW TO GET STARTED
RIGHT IN A NEW LIFE
WITH JESUS**

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WELCOME

Welcome! If you are reading this, chances are you just accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and want to see your life change, or you want to help someone else change their life too.

That's what this book is all about.

Jesus said, *"Follow me and I will make you fishers of men."*
(Mark 1:17)

The quick and simple of it is: are you following Jesus? Are you helping others follow Jesus?

We will help you do that with the book in your hands.

We will introduce you to God's Word and His life-changing ways, the big story of Scripture, and the basics of our faith. But most of all we want to invite you to join Jesus in changing your family, neighbors, and our world.

Start following Jesus. Starting sharing Jesus.
And watch the world change!

Pastor Jonathan Falwell

[PART 1]

START A NEW LIFE

STARTING IS IMPORTANT.

If you want to experience the world and the richness of life, you must start the journey by leaving your house. If you want to grow a career or lead a business, you must start the climb by achieving a degree. If you want to experience a family and the joy of passing on a legacy, you must start with marriage and birthing or adopting a child.

Nothing desired comes into reality without the right start.

Similarly, if you are not "born again" into God's family through Jesus Christ, you cannot expect to experience true life. You can never grow as a Christian. If you do not come to Jesus to begin with, you cannot follow Him and lead a life blessed by Him.



That may sound simple, but many people attend a church or participate in religious activity without ever starting a new life with Jesus. Starting is important.

STARTING *RIGHT* IS IMPORTANT.

That is why we will start this study by looking at your very first steps with God. To follow Jesus, you must begin here. To know God and His family, you must start at the very first step: **salvation**.



Building from this essential starting point, we will then progress to the key steps laid out in **assurance**, **baptism**, and **church**.





If you recently accepted Jesus as Savior, then you must begin reading God's Word right away! To grow in Him, to build your faith, and to learn about your life new life, start reading today. Simply open a Bible, look for John in the Table of Contents, and read one chapter each day. In the next 21 days, you will start a new habit, and what's more, a new life in Jesus.

Ask your church about a mentor, and ask God to teach and help you as you go!





God's Rescue Story

Welcome to God's family! If you accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior, then He has rescued you from sin and death and has made you a part of His family. Before we move forward with learning how to follow Jesus, let's review what God has done in your life - the miracle of salvation and God's rescue story.

Here is how God rescued you from sin:

Open your Bible to the book of Genesis, the very first book in the Old Testament. You can read the full passages later, but for now just look at **Genesis 1:26-31**. In the beginning, God created everything, including humans. This passage tells us that God created us in His image, and we were a good creation.

Now look at **Genesis 3**: A villain enters the story, and a virus enters the good creation. Satan, in the form of a snake, tricks and tempts Eve to disobey God, then her husband, Adam, also disobeys God. Adam and Eve rebel against God, the universe's King. And so, the world is broken, infected like a computer that is attacked by a virus. Humanity suffers physical and spiritual death, separated from God forever.

But hope arises even in the midst of judgment as God promises in Genesis 3:15 to rescue humanity by providing a Savior. The rest of the Bible is about that story and about that Savior.

Fast-forward several thousand years and look at the events in **Luke 1**, the third book in the New Testament. At the height of the Roman Empire, a young Jewish girl is approached by an angel and told she will give birth, as a virgin, to the Savior promised in Genesis 3. The girl, Mary, will birth the Savior, Jesus, the Son of God Himself. In the next chapter, **Luke 2**, she and her husband journey to Bethlehem for a tax registration. While there, prophecy and promises are fulfilled, and Jesus Christ is born.

The next 30 years of Jesus' life are a quiet mystery. He grows up in an uneventful way, but when He reaches manhood, He begins the ministry of his father. Telling people to repent and turn to God, He cares for people, heals them, and teaches them about God's kingdom. Do you see where this leads three years later in **Luke 23**? Jesus' teaching runs against the religious leaders of that day, and they arrest and condemn Him because of their jealousy.

They decide to kill Jesus. But this is no ordinary murder plot, nor some accidental martyrdom. Jesus is going to willingly sacrifice his life.

See how he is crucified on the cross? See how, after hanging there six hours, He prays to His father and then dies? Then the burial. That should be it, end of story, right? Death closes the book!

But remember, this is God's story! Turn to **Luke 24**. Jesus Christ comes back to life three days after he suffered and died on the cross. In his resurrected body, Christ invites his followers to believe what he had just done and to go tell others about his gift of salvation.

That's the story, but what is God's plan to rescue us? How do we get salvation from that story?

We see the main points of God's plan—and it is very simple. But do not be fooled—simple does not mean easy. A simple pill or shot can save someone's life. And while the act of receiving the medicine is simple, the years of study, sacrifice, research, and funding to develop the drug is enormous. God's plan is simple to understand and accept, but it cost Christ His life. We may never understand how it is that God would lay down His life for sinful creatures that rebelled against Him.

Whether we fully understand how God did it, He wants us to believe and receive. He already offers it. There is no magic phrase or exact wording. In fact, in the Bible, people sometimes accepted His salvation just by saying "save me!" It is not as much the words that count, it is the sincerity of your heart. Do you really believe it? Do you really mean it?

Look at the 6 truths in God's plan. Are these what you believe?

- 1. God loves you!** He is your Creator and wants to have a relationship with you and all people (Genesis 1:1). He wants to share his abundant life with you (John 3:16; 10:10).
- 2. You are a sinner.** And not just you, but every human who ever lived (Romans 3:10). A sinner is a rebel against God's standard, holiness, and authority (Romans 3:23), just like Adam and Eve.



- 3. The penalty for sin is death.** Rebellion must be dealt with, and sin has a price that must be paid (Romans 5:12). Sin causes us to have eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23). Sin causes physical death in this life (Genesis 3:6-7) and spiritual death in hell (Revelation 21:8).
- 4. Jesus paid your sin penalty with His own death.** Jesus is God's Son, and the only righteous person who could ever do this (1 Peter 3:18, Acts 4:12). He lived perfectly, died, was buried, and then resurrected in His own power (1 Corinthians 15). His death was your substitute, and He took your punishment so that God's wrath could be satisfied (Romans 5:8).
- 5. His salvation can come to you by His grace, not your works.** He can save you, rescue you from Satan, cure you of your sin, and help you escape from sin's penalty (Romans 10:13). He offers this as a free gift of His grace or "unmerited favor" (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- 6. You must repent and call on God by faith.** Repenting is more than regretting (acknowledging sin mentally) and more than remorse (acknowledging sin emotionally). Repenting means you turn away from your rebellion and turn toward God—it is a literal act of your will. You then put your full trust in Jesus and believe God for salvation (Romans 5:1). You express this by literally asking Jesus to forgive your sin (Romans 10:9).

That is God's plan. Not priceless, it cost Christ's life.





BUT IS THIS YOUR STORY?

*How about you?
Is this the story you have heard and believed?
Have you asked God to rescue you?*

*If you have never done this, now is the best time
to make sure about your standing with God
and your eternal life.*

*Pray, talk to God right now, in your own words,
from your heart. You could say something like
this: "God, I believe that You love me. I confess
that I am a sinner, and I know the penalty for sin
is death. I believe that Jesus paid my sin penalty
with His own death on the cross, and that He
rose again. I believe that salvation comes by Your
grace, not by any good works that I can perform.
I repent and by faith ask You right
now for salvation. Thank You."*





Confident in Your Salvation

Let's pretend you have bought your first house. You have moved in and unpacked. At first, your nights are peaceful, but you begin to have a hard time sleeping. Your mind drifts to worry, *"That closing went quick. There was so much to sign. Did I sign everything? Did I even understand it? Did the check go through? What if I missed something and this house isn't even mine? I probably shouldn't have this house; I don't know how anything works in it!"* And then, even worse, you start hearing noises in the night: *"Did I lock the front door? Does a security company monitor this house? Maybe someone is breaking in! Maybe the former owners are coming to take the house back because I didn't sign all those papers!"* Maybe you need a vacation!

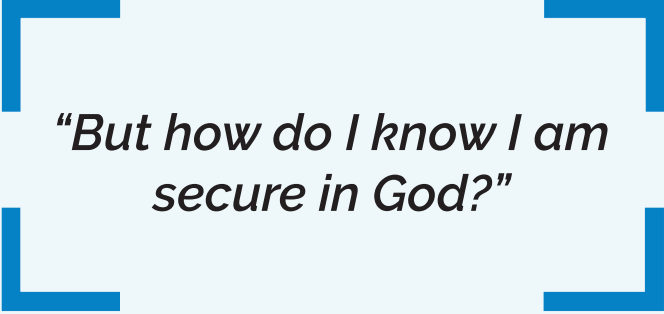
Like the stress of buying a new house, some people stress over their new salvation. They may worry within a short time of their "spiritual birthday," or the fears and doubts may come years later. They worry they somehow did it wrong, or that if they are not good enough, God will foreclose on them and repossess their salvation.

Does it matter if you have assurance and security? **Yes!** Satan will discourage and defeat you throughout life if you constantly doubt that God has saved you. So let's tackle these doubts and questions.

I am secure in my salvation.

Your "spiritual house" is locked up tight. Scripture teaches that salvation is a permanent contract. No matter how you feel or what you do—or what anyone else does to you—you will not lose your salvation. This is not because you

are good enough, but because God is all-powerful and loving. He promised to maintain your salvation. You do not need to make payments; He has already made *the* payment through Jesus Christ!



“But how do I know I am secure in God?”

Let's look at the evidence of examples and teaching in Scripture.

Examples:

The Apostle Paul had established a church in Corinth, a tough city with lots of immorality and idolatry. Later, Paul heard that many of these new Christians had fallen back into the mud of their past and were choosing some horrible sins. He wrote the letters of **1 & 2 Corinthians** to rebuke God's people, to discipline and remind them of how they should be living. Even still, he talked to them as God's people. Though they had sinned, they were still secure in the family. Similarly, the **Ephesian** church first loved God but later backslid. In **Revelation 1-3**, Christ rebuked them for losing their first love. In that same message, he corrected a lukewarm **Laodicean** church. He corrected his family members who were sinful; He did not say they had been kicked out of the family.

Teaching:

1. Ephesians 2:8-9 and Titus 3:3-6 clearly tell us that we

cannot gain salvation by good works. If we could, how would we maintain salvation? Would a bad work ruin our salvation? Or a bad work that ruins salvation? If we cannot work to get salvation in the first place, then we cannot work to keep it either.

2. There are no salvation deal-breaker sins in Scripture. There certainly are passages where God warns His people that they will be corrected and disciplined if they do not straighten up, but there is no sin that makes God repossess your salvation.
3. There are permanent benefits and rights that went into effect the moment that we entered God's family through Jesus (John 3:5). We were: purged by Jesus' blood (Hebrews 1:3), perfected (Hebrews 10:14), regenerated (Titus 3:5), acquitted (Romans 8:33,34), sealed (Ephesians 4:30), baptized into Christ's body (Romans 6:3-4), grafted into God's family (Ephesians 5:29-30), preserved (Jude 24), and glorified (Romans 8:30).
4. God cannot fail in His work of preserving us. The Holy Spirit regenerated, sealed, baptized, and indwells—and prays for us. The Son was crucified, resurrected and intercedes for us forever. Finally, the Father said the elect would never perish (John 3:16, 10:27-29), thirst (John 4:14), be judged (1 Corinthians 1:8,9), die spiritually (John 8:52), or be forsaken (Philippians 1:6, Heb 13:5).

Romans 8:31-39 NIV sums this up most powerfully, especially in the last verses: *"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Salvation is yours, bought by Jesus, given by His Father, and locked up and protected by the Holy Spirit!

“But how do I know that I am actually saved in the first place?”

I can know that I have salvation.

First, read 1 John 5:13 NIV: *“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”*

Our doubts come either from the Spirit's conviction or Satan's distractions. Satan distracts us by our past decisions or present failures.

- 1. “I cannot remember the events surrounding my conversion.”** People who accept Christ in their childhood may struggle with this because memory fails. Not knowing the exact moment of your salvation is not crucial, but do you remember an age or stage you came into relationship with God?
- 2. “I did not see a radical change.”** It is not how much external sin you see eliminated from your life, it is the change that happens inside. Many people live good, wholesome lives, but they are dead inside. Do not base your assurance solely on external changes that you can see.
- 3. “I just keep sinning.”** Read Romans 7; even Paul, the great Christian, confessed his sin struggles. The truth is: we are all still in a battle, still living in this flesh and in a

broken world. We will have struggles. We will see more victory, and we should grow stronger over time, but we will still deal with sin.

4. **“I think I did it wrong.”** Maybe they were the wrong words or they were the wrong counselor! Relax. There is no magic formula quoted in Scripture. People came to Jesus in different ways, using many different words.

1 John was written to give us assurance against doubt and to help with our fears. As **1 John** shows, true Christians have these marks in their life, either past or present:

1. **God** – They want to know Him (1:3,4), look forward to seeing Him (3:2,3), and relate to Him by His Spirit within them (4:13).
2. **Sin** – They are convicted of their sin (1:5-10), despise their sin (2:15), and practice sin less and less (3:5,6).
3. **Saints** – They seek fellowship with other Christians (1:3,4; 3:14).
4. **Prayer** – They have seen prayer work and God has answered their prayers (3:22, 5:14,15).
5. **Scripture** – They believe Scripture (5:1-2), know what is not Scripture (4:1-3), and want to obey Scripture (2:3-5).

If you are seeking assurance, start here: Have you asked Christ for salvation? (If not, re-read the Salvation chapter that came before this.) If you have asked Christ for salvation, what does Scripture promise He would do if you asked?

Also, consider whether there are present or past sins that are confusing you. Confess them but move on from them. Ask God to give you assurance, and then go on living!



Publicly Identifying with Jesus

After you have accepted Christ as Savior, a first step in recognizing Him as your Lord is to proclaim Him as your Lord. You do this by being baptized in water.

Read **Mark 1:1-11** to start this section.

Mark 1 shows Jesus being baptized at the beginning of His ministry. Water baptism is a spiritually meaningful, symbolic ceremony that displays an inward decision. It takes the personal choice and makes a public profession. For the Christian, water baptism shows our personal decision to accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and to identify with and follow Him (Romans 6:4-7).

Water baptism has a long history among God's people. In the passage you read John the Baptist was preaching for people to repent. For them, baptism was how they could show that inward heart change through an outward action. He baptized people at the Jordan River until he introduced Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus' disciples continued the practice of baptism—after all, Jesus invited them to do so. Since then, the first churches in the book of Acts all practiced it, and it has been an ordinance of Christ's church to this day.

Still, you may have questions about baptism, so take a moment and read through the following questions.



Why do we baptize?

Jesus commanded us to baptize (Matthew 28:19-20), and we are following His example when we do it (Mark 1:9). It is a symbol of how we were spiritually buried with Him and raised for new life when we accepted His salvation. It is the first step of obedience and of the life of discipleship.

Is baptism needed to gain salvation?

No. Baptism is to salvation as a wedding ceremony is to a marriage. A wedding does not legally make anyone married—that only happens by the signing of a marriage license as witnessed by a licensed church leader or city official. Similarly, baptism is a public display of our love for Jesus, and it represents what God has done to seal our salvation.

Remember, we are saved by God's grace, through faith in Jesus, not by any religious works (Ephesians 2:8-9). Jesus gave salvation to people without baptism (Luke 23:39-43), and Paul was sent to preach the gospel for salvation—not to baptize for salvation (1 Corinthians 1:13-17). Paul always preached that salvation came by believing on Jesus Christ alone (Acts 16:30-31, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11).

Some may point out isolated passages that seem to indicate baptism as part of salvation. However, these passages, like Acts 2, 22 and 1 Peter 3, are simply statements of the entire process of accepting Christ and beginning a new life in Him. They show that our sins are washed away by faith in Jesus and that we evidence this decision to believe in Him through baptism. To return to the marriage illustration above: when we ask a young man if he's going to "put a ring on her finger" or we talk to an engaged couple about walking down the aisle, what do we mean? We are clearly using symbolic language to

talk about the act of getting married. The same is true about baptism and salvation.

Why is baptism done publicly?

All the biblical examples of baptism show people being baptized in public, whether in front of small groups of people (like Paul with the Ethiopian official or Philippian jailer – Acts 8, 9, 16), or large crowds (like John the Baptist's converts or the converts on the Day of Pentecost – John 1, Acts 2). We need not be ashamed of Jesus when we have become Christians. In fact, we should want to share our joyous decision with family, friends, and our church. You could even think of baptism as a signaling event that calls your new church family to come around and support you.

Why do we baptize by immersion?

All throughout the New Testament, we see people being taken down into water and brought back up (Matthew 3:16, Acts 8:38-39). John the Baptist's baptism was a picture of the Old Testament repentance by purification, which involved the full washing of a person ceremonially (Leviticus 18, Numbers 19, Deuteronomy 23). The Greek word for baptize—*baptizo*—means to immerse. It is this immersion that is a picture of being buried and raised to new life in salvation (Romans 6:4). This is not a major doctrinal issue since we are more concerned with the heart's condition with Jesus, but we want to practice Scripture as closely as we understand it.

What if I was not immersed for my baptism?

Although the method of baptism is not a major doctrinal issue, we do desire to practice the pattern found in the New Testament (see why we baptize by immersion). That is why we would invite you to be baptized by immersion if God so leads you and you are ready.

How soon should I be baptized?

In the New Testament, people were baptized immediately after salvation as a first and public step of obedience to Jesus (Acts 2:41, 8:38-39, 9:18, 10:47-48, 16:15, 33, 18:8, 19:5). You should be baptized as close as possible to the time of your decision to accept Jesus as Savior. There is no scriptural reason for waiting, but all the reason for stepping out and obeying today!

Are there sins which could prevent me from being baptized?

Scripture does not talk about any prerequisite holiness before being baptized. And again, people in the New Testament who accepted Christ were immediately baptized in water. Since baptism shows our decision of repentance and our desire to make Christ our master, there should be a spirit of repentance in the person being baptized. The trouble would come if a person accepted Christ and, while preparing to be baptized, proclaimed, "I am not giving up my immorality. I will do what I want!" Do you think they are ready to follow Jesus in baptism? In this case, it would be wise for godly pastors or counselors to stop this person and help bring understanding of the purpose of baptism before proceeding.

What if I was baptized before getting saved?

The first question to be considered is, "why were you baptized at that time?" Was it from confusion about preaching that you heard, or was it your heart-felt desire to follow God? Either way, we should obey Jesus when He commands us to be baptized as the public statement after salvation (Matthew 28:19-20). We would invite you to be baptized again as a new Christian.

How often can I be baptized?

In the New Testament, baptism is a first step and a one-

time ceremony; there are no examples of people being baptized more than once. Since it is not a magical action that brings salvation or makes you closer to God, we encourage you to not confuse yourself or others by being baptized more than once after salvation.

Can infants or children be baptized?

Although Scripture shows Jesus welcoming and blessing children, it does not show Him baptizing infants, nor are there any passages that show or command this practice. In the New Testament, those who were baptized were the new converts to Christianity. Since baptism is a step of obedience after salvation, and since infants cannot make that spiritual choice (due to natural mental development), we do not baptize them. We do, however, dedicate infants to the Lord (1 Samuel 1:27-28). How young can a child be to accept Christ? It is different from child to child, dependent on the child's development. But if a child has understood and accepted salvation, then there is no reason that they should not be baptized as well.



Jesus' Family

Jesus came to earth, gave us salvation, and invited us to live an abundant life with Him in this world and the next. But then He left this earth, and as He did, His disciples might have quickly become disillusioned. Yes, He was alive, but here He was leaving them. How would they go forward and live life without Him?

Jesus answered this concern throughout His ministry, and specifically answered it in His last few days on earth. First, He promised to send the Holy Spirit who would be to His followers everything that Jesus had been. Second, He had invited people into His family, which would be called the "church."

"But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." Matthew 12:48-50 AMPC

"I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matthew 16:18 ESV

"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." Acts 1:1-4 NIV

With the coming of the Holy Spirit, Jesus' Church was birthed. The disciples of Jesus took all they had learned from Him and began living it out in a community. They grew from 120 disciples in Acts 1 to 3,000 believers in Acts 2:41 with 5,000 men counted in Acts 4:4. They "filled Jerusalem" with their teaching (Acts 5:28) and "the number of disciples increased rapidly" in the days that followed (Acts 6:7).

But the Church was not just growing in numbers, it was growing in spiritual power. These people were following Christ and becoming more like Him every day:

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people." Acts 2:42-47 NIV

This is the amazing record of the early Church, but what is the Church?

What is the Church?

You could find more technical definitions, but, simply stated, the Church is Jesus' **family**, led under His **authority**, living out His **Word**, on His **mission**.

Family

Jesus' family is a group of Christ-followers living life together and loving as He commanded.

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.” Ephesians 2:19 ESV

“Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another.” 1 Thessalonians 4:9 ESV

Authority

Jesus' family is led by God the Father, pastored by God the Son, and empowered by God the Spirit. And Jesus' family is led by God-ordained elders who lead, teach, and correct the family according to Scripture.

“And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.” Ephesians 1:22-23 ESV

“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight”.

1 Peter 5:1-2 ESV

“We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves”. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 ESV

Word

Jesus' family is devoted to reading, studying, practicing, and teaching the Word.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom.” Colossians 3:16

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in

righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV

Mission

Jesus' family is commissioned to plant the gospel and make disciples everywhere, all the time, among all people.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” Matthew 28:19-20 ESV

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8 NIV

What is the Church's strategy?

Jesus' family first lived this out and accomplished this mission by attending to this simple strategy:

*“And day by day, attending the **temple** together and breaking bread in their **homes**...” Acts 2:46 ESV*

*“And every day, in the **temple** and from **house** to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.” Acts 5:42 ESV*

As a member of God's family, commit yourself to the same strategy! Serve and love Jesus' family all through the week. Participate in weekly **gatherings**, like Sunday services at church where we open our mouths to worship, open our treasure to give, and open our ears to Scripture teaching. Connect with smaller **groups**, with other Christ-followers who together are changing their world by loving God and people—people who together are living out the six key practices of following Jesus.

START TO FOLLOW JESUS WITH OTHERS.

Jesus called His first followers with this simple phrase, “Come and see” (John 1:39), and with a similar phrase, “Come, follow me” (John 1:43).

Right from the start, Jesus invited every follower, young and old, experienced and inexperienced, to walk in His footsteps, to imitate His words and actions, and to help others follow Him too.

WHAT DID HIS FOLLOWERS DO?

One of the first followers, Andrew, went and found his brother Simon. He shared the story of Jesus with Simon and invited him to follow Jesus too. Simon was ultimately reborn and renamed: he became Peter, the leader of the early church in Acts. You never know who you can impact by simply following Jesus and inviting others to do the same.

Meanwhile another of the first followers, Philip, went to his friend, Nathanael, and told him the very same message. But Nathanael was skeptical and did not immediately come to Jesus. Still, Philip persisted, sharing the simple invitation, “Come and see” (John 1:46).

Do those words sound familiar? They were Jesus' exact words to Philip when he started following Jesus (John 1:43). Philip may not have had all the answers or all the ways mastered, but he followed Jesus as best he could. He imitated Jesus made the same invitation that had changed his own life. You never know who you can impact by simply following Jesus and sharing how He has changed your life.

CAN YOU DO THIS TOO?

The short answer is: yes. The longer answer is: yes, and you must. This is what a disciple, a follower of Jesus, does: you tell the story of Jesus, help others grow in following Jesus, and you send those others to tell the story, help others, and so on. Jesus' followers were—and still must be—always inviting others to come and follow Jesus.

Here is how you can do this:

Jesus sent His followers with three actions to take: preach the gospel, baptize those who respond, and then each them to observe everything Jesus had taught. These three actions are what we today call the “Great Commission” (Matthew 28:19-20). While simple in themselves, it may help you to further translate the actions into language you live and speak today.

That's why we say it like this: Tell, Grow, Send.

Tell: Tell the Gospel story of Jesus, how He lived, died, and raised from the dead to save us from our sins. Pray that God open the eyes of those you tell the story to so that it makes sense and becomes real in their own lives. Share your own story of how you heard the Gospel and came to believe it; share how Jesus has changed your life.

Where do you start?

- 1. Share the Story** – Practice how you can share the Gospel of Jesus Christ and how you can share your own story—the story of how you came to believe and accept the Gospel in your own. If you know these stories well, you will be ready to say it and share it when the opportunity comes to share. Invite them to hear the story as well from your church or other Christian friends.
- 2. Map your mission** – Write out a list of 50-100 people that you know. These are probably the

relationships closest to you at home, work, friend circles, and so on. Mark who specifically is following Jesus and who is not, then think through how you can witness to Jesus in your own life and share the story of the Gospel with them.

- 3. Pray** – God is the one who must open eyes to understand and believe the Gospel. You can share, but ultimately He is the One who makes it work and makes their lives change. Pray consistently, make yourself available to God, and ask Him to help you be attentive to His work in others.

Grow: Grow others in following Jesus and obeying Him. Help others to imitate Jesus and live according to His Word. As you personally grow in the six practices of following Jesus explained in the next section, help others also grow in these practices. Together, you will see Jesus change your lives.

Where do you start?

- 1. Get together** – Helping others grow happens best in a personal relationship, so commit to meet together each week or on a rhythm that works best. Take some time to pray and read Scripture together, asking what you are learning and how you can imitate Jesus or practice what you are learning. Start by reading and discussing one of the Gospels, such as Mark or John.
- 2. Grow in the church** – Invite others to be baptized as the first step of obedience and to come to church as the way to grow with the entire church family of Jesus-followers. Help your friend join your Life Group or another near their home. Get yourself and this new disciple in the helpful community of other like-minded Christians.
- 3. Grow with this book** – This book is designed to make it simple and clear, to give you an understanding of the Gospel story and how to follow Jesus. Simply get an extra copy, read it

together, and start learning together how to read Scripture, pray, grow in a community, worship God, serve, and even share the Gospel with others.

Send: Help others to do what you just did with their friends, family, and other connections. Every follower, young and old, experienced and inexperienced, has the same mission: tell, grow, send. Every Jesus-follower helps others follow Jesus too.

Where do you start?

- 1. Teach the story** – Help others to know the Gospel story and their own story of how Jesus saved and changed them. Practice it together so that they are ready to share when the opportunity arises.
- 2. Map their mission** – Help others to write out a list of 50-100 people that they know. Similar to you, these will probably be the relationships closest to you at home, work, friend circles, and so on. Then help them think through how to witnessing and sharing Jesus.
- 3. Pray** – Just like you prayed, help them to pray. And pray with them and for them. Make their mission and their obedience as a disciple just as important as your own. We are all together in the mission of Jesus!



Following the Word Jesus Followed

In one of His most famous recorded sermons, Jesus gives His completely clear stance on the entire Bible: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17). He goes on regarding these writings known as Scripture: "whoever keeps and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19). Jesus understood that Scripture was the Word of God and that it could not be broken (John 10:35). Because He knew the Bible was God's own words, Jesus followed it in every part of His life.



When you are living in obedience to God's Word, you can be assured that you are living in His will."

-Dr. Jerry Falwell

To follow Jesus, we must think and act like Him. Treasure and follow the Word of God in every way and throughout your life.

How do I follow Scripture?

- 1. Read what it says.** Start at the most basic level: "what does it say?" Read five verses, then ask yourself, "what do these verses say?" Do not interpret, simply observe. Summarize or paraphrase what that passage of Scripture says.
- 2. Learn what it means.** Once you've observed what it says, ask: "What does it mean?" The passage may teach a principle or truth, give a command to obey, or state a promise that inspires faith and leads you to trust in God. Spend time considering why Scripture says what it says and you will do well.



3. **Put that into practice.** Once you know what it says and what that means, ask, “what should I do about that?” Since the Scriptures are true, there is an implication: you must do something. Scripture should always shape you, just like it shaped Jesus. Indeed, learning is best demonstrated



It is one thing to know that the Scripture is the sword of the Spirit, but it is another thing to know how to use it effectively. God expects us to use the sword, not merely hang it up as a decoration!”

-Dr. Jerry Falwell

in doing. Based on what Scripture says, change how you believe, think, speak, or act.

How can I make sure I understand Scripture?

1. **Read it often.** At the start, Scripture may feel unfamiliar—almost like a new language. One of the best ways to learn a new language is by immersion, taking it in constantly. In the same way, read and re-read Scripture until it becomes a second language. The understanding will follow your familiarity.

2. **Read it and pray.**

Scripture is God's Word, written by Him for our understanding. Pray and ask the Author to help you understand it. Jesus



Because the Scripture originates from God, it must be consistent with the nature of God. If God is true, He is without error. If the Bible is His Word, it too is without error.” -Dr. Jerry Falwell

said that the Holy Spirit is our Helper and the Spirit of Truth who would always help and teach Christians to understand and obey God's Word (John 14:16-26).

3. **Read it with others.** Why read Scripture alone? Reading with other Christians can help provide perspective on a passage, point

out what someone might have overlooked, and help you find ways to practice it.

- 4. Read it and investigate.** Scripture is not reading you can simply skim through to understand. You will need to put your mind to work. Ask questions about who says what and why; ask who does what and why. Look out for repeated words—they usually indicate importance. Notice causes and effects, comparisons and contrasts. Dig in and investigate! (For more tips, see appendix A.)

Where do I start?

- 1. Choose what to read.** Choose one of the Bible's 66 books and read one chapter each day. (Tip: New believers should start with John! Look in your Bible's Table of Contents to find it.)
- 2. Make a new habit.** Your goal is consistency, not volume. Set a time and place that is yours to read Scripture.
- 3. Start today.** Reading a book as large as Scripture can be intimidating, but every journey starts with a first step. Start your journey today by reading Scripture and putting it into practice all day.

Recommended Reading:

Matthew 5:13-20 and 7:15-29 | Matthew 23:1-5 |
John 14:15-31 and 17:17 | Luke 24:26-32 | James 1:19-25



Studying the Bible can become the most exciting and rewarding experience of your life. The sooner you get started, the greater will be your reward.”
-Dr. Jerry Falwell

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Pause to get specific about how you will follow Jesus by following Scripture like Jesus. In this specific practice of following Scripture, how will you begin to follow Him more today? How will you begin to help others follow Jesus more today?

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Praying to God like Jesus prayed

Throughout His life, Jesus prioritized and practiced praying. In fact, Luke 5:16 tells us that Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. One of the most successful leaders this world has ever seen would withdraw from people to be alone, speaking to God and hearing from Him. It was this very habit that allowed Jesus to do what He did. Jesus even spoke with God with such intimacy and depth His disciples asked, Teach us to pray (Lk. 11:1). In response, Jesus taught what we call, "The Lord's Prayer" (Lk. 11:1-4). Jesus offers to teach all of us to pray like Him so we may have the same incredible intimacy and deep relationship with God.

To follow Jesus, we must pray like Jesus: talk to God about everything, just like you are in a conversation with Him.

What is prayer?

1. Prayer is talking to God your Father.

God knows everything you ask before you ask; He knows everything

about you and loves you endlessly. Better than any earthly father, the all-powerful, compassionate, and perfect Father God wants to hear from us, His children, and help in our lives.

“ *Nothing bolsters our faith more than prayer. Even when we bring our smallest request to God, we are exercising faith in Him. He delights to hear us and to answer our prayers. The greater our needs, the greater is His power to meet them.”*
-Dr. Jerry Falwell

2. Prayer is conversation and interaction.

Prayer is a two-way dialogue, where you do two things: talk to God and listen to God, since He actually listens and talks to you.

3. Prayer is vital and powerful. Prayer invites the limitless power and goodness of God into your life and our world. Dr. Jerry Falwell. used to say it like this: "Nothing of eternal significance is ever accomplished apart from prayer." God is ready and waiting, so pray and pray often!



Prayer is not a posture, it is an attitude of the heart. You can pray while you work, drive a car, or fix a meal. You can pray early in the morning, throughout the day, or late at night. The unceasing process of prayer is the constant communication of our hearts to God. Pray often. Pray fervently. Pray without ceasing." -Dr. Jerry Falwell

How do I pray?

1. Focus on who

God is. Faith fuels prayer, and faith comes from knowing who God is. In Luke 11, Jesus' prayer began by

focusing on who God is: His Father in heaven. As your Father, He cares, provides, and desires to give you an abundant life! As God in heaven, He is able, powerful, and good. Focus on who God is, as described in Scripture. He is the One you can trust and rely on.

2. Invite God in. Prayer brings God into your life, so start by inviting God in. Ask God to direct your life, intervene in a situation, or even to help you pray. Just like Jesus in Luke 11, invite God to bring His Kingdom to earth and in your life.

3. Accept God's forgiveness. If prayer is a conversation and part of your relationship with God, then sin can get in the way. God offers to keep the relationship clear through forgiveness. When you pray, confess your sins and accept His forgiveness.

4. **Ask for God's provision.** Prayer can and should address physical needs, from daily bread to your greatest need. God is willing and able to supply what you need: ask!
5. **Ask for God's deliverance.** Prayer can change everything—even your most extreme situation or difficult temptations. If you find yourself in a hole or a fight, ask God to deliver you.
6. **Thank God for everything.** If you lose sight of God's good gifts, prayer will become stale. Gratitude returns prayer to where it started: focused on who God is, His goodness and how He provides. Remember this and thank Him in every prayer.

Where do I start?

Pray God's words back to Him. Prayer may initially feel awkward or unfamiliar, but start praying God's words back to Him. Start with Jesus' prayer in Luke 11. Consider the words of His prayer and turn them into your own prayers to God.

Recommended Reading: Luke 11:1-13 | Matthew 6:5-34 and 7:7-12 | Luke 5:16 and 6:12 | John 10:1-10 and 15:1-17

“Every Christian should spend time alone with God each day. Determine now to set a time and place to pray—and do it. Satan will do anything he can to keep you off your knees. Stop talking about it and start praying. Your life will be richly blessed.” -Dr. Jerry Falwell

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Pause to get specific about how you will follow Jesus by praying like Jesus. In this specific practice of prayer, how will you begin to follow Him more today? How will you begin to help others follow Jesus more today?

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Worshipping with a whole-hearted life like Jesus

Jesus once summed up Scripture's greatest commandment by quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-5: "Hear, O Israel! The Lord your God is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:28-30). Worship starts in the long-standing faith that God is the only God and only One worthy of worship. For Jesus, worship was a lifestyle—an undivided life where your heart, soul, mind, and strength are fully focused on God and demonstrating love for Him.

To follow Jesus, we must learn to worship like Jesus: worship God by loving Him with absolutely everything in life.

What is worship?

- 1. Love for God starts worship.** Worship is impossible without your heart, soul, mind, and even your strength all captured by God and focused on loving Him.
- 2. A heart condition.** Worship is a test of affection: what grabs your affection? You go where your heart is. Jesus' death for you was the greatest display of love, but has that kick-started your love for Him? Has His love grabbed your affections?
- 3. A soul focus.** Worship is a test of inner will: what shapes your decisions and direction?



When we get our attention off God, we transfer it from the ultimate to the immediate... Stop living for the pleasure of the moment and start living in the light of eternity."

-Dr. Jerry Falwell

The inner part of a person guides every decision. Does God guide you like this?

4. **A mindset.** Worship is a test of value: what do you think of most and how highly do you think of it? There is nothing higher than God, but do you think highly enough of Him? Or do you think too highly about someone or something else?
5. **A strength directed.** Worship determines action: what are you using your energy and activity for? The most visible demonstration of focus is where you spend your energy and activity. What do you do, and for whom do you do it?

How do I live out a lifestyle of worship?



Keep your heart fixed on God... The heart represents the whole of one's inner being. It controls our character and shapes our personality. Keeping our hearts fixed on God is a daily and lifelong exercise of faith."

-Dr. Jerry Falwell

1. **Worship God every day in everyday ways.**

Turned toward

God in love and humility, every day can be used as worship. Your heart, soul, mind, and strength can turn every thought, motive, and action to God. Whether it is special moments of worship through song or everyday obedience and genuinely seeking to please God, all of this is worship.

2. **Love God and love others.** You know that worship is love for God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. Yet Jesus also commands you to love your neighbor (Mk. 12:28-30). Do you have to choose one or the other? No, worship orders your loves properly: you love God first and foremost. He is your first and highest love. You can and must love others as He has loved you, and your love for Him propels you to do as much.



3. **Bring your first and best.** “First fruits” is the Bible’s term for when people brought God the best of their things. This is where “tithes and offerings” originated, people bringing God the first ten percent of all their gains (Deut. 26:1-14). Is there any way that you do not bring God your first and best? Whether effort, money, or time: how can you bring your first and best to God?
4. **Sacrifice what must be sacrificed.** Worship will always be closely associated with sacrifice. Different types of sacrifices have always represented different things, but Christians are urged to sacrifice ourselves to God (Rom. 12:1). What better test of worship is there? What keeps you from God? Offer your entire life to God.
5. **Turn everything into work for God.** The *Hebrew* word for worship is *avodah*; *avodah* also means work. The Bible makes clear that God-directed work is worship. “Whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). “Whatever you do, in word or in deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” Col. 3:17 BSB. Whatever you do, if focused on God’s glory, it is worship.

Recommended Reading: Mark 12:28-44 and Mark 14:32-26 | John 4:21-24 | Matthew 5:23-24 and 6:1-34 | Revelation 4:1-11 and Revelation 15:1-4

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Pause to get specific about how you will follow Jesus by worshiping like Jesus. In this specific practice of worship, how will you begin to follow Him more today? How will you begin to help others follow Jesus more today?

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Living with others like Jesus did

Throughout the four gospels that record Jesus' life, one remarkable fact often goes little noticed: Jesus did not live or work alone. He traveled, spoke, and ate with twelve others. He sent disciples on work missions in pairs. Speaking to those around Him, Jesus said, "You are all brothers and sisters, you have one Father, and He is in heaven" (Matthew 23:8-9). Jesus said about people praying: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Mt. 18:20). What's more, He said our number one identifier is our love in life together: "Even as I have loved you, love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples" (John 13:35). Jesus knew the importance of community and embraced it fully. Will you?

To follow Jesus, we embrace community like Jesus: learn to live in loving support for other Christians and to receive loving support from other Christians.

What is Christian community?

1. Automatic family. Christian community is not really a choice: when anyone enters God's family, we become family to one another. Though diverse, we find common-ground in belief in Jesus Christ and practicing His word. Though leading different lives, we have the common goal of following Jesus.

2. Loving people.

Christian community commits to loving one



If God lives within your soul, you can learn to love anyone. Jesus told His disciples to love even their enemies." -Dr. Jerry Falwell



another like Jesus exemplified and commanded. Love should be our defining characteristic in and out of the church.

- 3. Big and small.** Christian community gathers in big ways, like Sunday at church, and small, like Christian friends or a life group. We embrace faith that is personal but not private because we all need community in all sizes so that each person can be known, supported, and grow.



Cultivate Christian fellowship. We need each other. Don't try to go it alone." -Dr. Jerry Falwell

How do I live in community?

- 1. Embrace church in all its sizes.** Church is ultimately the family of God, and you joined His family. We need to be part of the whole family, like when it gathers all at once on Sunday and part of the family that shares in life and lessons together, gathering in homes or elsewhere to follow Jesus together.
- 2. Make Sunday a habit.** Some mornings will be harder than others, but on those days, you could even say that it's when you most need to be in church! Make attending church a habit.
- 3. Find your own small group.** Personal help can be the difference-maker in tough times and in everyday moments. It is often said that new faith is vulnerable faith. You will need a small group of Christian friends, encouragers, and teammates. And these people will need you too. Find others you can trust.



We are to love others in the same way He loves us—unconditionally. If God lives within you His love is within you, whether you feel it emotionally or not. You can love others, because God loves you." -Dr. Jerry Falwell

- 4. Love like Jesus.** Jesus loved His friends to the point of dying for them. He loved selflessly and sacrificially, forgiving others' and serving for their good anyway. Even Christians have conflicts, but you must choose to love one another as He loved. (John 13:34-35) Love one another as He loved.

Where do I start?

- 1. Prioritize Sundays.** Find out the time your church meets and make it a priority to attend. Set the reminder in your phone even now!
- 2. Ask about small groups.** There are many ways to find your own small group at church: step out, search for it, and ask!
- 3. Pray for community.** Pray and ask that God would give you the sort of community that can support you to grow and thrive, as well as to help you love others the way He loves you.

Recommended Reading:

John 13:31-35 and John 17 | Matthew 5:21-23 | Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-34 | Ephesians 2:11-22

“***There can be no true love apart from God, and no true knowledge of God apart from love. Since love is an expression of the character of God, it must be real in the lives of those in whom God lives.***” -Dr. Jerry Falwell

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Serving the good of others like Jesus did

The night before He died, Jesus did something that left His followers stunned. John 13 tells us that He got up from His last meal with His followers, laid aside His clothes, and wrapped a towel around His waist. He started to wash the dusty feet of His disciples—the job of a servant. The God of the universe bowed at His followers' feet to clean their dust. Speaking to them, Jesus said, "Do you know what I have done to you? If I then, the Lord and Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than His master" John 13:12-16. Jesus embraced a stunning truth that reverses the norm: *the one who desires to be great must become a servant* (Mt. 20:26).

“*Service is the immediate goal of our salvation. God has called us to serve Him with our lives.*”
-Dr. Jerry Falwell

To follow Jesus, we must serve the good of others like Jesus: embrace serving others in every part of your life.

What is serving?

- 1. Putting Jesus first.** Service is done for the sake of Jesus Christ, following His example. If He is first, you can follow.
- 2. Putting others first.** Serving helps you esteem others better than yourself

“*The positive virtues of service to God also keep our hearts and minds fixed on Him. When you are serving the Lord, you will be highly dependent on Him.*”
-Dr. Jerry Falwell

(Philippians 2:3). Serving values others more.

- 3. Meeting physical and spiritual needs.** Serving can meet physical needs, like clothes and food, or a spiritual need, like prayer and encouragement. Serving meets the needs others have.
- 4. Individual and collective.** An individual can serve or be served, and serving can be in a group or for a group.
- 5. In and out of church.** Serving meets needs of Christians and non-Christians, on Sundays and weekdays—any place and anytime a need arises.

How do I serve others?

“ *The key is not in where we go or what job we perform, but in becoming what He wants us to be.” -Dr. Jerry Falwell*

1. Use what you have.

You have resources and natural skills that can be used for the good of others. As a Christian, you also have spiritual gifts given to you by Jesus. Consider what needs exist and how your skills and gifts could help. (For help with spiritual gifts, ask your church to help you discover yours.)

2. Channel your passions and interests.

“ *A spiritual gift is a God-given ability for spiritual service... Spiritual gifts are given by the grace of God to enable us for service.” -Dr. Jerry Falwell*

You probably have natural interests that drive you to care deeply about certain needs, issues, or people. Consider how your passions and interests could point you to a way or place to serve others.

3. Bring your personality and experiences.

God designed you with unique ways of contributing to His family, and the family needs your

contribution. Think about the special ways God has equipped you to serve others. Consider how you are uniquely equipped to serve a need.

- 4. Engage in your church.** God's family needs you, and you need God's family. That is how He designed this all to work. A church comes alive when every member is engaged and serving, and every member grows and thrives when the entire church is engaged and serving. Consider how serving at church is good for you and for others!

Where do I start?

- 1. Pray.** Pray that God would show you how to serve others like Jesus did. Let Him know you are willing to do whatever He wants.
- 2. Offer.** There are many needs around you. Offer yourself to meet a need in your community. Let a pastor or a friend in need know that you are willing to serve! God's family would love you to serve and grow.
- 3. Try.** Research shows it might take five tries before you find the right fit. Start serving and consider it a learning experience. Do not wait for the perfect fit before you start: just start!

Recommended Reading: John 13:1-17 | Matthew 5:13-16 and 6:1-4 | Luke 6:6-11 and 6:27-36 | Mark 10:35-45

“Now that you are saved, God has placed a claim on your body and your spirit. You belong to Him. Therefore, it does make a difference how you live.”-Dr. Jerry Falwell

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Sharing God with others like Jesus did

Jesus was always giving His life away. He said that He came to bring life and bring it abundantly. He also never intended us to keep Him to ourselves. He constantly propelled His followers outward and told them to always pray that the Lord of the Harvest would send workers into His harvest field (Matthew 9:38). Jesus' was clear: "Jesus came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). And after His death and resurrection when He was to return to heaven, Jesus gave His mission to us saying, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you" (Mt. 28:18-20).



Now that you have found eternal life in Jesus Christ, you need to share this wonderful discovery with others. The most natural thing for a new Christian is to want to see his friends and loved ones come to Christ. If you don't reach them, who will?"

-Dr. Jerry Falwell.

To follow Jesus, we must share love and truth like Jesus: share God with others by sharing the good news of Jesus.

What is the good news to share?

- 1. A problem solved.** Christ came to save sinners. Sin is the universal human problem, and sin separates us from an abundant life with God.
- 2. Forgiveness provided.** Christ came to forgive sinners. He lived the life we ought to have lived, and He died the death we ought to have died. In

doing this, Jesus substituted Himself in our place so that we could be forgiven rather than punished.

3. A life renewed.

Christ came to give all sinners new life. Just as Jesus was resurrected



It does not matter what kind of person you have been. No one can deny your personal testimony. You do not have to be a Bible scholar to tell people about Jesus." -Dr. Jerry Falwell

from the dead, so every Christian will be raised to new life in Christ. In Jesus Christ, the old life is gone and new life has come.

- 4. All of this: free.** Christ offers this gift of salvation to all who would confess, repent, and believe. Jesus gives life freely. This good news is what Christians have always called the Gospel.

How do I share the Gospel with others?

1. Share the good news of Jesus.

The Gospel is the most profound good news, but it is also remarkably simple. Simply share the four-part explanation that you just read!



The most basic way to get started is to tell others that you have given your life to Christ and trusted Him as your personal Savior. If you have been genuinely saved, you should be excited about what God has done for you." -Dr. Jerry Falwell

- 2. Share your story of Jesus.** Sharing gains traction when you share personally. Share what Jesus has done to change you!
- 3. Pray for help and success.** The Holy Spirit is the one who awakens a person's heart to the Gospel and salvation. Take the pressure off and pray that God awakens your hearer's heart. It is His salvation, His message, and His work. You just share it!

Where do I start?

- 1. Learn the good news.** You cannot share what you do not know. Commit the gospel message to your memory so you are ready.
- 2. Know your story.** Think through how you came to hear and believe the good news about Jesus. Consider how Jesus has changed your life and how you can share that with others.
- 3. Write it all down.** Writing something down is a great way to learn, remember, and improve. Write down the Gospel and your story so that you are sure you know it well.
- 4. Practice sharing.** Whether you practice with a mirror, notepad, or a friend over coffee, practice sharing the good news and your story. You will not share what you do not feel confident sharing, and practice helps you feel confident.
- 5. Appreciate what God has done.** The best way to ensure you share with others is to appreciate the gift you received. Any great gift makes us overflow with joy. Like a great view or experience, when we have beheld something wonderful, we cannot help but share it with others. Think about how wonderful a gift you have been given in Jesus Christ. Let thankfulness fill your heart and mind and overflow to others!



Without a doubt, we are to be His witnesses to everyone we meet: close friends, casual friends, mere acquaintances, and even total strangers. Let everybody know what Christ has done for you." -Dr. Jerry Falwell

Recommended Reading: Matthew 9:9-13 and 9:35-38 | John 1:35-46 | Luke 15:1-32 | John 4:34-28 and 1 Corinthians 3:5-9

The logo features two vertical blue bars on the left, each with a white cloud-like pattern. To the right of these bars, the word "PAUSE" is written in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

Pause to get specific about how you will follow Jesus by sharing God with others like Jesus. In this specific practice of sharing, how will you begin to follow Him more today? How will you begin to help others follow Jesus more today?

1. Text: Who will you text right now to share what you have learned? Who could you text right now to bring one step closer to following Jesus? Write who & what you could text:

2. Tell: Who will you share with face-to-face? Who could you speak to in person to bring one step closer to following Jesus? Write who o you will tell and how you will do it:

3. Share: How will you share your new habit of following Scripture with your friends or followers on social media? How can you share your commitment to follow Jesus and bring your newfound life public?

4. Start: How will you start a new practice of following Scripture like Jesus? Will you put a reminder in your phone to read and study, journal an insight, or plan one action to take on it? What will you read and when? Write your specific commitment and goal here:





APPENDIX: HOW TO BETTER UNDERSTAND SCRIPTURE

Remember: Your goal is consistency, not volume; quality, not quantity. Every time you read Scripture, do your best to understand it as fully as possible and to put it into practice as fully as possible. Let it change every part of you.

Start here: At first, you may find it helpful to refer to these prompts often and record your investigations as you go. But, as you become more familiar with Scripture, it will become second nature to use these prompts and ask investigative questions as you go. Start slow, work hard, repeat, and you will find yourself understanding Scripture more and more.

Investigate the Passage:

- **Ask who:** Who wrote the passage? Who does the passage address? Who is involved? Who acts? Who gets acted on? To whom was it written?

- **Ask what:** What happens in the passage? What is the passage about? What happens before the passage? What happens after the passage? What is the tone of the passage?

- **Ask when:** When was the passage written? When did the action happen? Remember, these passages were written a specific time and place very far from our own! The “when” of the passage often affects the meaning of the passage.

- **Ask where:** Where was the passage written? Where did the action happen? Asking these questions will force you to grapple with the original context of the passage.

- **Ask why:** Why is this passage in the Bible? Why does

God want us to know and study this passage? Why might the author have made the argument in this way? Why might the story have been told in this way? Why does the passage used the words it uses? “Why” is very important to understanding, applying, and practicing Scripture.

- **Ask how:** How does the passage communicate? How does the logic or argument unfold? How does the story or action develop? How are the major ideas explained? How are things or people described in the passage? How do actions affect others? How do others react to action in the passage?

Investigate the Details:

- **Notice the context:** What is the bigger story that the passage is a part of? How does geography, history, or culture affect the passage? What was it like for the original audience to hear or read this passage? What was happening in their lives that would affect how we understand it today?

- **Notice the words used:** Are they strange? Surprising? Repeated? What do they mean, and why are they used here? How do the words have a different meaning today compared to when they were first written and understood?

- **Notice the structure:** Does the passage compare or contrast ideas, persons, or objects? Is the passage a story, a letter, a poem, a list? How does the passage begin and end? How did the author try to shape how you read the passage?

Interpret the Passage and Its Details:

- **What did the passage mean to its first hearers?**

The original audience that first heard the passage would have understood, learned, and acted in certain ways. You must do your best to understand as they would have understood. The passage can never mean what it never meant.

- **What else does Scripture say about this?**

Scripture is cohesive, written by God through men. God is true: He does not contradict Himself. Apparent contradictions call for further investigation. An interpretation of Scripture must not conflict other Scripture. If yours does, start again.

- **What do others say about this passage?** Scripture is unchanging truth communicated to Christians across cultures and generations. What the church has taught and what others have believed should be filtered through Scripture for accuracy. Research, commentaries, small groups, sermons, and pastors can be great tools in staying close to historic and tested Christian faith.



Without a doubt, the Bible is the greatest book every written...Above all, the Bible points to one central figure, the most unique person in all of history—Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” -Dr. Jerry Falwell



[PART 2]

STORY OF SCRIPTURE



Stories are among the most inviting ways to communicate. When we hear a story, we cannot help but begin to imagine the story—feeling, hearing, and seeing the story. By nature, we enter the story and become a part of it. God is always inviting us to enter His story and to follow Jesus through this story.

That is why God wrote the story of Scripture. Being ultimately the words of God Himself, this story is all true and life-changing like no other. He communicated His message to over forty human authors guided by the Holy Spirit. He then inspired and preserved this Scripture, and He still illuminates our understanding of this Scripture.

Yet at times it may feel overwhelming to understand all of the sixty-six books that make up this Scripture. You could

simply read each of the sixty-six books straight through or study each book in its literary grouping—Old and New Testaments, with the Old Testament divided into Law (5 books), History (12), Poetry (5), Prophets (17), and the New Testament as Gospels (4), Church History (1), Letters (22). But we will take this time to look the Story of Scripture, the narrative as it unfolds through time chronologically.

“For 35 people to write a book with complete consistency over a period of 1,500 years would be a remarkable accident indeed. Yet this is what happened with the Bible, and it was no accident.”
-Dr. Jerry Falwell

Over the pages that follow, you will find a brief overview of each of the twelve “chapters” of this unfolding story:

Creation, Patriarchs, Exodus, Conquest, Judges, United Kingdom, Divided Kingdom, Captivity, Return, Gospels, Early Church, and Epistles. What follows is a tool designed to guide you through the Bible's over-arching story.

This guide to the Bible's over-arching story is from Dr. Harold Willmington and was originally published in Willmington's Guide to the Bible (Tyndale House).

The Story of the Bible in 12 Stages

In the councils of eternity past the divine decision was made. Even today angels and mortals are prone to gasp in amazement as they ponder the implications of that mind-boggling plan. In the fullness of time, the sinless Son of God would visit a cursed planet and shed His blood for its sinful inhabitants. Could anything more unexpected and undeserved be imagined?

But many things must first precede and prepare for that glorious journey from heaven to earth. To begin with, man and his universe would be created. Then, from the many, a particular nation would be selected to serve as a divine channel. Finally, all those events, places, and personalities playing a part in that glorious tale had to be carefully and accurately recorded.

God's schedule called for 30 human authors to describe that sovereign story in some detail. Moses was the first and Malachi the final writer. However, God was in no hurry to complete his marvelous manuscript. A thousand years would transpire between the first and last Old Testament books. Then an additional four centuries passed before the beginning of the New Testament.

STAGE 1:

CREATION STAGE

Genesis 1-11

There are 1,189 chapters in God's Word, the Bible. Undoubtedly, the most important among all these are the first 11, for they effectively serve as sturdy foundations on which the remaining 1,178 chapters firmly rest. If one rightly understands the divine story presented in these chapters, then a clear and concise picture appears, showing the origin, purpose, and future of all things.

The necessity for accepting these early chapters in a literal, factual, normal, and historical manner cannot be overstated if one is to correctly ponder his past and please his God! Note the pointed words of Jesus and the writer to the Hebrews: *"If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?"* John 3:12.

"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.... But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" Heb 11:3, 6.

Four stupendous events transpire during this original stage. Each is mind-staggering. The final three would forever and radically change the course of history. 1. The origin of all things. 2. The fall of man. 3. The universal Flood. 4. The tower of Babel.

One may well experience confusion and depression at the end of this stage. How could a story which began with such majesty end at Babel with such idolatry?

But this is only the first stage in the story. One must read on for the answer.

STAGE 2:

PATRIARCHAL STAGE

Genesis 12-50, Job

A founding father and his three descendants. A suffering saint and his three friends. Their lives make up the Patriarchal Stage.

Abraham is the founding father. His three descendants are Isaac (son), Jacob (grandson), and Joseph (great-grandson).

Job is the suffering saint. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar are his three "friends."

Abraham's life may be summarized by two words: seed and soil. In a special promise known as the Abrahamic covenant, God assured Abraham that he would father a great nation (seed) and that a particular land (soil) would be given to them forever. That nation would later become Israel, and the land would be Canaan. Two of Abraham's three descendants would foreshadow the New Testament person and work of Christ. Isaac, the son, foreshadowed Jesus' supernatural birth and sacrificial role. Joseph, the great grandson foreshadowed Christ's manifold sufferings.

And now for the suffering saint. Question: Why does a loving and sovereign God allow pain and persecution to fall on his people? Though the complete answer will only be revealed in heaven, the book of Job does suggest at least three reasons. First, to glorify the person of God. Second, to purify the lives of saints. Third, to nullify the lies of Satan.

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Job. What are the spiritual lessons to be learned from this "quality quintet"? Abraham demonstrates faith; Isaac, submission; Jacob, self-mastery; Joseph, character; and Job, patience!

STAGE 3:

EXODUS STAGE

Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy

"What are nice people like you doing in a nasty place like this?" As the book of Genesis ends, Jacob and his entire family clan had moved from Canaan to Egypt. This stage now tells us just how God will bring his people out of the land of bondage.

It begins with the persecution by Pharaoh and ends with the proclamation by Moses. Between these two key events, separated by 80 years and 800 miles, a breathtaking history transpires. Both God's faithfulness and Israel's fickleness are clearly seen. God's faithfulness is evident in the pouring out of 10 plagues, the rolling back of the Red Sea, the bringing forth of water from a rock, the handing down of the law, and the raising up of the Tabernacle. Israel's fickleness is seen in the idolatry at Sinai and the rebellion at Kadesh.

This stage is actually the tale of three trips. The first trip was from Egypt to Mount Sinai; the second, from Mount Sinai to Kadesh-barnea; and the third, from Kadesh to the east bank of the Jordan.

Two of the Bible's most famous and capable men were divinely appointed to direct these journeys—Moses the lawgiver, and Joshua the rest-giver!

Observe Moses' confusion about God at the beginning of this stage:

"Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them?" (Exod 3:13).

Observe Moses' confidence about God at the end of this stage:

"I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deut 32:3-4).

STAGE 4:

CONQUEST STAGE

Joshua

It was April 1405 BC. Two men stood quietly beside a flowing body of water. Both were deep in thought, as they remembered an April long ago when they were standing beside a different body of water some 800 miles away and 40 years past. The names of these two men were Joshua and Caleb. They were standing by the Jordan River. The first time, they had been standing by the Red Sea. So much had happened since that time. In fact, of their entire generation, they alone had survived.

So far, so good. But what would happen now? What of the future? Would God's faithfulness sustain the present generation as it had the previous one? It would indeed. The Jordan waters would roll back and the Jericho wall would fall down. In fact, before it ended the sun itself would stand still.

In three brilliant and brief campaigns the land was subdued. Beginning with a central attack, which separated their enemies, the victorious Israelites quickly moved south, and then completed the campaign in the north. For the most part, the land now lay in their hands.

These two April events beside the water would culminate in a final April scene that would assure all repenting sinners of an eternal home beside the ultimate body of water. Matthew tells us of the April event.

"And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified" (Matt 26:1-2).

"And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots" (Matt 27:35).

And John describes the water.

"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him" (Rev 22:1-3).

STAGE 5:

JUDGES STAGE

Judges, Ruth

"Kill the ump! Kill the ump!" How often has that cry been heard in the bleachers from overzealous baseball fans who felt a wrong decision was made by an official?

Can you imagine, however, two teams actually attempting to play a game without an umpire? A game where both pitcher and batter would lovingly and logically decide what was a ball and what was a strike? Or in the bottom of the ninth, after stealing second base, can we picture the baseman and the runner calmly and cheerfully determining whether the player was safe or out?

On second thought, "Long live the ump! Long live the ump!"

In essence, the Judges Stage is similar to that impossible ball game without an umpire. Four times we read: "*In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes*" (Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25).

This sad and sordid stage vividly illustrates the fact that sinful man not only needs a referee to arbitrate, but also a Redeemer to propitiate.

STAGE 6:

UNITED KINGDOM STAGE

1-2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

The Israelite crowds began gathering by tribes at Mizpeh, just north of Jerusalem. Unfortunately, they could not meet in Jerusalem, for the Holy City was still occupied by pagans. Finally the great prophet Samuel appeared and made his announcement. So it was true after all Israel was to have its very own king, like all other nations! But from what tribe would he come? The popular view was from Judah, largest of them all. Others felt, however, he might be from Ephraim, the most influential tribe in the north. Both guesses proved wrong. Audible gasps were heard when the official selection was announced. Israel's first king would be Saul, son of Kish, and a Benjamite, smallest of all the tribes!

The United Kingdom Stage is the tale of three kings. Saul was the first, David the second, and Solomon the third. The latter two were not only rulers but writers also. Many of the Psalms came from David's pen, while Solomon authored the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. These books, written by Israel's first kings, predict the glorious future reign of her final King, the Lord Jesus Christ!

STAGE 7:

DIVIDED KINGDOM STAGE

1-2 Kings, 2 Chronicles

"Daddy, what did you do during the war?" All those fathers living from 931 BC onward probably had to answer this penetrating question. In that fateful year, a civil war broke out among Israel's 12 tribes, dividing the kingdom in two. The ten northern tribes left the two southern ones to form their own nation.

Perhaps Jesus had this very event in mind centuries later when he said, "*Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand*" (Matt 12:25).

The Divided Kingdom Stage is best characterized through the actions of two official groups: potentates and prophets. More of each appear at this time than at any other period in biblical history.

No less than 39 rulers sat on two thrones: 20 in the south and 19 in the north. Thirty-eight were men, and one was a woman. The longest reign was 55 years, and the shortest a mere seven days.

Ministering to and, more often than not, preaching against these 39 monarchs came the prophets.

Who were they? For the most part, they were God's 11 admonishing authors: Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Amos, Hosea, Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah. Each man appeared and fell like a heavenly hammer on sin and sinners.

To whom did they write? One directed his writings to Edom, two to Nineveh, six to the southern kingdom, and two to the northern kingdom. In fact, an additional two- Elijah and Elisha were so busy pronouncing judgment and performing miracles that they didn't even take time to write down anything.

What did they write? In a nutshell, "Shape up spiritually, or be shipped out physically!" Or, stated another way, "Seek God's pardon, or suffer God's punishment" "Revival or ruin" which would it be?

How did they fare? Some were ridiculed, others murdered, and the rest ignored. And the results? Satan's twin wolves- Assyria and Babylon-were permitted to prey on God's 12 tribes. Assyria would devour the northern 10, while Babylon would destroy the southern two. The sad words of heartbroken Hosea would become a terrible reality:

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children" (Hos 4:6).

STAGE 8:

CAPTIVITY STAGE

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

"If you can't do the time, then don't do the crime!"

This seems to be the official in-house proverb among prisoners, used to taunt newcomers who often complain bitterly about their "unfair" incarcerations.

The Divided Kingdom Stage describes Israel's crime. The Captivity Stage records the time. The righteous Judge, however, does not "throw the book" at His guilty nation by imposing either the death sentence or life plus 99 years! Instead, He graciously limits confinement to 70 years. But then, wonder of wonders, He not only promises to be with His spiritual prisoners during that confinement, but to also fully restore them to their former homeland. As one considers these facts, it becomes evident that the real purpose for the Babylonian captivity was more to purify than to punish.

A politician and a priest now become God's two chief spokesmen. Daniel and Ezekiel are used to promote, protect, and preserve those taken from Jerusalem to Babylon.

Their two books graphically describe the awesome events transpiring during those 70 years in exile. As a result of those seven long decades, Israel learned its lesson. Never again would that nation be guilty of the crime of worshipping idols.

STAGE 9:

RETURN STAGE

Nehemiah, Ezra, Esther

Many Jewish exiles doubtless wondered whether Jeremiah really knew what he was talking about when he prophesied just before the Babylonian captivity: *“For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place”* (Jer 29:10).

Had Jeremiah heard God correctly? Should this amazing prophecy be taken literally? Now the truth was out. He had and it should. The official Persian decree, issued by Cyrus the Great himself, fulfilled Jeremiah's prediction:

“Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:2-3).

The Return Stage gives the account of what happened to the minority of Jewish people who decided to return to Jerusalem and the majority who remained in Babylon. The actions of Zerubbabel, Joshua, Haggai, Zechariah, Ezra, and Nehemiah summarize the minority group. The actions of Esther and Mordecai summarize the majority group. Before the story ended, both groups found themselves in great conflict. The minority faced bitter hostility, and the majority, an outright holocaust.

But in each case God's promise concerning his people rang true:

"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isa 43:2).

STAGE 10:

GOSPEL STAGE

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

There was little doubt that they were the best-known couple in Herod's Temple at that time. No, they were not married. In fact the woman had been a widow for many years. We are told very little about them, but what we do know plays an all-important part in the Gospel Stage. His name was Simeon and her name was Anna.

In regard to Simeon (Luke 2:25-26, NKJV):

"And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ."

In regard to Anna (Luke 2:36-37, NKJV):

"Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day."

From these verses it may well be rightly concluded that no other individual or groups of individuals in all of Israel during those days demonstrated more passion in their anticipation of the Jewish Messiah's imminent appearance than did these two old people! Amazing indeed!

Others had just been born or would soon be born who would eventually assume their roles in the divine drama of redemption:

- John the Baptist: An infant son to a beloved priest some six months prior
- Andrew, Peter, James, and John: Four baby boys born all in Galilee, where they would become fishermen
- Nicodemus: The offspring of a wealthy and influential family. The boy would eventually be regarded as one of Israel's greatest teachers
- Two thieves at Calvary: Two baby boys who would soon give themselves over to a life of crime and eventually pay the supreme price for it
- Mary Magdalene: A baby girl who would eventually be freed from the torment of having seven demons
- John 9: A baby boy who was born blind to the grief of his parents
- Annas and Caiaphas: A baby girl to a rising and materialistic young priest. She would later marry another priest equally as godless as his father-in-law.

Yes, all the props would soon be in place followed by the dimming of the lights and the sound of music. Cue the Gospel Stage ...

STAGE 11:

EARLY CHURCH STAGE

Acts

If the previous overview had a theme, it might have been "Twas the night before Christmas." The theme for this stage could be "Twas the day before Pentecost."

The Father had already sent His Son to purchase our redemption, which He did by His death on the cross. He would now send His Spirit to proclaim that glorious truth everywhere! And it was indeed proclaimed! A small nucleus of 120 believers would soon be joined by thousands upon thousands of Christ-followers. In fact, a Jewish historian by the name of Josephus, writing at the time, estimated as many as one-third of all those living in Jerusalem had become disciples of Jesus. And this was in the Holy City alone.

In fact, the period recorded in the book of Acts from 30 to 60 AD could well be referred to as "Those Three Decades of Divine Destiny!" With the exception of the Gospel Stage, this period doubtless witnessed more advancements in regard to the Kingdom of God than any other in biblical history.

The action never seemed to pause—beginning with the mighty Spirit outpouring at Pentecost, followed by additional miracles, fruitful missionary trips, successful church-planting activities, and great preaching crusades. Furthermore, nearly one-half of the New Testament Epistles were written at this time, all authored by one of the church's most vicious enemies prior to his conversion—Saul of Tarsus, who would become the apostle Paul.

STAGE 12:

EPISTLE STAGE

Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude, Revelation

What a blessed and exciting time the original "Upper Room 120" group of believers were having (Acts 1:15)! Following Pentecost, they had seen the conversion and baptism of literally thousands upon thousands of people (Acts 2:41; 5:14). In addition, they had the privilege of hearing both great preaching and teaching--and being a part of Spirit-filled prayer meetings. Who could possibly ask for more?

But eventually, these early believers felt there was indeed more a final element to complete their assignment to be witnesses for Christ. Actually, it had to do with the Old Testament books. God had once ministered to his people Israel by sending the writing prophets such as Isaiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, and others. Thus, his new people, the church, needed this to be done for them.

In fact, many questions and issues had been raised which could only be addressed by the arrival of scriptural revelations. To address them, God provided a solution: Introducing . . . Peter, Paul, John, James, Jude!

These five writing warriors would enlighten the body of Christ. These men wrote to address the following topics:

- The nature of the church - read Ephesians and Colossians.
- Great theological concepts concerning justification, sanctification, glorification, and more - read Romans and Galatians.
- Christian liberty - read 1 Corinthians.
- Christian forgiveness - read Philemon.
- Christ's high priestly ministry - read Hebrews.

- Israel's future - read Romans 9-11.
- The church's future - read 1 Thessalonians.
- Advice to pastors and deacons - read 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, and 1 & 2 Peter.
- Christian love - read 1 Corinthians 13.
- Spiritual gifts - read 1 Corinthians 12, 14.
- The problem of suffering - read 2 Corinthians.
- The overall future - read Revelation.

START THE DOCTRINE



Imagine a house without a frame, a body without bones, or a family without common values. They would be a disaster! In the same way, we need a structure for understanding the major truths of Scripture and the foundations for our shared faith. To some, the connotation of “doctrines” may sound boring or stoke fear of a divisive fight, but the word doctrine simply refers to the core teachings of God in Scripture.

“The Bible was written to change our lives, not just to challenge our minds. Knowing Biblical truth is one thing, but living it is another matter.” -Dr. Jerry Falwell

These distinct Christian teachings are studied through different approaches or types of theology, which simply means a study of how to read and interpret Scripture better, how to understand and practice these essential doctrines. But on the pages that follow, we will take a systematic approach, briefly exploring an overview of ten core teachings: the Trinity, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Scripture, Salvation, the Church, humanity, the spirit world, end times, and eternity.

You may have many questions about these or not yet feel much interest. But on either end of the spectrum, you can and should study these core teachings as best you can and for the rest of your life walking with Jesus. He studied, treasured, and taught these Himself. After all, these are not cold codes of knowledge but the good teaching of

Scripture that help us grow in faith, live in love, and ground ourselves in trust in God.



The Bible is our guide for life. It is God's manual for successful living. As you seek His direction in your life, you will discover His guidance in Scripture.
-Dr. Jerry Falwell

They are the firm supports of truth that house our faith, the structure that allows us to walk out our faith confidently, and the common values and language that let us share in community with our Christ-following family. These are the core teachings you can build a life upon.



"We affirm our belief in one God, infinite Spirit, creator, and sustainer of all things, who exists eternally in three persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. These three are one in essence but distinct in person and function.

We affirm that the Father is the first person of the Trinity and the source of all that God is and does. From Him the Son is eternally generated and from Them the Spirit eternally proceeds. He is the designer of creation, the speaker of revelation, the author of redemption, and the sovereign of history." - TRBC Doctrinal Statement

NAMES FOR GOD:

- 1. Elohim** – Used 2,750 times, it refers to God's power and might (Gen 1:1, Psa. 19:1)
- 2. El** – There are four compounds of the name El
 - Elyon, *"the strongest strong one"* – (Gen. 14:18-20)
 - Roi, *"the strong one who sees"* – (Gen. 16:13)
 - El Shaddai, *"God Almighty"* – (Gen. 17:1)
 - Olam, *"the everlasting God"*—(Isa. 40:28-31)
- 3. Adonai** – The name means "Master, Lord." The Hebrew Old Testament name Adonai and its Greek New Testament counterpart, Kurios, describe the relationship between master and slave. (Mal. 1:6, Phil. 4:19)
- 4. Jehovah** – This is the most common name for God, occurring 6,823 times. It means "the self-existent one, the God of the covenant." (Exod. 3:13-14)

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD:

GOD IS SPIRIT - He is the ultimate pure and perfect Being, incorporeal, without material substance or physical parts, not having size or dimensions (John 1:18; 4:24).

God Is A Person - He exists and is aware of His existence, having the power of self-determination and possessing all the attributes of personality. (Exod. 3:14; Heb. 1:3). He creates (Gen. 1:1), destroys (Gen. 18:20; 19:24, 25), provides (Psa. 104:27-30; Lk. 12:24), promotes (Psa. 75:6, 7), cares (1 Peter 5:6, 7; Heb. 10:35), hears (Psa. 94:9, 10), hates (Prov. 6:16-19), grieves (Gen. 6:6; Eph. 4:30), and loves (Jer. 31:3; John 3:16; Rom. 5:8, 8:35; 1 John 3:16; 4:10, 16)

God Is One - He is the only and ultimate unified Being, with each divine attribute perfectly united with all other attributes, yet each maintaining its own uniqueness, identity, and function (Deut. 6:4, 5; Eph. 4:5; 1 Tim. 1:17; 1 Tim. 2:5).

God Is A Triune Being - There is only one God, but in the unity of the Godhead there are three eternal and co-equal Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the same in substance (who each Person is), but distinct in subsistence (what each Person does) (Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Isa. 6:8; 48:16; 63:9, 10 (Matt. 3:16, 17; 28:19, 20; John 14:16, 26; 2 Cor. 13:14).

God Is Self Existent - He is because He is—being the only source of His own eternal existence, independent of any and all outside influences (Gen. 1:1; Isa. 41:4; Rev. 22:13). He is the one and only uncaused cause, owing His very existence to Himself! He looks to no one or nothing in regard to His thoughts (Rom. 11:33, 34), His will (Rom. 9:19; Eph. 1:5), His power (Psa. 115:3), or His counsel (Psa. 33:10, 11).

God Is Self Sufficient - This attribute is closely connected to the attribute of self-existence, but carries it a step further. This means God has never had, in eternity past, nor can ever have in the ages to come, a single need for

which His own divine nature has not already provided (Job 41:11; Psa. 24:1; 50:10-12; 1 Cor. 10:26).

God Is Eternal - This means God is absolutely free from the tyranny of time. In Him there is no past or future, but one always and never-ending present. He is neither conditioned nor confined by time (Deut. 33:27; Psa. 90:2; Rom. 1:20; Heb. 9:14; 1 Peter 5:10).

God Is Omnipresent - God, in the totality of His essence, without diffusion or expansion, multiplication or division, penetrates and fills the universe in all its parts. Stated more simply, God is everywhere at the same time (Psa. 139:7-12; Jer. 23:24; Matt. 18:20).

God Is Omnipotent - He is able to accomplish anything and everything if it does not contradict His own nature (Gen. 18:14; Isa. 40:12, 15; Dan. 4:30-32; Matt. 19:26; Luke 1:37; Rev. 19:6).

God Is Omniscient - God possesses (without prior discovery of facts) complete and universal knowledge of all things past, present, and future. This includes not only the actual, but also the possible. This total and immediate knowledge is based on His eternity and His omnipresence (2 Kings 19:27; 2 Chron. 16:9; Psa. 33:13-15; 139:2, 4, 16; 147:4; Prov. 5:21; 15:3; Jer. 16:17; 32:19; Isa. 40:13; Matt. 10:29, 30; Heb. 4:13).

God Is Wise - This refers to His ability to rightly apply all His knowledge in regard to the good of His creatures (Job 36:5; Psa. 104:24; 136:5; 11:2; Jer. 10:12; 51:15; Dan. 2:20; Luke 11:49; Rom. 11:33; 16:27; 1 Cor. 1:24, 30; Eph. 1:10; Col. 2:3; 1 Tim. 1:17; Jude 25).

God Is Immutable - He never changes from Himself, His divine character remaining constant. While His program in

dealing with man may change, His person does not. He is indeed the same yesterday, today and forever (Num. 23:19; Psa. 102:25-27; Mal. 3:6; Acts 1:11; Rom. 11:29; Heb. 1:10-12; 13:8; James 1:17).

God Is Sovereign - God is the absolute and sole ruler in the universe. (Psa. 135:6; Isa. 45:21; 48:3; 46:9-11; Dan. 2:44; 7:13, 14; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Rev. 5:9, 10; 11:15) He alone possesses the needed power, freedom, wisdom and will to successfully carry out a predetermined course of action. This sovereignty can be viewed in both the physical world and scriptural world.

God Is Incomprehensible - By this it is stated that no one except God himself can even (or ever) fully understand and comprehend either His Person or (at times) His plan. (Deut. 4:35; Job 5:9; 11:7; Psa. 36:6; Eccles. 3:11; Isa. 40:13; 44:8; 45:5, 6; 46:5, 9; Isa. 45:7; Rom. 11:33-36; 1 Cor. 2:16)

God Is Holy - It has been suggested that His holiness is the union of all other attributes, as pure white light is the union of all the colored rays of the spectrum. In the positive sense of the word, God's holiness assures the abundance of every clean and pure element within the divine person, while from a negative perspective, it guarantees the absolute absence of any unclean or evil element. (Lev. 19:2; Josh. 24:19; 1 Sam. 2:2; Psa. 22:3; 99:9; Isa. 6:1-3; 57:15; Luke 1:49; John 17:11; 1 Peter 1:15; Rev. 4:8)

God Is True - This means His being and knowledge eternally conform to each other. Thus, God is true for He alone represents things as they actually are, for truth is reality revealed (Deut. 32:4; Jer. 10:10; John 3:33; 17:3; Rom. 3:4; 1 Thess. 1:9; 5:20; 2 Cor. 1:18; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18; Rev. 15:3; 16:7; 19:11).

God Is Faithful - God's faithfulness refers to His self-

loyalty and to His loyalty to His entire creation. He will not (indeed, He cannot) change His character nor fail to perform all He has promised (Deut. 7:9; Psa. 36:5; 89:1, 2; 119:90; 2 Thess 3:3).

God Is Merciful - This speaks of God's compassion and pity upon those in great distress, even when the person involved has caused his own problems through sinful activities. Mercy is, among other things, not getting what we deserve (Exod. 34:7; Num. 14:18; Deut. 5:10; 1 Chron. 16:34; Ezra 3:11; Neh. 13:22; Psa. 51:1, 16, 17; 103:8-17; 119:64; 136:1; 138:8; Jonah 4:2; Rom. 9:15, 16; 11:32; Eph. 2:4; Titus 3:5; Heb. 8:8, 12; James 5:11).

God Is Gracious - This is a reference to His unmerited favor. Grace and mercy are different sides of the same coin. Mercy is that act of withholding merited punishment, while grace is that act of bestowing unmerited favor (Psa. 103:8; 145:8; John 1:16, 17; Acts 15:11; 20:24; Rom. 5:15; 16:20, 24; Eph. 1:7; Titus 3:7; James 4:6; 1 Peter 2:3; 5:5, 10; Psa. 111:4; 116:5).

God Is Love - This refers to His unselfish, unlimited, unconditional, undeserved, and undying concern in regard to our welfare, whereby He always seeks our highest good (Deut. 4:37; 33:3; 2 Chron. 2:11; Hosea 14:4; John 14:23; Rom. 5:5; 8:35, 39; 2 Cor. 13:11; Eph. 2:4; 3:19; 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:16; Titus 3:4; Heb. 12:6; 1 John 3:1, 16; 4:10, 16; Rev. 1:5).

"We affirm that the Lord Jesus Christ is the second person of the Trinity. Eternally begotten from the Father, He is God. He was conceived by the virgin Mary through a miracle of the Holy Spirit. He lives forever as perfect God and perfect man: two distinct natures inseparably united in one person.

We affirm that Jesus Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice by the appointment of the Father. He fulfilled the demands of God by His obedient life, died on the cross in full substitution and payment for the sins of all, was buried, and on the third day, He arose physically from the dead and ascended into Heaven where He now intercedes for all believers."

- TRBC Doctrinal Statement

The Preexistence of Jesus Christ as God -

Prior to his Bethlehem appearance, Jesus was active creating the universe (John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2, 10), controlling this created universe (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:17), and communing with the Trinity (John 17:24).

The Old Testament Ministry of Jesus Christ –

A "theophany" is a pre-Bethlehem appearance of Christ, often seen in the form of the "angel of the Lord". He appeared to Hagar, Abraham's Egyptian wife (Gen. 16:7-14; 21:16-20), Abraham (Gen.18:10; 18:17; 22:11), Jacob (Gen. 28:12-15; 32:24-30), Moses (Exod. 3:4-5; 23:20; 33:22), Joshua (Josh. 5:13-15), Gideon (Judg. 6:11-24), Samson's parents (Judg. 13), three young Hebrews in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:24-25), and Daniel (Dan. 6:21-22; 7:13-14; 10:5-6).

The Virgin Birth Incarnation of Jesus Christ

(John 1:14; 1 John 4:2; Rom. 8:3; 1 Tim. 3:16).

1. The word *incarnation* means "in flesh" and denotes the act whereby the eternal Son of God took to Himself an additional nature, humanity, through the virgin birth.
2. The miracle of the virgin birth was not the actual birth, but rather the conception of Christ's earthly body.
3. He will continue to manifest himself in this body (in its resurrected state, of course) throughout the ages.
4. The prophecies include: The method of his birth. He was to be born of a woman (Gen. 3:15), specifically to a virgin woman (Isa. 7:14). The nature of his birth (Isa. 9:6)— He would become the God-Man. The nationality of his birth: He would come from the nation Israel (Gen. 12:3), Judah, one of Israel's 12 tribes (Gen. 49:10), and the house of David, of the tribe of Judah in Israel (2 Sam. 7:12-13). The place of his birth - Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2).
5. Reasons for the Virgin Birth incarnation: To...
 - reveal the invisible God (John 1:18; 14:9).
 - make a sacrifice for our sins (Heb. 2:9; 10:4-5, 10, 12; Mark 10:45).
 - reconcile man to God (2 Cor. 5:19; 1 Tim. 2:5-6).
 - provide the believer with a high (Heb. 3:1; 4:15).
 - destroy the devil and his works (1 John 3:8).
 - glorify the Father (John 13:31; 14:13; 17:4).

The Humanity of Jesus Christ

1. He had a human parentage (Luke 1:31; Gal. 4:4).
2. He had a human Body (Matt. 26:12), Soul (John 12:27), and Spirit (Mark 2:8; Luke 23:46).
3. He looked like a man to the Samaritan woman (John 4:9), the Jews (John 8:57), and Mary (John 20:15).

The Deity of Jesus Christ – He is omnipresent (John 3:13; Matt. 18:20; 28:20), omnipotent (Heb. 1:3), omniscient (John 16:30), receives worship (Matt. 4:10), and is the final Judge (Matt. 25:31, 32; John 5:22, 27; Acts 17:31).

The Character of Jesus Christ

1. zeal (Luke 2:49; 12:49-50)
2. compassion (Heb. 5:2; Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 15:32)
3. meekness and gentleness (2 Cor. 10:1; Pet. 2:21-23)
4. courage (Luke 4:16-30; John 2:13-17; Matt. 21:12-16; Mark 5:1-9; John 11:7, 8, 16, 53; Matt. 23)
5. obedience (John 6:38)
6. love (John 11:1-3; 13:23; 14:31; 15:10; 13:34, 17:2, 9, 12; 19:25-27; Mark 10:13-16; Matt. 23:37; Luke 19:41)

The Offices of Jesus

1. Prophet – Predicted by Moses (Deut. 18:18), Christ was looked upon as a prophet by many during his earthly ministry (John 4:19; 7:40; Luke 7:16; 22:64; 24:19; Matt. 21:11).
2. Priest - He offered himself on Calvary (Heb. 2:9), and prays for his people (John 17; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25).
3. King – His will fulfill the office of the king (Rev. 19:11-16).

The Death of Jesus Christ

1. He spoke concerning his suffering and death on many occasions (John 3:14; Matt. 16:21; 17:22-23; 26:26-28).
2. These groups were "responsible" for His death:
 1. Judas (Matt. 26:14-16, 47-50)
 2. Annas and Caiaphas (John 18:12-13, 24; Matt. 26:57, 65)
 3. Pilate (Matt. 27:26)
 4. The Jewish leaders (Matt. 26:3-4; 27:1)
 5. The Roman soldiers (Matt. 27:27-31)
 6. All sinners (Heb. 2:9)
 7. The Father himself (Isa. 53:6, 10; 2 Cor. 5:21)
3. The scope of it – Christ died for the world (John 3:16; 1:29; 1 John 2:2; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:6), the elect (Eph. 1:4; 5:25; Rev. 13:8), and for each man (Heb. 2:9).
4. It was necessary because of God's righteousness (Lev. 11:44; Prov. 15:9), and because of man's sinfulness (Rom. 3:9-18).

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

1. It was predicted by David (Psa. 16:10), Isaiah (Isa. 53:10-12), Zechariah (Zech. 12:10), and Jesus himself (Matt. 12:39-40; 16:21; 17:23; 20:18-19; John 10:17, 18).
2. The most lengthy and detailed overview of Christ's glorious resurrection from a theological perspective is found in 1 Corinthians 15.
3. Both Christ's death and resurrection are pictured by the ordinance of baptism (Rom. 6:4-5).

The Ascension of Jesus Christ - He visibly ascended into heaven 40 days after His resurrection (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9-12).

The Present Ministry of Jesus Christ - He sits at Father's right hand to:

1. Be our forerunner (Heb. 6:19-20)
2. Prepare a place for us (John 14:2)
3. Give spiritual gifts to His followers (Eph. 4:10-14)
4. Offer encouragement to His followers (Heb. 4:14-16)
5. Make high priestly prayers for us (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 9:24)
6. Send the promise of the Father (John 16; Acts 1:4; 2:33)
7. Care for His churches (Rev. 1:10-3:22)
8. Work through His people (John 14:12)
9. Wait until His enemies become His footstool (Heb. 10:12-13)

The Future Two-fold Return of Jesus Christ

1. At the Rapture, where He comes for His people (thus introducing the great tribulation) (John 14:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:51-53; 1 Thess. 4:16-17)
2. At the Second Coming, where He comes with His people (thus concluding the great tribulation) (Jude 14; Psa. 24:9-10; Isa. 25:8-9; Isa. 40:5, 10; Matt. 16:27; 24:30; 26:64; 2 Thess. 1:7; 2:8)

The Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ - He will rule on earth for 1000 years, as prophesied and described in Isa. 9:6-7; Luke 1:32-33; Matt. 8:11; 13:43; 25:34; 26:29; Acts 3:19-21; Rom. 8:16-23; 15:11-12, Rev. 20:4, 6.

"We affirm that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, proceeding from the Father and Son and equal in deity. He is the giver of all life, active in the creating and ordering of the universe: He is the agent of inspiration and the new birth; He restrains sin and Satan; and He indwells and sanctifies all believers." - TRBC Doctrinal Statement

The Nature Of The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit of God is a Person, as much as the Father and Son are Persons. He has a mind (Rom. 8:27), searches out the human mind (1 Cor. 2:10; 2:9), has a will (1 Cor. 12:11), forbids (Acts 16:6-7), permits (Acts 16:10), speaks (Acts 8:29; 10:19; 13:2; Rev. 2-3), loves (Rom. 15:30), grieves (Eph. 4:30), and prays (Rom. 8:26). He is not only a Person, but a divine Person. He possesses the attributes of God: eternal (Heb. 9:14), sovereign (1 Cor. 12:11), and omnipresent (Psa. 139:7-12), He is omnipotent in shaping us (Job 33:4) and strengthening us (Mic. 3:8; Zech. 4:6), and omniscient (Psa. 139:1-6). He is called God (Acts 5:3-4). He is made equal with the Father and the Son (Matt. 3:16-17; Jn.14:16; Matt. 28:19-20; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2).

Names Of The Holy Spirit

He is called the eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14), Spirit of truth (John 16:13), Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29), Spirit of glory (1 Pet. 4:14) Spirit of life, and the Comforter (John 14:26).

Emblems Given to the Holy Spirit – His eight designated emblems shed light upon both nature and His mission.

1. The dove (John 1:32)
2. Water (Isa. 44:3; John 7:37-39)
3. Oil (Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38; Heb. 1:9; 1 John 2:20)
4. A seal (Eph. 1:13; 2 Cor. 1:22)

5. Wind (Acts 2:1-2)
6. Fire (Exod. 3:2; Lev. 9:24; Exod. 13:21; Isa. 6:1-8; Acts 2:3; Heb. 12:29)
7. An earnest (2 Cor. 1:22; 2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:14)

The Holy Spirit's Ministry

1. The universe – He created the stars (Psa. 33:6), earth (Gen. 1:2), trees, birds, animals, fish (Psa. 104:11-25), and man (Job 33:4).
2. Scriptures – He is author of the Old Testament (2 Sam. 23:2; Isa. 59:21; Jer. 1:9; John 10:35; 2 Pet. 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:15-17) and New Testament (John 14:25-26; 1 Cor. 14:37; Rev. 1:10-11).
3. Nation of Israel - He empowered its leaders - Moses (Num. 11:17), Joshua (Num. 27:18), Gideon (Judg. 6:34), Samson (Judg. 15:14-15, 14:6, 19), and David (1 Sam. 16:13). He led Israel through the desert (Neh. 9:20), will empower Israel during the Tribulation (Joel 2:28-32; Rev. 7:24) and in the Millennium (Ezek. 39:29, Ezek. 37:13-14; Zech. 12:10).
4. The devil – The Holy Spirit now acts as a divine dam, holding back and limiting the full power of Satan and of sin (Isa. 59:19, 2 Thess. 2:6-8).
5. The Savior – He conceived (Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:18-20), anointed (Matt. 3:16; Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38; Heb. 1:9), sealed (John 6:27), led (Matt. 4:1), empowered (Matt. 12:28), filled (John 3:34; Luke 4:1), sorrowed with (John 11:33), rejoiced with (Luke 10:21), offered at Calvary (Heb. 9:14), and resurrected (1 Peter 3:18) Jesus.
6. The sinner (John 16:7-11) - He convicts humans of sin (John 3:18), of Christ's righteousness (Romans), and of future judgment as they share Satan's doom (John 8:44, Rom. 16:20, Matt. 25:41).
7. The church (Eph. 2:19-22):
 - He aids in its singing services (Eph. 5:18-19).
 - He appoints its preachers (Acts 20:28).
 - He anoints its preachers (1 Cor. 2:4).

- He warns its members (1 Tim. 4:1).
 - He determines its decisions (Acts 15:28).
8. The believer - The instant an unsaved person prays, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," the Holy Spirit immediately effects a five-fold work in him:
- He regenerates the believer (Titus 3:5; John 3:3-7; 1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18).
 - He baptizes the believer (1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 2:12).
 - He indwells the believer (John 14:20; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19).
 - He seals the believer (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 4:30).
 - He fills the believer (Acts 2:4)

All five of these ministries happen instantaneously to the believer. The first four ministries can never be lost and therefore, need not be and should not be asked for again. The fifth ministry, however, can be lost, and therefore should be asked for as many times as needed (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:16). The first four ministries give us peace with God (Rom. 5:1). The fifth ministry assures us the peace of God (Phil. 4:7) and is lost whenever disobedience is found in the life of the believer. This disobedience may manifest itself in either (or both) of the following ways: the sin of quenching the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19), and the sin of grieving the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). The fifth ministry may (and should be) instantly regained. This can be accomplished by knowing God's method of forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:7) and by knowing God's means of forgiveness and cleansing – the confession of the Christian (1 John 1:9).

9. Spiritual gifts (Eph. 4:4-8) - These are supernatural abilities imparted to each believer at the moment of conversion by the Holy Spirit. Each believer possesses at least one spiritual gift (1 Pet. 4:10; Eph. 4:7; 1 Cor. 7:7; 12:7; 12:11). No believer possesses all the gifts (1 Cor. 12:29-30). The purpose of the spiritual gifts is to glorify the Father (Rev. 4:11) and edify the church (Eph. 4:12-13).

The gifts are abused by not using those imparted to us (2 Tim. 1:6; 1 Tim. 4:14), attempting to use those gifts not imparted to us (see 1 Cor. 12-13), and not using the gifts in love (1 Cor. 13:1).

In three main passages, the Apostle Paul lists 18 separate spiritual gifts for us. These are Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; and Ephesians 4. It would seem that these 18 gifts can be placed into two basic categories: sign gifts (Apostleship, Prophecy, Miracles, Healing, Tongues, Interpretation of tongues, Knowledge) and stewardship gifts (Wisdom, Discernment of spirits, Giving, Exhortation, Ministering, Mercy showing, Ruling, Administration, Faith, Teaching, Evangelism, Pastor/teacher).

10. The fruit of the Spirit (Rom. 6:22; 7:4; Col. 1:10) - God desires His new creation to do the same as He ordered His old creation to do (Gen. 1:28) - to be fruitful. God desires the believer to fulfill the prophecy concerning Joseph (Gen. 49:22) and for His children to experience the blessings of Psalm 1 (Psa. 1:3). He desires His children of light to function today as His tree of life will function in eternity (Rev. 22:1-2). To bear spiritual fruit we must die to this world (John 12:24) and abide in the Savior (John 15:1-5; 16).

"We affirm that the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, though written by men, was supernaturally inspired by God so that all its words are the written true revelation of God. It is therefore inerrant in the originals and authoritative in all matters. It is to be understood by all through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, its meaning determined by the historical, grammatical, and literary use of the author's language, comparing Scripture with Scripture."

- TRBC Doctrinal Statement

Bible Statistics

The Old Testament

1. 39 books
2. 929 chapters
3. Longest book – Psalms
4. Shortest book – Obadiah

The New Testament

1. 27 books
2. 260 chapters
3. Longest book – Acts
4. Shortest book – 3 John

Bible Authors

1. Moses wrote Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Psalm 90.
2. Joshua wrote the book named after him.
3. Job may have written his own story.
4. Samuel may have written Judges, Ruth, and 1 Samuel.
5. David wrote most of the Psalms (2 Sam. 23:2).
6. Sons of Korah wrote Psalms 42, 44-49, 84-85, 87.
7. Asaph wrote Psalms 50, 73-83.
8. Heman wrote Psalm 88.

9. Ethan wrote Psalm 89.
10. Hezekiah wrote Psalms 120-123, 128-130, 132, 134 – 136 (Isa. 38:20).
11. Solomon wrote Psalms 72, 127, Proverbs 1 – 29, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon.
12. Agur wrote Proverbs 30.
13. Lemuel wrote Proverbs 31.
14. Jeremiah wrote Jeremiah, probably Lamentations, and possibly 1 and 2 Kings.
15. Ezra wrote Ezra and possibly 1 and 2 Chronicles and 2 Samuel.
16. Mordecai may have written Esther.
17. Luke wrote Acts as well as the Gospel of Luke.
18. John wrote the Gospel of John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation.
19. Paul wrote Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.
20. Apollos may have written Hebrews.
21. The books of Old Testament prophecy were written by the prophets whose names they bear. The New Testament Epistles and Gospels, with the exceptions noted above, were also named after their authors: Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Matthew, Mark, Peter, James, and Jude.

Bible Language

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, with the following exceptions appearing in Aramaic – These are: Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26; Daniel 2:4-7:28; Jeremiah 10:11. The entire New Testament was written in Greek.

Bible Formation

How did we receive our Bible? Around 1400 B.C. God

began to quietly call some 40 men and women into his presence, and used the three tools as follows:

- 1. Revelation:** From God to man (man hears that which God wants written). We know God spoke to man, but how did he speak? Hebrews 1:1 informs us he spoke to the fathers and prophets in many ways.
- 2. Inspiration:** From man to paper (man writes that which God wants written). Inspiration may be defined as the Holy Spirit's superintending over the writers so that while writing according to their own styles and personalities, the result was God's Word written – authoritative, trustworthy, and free from error in the original autographs. The term inspiration is found but once in the New Testament. This occurs in 2 Timothy 3:16. Here Paul says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." The Greek word is theopneustos, and literally means "God-breathed." Scripture texts on inerrancy and inspiration (Exod. 34:27; 2 Sam. 23:1-2; Jer. 1:9).
- 3. Illumination:** From paper to heart (man receives that which God has written.) It can be stated that without inspiration, no Scripture would have ever been written. We may now claim that without illumination, no sinner would have ever been saved! Illumination, then, is that method used by the Holy Spirit to shed divine light upon all seeking men as they look into the Word of God. Illumination is from the written word to the human heart. Why is this third step necessary? It is necessary because of natural blindness (1 Cor. 2:14; Matt. 16:16-17) and because of satanic blindness (2 Cor. 4:3-4). The result of illumination is that sinners are saved (Psa. 119:130) and Christians are strengthened (1 Pet. 2:2; Psa. 119:105).

Bible Canonization

The word comes from the Greek word *kanon*, which refers to a measuring instrument. It therefore came to mean a

rule of action (Gal. 6:16; Phil. 3:16).

Before the Babylonian captivity, prior to 606 B.C. the Old Testament books were apparently laid beside the Ark of the Covenant in the temple (Exod. 24:3-4, 7; Josh. 24:25-26). During the Babylonian captivity the books were probably carried to Babylon and later collected by Daniel (Dan. 9:2). After the Babylonian captivity the books may have been taken back to Jerusalem by Ezra the prophet and kept in the newly completed temple. (See Ezra 3:10-11; 6:15-18; Neh. 8:1-8.)

The New Testament books were distributed among the early churches and gathered by the Christians (Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27).

These tests were used to determine which books should be canonized:

1. Authorship – Who wrote the book or the epistle?
2. Local church acceptance
3. Church fathers' recognition
4. Book subject matter (content)
5. Personal edification – Did the book have the ability to inspire, convict, and edify local congregations and individual believers?

By the year 300 B.C. (at the latest) all Old Testament books had been written, collected, revered, and recognized as Biblical, canonical books. Many believe Ezra the prophet led the first recognition council. During the Third Church Council of Carthage, held in A.D. 397, the 27 New Testament books were declared to be canonical.

"We affirm that each person can be saved only through the work of Jesus Christ, through repentance of sin and by faith alone in Him as Savior. The believer is declared righteous, born again by the Holy Spirit, turned from sin, and assured of heaven.

We affirm that the Holy Spirit indwells all who are born again, conforming them to the likeness of Jesus Christ. This is a process completed only in Heaven. Every believer is responsible to live in obedience to the Word of God in separation from sin." - TRBC Doctrinal Statement

The Meaning of Salvation

1. The Hebrew root word yesha (basis for the name of Joshua and Jesus) signifies freedom from what binds or restricts and thus effects deliverance.
2. The Greek word is soteria, meaning "to cure, to provide recovery, to rescue, to effect one's welfare."

The Implications of Salvation

- That someone needs to be saved. People are lost (Matt. 9:1-2; Rom. 3:19; Psa. 69:1-2; Luke 19:10; Eph. 2:12). Why are people lost? (Psa. 19:1; Acts 14:17; Rom. 1:19-20; Jn. 8:44; 2 Cor. 4:4; Gen. 2:17; Eccles. 7:20; Jer. 17:9; Mk. 7:20-23; Rom. 5:12; 1 Jn. 5:12; Jude 19).
- That someone is able and willing to save. Such a Savior must fulfill both requirements: He must be able and willing to save.
- It is possible for a person to have the desire but not the ability to save another individual.

The Source of Salvation – Jesus Christ is the source of salvation. He meets both requirements:

He is able to save (Eph. 3:20; 2 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 2:18; 7:25; Jude 24).

He is willing to save (Matt. 8:2-3; 1 Tim. 2:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:9).

The Threefold Method of Salvation

Salvation is always by the blood (Heb. 9:22). Furthermore, this blood must be innocent, shed, and applied (Heb. 9:14, Matt. 26:28, Rev. 1:5).

Salvation is always through a person (Acts 4:12; 1 Thess. 5:9; Heb. 5:9).

Salvation is always by grace (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 2:11).

The Vocabulary of Salvation

Conversion (Psa. 19:7; 51:13; Matt. 18:3; Mark 4:12; Acts 3:19; 15:3; James 5:20). In essence, both Hebrew and Greek meanings have reference to a twofold turning on the part of an individual. One has to do with repentance (a turning from), and the other with faith (a turning to).

Substitution (1 Peter 3:18). Substitution refers to that act whereby someone or something replaces, or stands in the stead of someone else or something else.

Reconciliation – The Greek word *allasso* means to change from that of enmity to that of friendship. In essence, it indicates a change of relationship from that of hostility to that of harmony between two parties.

Propitiation – The Greek word *hilasmos* means "to render favorable, to satisfy, to appease." In essence the doctrine of propitiation states that the death of Christ fully satisfies all the righteous demands of God toward the sinner (1 John 2:2). It was necessary because of God's wrath (that stern reaction of the divine nature to evil in man) (John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 5:6; Rev. 6:16; 11:18; Rev. 14:10; 19:15).

Remission (Acts 10:43; Matt. 26:28; Lk. 24:47; Heb. 9:22)

The meaning of remission – This concept is practically

synonymous with the word forgiveness. It refers to a sending back, a putting away.

Redemption (Luke 1:68; Gal. 3:1; Rev. 5:9) To pay a ransom price for something or someone (Heb. 9:12), to remove from slavery (Gal. 3:13), to effect a full release (Rom. 3:24; 8:22-23; Eph. 4:30). It is a costly transaction (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Regeneration (Titus 3:5) It is that process whereby God, through a second birth, imparts to the believing sinner a new nature (John 1:12-13; 3:3; 1 Jn. 5:1; Jer. 13:23; Rom. 3:10-18; 7:18; Gal. 5:19-21). The means of regeneration is the Word of God (John 3:5; Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23), the messenger of God (Rom. 10:13-15; 1 Cor. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Gal. 4:19), and the Spirit of God (John 3:5-6; 1 Cor. 2:14; Titus 3:5).

Imputation (Rom. 4:8) To impute is for one person to add something good or bad to the account of another person. In the Bible there are three main theological imputations: The imputation of Adam's sin upon the human race (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:22), the imputation of the race's sin upon Christ (Isa. 53:5; 11; Heb. 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:24). (See also 2 Cor. 5:14-21.), and the imputation of God's righteousness upon the believing sinner (Phil. 3:7-9).

Adoption (Gal. 4:4-5) The word literally means "the placing of a son." Adoption logically follows regeneration. Regeneration gives one his nature as a child of God, whereas adoption gives him his position as a son of God (2 Cor. 6:18; Eph. 1:5).

Supplication (prayer) (1 Tim. 2:1; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6) Prayer may be best defined as "having fellowship with God."

Justification is that legal act whereby man's status before God is changed for the good. The method of justification (Job 25:4; Rom. 4:16) is by faith (Rom. 5:1) and by grace (Rom. 3:24; Titus 3:7; Eph. 2:1-10). The two great examples of justification are Abraham – He was justified apart from circumcision (Gen. 15:6), and David – He was justified apart from the Levitical offerings (Psa. 32:1-2; Psa. 51:16-17.)

Sanctification (1 Thess. 4:3; 5:23) occurs in various forms some 300 times in the New Testament and 760 times in the Old Testament, for a total of 1,060 in the Bible. The basic meaning in all these instances is "to set apart."

Glorification (Rom. 8:30; 5:2; Rom. 8:18; 1 Cor. 15:43; Col. 3:4; 1 Pet. 5:1) refers to the ultimate and absolute physical, mental, and spiritual perfections of all believers (Rom. 8:22-23; 1 Cor. 15:41-44; 15:51-55; 2 Cor. 4:14-18; Jude 24-25). Glorification is both the logical and necessary final side of the great salvation triangle. It completes justification and sanctification.

In the past, Christ the Prophet saved us from the penalty of sin through justification (Eph. 2:8; Titus 3:5).

In the present, Christ the Priest saves us from the power of sin through sanctification (Heb. 7:25).

In the future, Christ the King shall save us from the presence of sin through glorification (Rom. 5:9-10).

"We affirm that a church is a local assembly of baptized believers, under the discipline of the Word of God and the lordship of Christ, organized to carry out the commission to evangelize, to teach, and to administer the ordinances of believer's baptism and the Lord's table. Its offices are pastors and deacons and it is self-governing. It functions through the ministry of gifts given by the Holy Spirit to each believer."

- TRBC Doctrinal Statement

The Meaning of the Word Church

The Greek word in the New Testament for our English word church is *ekkleisia*. It is derived from the verb *ekkaleo*. The compound *ek* means "out," and *kaleo* means "to call or summon." Thus, the literal meaning is "to call out."

The Origin of the Church

The bulk of Bible students hold the position that the church began at Pentecost (Acts 1-2).

The Nature of the Church

- It is not a new name for Israel.
- It is not the kingdom.
- It is not a building structure composed of wood, bricks, nails, and mortar.
- It is not a state or national organization.

There are three distinct positions concerning the church:

a. The *ekkleisia* of the New Testament refers only to those geographical groups of baptized believers (Acts 11:26; 13:1; Romans 16:1; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Philemon 2; Revelation 1:4)

- b. The *ekklesia* of the New Testament refers primarily (if not only) to that invisible body of Christ, composed of all believers, saved from the day of Pentecost to the Rapture.
- c. The *ekklesia* of the New Testament embraces both the total body of Christ (including living and departed believers) and individual local assemblies, with the main emphasis being placed on the latter meaning (Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 15:9; Galatians 1:13; 3:28; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:25-32; Colossians 1:18; Hebrews 12:23; Revelation 19:6-9).

The Purpose of the Church

The purpose of the church is not to save the world, serve the world, fight the world, imitate the world, nor to isolate itself from the world.

It is to love God (Rev. 2:4), glorify God (Eph. 1:5-6, 11-12, 14), and display God's grace (Eph. 2:7; 1 Pet. 2:9).

The church is to read (1 Tim. 4:13), heed (1 Tim. 4:16), and deed (2 Tim. 2:1-2; 4:2) the Scriptures.

The church is to baptize (Matt. 28:19), instruct, edify (1 Cor. 14:26; 1 Thess. 5:11), discipline (1 Pet. 4:17), provide fellowship for (Acts 2:42), and care for (Acts 11:27-30) the saints.

The church is to share the gospel with the lost and make disciples (Rom. 1:14-15, Matt. 28:19-20). It is to act as a restraining and enlightening force in this present world (Matt. 5:13-16), and to promote all that is good (Gal. 6:10).

The Symbols for the Church

- The Head and the body (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-31; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:12, 16; 5:23, 30; Col. 1:18)
- The Bridegroom and the bride (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 3:19-21; 5:25-32; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:9)
- The Vine and the branches (John 15:1-16)
- The Shepherd and the sheep (John 10:1-16)
- The High Priest and a kingdom of priests (Heb. 5:1-10;

1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6b)

- The Cornerstone and the living stones (Isa. 28:16; Dan. 2:34; Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-7)

- The last Adam and the new creation (Rom. 5:11-21; 1 Cor. 15:20-50)

The Officers of the Church

- Elders, Overseers (1 Tim. 3:1)

- Deacons (1 Tim. 3:8)

The Ordinances of the Church

An ordinance is an outward, visible rite that symbolizes a central truth of the Christian faith. Such a rite is only an ordinance when it has been commanded in the Bible to be practiced by the church. The New Testament lists two:

- The Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:19-20, 26-28). (See also Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25.)

- Baptism (Matt. 28:19)

The Destiny of the Church

- To be caught up by the Bridegroom at the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:51-53; 1 Thess. 4:15-17)

- To be examined and rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:13)

- To be united with Christ at the marriage service of the Lamb (2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7-8)

- To be seated with Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9)

- To reign with Christ during the Millennium (Rev. 1:6; 20:6)

- To share the new Jerusalem with Christ throughout all eternity (Rev. 21:1-2)

- To illustrate the glory of Christ throughout all eternity (Eph. 1:6, 3:10). (See also Eph. 2:1-7.)

"We affirm that human beings were directly created, not evolved, in the very image of God. As reasoning moral agents, they are responsible under God for understanding and governing themselves and the world. Adam, the first man, willfully disobeyed God, bringing sin and death into the world. As a result, all persons are sinners from conception, which is evidenced in their willful acts of sin; and they are therefore subject to eternal punishment, under the just condemnation of a holy God." - TRBC Doctrinal Statement

The Origin of Man

There are (at least) three main theories concerning the origin of man.

1. Atheistic evolution - This theory holds that man is the accidental and random product of a blind and non-personal series of chemical and biological events.
2. Theistic evolution - This view, as the name implies, says there is a God and that He used the method of evolution to bring about the universe and the world.
3. Special creation - This is the view that man is a direct product from the hand of God and that the statements in Genesis 1 and 2 are to be taken at face value in a literal and normal way.

The Nature of Man

How is man made in the image and likeness of God? (Gen. 1:26-27)

Throughout the history of the Christian church various theories have been propounded.

1. That this likeness means God possesses a physical body similar to man (this is the view of Mormonism)
2. That this likeness is a reference to the triunity of man (body, soul, and spirit)

3. That this likeness is associated with man's self-consciousness and sense of morality

What is the nature of man's body? Views concerning the purpose of the body:

- The body is the prison house of the soul. (False)
- The body is the only part of man that is important. (False)
- The body is the partner of the soul. (True)

Where and how does man receive his soul?

- Pre-existence. All men have known other existences prior to this earthly life in Heaven or somewhere in time past and therefore receive their original soul from previous existence into their earthly bodies. (False)
- Creationism. According to this theory each human soul is an immediate and special creation by God and enters the developing body at an early stage, probably at conception (Eccles. 12:7; Zech. 12:1; Heb. 12:9).
- Traducianism. Both body and soul are passed on through natural generations (Psa. 51:5; 58:3; Job 14:4; John 3:6; Eph. 2:3).

What is the soul? The nature of man's soul is, like that of the doctrine of the Trinity, a mystery that simply cannot be grasped by mortal mind. It would seem the Bible indicates not so much that man has a soul, but rather man is a soul. Man has a body and a spirit, but the soul is who a man is. The basic characteristics of the soul seem to be intellect, sensibility, conscience, and will.

The Purpose for the Creation of Man

Historically speaking, man was created to demonstrate and display the glory of God (Psa. 8:1, 3-5; Rev. 4:11). Prophetically speaking, man was created to demonstrate and display the grace of God (Eph. 2:4-7).

The Original Responsibilities and Restrictions of Man

1. Man was to assume the headship over all nature (Psa. 8:6-8)
2. Man was to provide names for every living creature (Gen.2:19-20)
3. Man was to love and protect his wife
4. Man was to reproduce himself and populate the earth with his kind (Gen. 1:28)
5. Man was forbidden to partake of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17)

The Tragic Sin and Fall of Man

1. The temptation preceding the Fall (Gen. 3:1-4). Satan begins by doubting the Word of God and ends by denying the Word of God.
2. The transgression causing the Fall was Eve and Adam disobeying and eating the fruit God forbade (Gen. 3:6).
3. The trials following the Fall included shame (Gen. 3:7), fear (Gen. 3:8), and excuses (Gen. 3:12-13). At this point the righteous Judge sets up His court in Eden and indicts the following:
 1. The serpent (Gen. 3:14)
 2. Satan would suffer a crushing and fatal head wound (Gen. 3:15)
 3. Adam and Eve would both experience physical death (Gen. 5:5; Psa. 90:10) and spiritual death (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 21:8). Adam would have weary labor (Gen. 3:17-19). Eve would have multiplied sorrow (Gen. 3:16).
 4. Nature itself suffered the Fall and now "groans" (Rom. 8:19-22).
4. The great promise after the Fall (Gen. 3:15) was that God would provide a savior for man's sin through the seed of the woman (Isa. 53:5; Rom. 16:20).

"We affirm that all things were created by God. Angels were created as ministering agents, though some, under the leadership of Satan, fell from their sinless state to become agents of evil." - TRBC Doctrinal Statement

The Two Types of Angels

It is believed that all angels were originally created without fault and, like Adam in the Garden, placed on a probation of some sort. They were theologically, during this time, posse non peccare (able not to sin). But the probation period ended when heaven's chief angel, Lucifer by name, instigated a great revolt against Jehovah God Himself. See Isa. 14:12-15 and Ezek. 28:11-19. It is suggested by Rev. 12:3-4 that he was able to persuade one-third of heaven's angels to side with him in this terrible rebellion. From that point on, the faithful angels are referred to as holy and elect angels (Mark 8:38; 1 Tim. 5:21), while the fallen angels are known as the devil's angels (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:9).

The Creation of the Angels

Angels, like everything else in this universe, were made by God, the Father, through Jesus Christ in the energy of the Holy Spirit. (Gen. 1:1-2, Neh. 9:6, Psa. 148:2, 5, John 1:1-3, Eph. 3:9, Col. 1:16). They were created before the 7th day of creation, (Gen. 2:1) before man (Psa. 8:5), before the earth (Job 38:1, 4, 7).

The Angels' Work

The angel's work is to glorify God and worship Christ (Luke 2:13-14, Rev. 4:11, Col. 1:14-16, Heb. 1:6), to do the will of God (Psa. 104:20-21), to assist the people of God (Heb. 1:14), and to observe the plan of God (1 Peter 1:9-12, Eph. 3:10).

The Number of Angels

They are innumerable. God of course knows their number, but they are presented to man as uncountable. Actually, there may be as many angels as there are stars in the universe, for angels are often associated with the stars! See Judges 5:20; Job 38:4, 7; Psa. 148:1-3; Isa. 14:13.

Named Angels in the Bible

1. Michael - Name: "Who is like God?" - "One of the chief princes" (Dan. 10:13), "Great prince" (Dan. 12:1), "Archangel" (Jude 9). He helped a lesser-ranked angel get through to answer Daniel's prayer (Dan. 10:13, 21), he will stand up for Israel during the tribulation (Dan. 12:1), he disputed with Satan concerning the dead body of Moses (Jude 9), he fights against Satan in the heavens (Rev. 12:7)
2. Gabriel - Name: "God's mighty one" - "The man" (Dan. 9:21), "Archangel" (1 Thess. 4:16), "Angel of God" (Acts 10:3; 27:33). He explained the seventy weeks to Daniel (Dan. 9:21), predicted the birth of John the Baptist to Zacharias (Luke 1:19), the birth of Jesus to Mary (Luke 1:26), he assured Joseph concerning the purity of Mary (Matt. 1:20), warned Joseph about the plot of Herod (Matt. 2:13), told Joseph about the death of Herod (Matt. 2:19), announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds (Luke 2:9). He strengthened Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:43), rolled the stone back at Christ's resurrection (Matt. 28:2). He freed the apostles from prison (Acts 5:19), sent Philip to the desert of Gaza to meet the eunuch (Acts 8:26), instructed Cornelius to send for Peter (Acts 10:3), freed Peter from prison (Acts 12:7), executed wicked Herod for blasphemy (Acts 12:23), assured Paul on the deck of a sinking ship (Acts 27:23). He will sound the trumpet at the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:16).

3. Lucifer (Isa. 14:12) - Name, "Shining one". His two most well-known titles are the devil (Matt. 4:1) and Satan (Matt. 16:23)
4. Abaddon (Hebrew name) and Apollyon (Greek name) meaning "destroyer." See Rev. 9:11.

Three Special Groups Of Angels

1. The cherubim/cherub are referred to some 92 times in 13 biblical books (Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Hebrews)
2. The seraphim/seraph The seraphim (plural) and seraph (singular) are only described and referred to in Isaiah 6.
3. The living creatures are four special angels referred to and described in Rev. 4:6-9; 5:8; 15:7)

The Appearance Of Angels

The good angels often appeared as and were mistaken for men (Gen. 18:2, 22; 19:1, 10; Dan. 9:21; 10:18; 12:6-7; Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4; Acts 10). They appeared as glorious and shining beings (Dan. 10:10-15; Matt. 28:3; Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4; John 20:11-12; Acts 1:10; Rev. 10:1-2; 18:1), and as fiery horsemen riding chariots (2 Kings 2:11-12; 6:17; Psa. 68:17). The bad angels will appear at the fifth and sixth trumpet plagues during the Great Tribulation as cruel and hideous creatures (Rev. 9:1-19). With but one exception, angels are described in the masculine sense (Zech. 5:9, Gen. 18:2, 22; 19:1; Dan. 9:21; 10:18; 12:6-7; Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4; Acts 1:10; Psa. 89:6).

The Limitations Of Angels

They are not omnipresent (Dan. 10:10-14, Luke 1:26-27), omnipotent (John 14:6; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5, Rom. 8:38-39), nor omniscient (Matt. 24:36, 1 Peter 1:9, 12).

Satan

The devil is mentioned in seven Old Testament books – Genesis, 1 Chronicles, Job (12 times), Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. He is to be found in 19 New Testament books and is referred to by every New Testament writer. He is referred to by our Lord Jesus Christ some 15 times.

The Origin of Satan

He was created by God as the angel Lucifer, but fell from heaven due to his sin of pride (Ezek 28:12-17, Isa. 14:12-15).

The Personality of Satan

He is a real person (1 Cor. 15:39-40), possesses intelligence (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7) (Luke 22:31), possesses a will (2 Tim. 2:26), possesses emotions (1 Tim. 3:6, Rev. 12:12), is not omnipresent, is not omnipotent, is not omniscient.

The Activities of Satan

He hinders the work of God's servants (1 Thess. 2:18), resists their prayers (Dan. 10:12-13), accuses them (Rev. 12:10, Job 1:7-12; 2:3-6, Zech. 3:1), lays snares for them (1 Tim. 3:7, 2 Tim. 2:26), tempts (Eph. 6:11), afflicts (Job 2:7, 2 Cor. 12:7, Acts 10:38, 1 Cor. 5:3-5), and influences them to disobey God (1 Chron. 21:1, Matt. 16:22-23, John 13:38; 18:15-18, 25-27, Acts 5:1-11).

He blinds the unsaved to the truth (2 Cor. 4:4), steals the Word of God from their hearts (Matt. 13:3-4, 18-19), and deceives them (Matt. 24:24, 2 Cor. 11:13-15, 2 Tim. 3:13, 2 Thess. 2:9-10, 2 John 7, Rev. 13:14-15).

The Locations of Satan

In the past, he was in the heavenlies as God's choir leader (Ezek. 28:12-19; Isa. 14:12-14). Presently, he is in the

heavenlies as God's chief enemy (Job 1:6; 2:1; Zech. 3:1) and roams the earth trying to destroy people (1 Peter 5). In the future, he will be on earth during the great tribulation (Rev. 12:9-10, 12) and then chained in the bottomless pit during the Millennium (Rev. 20:1-3). He will be released and lead one last rebellion on earth following the Millennium (Rev. 20:7-8) and then be cast in the lake of fire forever (Rev. 20:10).

"We affirm that at the end of this age the unsaved will be raised and judged according to their works and separated forever from God in hell. The saved, having been raised, will live forever in heaven in fellowship with God."

- TRBC Doctrinal Statement

The Residents of Heaven

- 1. The holy and elect angels** - God, of course, knows their number, but they are presented to men as uncountable. There may be as many angels as there are stars in the heavens, for angels are often associated with the stars (Psa. 68:17, Heb. 12:22, Rev. 5:11).
- 2. The church** - (Rev. 19:1, 7-8; 21:9; 22:17)
- 3. Saved Israel** - Although the New Jerusalem is basically a wedding present from the Bridegroom (Christ) to the bride (the church), Israel nevertheless is also invited to dwell within these jasper walls (Heb. 11:16; Matt. 25:10, 23).
- 4. All the redeemed who ever lived** - (Rev. 5:9; Rev. 7:9)
- 5. The Father** - Isaiah (Isa. 6:1-3), Daniel (Dan. 7:9-10), and John (Rev. 4:2, 6) saw heaven's throne and someone seated upon it. The context of all three passages strongly indicate this figure was the Father Himself.
- 6. The Son** - (Rev. 5:6) Here we learn that not only is the Lamb of God an occupant of heaven, but the very source and strength and center of heaven, without which there could be no heaven. In the book of

Revelation, John refers to Jesus as a Lamb no less than 27 times.

- 7. The Holy Spirit** - Although the Spirit of God is not as prominent as the Father or Son, He is unquestionably an occupant of the New Jerusalem, as attested by the following passages: Rev. 14:13 and Rev. 22:17.

The Activity of Heaven

- 1. Heaven will be a place of singing**

(Psa. 100:2; Isa. 49:13; Rev. 5:9; Rev. 14:3; Rev. 15:3-4)

- 2. Heaven will be a place of fellowship**

Not only will believers enjoy blessed fellowship with other believers but, even more important, we shall know and be known by the Savior in a far more intimate way than ever possible here on earth. Note the things this Good and Great and Chief Shepherd will do for His sheep in heaven as listed by John: He will feed us that hidden heavenly manna; he will give us a new name (Rev. 2:17); lead us beside the living waters and dry all our tears (Rev. 7:17); allow us to sit with him on his throne (Rev. 3:21); array us in fine linen (Rev. 19:8); reward us (Rev. 22:12).

- 3. Heaven will be a place of serving** - While we cannot be dogmatic on the exact nature of this service, we do know from the following passage that a portion of our labor for the Lamb will be that of exercising authority and judgment over angels (Rev. 7:15; Rev. 22:3).

- 4. Heaven will be a place of learning** - It is evident, as one ponders the theology of Paul's prayer in Ephesians, that all these glorious spiritual truths cannot possibly be learned in their fullest sense by the believer down

here (1 Cor. 13:9-10; Eph. 1:15-21). These precious principles must surely find their consummation in eternity. This is also true concerning his later prayer in the same epistle (Eph. 3:14, 17-19). What will we learn about in Heaven? We will learn concerning the person of God (Rom. 11:33), the precepts of God, the Bible itself, the plan of God, and the power of God (Gen. 1:1; Psa. 19:1; Psa. 147:4; Isa. 40:26).

Questions About Heaven

1. What kind of bodies will we have?

In essence, our bodies will be like the glorified body of Jesus (Phil. 3:21) (1 Jn. 3:2). Note the features of Christ's resurrected body: It consisted of flesh and bone (Luke 24:39-40), He ate in this body, partaking of fish, honeycomb, and bread (Luke 24:41-43; John 21:12-15), and His body was not subjected to the regular laws of time and gravity (John 20:19; Luke 24:31, 36).

2. Will our bodies be recognizable?

In other words, will we know each other? In this the Scriptures answer with an emphatic yes. During His transfiguration, our Lord spoke freely with Moses and Elijah centuries after both these Old Testament heroes departed from this earth. "And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him" (Matt. 17:3). Yet they are still recognized as Moses and Elijah. In addition to this, the Apostle John, during his vision of the Revelation, sees and recognizes the differences between elders, angels, and various redeemed peoples from all the nations of the earth. Perhaps the apex of this beautiful truth is found in Paul's love chapter: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. 13:12).

3. What age will we be in heaven?

Thomas Aquinas believed (based on Ephesians 4:13)

that the human body would have the development appropriate to the age of 30, which was that of the risen Christ in his full, human maturity. Thus those who were younger and those who were older would be resurrected and transformed to look like what they were when they were 30 or what they would have looked like had they reached the age of 30. Of course this is but sheer speculation. We simply do not know, but it is not at all unreasonable to conclude whatever the age, every believer will enjoy the maximum physically, spiritually, socially, and intellectually.

4. What will our relationships be with our loved ones in heaven?

In other words, will a special rapport still exist between husband and wife, father and son, mother and daughter? Again, we are not specifically told. We do know glorified believers in heaven will not marry and raise children (Matt. 22:30). However, it would seem (at least to this author) that certain individuals in heaven will continue to be perhaps closer to me than others. Here I would refer to Sue (my wife), Matthew (my son), etc.

5. What about those who die as babies?

The vast majority of Bible students hold all infants and very young children go to heaven upon dying. Both David and Jesus definitely indicated this (2 Sam. 12:22-23; Matt. 18:2-3; Matt. 19:14).

Hell

1. Who will be in hell?

Satan (Rom. 16:20, Rev. 20:10), the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:8), the false prophet (Rev. 19:20), fallen angels (2 Peter 2:4, 1 Cor. 6:3), all unsaved people (Rev. 21:8)

2. What is a description of hell?

It is a unquenchable fire (Matt. 13:41-42; Mark 9:43), memory and remorse (Luke 16:19-31), thirst (Luke 16:24), misery and pain (Rev. 14:10-11; Matt. 13:42; 24:51), undiluted divine wrath (Rev. 14:10), originally prepared for Satan and his hosts (Matt. 25:41), created for all eternity (Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:46; Jude 7)

Why is there a hell?

God's Justice Demands a Hell. In addition to direct affirmations, Scripture offers reasons for the existence of hell. One is that justice demands the existence of hell, and God is just (Rom. 2). He is so pure and untainted that He cannot even look upon sin (Hab. 1:13). God is no respecter of persons (Rom. 2:11).

God's Love Demands a Hell. The Bible asserts that "God is love" (1 John 4:16). But love cannot act coercively, only persuasively. A God of love cannot force people to love Him. Paul spoke of things being done freely and not of compulsion (2 Cor. 9:7). Those who do not wish to be with Him must be allowed to be separated from Him. Hell allows separation from God.

Human Dignity Demands a Hell. Since God cannot force people into heaven against their free will, human free choice demands a hell (Matt. 23:37). As C.S. Lewis said, "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.'" (*Screwtape Letters*).

"We affirm that the return of Christ for all believers is imminent. It will be followed by seven years of great tribulation and then the coming of Christ to establish His earthly kingdom for a thousand years."

- TRBC Doctrinal Statement

In Light Of End Times Prophecies We Are To:

1. Attend the services of the Lord's house (Heb. 10:25).
2. Observe the Lord's Supper with the Rapture in mind (1 Cor. 11:26).
3. Love believers and all men (1 Thess. 3:12-13).
4. Be patient (James 5:8).
5. Live a separated life (1 John 3:2-3; 2:28).
6. Refrain from judging (1 Cor. 4:5).
7. Preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:1-2; 1 Pet. 5:2, 4).
8. Comfort the bereaved (1 Thess. 4:16).
9. Win souls (Jude 21-23).
10. Be concerned with heaven (Col. 3:1-4)

The Rapture of the Church

Actually, the word rapture is from *rapere*, found in the expression "caught up" in the Latin translation of 1 Thessalonians 4:17. The first mention of the Rapture (John 14:1-3). The two most important passages describing the Rapture are found in 1 Thess. 4:13-18 and 1 Cor. 15:51-53.

The Bema Judgment Seat of Christ

(Rom. 14:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7; Col.3:24-25; Heb. 10:30.) The bema was not a judicial bench where someone was condemned; it was a reward seat. The Christian life is a race, and the Divine Umpire is watching every contestant. The purpose of the bema judgment is not to determine whether a particular individual enters

heaven or not. The bema judgment is not to punish believers for sins committed either before or after their salvation (Psa. 103:10-12; Isa. 38:17; Isa. 44:22; Micah 7:19; Heb. 8:12; 1 John 1:7). Some will receive rewards. "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward" (1 Cor. 3:14).

The Great Tribulation

It is called The Day of the Lord [Isa. 2:12; 13:6, 9; Ezek. 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obad. 15; Zeph. 1:7, 14; Zech.14:1; Mal. 4:5; Acts 2:20; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Peter 3:10] and The Tribulation (Matt. 24:21, 29). A careful study of Daniel 9:24-27 reveals the time element here to be seven years. The purpose is to harvest the crop that has been sown throughout the ages by God, Satan, and mankind (Matt. 13:37-43), prove the falseness of the devil's claim, prepare a great martyred multitude for heaven (Rev. 7:9), prepare a great living multitude for the Millennium (Matt. 25:32-34), punish the Gentiles (Rom. 1:18; 2 Thess. 2:11-12; Rev. 19:15), purge Israel (Ezek. 20:37-38; Zech. 13:8-9; Mal. 3:3) and prepare the earth itself for the Millennium (See Isa. 4:5; 30:26; 40:3-5; 60:19-20).

Possible Tribulation Timeline:

1. Appearance of the Antichrist (Dan. 7:25; 11:36; 2 Thess. 2:3-4, 9; 1 John 2:22; Rev. 6:2; 13:1-2, 6)
2. Appearance of the false prophet (Rev. 13:11)
3. Formal organization of the super-harlot church
4. Revival of the old Roman Empire (Dan. 2:41; 7:7-8; Rev. 13:1; 17:12)
5. Antichrist's seven-year covenant with Israel (Isa. 28:18; Dan. 9:27)
6. Mass return of the Jews to the land of Israel (Ezek. 37:1-14; 34:11-13; 36:24; Isa. 43:5-6)
7. Ministry of two special witnesses (Rev. 11:3-6)
8. Conversion and call of the 144,000 (Rev. 7:1-8)

9. Rebuilding of the Jewish temple (2 Thess. 2:3-4; Rev. 11:1; 13)
10. Pouring out of the first six seal judgments (Matt. 24:4-8; Rev. 6:1-17)
11. Gog and Magog invasion into Palestine (Ezek. 38-39)
12. Ministry of the two witnesses (Rev. 11:7-13)
13. Victory song of the 144,000 (Rev. 14:1-5)
14. Casting out of heaven's monster, Satan (Rev. 12:3-15)
15. Destruction of the false church (Rev. 17:17-18)
16. Full manifestation of the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:3-4, 9)
17. Worldwide persecution of Israel (Rev. 12:1)
18. Pouring out of the last seal judgment (Rev. 8-9; 11:15-19)
19. Sights and sounds of the temple in heaven (Rev. 15:1-8)
20. Pouring out of the seven bowl or vial judgments (Rev. 16)
21. Sudden destruction of economic and political Babylon (Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 18:2)

The Battle of Armageddon (Joel 3:2, 9-16; Rev. 14:14-20; 16:16; 19:11-16)

The Second Coming of Christ (Jude 14)

It begins with fearful manifestations in the skies (Matt. 24:29; Luke 21:25-26). In the midst of this, the heavens open and Jesus comes forth (Matt. 24:30; 2 Thess. 1:7; Rev. 1:7; Rev. 19:11). The returning Savior touches down upon the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4, 8). After touching down on the Mount of Olives, Christ proceeds to Petra and Bozrah (Isa. 34:6; 63:1). He comes to:

1. Defeat the Antichrist and the world's nations assembled at Armageddon
2. Regather, regenerate, and restore faithful Israel (Isa. 43:5-6; Matt. 24:31)
3. Judge and punish faithless Israel (Rom. 9:6; 11:26)
4. Separate the Gentile sheep from the goats (Matt. 25:32-33)
5. Bind Satan (Rom. 16:2; Rev. 20:1-3)
6. Resurrect Old Testament and tribulational saints (See

Psa. 49:15; Isa. 25:8; 26:19; Dan. 12:2; Hos. 13:14; John 5:28-29; Heb. 11:35; Rev. 20:4-5.)

7. Judge fallen angels (1 Cor. 6:3)

The Glorious Millennium

The word millennium itself is a Latin term that signifies "one thousand years" (Rev. 20:4). Premillennialism view teaches that Christ will return just prior to the Millennium. The wedding at the beginning of the Millennium (Rev. 19:7-9). The Millennium is to reward the saints of God (Psa. 58:11; Prov. 11:18; Isa. 40:10; Matt. 5:12; 16:27; 25:34; Col. 3:24; Rev. 22:12), answer the oft-prayed model prayer - "Thy kingdom come" (Matt. 6:9-13), redeem creation (Rom. 8:19-22, TLB), and fulfill the main burden of biblical prophecy (1 Pet. 1:11).

The Lord Jesus Christ will of course be King supreme, but there are passages that suggest He will graciously choose to rule through a vice-regent, and that vice-regent will be David. Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 34:23. (See also Ezek. 37:24; Hos. 3:5.). Jerusalem will become the worship center of the world (Mic. 4:1; Isa. 2:2-3). It will occupy an elevated site (Zech. 14:10) and be six miles in circumference (Ezek. 48:35). It will be named "Jehovah-Shammah," meaning "the Lord is there" (Ezek. 48:35), and "Jehovah Tsidkenu," meaning, "the Lord our righteousness" (Jer. 23:6; 33:16). The Temple will be the center of worship (Isa. 2:3; 60:13; Ezek. 40-48; Dan. 9:24; Joel 3:18; Hag. 2:7, 9)

Satan's Final Revolt (Rev. 20:7-9)

The Great White Throne Judgment

(Heb. 9:27; Rev. 20:11-15; Dan. 7:9-10)

1. The Judge of this throne, Christ Himself (John 5:22, 27; Acts 10:40, 42; 2 Tim. 4:1)
2. The judged at this throne (Psa. 9:17)
3. The judgment at this throne—the eternal lake of fire (Rev. 20:14-15; Matt. 25:41, 46)

The Destruction of this Present Earth and Heaven (Matt. 24:35; Heb. 1:10-12; 2 Pet. 3:10, 12)

The Creation of the New Earth and Heaven (Isa. 65:17; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21:1)

[PART 3]

Excerpts from the Original
How to Get Started Right

By Dr. Jerry Falwell



LIVING BY FAITH

Faith is making real what cannot be seen or sensed with human faculties. Living by faith will take your life out of the natural and into the supernatural.

Faith is standing on God's integrity and acting on His promises. It involves believing God's Word above all human doubt, criticism, or speculation. The Christian life must be lived one step at a time. We must learn to trust our heavenly Father every step of the way. Living by faith is the most exciting life anyone could ever know.

God is looking for champions who will run ahead of the crowd, who will not be embarrassed if they falter, but who will keep on running no matter what. If you are going to run the race of life for God and make a mark on this generation, you must be willing to live by faith to the glory of God.

Saving faith brings us into the family of God and sustaining faith keeps us there for the rest of our lives. Faith is not something we simply exercise at salvation and forget about. It is a lifelong process of spiritual growth. Faith is taking God at His Word no matter how bleak the circumstances appear to be. It is believing in His love and His character more than in human reason.

Biblically speaking, faith is the same as believing. The Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). According to the Amplified Bible, believe means to "trust, rely on, cling to, or give yourself to God." The act of faith is believing. The object of

our faith is Jesus Christ.

The nature of faith. True faith is the expression of belief in someone or something. Biblical faith involves belief in the death of Christ as a sufficient atonement for our sins. When we say that we believe in Christ, we are claiming more than mere belief in His existence. We believe that His sacrifice on the cross was a sufficient payment for our sins.

Christ is the object of our faith. The risen, living Christ is the continual object of the believer's faith. He is a living Saviour, not merely a creed of belief. Thus, our relationship with Him is a personal one actualized by faith in Him.

The Holy Spirit is the agent of our faith. He acts on behalf of Christ to plant faith in our hearts. The Spirit initiates the faith process by convicting us of our sins (see John 16:8). He draws us to the Saviour and regenerates the unbelieving heart. The Bible declares that no man recognizes Jesus as the Christ without the Holy Spirit (see 1 John 4:2).

The Bible is the instrument of our faith. The apostle Paul said, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). The Holy Spirit uses the Bible to convict us of sin and bring us to faith in Christ. Jesus described the Word of God as a "seed" (Luke 8:11) that germinates into faith in the human heart. We are born again by "the word of truth" (James 1:18), which the apostle Peter described as "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God" (1 Peter 1:23).

The evidence of faith. The apostle urged his readers to show their faith by their works (James 2:18). He did not mean that we are saved by works. He meant that an

empty profession of faith cannot save anyone. Real faith will express itself in works of righteousness. James boldly declared, "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:26).

Genuine faith will show itself in evidences of faith. The writer of Hebrews emphasized this throughout the 11th chapter of his epistle. He refers to Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Rahab. Faith is described in Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Notice that faith is not a blind leap into the dark. It is substance and evidence. You can depend on it. And you can build your life on it.

Notice what can be done by faith. Noah built an ark by faith. Abraham moved his family by faith. Jacob blessed his children by faith. Moses forsook Egypt by faith. Kingdoms were subdued, promises were obtained, and armies were put to flight—all by faith!

Living by faith. Jesus told His disciples that they could move mountains by faith (see Matthew 17:20). When they said, "Lord, increase our faith," He told them that if they had "faith as a grain of mustard seed," they could uproot trees and change the course of history (see Luke 17:5-6). Our Lord was trying to teach His disciples that they did not need more faith, but that they needed to exercise the faith they already had. Then it would grow.

Living by faith is what the Christian life is all about. But faith that moved mountains does not come overnight. It involves learning to trust God for greater things. The apostle Paul reminds us, "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Living by faith means to develop a confident expectation

in God. Jesus said, "Ask and it shall be given you" (Matthew 7:7). He also promised, "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (John 14:14). These are promises upon which we can build a life of faith. James also tells us to "ask in faith" (James 1:6).

The greatest experiences of my Christian life have come because I was willing to live by faith. Building one of the world's largest churches and a Christian university, second to none, did not just happen. I had to believe God for the impossible. Time and time again, people would tell me that my goals were unrealistic and certainly unobtainable. But I never listened to them. Instead, I determined to believe God and live by faith.

You too can experience a life of faith. Stop saying, "I can't." Start believing that God can! Stop doubting and start trusting. Put your faith into action. There is so much you can do for the cause of Christ if you will only do it. If others try to hold you back, go it alone. If God is leading you, that will soon become evident to others and they will follow your leadership.



HOW TO PRAY WITH POWER

Nothing of eternal importance is every accomplished apart from prayer. It is the divine prerequisite to spiritual power in our daily lives.

Prayer is communion with God. John Calvin called it “the soul of faith.” It is the verbalization of our faith in God. The writer of Hebrews explains, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). If we are to learn to pray, we must learn to have faith in God, to whom we are praying. If He really exists, we can have absolutely confidence that He hears us and that He will answer us. God said, “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not” (Jeremiah 33:3).

Promises of Prayer. The Bible has much to say about the promises of God to those who pray. Jesus encouraged His disciples to pray when He said, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matthew 7:7). He indicated that prayer involves asking and receiving specific answers from God. It also involves discipline and persistence. We must ask in faith initially and then keep on asking.

Our Lord also said, “All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matthew 21:22). He undoubtedly meant that prayer is the vocalization of our faith. When we pray and believe, we will see God at work in our lives. Look at the incredible answers to prayer

recorded in the Bible. Prayer opened the Red Sea, brought water from a rock, and brought bread from heaven. Prayer made the sun stand still, and it brought fire from the sky to consume Elijah's sacrifice.

Prayer is essential if we are to grow in our walk with God. It draws us to the throne of His grace and into the presence of His holiness. Prayer makes us conscious of the God we know, love, and serve. It increases our zeal to be like Him, and it brings a fresh outpouring of the filling of the Holy Spirit upon our souls, enabling us to live the Christian life. With much prayer, there is much power; with little prayer, little power.

Power of Prayer. The power of prayer is directly related to the power of God Himself. Jesus said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13). Upon this promise, Christians pray in the name of Jesus. But simply mentioning His name will not in itself empower our prayers. In ancient times, one's name was a reflection of his person and character. Jesus was telling His disciples that they could pray with confidence in His power to intercede in their behalf.

Because of the intercessory High Priesthood of Christ, we are called to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15). He stands as a compassionate advocate ready to forgive our sins and meet our needs.

Jesus alone is qualified to serve as our High Priest, because He is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26). As such, He is greater than the Old Testament priest who had to make offerings for his own sins as well as for

the sins of the people. Further, He is greater because He is the sacrificial Lamb offered for our sins. Christ is both our High Priest and our Lamb of sacrifice. No wonder, then, that we can pray in His name, believing that He will answer us.

Principles of prayer. When our Lord taught His disciples to pray, He taught them the basic principles of prayer. These are found in Matthew 6:5-15. He taught them to pray: privately, sincerely, faithfully, and specifically.

Privately: Jesus told His disciples to pray in secret. He did not mean that public prayer was wrong. Rather, He was emphasizing that genuine prayer is private and personal. He urged His followers not to pray merely to be seen of men. What we are on our knees before God in private, we eventually become in our public lives as well.

Sincerely: Prayer should be the spontaneous result of our sincere communication with God. Jesus said, "Use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do" (Matthew 6:7). Merely repeating a prayer (even the "Lord's Prayer") is a meaningless and fruitless exercise.

Faithfully: Since our heavenly Father "knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him" (Matthew 6:8), we must simply ask in faith with the confidence that God will answer us.

Specifically: The body of what has been called the "Lord's Prayer" (perhaps better, the "Disciples' Prayer") presents a specific pattern of prayer.

1. Appellation: "Our Father which art in heaven"
2. Adoration: "Hallowed be thy name"
3. Expectation: "Thy kingdom come"
4. Submission: "Thy will be done"

5. Petition: "Give us this day our daily bread"
6. Confession: "Forgive us our debts"
7. Request: "Lead us not into temptation"
8. Praise: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."

In this pattern Jesus reveals the many elements and facets of prayer, while giving this eloquent masterpiece of spiritual communication in the most simple and basic language imaginable. Prayer has always occupied an important place in Christianity. But why more professing Christians do not pray or do not get their prayers answered is a great mystery.



HOW TO OVERCOME FAILURE

Failure is not the end. The longer you live, the more you will have to deal with failure. When you do fail, don't give up.

The key to overcoming failure is to recognize that it can be beneficial. God wants us to learn from our failures. He especially wants us to learn not to make the same mistake again. We need to face our weaknesses and accept personal responsibility for our actions. You cannot correct a problem you are not willing to face. But, by the grace of God. You can turn your failure into victory.

Accept the reality of failure. All human beings fail. God is fully aware of your limitations. The Scripture says, "For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14). God knows our limitations, and we must accept them as well. True success is not avoiding failure, but learning what do with it.

It is better to attempt things and fail, than never to attempt anything because you are afraid to fail.

Overcome the fear of failure. Fear is more damaging than failure. Worrying about what might go wrong will prevent you from moving ahead. The Bible says, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

Fear and anxiety can paralyze your creativity and generate a confusing inner conflict. The Bible clearly teaches that we are not to worry about the problems of life. In Philippians 4:6, the apostle Paul warned, "Be careful for

nothing," meaning do not be full of care or worry. Rather, he urged his readers to pray about everything. In other words, he was saying that we should stop worrying and start praying.

Overcome the fact of failure. Many people never overcome their failures because they never forgive themselves for failing. Instead of moving beyond failure to success, they continue to punish themselves with self-inflicted guilt. If you have failed, admit it and start over. Confession is the key to shaking off the past. The Bible says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whosoever confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

To fail is not to be a failure. Everyone fails sooner or later. The key to success is determining how you will handle your failure. If you try to hide it, it will haunt you. If you confess it, you can conquer it. Forgive yourself and accept God's forgiveness as a genuine expression of His grace.

Starting over. God is willing to forgive you, and He wants to give you a new beginning.

Starting over is never easy, but it is better than giving up. Once you have fallen down in the race of life, you really have only two choices—give up, or get up. You either lie on the ground in self-pity and self-condemnation, or you get up by faith and start again. The choice is yours.

Some people think that a bird with a broken wing will never fly as high again. I don't believe that and neither does God. Look at Peter. He was a believer, yet he denied that he ever knew the Lord. After His repentance and restoration, he was more effective in serving Christ than ever. John Mark is another example. He gave up and

turned back on the first missionary journey with Paul and Barnabas. Paul was so upset with him that he refused to take him on another venture. In time, Mark proved to be such a faithful servant of Christ that Paul sent for him while he was in his last days in prison in Rome (see 2 Timothy 4:11).

No matter what has gone wrong in your life, God can make you over to His glory. He can and will conform you to the image of Jesus Christ one way or another. As He does, follow this advice.

Don't make excuses. Stop trying to excuse your mistakes. Don't blame your failure on others. They may have contributed to it, but in the final analysis, it was our decision. You did it, and you are responsible for the consequences. What's done is done. It cannot be undone, but it can be redone with God's help.

Re-evaluate your priorities. What was missing in your life that led to your failure? This is a good time to ask yourself some hard questions regarding what your life is all about. Too often we get our priorities out of order. If you really want to get started right this time, establish the right priorities in your life. Put your relationship to God first, your family second, and everything else after that.

Establishing priorities is like setting guidelines for life. Before you can set any personal goals, you need to know your limits and the order of your priorities. For example, no matter how important your personal ministry, it should not hinder your meeting your family's needs. Your wife or husband comes first, then the children. Don't let other people and things crowd them out of your life.

Re-establish new goals. Once you determine your priorities, begin to set new goals for the future. Don't get bogged down with the past. Sometimes it is best to make a clean break and move on to something new. Follow the guidelines of Scripture and the advice of mature Christian friends. Don't try to prove you have overcome your past by doing anything foolish or hasty. Let me recommend several important steps in re-establishing future goals:

Honor God: Make sure that whatever you do honors God, not yourself.

Seek His will: God's will is revealed in His Word and is always consistent with His Word.

Be patient: Remember, patience is one of the greatest virtues listed in Scripture. Don't try to run ahead of God's timetable.

Build on a solid foundation: The Bible reminds us that wood, hay, and stubble are an inadequate foundation compared to one of gold, silver, and precious stones. The former represent feeble human effort compared to the solid things of God.

Whatever the future holds, remember that God holds the future. Where He guides, He provides. Trust Him every step of the way. When you are walking in the center of His will, He will meet your needs. If you are unsure of the future, ask Him to open doors and close the wrong ones. Then trust Him to do just that.



HOW TO FORGIVE THOSE WHO HURT YOU

You will never learn to love people the way Christ loves them, until you learn to forgive them the way He forgives them.

The Importance of Forgiveness

Jesus spoke about forgiveness as much as any topic He ever addressed. Understanding human nature as He did, our Lord knew the importance of dealing with this vital topic. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made several references to the principle of forgiveness. Discussing the command not to kill, our Lord said, "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment (Matthew 5:22).

Our Lord emphasized the importance of forgiveness by stating that it was more important than giving (see Matthew 5:23-26). He commanded His disciples to leave their gifts at the altar and "first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:24).

Reconciliation is bringing together in peace those who were at enmity against each other. It is the resolution of bitterness and conflict that paves the way for peace and friendship, the vital link to Christian love and unity. Reconciliation cannot be replaced with other virtues. Forgiveness and reconciliation are the supreme and undeniable evidences of true Christianity.

Jesus went as far as to tell us, "Love your enemies." He even told us how to love them. First He said, "Bless them that curse you." He added, "Do good to them that

hate you." Then He concluded, "Pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). Notice these three aspects of love: bless them, do good to them, pray for them.

Only when we have done all these things can we truly know how to love our enemies. The more we love them in this manner, the more likely we are to be reconciled to them.

The Process of Forgiveness

In explaining the necessity of forgiveness to His disciples, our Lord Jesus gave them step-by-step process for resolving personal conflicts within the family of God. Having pronounced a "woe" on the world because of personal offenses, He observed, "it must needs be that offenses come" (Matthew 18:7). Recognizing the reality of offenses, our Lord gave both a warning against them and a process for resolving them.

Personal forgiveness. Christ told His followers that if a fellow believer offends, we are to go to him personally and privately to resolve the offense. Jesus said, "Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother" (Matthew 18:15). This approach is to be honest, sincere, and straight-forward. Instead of harboring bitterness, or spreading gossip, the offended believer is to confront the offender directly. Ideally, this should resolve the majority of personal conflicts among believers.

Plural forgiveness. If the offending brother or sister refuses to respond to the personal rebuke, our Lord commanded, "Take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witness every word may be established" (Matthew 18:16). By this process the two witnesses are to confirm the nature of the conflict, whether or not the offender has

truly offended, and whether or not he is willing to repent and seek reconciliation. By this method, the two personal in conflict are not left in an irreconcilable standoff. If the offender responds to the plural confrontation, reconciliation and restitution are to be granted.

Public forgiveness. Only after the first two steps have failed, is the offender to be publicly confronted by the church. Even at this point, the goal of such discipline is to reconcile and restore those who repent. If they refuse to do so, however, our Lord added, "But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (Matthew 18:17). By this, Christ meant that the unrepentant were to be excommunicated from the church. Even then, we must remember that such drastic action was for the purpose of confronting the offender and urging his repentance and restoration to the fellowship of the church.

The Progression of Forgiveness

In a parallel passage in Luke 17, our Lord further explained the process of forgiveness by stating, "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him" (Luke 17:3). Notice the two key elements stated here—rebuke and forgive.

Remember, a rebuke is simply a statement of honesty. It does not have to be given with severity or hostility. When someone offends us, we have an obligation to rebuke him, and not to gossip about him. If he responds to the rebuke, we are also obligated to forgive him. Jesus said, "If he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, 'I repent;' thou shalt forgive him (Luke 17:4). No wonder the apostles responded, "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke 17:5).

Having heard this previous instruction, Peter asked the Lord in Matthew 18:21, "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?" Thinking this to be the appropriate response, Peter was shocked when Jesus said, "I say not unto thee, until seven times; but, until seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22). By this statement, our Lord was clarifying His original point. Forgiveness is to be a lifetime process, not a limited proposition.

Barriers to Forgiveness

Those who do not forgive, hide behind barriers built with excuses. Stop excusing and start forgiving.

"But you don't understand what he did to me! I just can't forgive him. It wouldn't be right." Over the years, I have heard just about every excuse there is for not forgiving. People always present them as reasons or explanations, but they are really just excuses.

The ultimate excuse is, "I can't forgive," which really means, "I won't forgive." You can do anything that is right, God always empowers us to do right. His grace is always sufficient, no matter how difficult the task. When we forgive we confirm what Christ did for us on the Cross when He died for our sins so that we might be forgiven.

Anger. Some people will not forgive because they are too angry. Angry people have no patience. They are often cruel and self-seeking. They thrive on envy and are easily provoked out of control. *Anger says, "I can't forget the offense, and I want to get even."*

Pride. Another barrier to forgiveness is pride. Some people are too proud to admit they have failed or that they have wronged someone else. They often say something like, "Me, ask his forgiveness? He should ask mine!" *Pride says,*

"I was right and he was wrong. I don't have to forgive him."

Fear. Some people are afraid to forgive because they fear they will be hurt again. "Why should I forgive her? She will only hurt me again," they often say. They are afraid to take a chance on forgiveness. *Fear says, "I will only get hurt again."*

Jealousy. Jealous people usually refuse to forgive because they rationalize that somehow they are letting the other person "off the hook." In reality, their jealousy is a form of selfishness and revenge. *Jealousy says, "I can't let him get away with this."*

Emotion. Many people never learn to forgive because they simply do not feel like it. Their decisions are based on their emotions and not on principles. They do only what they feel like doing. *Emotion says, "I don't feel like forgiving."*

Worry. Some people are afraid to ask forgiveness or to grant forgiveness because they are afraid they will be misunderstood. "If I ask him to forgive me, he will think he was right and I was wrong." *Worry says, "What if he doesn't understand?"*

Guilt. Some cannot forgive others because they cannot forgive themselves. In reality, they will not forgive themselves. They tend toward self-condemnation and self-punishment instead of accepting God's forgiveness. *Guilt says, "I cannot even forgive myself, let alone you."*

There is an even greater barrier to forgiveness than any of these. It is self-righteousness. Self-righteous people, like the elderly brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son (see Luke 15:11-32), take the attitude that the offender does not deserve to be forgiven. "you did it, and you are going to pay for it," is their attitude.

Most unforgiving people are like the Prodigal's elder brother. They won't forgive simply because they don't want to forgive. Marriages end in divorce because people won't forgive. Friends become enemies because they won't forgive. Churches often split because people will not forgive.

Forgiveness is the most essential ingredient in human relationships. It resolves conflict, removes bitterness, restores fellowship, and rebuilds broken relationships. Without it, those who are at enmity can never be truly reconciled. With it, the worst of enemies can become the best of friends.

The Scripture clearly teaches that wrong attitudes grieve the Holy Spirit and hamper the work of God in our lives. The apostle Paul wrote, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice" (Ephesians 4:31). Notice that there is a chain reaction of evil in this passage. An unforgiving spirit is caused by bitterness and is further deepened by each wrong response: bitterness—wrath—anger—clamor—evil speaking—malice—UNFORGIVENESS.

The solution to this response of bitterness is stated in the next verse. "And be ye kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32). Notice the proper responses toward those who wrong us: kindness—tenderheartedness—FORGIVENESS.

Our responsibility is to always forgive those who confess their sins, repent, and seek our forgiveness. God never tells us to take an "I'll-wait-and-see" approach. When others repent and seek our forgiveness, we are to grant it just as God granted us forgiveness when we sought Him. We need to learn to put away every wrong attitude that

stems from bitterness, knowing that the chain reaction of bitterness eventually leads to open and public conflict, which hurts others and damages the cause of Christ.

Learn to forgive others as completely and totally as God has forgiven you. Then the powerful principles of forgiveness will unlock your embittered spirit and set the power of God free within your soul. It will make you kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving—just like Jesus Christ!

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