

Starting Off On The Right Foot

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INTRODUCTION

There is an excitement when it comes to those that have just placed their faith in Jesus. It can be energizing to those who have walked for miles on this journey to have new faith partners. It is also one of the most beneficial things for a new believer to come under the guidance of those that have been following Jesus for some time.

The purpose of this book is not to provide an exhaustive resource on Christian theology. It is my desire that this book be a primer for those seeking to make a lasting profession of faith in Christ. For many Christians accepting Christ is stepping into a foreign land of teachings and practices. This frightens so many people away and for those that do not receive good directions can be overtaken by bad teachings and misguided thoughts.

I pray that as you are starting a new life with Christ that you start off on the right foot and that a strong Biblical foundation and disciplined faith is laid out for you on your spiritual journey with God. The doctrines of the Bible and the practices of our faith are not just another way of doing things in life. They are the teachings of Jesus; the way, the truth, and

the life. If we are to be true followers of Jesus, we must make any and every effort to start strong.

Wherever you are spiritually, it is always a good idea to check and recheck the foundation upon which your faith rests. Theology can involve a lot of hard thinking but in our foundation, it is important to keep things simple. It is simple and childlike faith that pleases God. Discipline can seem a lot like work but as we grow into it we establish patterns of a Godly lifestyle. That is why it is so important to start off on the right foot.

2nd Edition Updates

There are grammatical and other technical updates in this second edition. However, the largest updates come in deeper dives into some of the sections along with discussion questions at the end of each subsection. Finally, there is an effort to simplify the concepts by provide illustrations and charts. These visual additions should help to provide a clear understanding of theology and acts of devotion.

BASIC CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

For almost 2,000 years, followers of Christ have been leading others to Faith in Jesus Christ. During that time many practices and opinions have risen and changed. Many false doctrines (teachings) have tried to wander into Christianity and attack it at its core. Faithful men and women throughout the centuries fought for the Biblical truth to remain intact.

The first section of this book lays down a basic pattern for understanding the Christian faith. Learning and growing in the faith never ends but continually expands. It is vital to bolster our faith with a solid foundation. In this book, four essential areas are examined to lay this foundation. These doctrines are about God, Jesus Christ, and salvation.

Within these critical areas, we will come across several other teachings that find themselves contained in the central doctrines. This basic introduction to Christian **Doctrine** is vital to starting out on the right foot. We must affirm what we believe if we are to move forward. The term doctrine means “teaching.” The focus of doctrine is its content.

It may not seem like a big deal, but Biblical doctrine seeks theological precision. False teaching can arise from the smallest drift away from just a single word. At times, the terminology is used by different groups but, the meanings do vary. For example, Christians, Roman Catholics, and Mormons both use the phrase “born again.” However, for Christians, to be born again means that the spirit of the believer has been brought to life through faith in Jesus Christ. The Catholic means that they have been baptized. Whereas, the Mormon is speaking to a moment of conversion. Being born again for the Christian speaks about an actual transformation in nature. The other two talks about a change of mental perspective and observance of a ritual.

The question that we must answer as new believers follow this idea: how do I know what is right doctrine and what is false doctrine? To answer that question, I purpose a four-step litmus test. Again, these four key areas will help a person understand whether the beliefs of another individual or group are Christian.

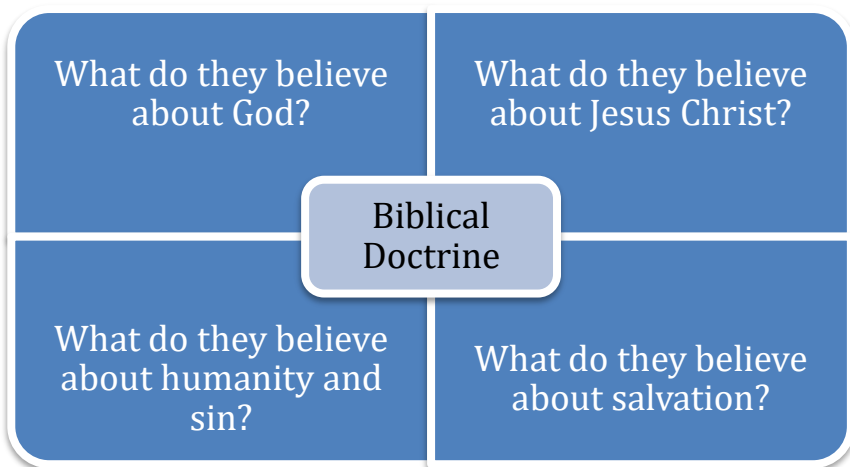


FIGURE 1: A LITMUS TEST FOR FAITH.

If there is any departure from the Biblical truth, then something is plainly not Christian. The remainder of this first section explores the basic Christian faith based on Christian Scripture. Make sure to prayerfully think through the follow-up questions at the end of section as you endeavor to internalize the basic concepts of the Christian faith.

What do you think about God? It is a critical question for every person to consider. There are too many Christians and non-Christians that have little to no knowledge of what Scripture says about God. Some may reply, “I believe what my Church believes,” even when they do not know what their church believes. Other well-meaning individuals may state, “It is not important what I believe about God but just that I believe in Him.” The challenge for believers is to know God more deeply so they can make Him known to others.

We can learn through the faithful preaching and teaching in the church what the scriptures teach about God. However, everyone should seek to understand them each day of the week. It seems that much of what a person believes influences the accompany behaviors. If a person does not search out the scriptures to understand God and is content to only believe in some supernatural being, then they are more open to receive false teaching. For instance, if they believe that God is a part of everything (called **pantheism**), they might not have a problem with self being God, another person, or thing. To faithfully align our patterns of thinking and

doing requires consistent and frequent journeys into God's Word.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Genesis 1:1 of the Bible states in the first four words, *"In the beginning God."* At the very beginning of time, God was already there. There is no argument for the existence of God here. Instead, it is stated as a fact. In the beginning, God already was. There is not a point in eternity when God was not in existence. The Lord has always existed in the eternal now. The beginning of anything starts with God. He is before it all. We are told in Psalm 90:2 that God has no beginning and no end:

"BEFORE THE MOUNTAINS WERE
BROUGHT FORTH, OR EVER THOU
HADST FORMED THE EARTH AND THE
WORLD, EVEN FROM EVERLASTING
TO EVERLASTING, THOU ART GOD."

We can know about God because He has disclosed Himself to us. God is revealed in two very significant ways. The first avenue is called the **general revelation** or natural revelation. Revelation mean to unveil something once hidden. He has shown His existence through creation, the very

things that we can see, feel, taste, smell, and touch. Scripture declares “*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork*” (Psalm 19:1). This means that all of mankind has seen and felt the existence of God. Individuals are without an excuse for unbelief:

“FOR THE INVISIBLE THINGS OF HIM
FROM THE CREATION OF THE WORLD
ARE CLEARLY SEEN, BEING
UNDERSTOOD BY THE THINGS THAT
ARE MADE, EVEN HIS ETERNAL
POWER AND GODHEAD; SO THAT
THEY ARE WITH EXCUSE.” ROMANS
1:20

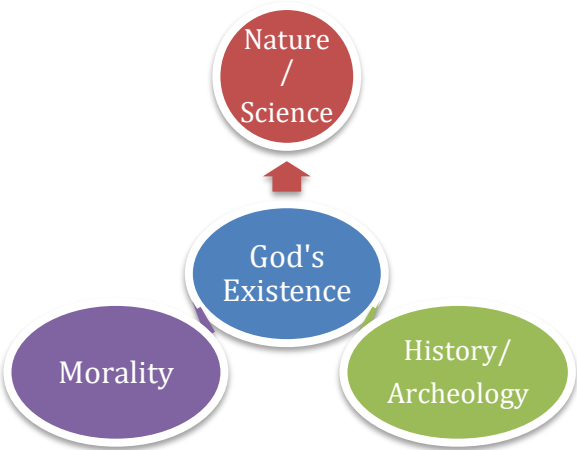


FIGURE 2: GOD'S EXISTENCE THROUGH GENERAL REVELATION.

Faith and reason are not in conflict with one another. In fact, science confirms the faith in God. It is not science that contradicts faith but a specific philosophy of science that is biased against the supernatural. Through reason, it is easy to know that God exists through natural reality, linear history, and the existence of an objective morality (or natural law). For these things to exist, there must be a constant force behind them to not only create but also to sustain.

The second way that God reveals Himself is called **special revelation**. God shows himself to us through the scripture. This self-disclosure happened in real time, at real places, to real people. It is through these unique revelations of God that we received the Word of God as individuals wrote down what God told them. If we believe that God is as powerful and capable as Scripture claims, it only seems obvious that God could give us the specific knowledge He wants us to know about Him.

“ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY
INSPIRATION OF GOD, AND IS
PROFITABLE FOR DOCTRINE, FOR
REPROOF, FOR CORRECTION, FOR
INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS:
THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE

PERFECT, THOROUGHLY FURNISHED
UNTO ALL GOOD WORKS” (2
TIMOTHY 3:16-17).

It is essential to understand that the Bible is unlike any other book. Although it is written with human elements such as genre and the mechanics of language, it remains distinct. Its **inspiration** is different from a musician composing a song, and artist creating, or an author writing a book. The word for inspiration translates into, “God-breathed.” We infer that God divinely wrote the Holy Scriptures.

God worked through people. It did not take human imagination or ingenuity to make-up Scripture. Instead, the Spirit of God moved upon the hearts and minds of individuals and compelled them to speak and write. Persons like Moses, David, Matthew, and Paul did not write under the spirit as though they were robots. God used those men’s’ personalities, backgrounds, and culture to write God’s Word:

“FOR THE PROPHECY CAME NOT IN
OLD TIME BY THE WILL OF MAN: BUT
HOLY MEN OF GOD SPAKE AS THEY
WERE MOVED BY THE HOLY GHOST.”
2 PETER 1:21

God guided each word to clearly communicate the message He intended us to receive. God did not merely give ideas and say, “Run with it, and I’ll tell you if I like what you wrote.” Samuel said, *“The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word, was in my tongue”* (2 Samuel 23:2). God divinely inspired His Word to flow through these godly individuals. For example, the same musician can play different instruments. It is the same musician playing on different instruments giving differing sounds.

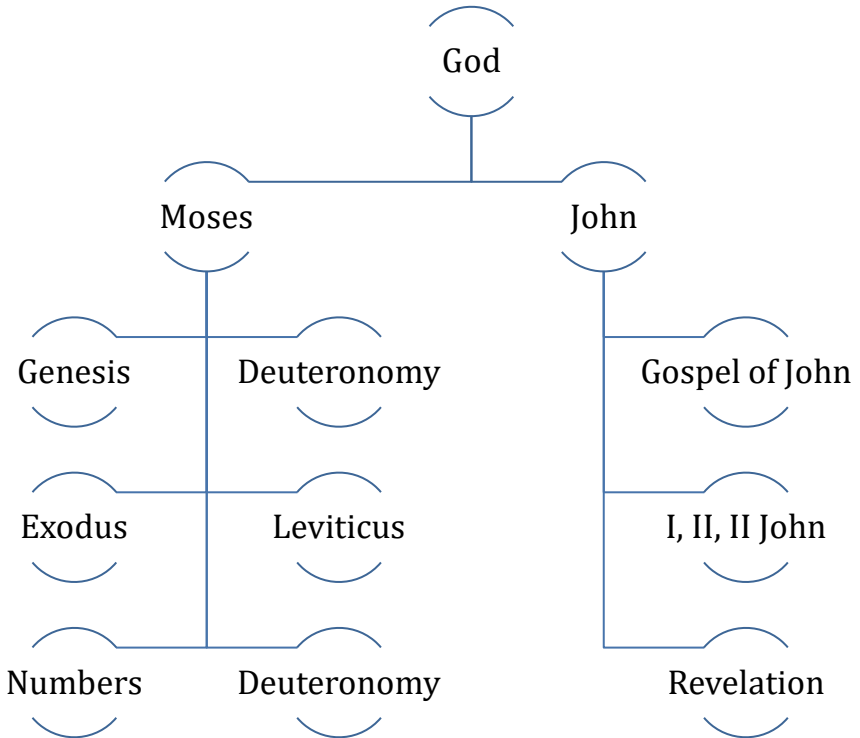


FIGURE 3: EXAMPLE OF GOD USING ONE AUTHOR FOR MULTIPLE BOOKS.

This is God's band. Some of these writers were leaders, musicians, teachers and some were preachers. So, Paul could be the cymbals, Moses a snare drum, and David as a harp. When reading the whole Bible, the reader will feel as though they were sitting watching God's band, His orchestra. Scripture speaks to many areas of life because of this wide range of writers and writing techniques. Hence, the whole Bible is essential in making a person whole.

God used forty writers over time spanning 1,500 years to write down His Words. There are sixty-six books that do not merely contain the Word of God but are the Word of God. The Old Testament contains thirty-nine books divided into five sections; The Law, which also called the Torah or Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy), History (Joshua-Esther), Wisdom (Job-Song of Solomon), the major prophets (Isaiah-Daniel), and the minor prophets (Hosea-Malachi). The New Testament is made up of twenty-seven books also divided into five sections; gospel (Matthew-John), history (Acts), Pauline epistles (Romans-Hebrews), General Epistles (James-Jude), and Prophecy (Revelation). These sixty-six books make up the Holy Bible, the Word of God.

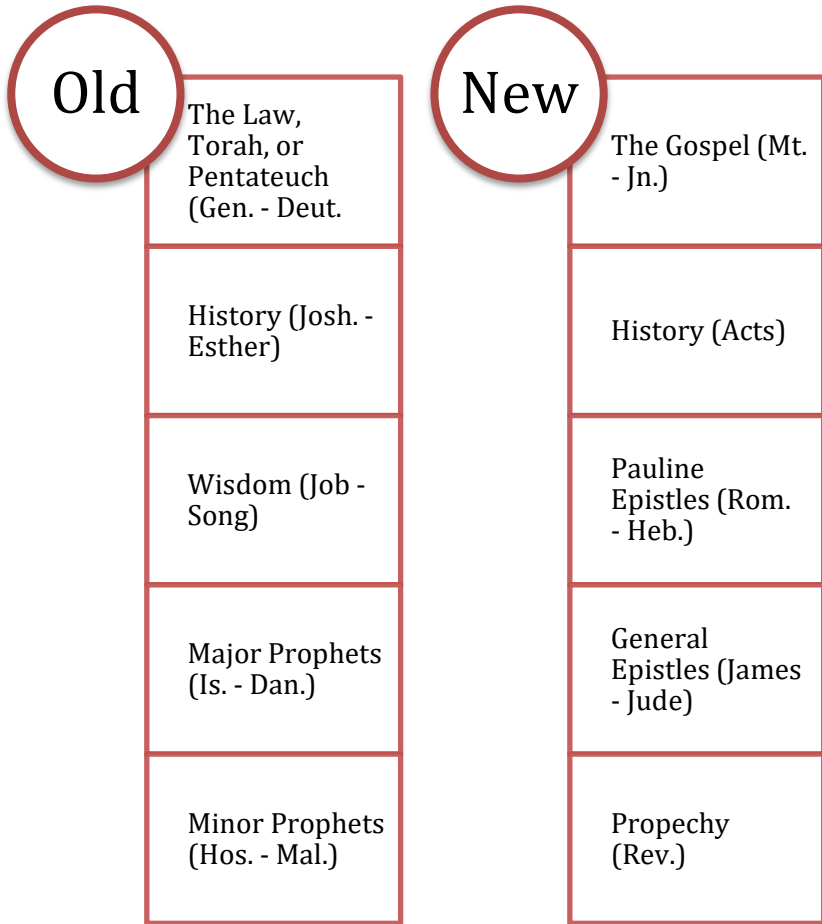


FIGURE 4: OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT DIVISIONS

One of the most amazing truths about these individuals is God guided their vision to things they things they had not seen or could experience. Moses did not see the creation of the world but gave a vivid description of it through the eyes of God. John

wrote about a culture and a time that was distant from His own when God gave him the vision in the book of Revelation. Daniel admitted he did not understand what he heard:

“AND I HEARD, BUT I UNDERSTOOD
NOT: THEN SAID I, O MY LORD,
WHAT SHALL BE THE END OF THESE
THINGS? AND HE SAID, GO THY
WAY, DANIEL: FOR THE WORDS ARE
CLOSED UP AND SEALED TILL THE
TIME OF THE END” DANIEL 12: 8-9

Another confirmation of the Bible’s authenticity is God had people to write about things that human nature would typically ignore. Its focus is on man as a sinner, Moses’ anger, David’s adultery and Peter’s denial. The approach of Scripture to not hide the embarrassing points of key figures may seem self-defeating. However, it instead adds to the ability of the Bible to call out sin and not excuse any single individual from sinful influence. Romans 3:23 summarizes the Biblical perspective that *“all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”*

With the Bible being divinely breathed out, it is understood to be more than just a collection of events in history, it is alive:

“FOR THE WORD OF GOD IS QUICK,
AND POWERFUL, AND SHARPER
THAN ANY TWO EDGED SWORD,
PIERCING EVEN TO THE DIVIDING
ASUNDER OF THE SOUL AND SPIRIT,
AND OF THE JOINTS AND MARROW,
AND IS A DISCERNER OF THE
THOUGHTS AND INTENTS OF THE
HEART” (HEBREWS 4:12).

The word “quick” in that passage means “alive.” God’s word is living, and it is powerful. When we read it, when it is preached, and when it is brought out in song, it influences individuals. It searches us and penetrates deep into our soul. There is nothing hidden from it. It is there to remove the things that would hinder us and to put in what will help us grow. Perhaps, this is one of the greatest testaments to the Scripture’s authority in our life. We do not read the Bible to gain information but for personal transformation.

THE NATURAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

The **natural attributes** of God are His alone. These are the revealed abilities God possesses as part of His being. It is easy for us to see that when compared to God, we are limited, and He is infinite in

all His abilities. He is lifted high above all others. This character of God is called the **transcendence** of God. Isaiah 57:15 reminds us that God is *“the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity.”*

God is infinitely powerful or what is called **omnipotent**. God can do whatever He wills to do. Some skeptics assert that God cannot create an object so big that He is unable to lift it. However, this position is self-defeating in many ways. The first of many, is why God do attempt this in the first place? God can do whatever He chooses but nothing that goes against His character. God’s acts are always consistent with His ways. The praises of the prophet Jeremiah testified of God’s power:

“AH LORD GOD! BEHOLD, THOU
HAST MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE
EARTH BY THY GREAT POWER AND
STRETCHED OUT ARM, AND THERE IS
NOTHING TOO HARD FOR THEE.”
JEREMIAH 32:17

God created and presently holds the world together by His will. God’s strength comforts and aids the believer. Our God is infinitely stronger than us at our best or worst, and all the evil forces in the

universe. This is why the Apostle Paul could exclaim, *“If God be for us, who can be against us”* (Rom. 8:31).

We also learn from Scripture that the Lord all-knowing. This attribute is called **omniscience**. There is nothing that escapes His knowledge. He sees all possibilities contained within the future and the actuals of the present and past. He is never caught off guard or surprised. While some erroneously claim that God knows all because He has predetermined everything, God’s knowledge and understanding, however, is higher than ours. The Psalmist proclaims,

“O LORD, THOU HAST SEARCHED ME,
AND KNOWN ME. THOU KNOWEST
MY DOWNSITTING AND MY
UPRISING, THOU UNDERSTANDEST
MY THOUGHT AFAR OFF. THOU
COMPASSEST MY PATH AND MY
LYING DOWN, AND ART
ACQUAINTED WITH ALL MY WAYS.
FOR THERE IS NOT A WORD IN MY
TONQUE, BUT, LO, O LORD, THOU
KNOWEST IT ALTOGETHER.” PSALM
139:1-4

“GREAT IS OUR LORD, AND OF GREAT
POWER: HIS UNDERSTANDING IS
INFINITE.” PSALM 147:5

Scripture emphasizes that God knows more about us than we do. God also knows more about what we need than we do. We can trust in that and walk after what He teaches us. The Lord knows our need before we even ask or think about it.

Not only is God all-powerful and all-knowing but is always fully present everywhere at any given time. The Psalmist once again contemplates on this great reality:

“WHITHER SHALL I GO FROM THY
SPIRIT? OR WHITHER SHALL I FLEE
FROM THY PRESENCE? IF I ASCEND
UP INTO HEAVEN, THOU ART THERE:
IF I MAKE MY BED IN HELL, BEHOLD,
THOU ART THERE. IF I TAKE THE
WINGS OF THE MORNING, AND
DWELL IN THE UTTERMOST PARTS OF
THE SEA; EVEN THERE SHALL THY
HAND LEAD ME, AND THY RIGHT
HAND SHALL HOLD ME.” PSALM
139:7-10

God's presence is always near us. Time and time again the scripture reminds us that this is a comfort to us for God says:

"I WILL NEVER LEAVE THEE, NOR
FORSAKE THEE." HEBREWS 13:15

Some questions that come up ask, "how can God be everywhere? Does He have a body? If He doesn't have a body then what is he? There are some scriptures that may give one the thought that God must have a body. This is especially true in the Old Testament. Such portions of scripture such as Exodus 33:9, 11, 22-23, could lead someone to think this is true. The Old Testament is filled with what is called **theophany** (literally defined as, God-appearances).

If expressions such as "the arm of the Lord," "the eye of the Lord," "the hand of the Lord," "nostrils," "mouth" show that God possesses a physical form then it must be consistent in our thinking also when reading that God is spoken of as "covering with his feathers," and that we "trust under his wings" or that he is a "consuming fire." These metaphors are the same idea as when Jesus says He is a "door," "roadway," loaf of bread,"

“water well,” “shepherd,” “vine.” We know that Jesus is not a real door or piece of bread but that He, like a door, is the way to salvation. John 4:24 records the words of Jesus stating:

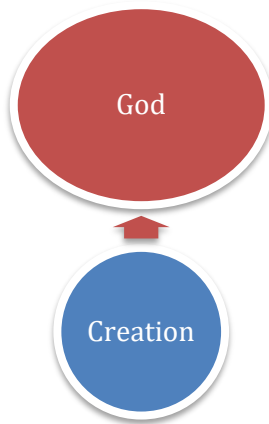
“GOD IS A SPIRIT: AND THEY THAT
WORSHIP HIM MUST WORSHIP HIM
IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH.”

“BEHOLD MY HANDS AND MY FEET,
THAT IT IS I MYSELF: HANDLE ME,
AND SEE; FOR A SPIRIT HATH NOT
FLESH AND BONES, AS YE SEE ME
HAVE.” LUKE 24:39

The word spirit is the best way to describe the divine nature of the Godhead. God is not material, and Scripture indicates this truth (Isaiah 66:1, 1 Kings 8:27). This means that He does not have a physical body and that He is invisible (Colossians 1:15, 1 Timothy 1:17). The action of the Son of God becoming flesh garners greater significance when we understand this Scriptural position.

This is very important in Genesis 1:1 where the writer makes it known that God is not part of the material creation. In the pagan world, the gods are a

part of creation or that nature is a part of them. Genesis 1:1 makes it very clear that God created all that is material and that God is separate from His creation. Physical and spiritual are different substances. The first commandment (Exodus 20:3) forbids reducing God to an idol or something material.



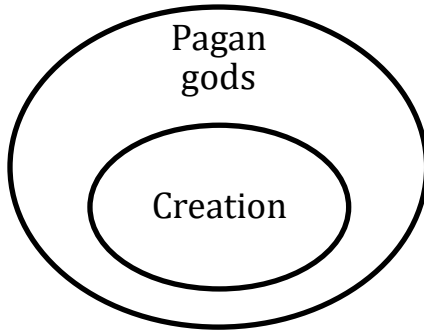


FIGURE 5: CHRISTIAN VS. PAGAN VIEW OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEITY AND CREATION.

In the end, we find that God’s constant presence comforts us in our God transcending all creation and is intimately connected to it. This is called the **immanence** of God. It is the reality that God is actively involved with His creation. The name was given to the Son of God, “Immanuel,” further confirms in Scripture the Lord’s abiding through its definition, “God with us.”

THE MORAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

The **moral attributes** of God are the traits concerning His character. While we will never be like God in His natural attributes we can reflect Him like a mirror in the moral attributes. These are the standards to which we are to strive for. These are the aim of Jesus Christ working in us.

First and foremost, we see that our God is **holy** and we are to be commanded to be holy, *“Be Ye Holy; for I am holy”* (1 Peter 1:16). The holiness of God is something he alone possesses and the only way for us to be holy is by being close to Him. One way to look at the holiness of God is His absolute perfection. It is wholly “otherness” or the fact that there is nothing or no one else like him (Hosea 11:9). It is the fact of the complete absence of sin in God and His complete abhorrence to sin.

Holiness is definitely an abhorring of all sin but it is also displayed in the way we treat other people. It is not a set group of rules but a way of living that displays the love of God. Hebrews 12:14 says, *“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”* Whenever we see God dealing with people, He treats them with love, even when He judges. In the event of the fall of Adam we see judgment come as they are driven from the garden. Yet, love is evident as man continues to live. This pattern of God’s holy-love is found throughout the scripture.

It is through the holy-love of God that the other moral and natural attributes flow out of. He does not act with His great power or knowledge contrary to the character of holy-love. It is amazing

knowing that our God never changes and will never act towards us in a way that is contrary to what He revealed about Himself in scripture.

Other moral attributes of God that go hand in hand is His **justice** and **righteousness**. God is faithful to carry out His plans, promises and laws. He is always just in all that He does, whether it is rewarding to people or whether it is in His judgments to people.

“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” (DEUTERONOMY 32:4).

God’s way may not always seem clear to us. Unlike God we do not know all things.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:8-9

God sees every angle, He see the future and the past. He knows exactly what is happening in the present. He knows who we are and what we need.

When he makes judgments, it is with the best intentions for our growing.

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” Jeremiah 29:11

The righteousness of God means that God will always do right and always remain true to His character.

Mercy, grace and **goodness** are another trio of God’s moral attribute. It has been said that mercy is God not giving us what we deserve, and grace is God giving us what we don’t deserve. Mercy is God’s compassion upon His people.

“WHO IS A GOD LIKE UNTO THEE,
THAT PARDONETH INIQUITY, AND
PASSETH BY THE TRANSGRESSION OF
THE REMNANT OF HIS HERITAGE?
HE RETAINETH NOT HIS ANGER FOR
EVER, BECAUSE HE DELIGHTETH IN
MERCY.” MICAH 7:18

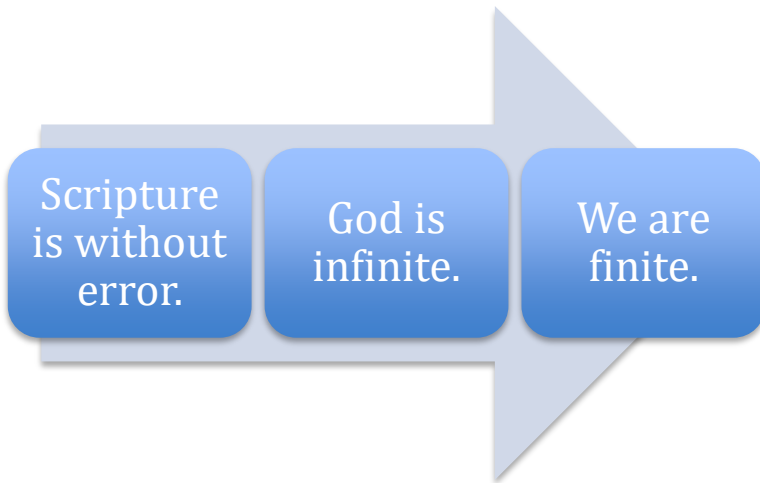
Grace is the unmerited favor of God towards us. It is the love and power of God that is given to people to seek Him. *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift*

of God” (Ephesians 2:8). The fact that God gives mercy and grace to all people, whether they come to Him or not, displays the goodness of God.

“THE LORD IS GOOD TO ALL: AND HIS
TENDER MERCIES ARE OVER ALL HIS
WORKS” (PSALM 145:9) AND “HE
MAKETH HIS SUN TO RISE ON THE
EVIL AND ON THE GOOD, AND
SENDETH RAIN ON JUST AND ON THE
UNJUST.” MATTHEW 5:45

GOD AS TRINITY

For all **eternity** (no beginning and no end, unaffected by time) God has existed as **Trinity**. One of the most complex doctrines is that of the Holy Trinity. God is one in His being, but He exists in three persons. Each person of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is fully God. This does not imply three gods or that God has three parts. The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the hardest claims made by Scripture. However, though we have difficulty comprehending it, the trustworthiness of Scripture helps us to ultimately apprehend it by faith.



In many places, the doctrine of the trinity is asserted in Scripture. Tucked away in the Old Testament, the book of Genesis contains a passage with the notion of multiple individuals involved in the creation. Genesis 1:26 states, “*and God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.*” Implied within that verse is that God alone spoke to Himself in realization of the Trinity. He certainly wasn’t discussing this with angels. The Old Testament also records this type of speech by God in Genesis 11:7 when He divided the languages at the tower of Babel.

The New Testament also contains the teaching of Trinity. During the baptism of Christ, the scripture records in Matthew 3:16-17 the presence of all three

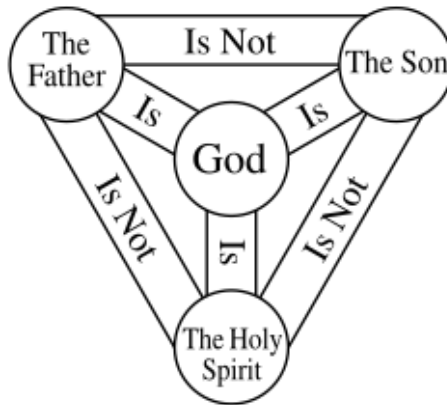
persons of the Trinity. It is seen as the Father speaks, the Son is baptized, and the Holy Spirit descends like a dove. The Apostle Paul blesses his hearers with a Trinitarian blessing:

“THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS
CHRIST, AND THE LORD OF GOD,
AND THE COMMUNION OF THE HOLY
GHOST, BE WITH YOU ALL. AMEN.” 2
CORINTHIANS 13:14

The terminology that the church has used for centuries to understand the Trinity is found in the terms **essence** and **persons**. Essence focuses on what and who God is. By the term essence we see the unity that is within God. There are certain attributes of God that are shared within the Trinity. These are divided up into two categories; the natural and moral attributes of God. Natural attributes are those characteristics only God alone possesses. Moral attributes are the characteristics that humanity can reflect.

By the word, “person,” theology shows the uniqueness that exists with God. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, equal in essence, power and glory. For example, with an earthly father and son, they are equal in essence. They are made of the same

physical material. Even though they may be separated by thirty years both are just as human as the other. The difference is in their function. While equal in their humanness, the roles they fill are different. The same goes for our understanding of God. God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equal in their essence as the One God but operate as three unique persons. Each person of the Trinity pursues distinctive functions or activities.



THE PERSONS OF THE TRINITY

There are three persons in the Holy Trinity. The natural and moral attributes of the Godhead are displayed and shared equally by all three. It is through the personality and names of each person that distinction is seen. The Father, the Son, and the

Holy Ghost are One God (not three separate gods) but are not one another.

There are some common expressions used to describe the Trinity. An egg is used to represent the three persons through its shell, the white, and the yolk. This is wrong because of the separation between the three and the simple fact that they are not equal in essence. Likewise, the three states of water (steam, water, ice) are used. This too is wrong because it leads to the thinking that God transitions from being one Person to being another. These two expressions of the Trinity resemble two major **heresies** (false teachings) that the early church faced.

In short summary, Christian teaching is that God is One but in three Persons. Scripture does not teach three separate Gods, three forms of God, or three parts of God. The three Persons are distinct in their personalities and functions within the Trinity while remaining one. Don't worry if the Trinity seems like a difficult teaching. It is one that truly makes Christianity different than any other religion. We are starting on the right foot and for now it starts with simple affirmation of this scripture truth.

Normally when we read of scriptures that speak of God they are taken as speaking of the

Trinity as a whole. It is safe however to also view these primarily as talking about the Father, the first person of the Trinity. The name Father is used primarily by Jesus Christ and later by the apostles and the church. Jesus constantly taught that we should pray to the “Father.”

“BUT THOU, WHEN THOU PRAYEST,
ENTER INTO THY CLOSET, AND WHEN
THOU HAST SHUT THY DOOR, PRAY
TO THY FATHER WHICH IS IN SECRET;
AND THY FATHER WHICH SEETH IN
SECRET SHALL REWARD THEE
OPENLY.” MATTHEW 6:6

Many works of God in the scripture are attributed to the Father. Such as in the works of creation and redemption in 1 Corinthians 8:6. For our Salvation it was the Father that sent the Son,

“AND THE FATHER HIMSELF, WHICH
HATH SENT ME, HATH BORNE
WITNESS OF ME. YE HAVE NEITHER
HEARD HIS VOICE AT ANY TIME, NOR
SEEN HIS SHAPE.” JOHN 5:37

The second Person of the Trinity is the Son of God. He is the Holy Spoken Word of the Father.

Again, in 1 Corinthians 8:6 we see a slight difference between the Father and the Son.

“BUT TO US THERE IS BUT ONE GOD,
THE FATHER, OF WHOM ARE ALL
THINGS, AND WE IN HIM; AND ONE
LORD JESUS CHRIST, BY WHOM ARE
ALL THINGS, AND WE BY HIM.” 1
CORINTHIANS 8:6

The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity. In no way is He inferior or unimportant. He is more than just the power of God or the force of God. The Holy Spirit indeed is a Person of His own while sharing the moral and natural attributes of the Godhead.

A way to understand the Person and work of the Holy Spirit is through the other names He is called in the scriptures. Jesus introduces the Spirit as the Comforter (the one called to your side like a lawyer during a trial). *“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name...”* (John 14:26). He continues the ministry of Jesus after the ascension in the lives of believers. He is our guide in following Christ,

“HOWBEIT WHEN HE, THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH, IS COME, HE WILL GUIDE YOU INTO ALL TRUTH: FOR HE SHALL NOT SPEAK OF HIMSELF; BUT WHATSOEVER HE SHALL HEAR, THAT SHALL HE SPEAK.” JOHN 16:13

Not only does He guide us in our daily lives, but He also intercedes for us before the Father.

“LIKEWISE THE SPIRIT ALSO HELPETH OUR INFIRMITIES: FOR WE KNOW NOT WHAT WE SHOULD PRAY FOR AS WE OUGHT: BUT THE SPIRIT ITSELF MAKETH INTERCESSION FOR US WITH GROANINGS WHICH CANNOT BE UTTERED. AND HE THAT SEARCHETH THE HEARTS KNOWETH WHAT IS THE MIND OF THE SPIRIT, BECAUSE HE MAKETH INTERCESSION FOR THE SAINTS ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD.” ROMANS 8:26-27

This makes it a lighter burden on our mind and heart when we realize that the Holy Spirit Himself takes our prayers to the Father and pleads our cause along with the Son.

JESUS CHRIST

Before the creation, the Son always was and in the creation the Son is present and working. It is of the Father's will that creation happens by the agency of the Word. In comparison to Genesis 1, John 1:1-3 is similar in phrasing and expands on how God created.

"IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD,
AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD,
AND THE WORD WAS GOD. THE
SAME WAS IN THE BEGINNING WITH
GOD. ALL THINGS WERE MADE BY
HIM; AND WITHOUT HIM WAS NOT
ANYTHING MADE THAT WAS MADE."

JOHN 1:1-3

Later on in the scripture, the Word became incarnate. **Incarnate** means that the Word was made in the likeness of our flesh.

"AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH,
AND DWELT AMONG US, (AND WE
BEHOLD HIS GLORY, THE GLORY AS
OF THE ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE
FATHER,) FULL OF GRACE AND
TRUTH." JOHN 1:14

Jesus, the Word, the Son of God, the fullness of the Godhead bodily, came to dwell among people. It is through the Son that we have the clearest picture of God. *“Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person...”* (Hebrews 1:3). If we are to know God, we are to believe in Jesus. *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”* John 14:1

“AND JESUS SAITH UNTO HIM I AM
THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE:
NO MAN COMETH UNTO THE
FATHER, BUT BY ME. IF YE HAD
KNOWN ME, YE SHOULD HAVE
KNOWN MY FATHER ALSO: AND
FROM HENCEFORTH YE KNOW HIM,
AND HAVE SEEN HIM.” JOHN 14:6-7

A core doctrine that is to be held in faith is the virgin birth of Christ. This is not just the opinion of some believers but is the stance of scripture on the subject. The implications of not believing in the virgin birth are severe. It is through the virgin birth that the Son of God became flesh and remained uncorrupted, sinless, and perfect.

The Old Testament sets up the requirement for a virgin birth through **prophecy**.

“THEREFORE THE LORD HIMSELF
SHALL GIVE YOU A SIGN; BEHOLD, A
VIRGIN SHALL CONCEIVE, AND BEAR
A SON, AND SHALL CALL HIS NAME
IMMANUEL.” ISAIAH 7:14

This places as a requirement on the one that brings salvation to be born of a virgin. The fulfillment of this scripture comes in Matthew 1:18-25 and is also recorded in Luke 1:26-38, 2:1-20.

The significance that the virgin birth places on Jesus is more than just the fulfillment of prophecy. In order for Christ to be the perfect sacrifice for sins He had to be sinless (Hebrews 7:23-28, 10:1:18). This virgin birth was the way God intended for Christ to retain His sinless deity (Jesus is God) and acquire our human nature. In turn, Christ was perfectly Human and perfectly God in the same body.

HUMANITY & SIN

The second doctrine that new believers must begin to explore is Biblical teachings about mankind. The main teachings covered are the origin of man, the fall, and the results of that fall. Having a Biblically correct view of man stems first from knowing what we know from the Bible about God. Knowing what the Bible teaches about God and man we can then have a better understanding of sin and salvation.

THE CREATION OF MAN

A view becoming more and more popular within the world is that man has evolved over time into what he is today. The Bible challenges the view of **Evolution**, especially when it comes to the realm of mankind. Genesis 1 offers a wide-view of creation as a whole but Genesis 2 offers a more pinpointed view of the creation of man. That does not mean that Genesis 1 does not offer anything important to the understanding of man, as we shall see.

Genesis 2:7 states that,

“AND THE LORD GOD FORMED MAN
OF THE DUST OF THE GROUND, AND

BREATHED INTO HIS NOSTRILS THE
BREATH OF LIFE; AND MAN BECAME
A LIVING SOUL.”

Even though Adam and Eve were the last of God's creation, in order of importance they were first. Adam meaning, "man" and Eve meaning "mother of all" were the crowning glory of God's creation. This is seen in how God created man differently than all the other things involved in the creation. He spoke everything else into existence except for man. When God made man the Bible gives us the picture in scripture of the Godhead coming down and forming man out of clay like an artist would a sculpture. Then God breathed into the lifeless piece of art and man became a living breathing soul.

There is a personal touch that God used in creating man by creating them in the “**image**” of God. *“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”* (Genesis 1:26). It is clear that this passage does not mean that man has a physical resemblance to God for John 4:24 says, *“God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”* It means that man is more of a mirrored image of his Maker. Like God, man has

intellect, emotion, and will. Man can think, use language, determine his direction, and make choices.

Since God exists as a Trinity, He exists in relationship to others. This means man, created in the image of God, also was created for relationships. This is why in the creation God sees that, *“It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him”* (Genesis 2:18). We were created to love and be loved.

Mankind can be seen in a three parts; the body, **soul**, and **spirit**. The human body consists of thousands of individual parts, but all are so joined together that they function as a synchronized unit. The body exists as unconscious house of our soul and spirit. The body that we see allows us to interact with the world that we see around. The body is also the temple of the living God.

“WHAT? KNOW YE NOT THAT YOUR
BODY IS THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY
GHOST WHICH IS IN YOU, WHICH YE
HAVE OF GOD, AND YE ARE NOT
YOUR OWN.” 1 CORINTHIANS 6:19

Housed within the body is the soul and spirit. Whether these are interchangeable words that mean

the same thing or whether they are distinct parts is debatable. It is easier on our understanding though to view the distinctions between these two. The soul is best understood as our conscious existence. It is the life of man. When God created man He breathed the breath of life into him, man became a living soul. The Greek word “Psyche” for our word “soul” is also the same word for “mind.” The soul or mind of man contains the personality of a person. It is also the soul that makes man an eternal being.

The last part is the distinction of our spirit. The spirit is the God-conscious part of man. It allows us to feel and worship God. It is the part that allows us to have that communion, that fellowship with God. Jesus is recorded telling a woman, *“God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:24). When we come to Jesus Christ in faith we are born again in the spirit. Until that born-again experience there is death in unbelievers, and it reigns in from that spirit.

THE FALL OF MAN AND THE RESULTS

God gave man the freedom to obey or disobey. He knew that if man were to truly be holy and love Him, then man would have to make that choice on his own. God knew that love was not to be

dictated. Trust could not be forced. Holy living would not be some mechanical operation of daily life...

“AND THE LORD GOD COMMANDED
THE MAN, SAYING, OF EVERY TREE
OF THE GARDEN THOU MAYEST
FREELY EAT: BUT OF THE TREE OF
KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL,
THOU SHALT NOT EAT OF IT: FOR IN
THE DAY THAT THOU EATEST THEROF
THOU SHALT SURELY DIE.” GENESIS

2:16-17

God reminded Adam of all the blessings he enjoyed. God then commanded him to accept one responsibility. The command should have been an easy one to obey in view of Adam's sinless condition and the bountiful blessings of God all around. He easily could have obeyed, but he did not.

The fall of man was a slippery slope. Satan tempted Eve to question the goodness of God towards them.

“NOW THE SERPENT WAS MORE
SUBTIL THAN ANY BEAST OF THE
FIELD WHICH THE LORD GOD HAD
MADE. AND HE SAID UNTO THE

WOMAN, YEA, HATH GOD SAID, YE
SHALL NOT EAT OF EVERY TREE
OF THE GARDEN." GENESIS 3:1

The questioning of God's laws and goodness can still be seen today. People may say that Christianity is just a set of rules to make people miserable. Instead, God's laws are there to keep His people safe and blessed.

Questioning God's motives for giving a law brought about the questioning of God's meaning of the Word He gave. Questioning God's word takes the absolutes of God and causes them to be lesser in value. When a person questions God it can lead to resisting the will of God in their life.

"AND WHEN THE WOMAN SAW
THAT THE TREE WAS GOOD FOR
FOOD, AND THAT IT WAS PLEASANT
TO THE EYES, AND A TREE TO BE
DESIRED TO MAKE ONE WISE, SHE
TOOK OF THE FRUIT THEREOF, AND
DID EAT, AND GAVE ALSO UNTO HER
HUSBAND WITH HER; AND HE DID
EAT." GENESIS 3:6

When the fall into sin had occurred, Adam and Eve came face to face with God and He confronted

them about their sin. Those who were created with a need for relationship started blaming others for their own wrongdoing. *“And the man said, the woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat”* (Genesis 3:12). The relationship that was pure had been destroyed,

“AND THE EYES OF THEM BOTH
WERE OPENED, AND THEY KNEW
THAT THEY WERE NAKED; AND THEY
SEWED FIG LEAVES TOGETHER, AND
MADE THEMSELVES APRONS.”
GENESIS 3:6

Not only was the relationship corrupted between people it was also destroyed between man and God. Adam and Eve hid themselves from God (Genesis 3:8) and Adam blamed God for giving him the woman (Genesis 3:12).

Physically at that moment they did not drop dead, but their natural bodies began to decay. Spiritually they died at the moment they ate the fruit. The spirit within them was gone as their soul became engulfed in sin, separated from God. They became spiritually dead people and we follow in the same heritage of Adam and Eve until we seek the forgiveness of God through Jesus Christ.

God began to bring judgment in the form of curses towards His creation. The biblical use of the word **curse** implies God withholding His blessings. Blessings come to those who obey the Lord, and blessings are removed from those who disobey the Lord. This removing of God's blessings is truly a great curse.

The first curse we find God giving in the Garden of Eden is a curse to the serpent (Genesis 3:14). Before God's curse was placed on the serpent it was a beautiful creature. "Serpent" in Hebrew means "a shining one." Since Satan is referred to as "an angel of Light" he probably appeared as a shining one, a creature of amazing beauty and interest to Eve. As a vehicle of the Tempter, the serpent was cursed by God and forced to crawl on his belly and eat dirt.

It is also clear that God saw the war that would be between Satan, Eve, and their respective "seed" (Genesis 3:15). The seed of the woman is Jesus Christ. The battle line of all the ages was to be drawn here. For all the ages of creation it is Satan with his host on one side and Christ with His Host on the other side.

The second and third curses affected people. The second curse given was on the woman, which involves an increase in pain at childbirth and submission to her husband (Genesis 3:16). Woman was deceived, man was not but because he hearkened unto the voice of his wife, he would bear the brunt of the curse for all mankind. The third curse, the earth was cursed to bring forth weeds and thistles, which meant that man would have to work by the sweat of his brow to get food from the ground (Genesis 3:17-19).

From all areas in our world we see neglect towards the seriousness of **sin**. Man, sometimes calls it just an error but God calls it sin. We need to learn to see sin from the perspective that God sees it. Our sin was serious enough to require the death of Christ on the cross. We as Christians should never treat sin lightly.

SIN

Sin is a **transgression** of the law. *“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law”* (1 John 3:4). To transgress means to go beyond, to overstep the boundaries, to exceed the limits imposed upon us by God. We must always remember that God's laws

are given to us for our own good. The One who made us knows what will bring us true happiness, but in spite of this truth, people would rather follow their own will

God also reveals in His Word that, by means of one sin, man is guilty of the entire law. If a person breaks one of God's laws he is guilty of breaking the entire law of God *“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all”* (James 2:10). This scripture tells us that God views all sin in the same way. God is no respecter of person and sin is sin. This means that the categorizing we do as people when confronted with sin is untrue with God. This puts into perspective the seriousness God views sin with.

This is because sin is the shortcoming of man towards God. *“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). If life is like a race then sin is the hindrance, which makes a runner lose by any measure of distance. It doesn't matter whether the distance is one inch or more it is still coming short of the finish line. People may say that they are better than another person but in all reality all people have missed God's standard and come short of His glory because of the sin of Adam. Sin is now part of our nature.

“WHEREFORE, AS BY ONE MAN SIN
ENTERED INTO THE WORLD, AND
DEATH BY SIN; AND SO DEATH
PASSED UPON ALL MEN, FOR THAT
ALL HAVE SINNED.” ROMANS 5:12

Is it a sin to be born? No, it is not a sin to be born but because we are born we have the nature of that sin which Adam brought upon all mankind. Romans 7:7-25 speaks on the struggle that people have with sin. This is not something that we develop over time. Psalm 51:5 says, “*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*” It is an unbiblical notion to believe that men are basically born good and it is their environments and inherited personalities that turn them bad. Before any of those things come into play there is a sinful and rebellious nature that exists in all people. “*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23).

Sin has a wicked price, which has already been stated in some of the prior verses given. That price of sin is death.

“FOR THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH.”
ROMANS 6:23

“WAS THEN THAT WHICH IS GOOD
MADE DEATH UNTO ME? GOD
FORBID. BUT SIN, THAT IT MIGHT
APPEAR SIN, WORKING DEATH IN ME
BY THAT WHICH IS GOOD; THAT SIN
BY THE COMMANDMENT MIGHT
BECOME EXCEEDING SINFUL.”

ROMANS 7:13

Sin resulted in the garden as the separation of God and man (Isaiah 59:2), a type of spiritual death. If a person continues to live in a sinful state of life and fails to come to faith in Jesus they will experience what is called the second death. Not only do they experience a physical death but an eternal death (John 8:24, Revelation 20:14-15, John 5:28-29).

HELL

Hell is truly something terrible and it is very real. There is one Hebrew word that is translated into the word hell, *sheol*. Thirty-one times it is translated into the word “hell”, thirty-one times into the word “grave”, and three times into the word “pit.” Three Greek words translate into our word for hell. *Hades* ten times for “hell” and once for “grave,” *tartaros* one time (2 Peter 2:4, meaning incarcerated

in eternal torment), and *gehenna* five times. Four out of the five times *gehenna* is used solely by Jesus when He speaks on the future destiny of unbelievers.

Some people believe that when unbelievers die that God won't punish individuals but just cause them to cease from existing. Scripture does not speak in that way. It sets forth a strong number of scriptures supporting an afterlife for those that do not follow Christ. Hell is a real place of horrible torments that will last for all eternity.

Several of the torments that scripture makes known, range from an unquenchable fire (Mark 9:43-44, Luke 16:24, Revelation 20:10, 15), to unending darkness (Matthew 8:12, Jude 13). It is a place of stinking brimstone (Revelation 19:20) and a constant thirst (Luke 16:24). This does not include the mental torments that will constantly be played over in the unbeliever's mind. Luke 16:19-31 records Jesus telling of a man's experience in hell.

Hell Stage 1

- Hell stage 1 is not the full reality of hell yet. In the story of Lazarus and the rich man we are told of the place where the rich man was. This story alludes to torments also being a part of this reality. The word used here is "Hades." This is the "holding place" for the unrighteous. For this, also see 2 Peter 2:9. Not to be confused with purgatory where individuals suffer for sin and then go to heaven according to Roman Catholic doctrine.

Hell Stage 2

- Pictured by Jesus as "Gehenna" (for example, Mark 9:43). Hell stage 2 occurs at the final judgment (Revelation 19:11-15), where there is no more need for Hades (Revelation 20:13). Those in the holding place of Hades (hell stage 1) and the holding place of Hades itself are thrown into the Lake of Fire, which is the second death (Revelation 20:14).

SALVATION

Sin brings with it sickness and death. It brings with it rebellion against God and His love. It shows itself in our unbelief. Sin destroys the possibilities of genuine relationships that we can have with other people. It keeps us from heaven and points us straight in the direction of Hell. But there is Jesus and in Him there is **salvation** from our sin.

We know that Adam's sin affected the entire universe and all of man by bringing death upon the entire human race. We are in need of a savior. We need someone to deliver us from this spiritual disease called sin. That is exactly what Jesus did for us when He died on the cross and defeated death in the grave by His resurrection. So how do we obtain this great salvation? It can be obtained through **faith** and **repentance**. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:"* (Ephesians 2:8).

Romans 10:9-13 shows us that Faith and repentance is the key in receiving salvation through Jesus Christ. Faith first comes to us by hearing the Word of God. It is by that special revelation of God's word we realize that we are sinners in need of a savior. That same word proclaims to us our savior,

which is Jesus Christ. We come to Him through faith and we must believe that He is able to save us from our sins. Scripture tells us that through belief and confession of that belief and our need for Jesus, we shall be saved.

The belief that He is able makes our faith even stronger. Our faith is strong because of the object we put our hope and faith on. The object of our faith is Jesus Christ.

“NEITHER IS THERE SALVATION IN
ANY OTHER: THERE IS NONE OTHER
NAME UNDER HEAVEN GIVEN
AMONG MEN, WHEREBY WE MUST
BE SAVED” (ACTS 4:12).

Our faith is not placed in any idol made by man. They do not have the power to speak, let alone save. It is important to come to the understanding that salvation relies solely on Jesus and that He came from God to save us from our sins and to keep us.

Along with faith is the repentance of our sins. Faith and repentance are like two sides of the same coin. You cannot have one without the other. Repentance is to feel such guilt over past sins with intention to change one's ways. Repentance moves

on our faith in Christ to ask forgiveness from God because we realize that there is no escape from sin without Him.

We have a *lively hope* or a faith that is alive.

“BLESSED BE THE GOD AND FATHER
OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHICH
ACCORDING TO HIS ABUNDANT
MERCY HATH BEGOTTEN US AGAIN
UNTO A LIVELY HOPE BY THE
RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST
FROM THE DEAD...” 1 PETER 1:3

Jesus, the Son of God, put on the likeness of our flesh so that He could die and be the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

“BY THE WHICH WILL WE ARE
SANCTIFIED THROUGH THE
OFFERING OF THE BODY OF JESUS
CHRIST ONCE FOR ALL. AND EVERY
PRIEST STANDETH DAILY
MINISTERING AND OFFERING
OFTENTIMES THE SAME SACRIFICES,
WHICH CAN NEVER TAKE AWAY SINS:
BUT THIS MAN, AFTER HE HAD
OFFERED ONE SACRIFICE FOR SINS
FOR EVER, SAT DOWN ON THE RIGHT
OF GOD.” HEBREWS 10:10-12

Jesus died and still we have a lively hope
because the object of our faith is alive!

“AND IF CHRIST BE NOT RAISED,
YOUR FAITH IS VAIN; YE ARE YET IN
YOUR SINS...BUT NOW IS CHRIST
RISEN FROM THE DEAD.” 1
CORINTHIANS 15:17, 20

So, what do we do then with our faith? We put our faith to work. *“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone”* (James 2:17). That does not mean works saves us, it is still by grace and faith. Works are not a part of receiving salvation or that would be contradictory to the grace of God. *“Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,”* (Romans 4:6). Salvation brings a working mentality within us. Works do not save us but they are a testimony to show what God is doing in our lives. We let our light or witness shine through our good works after salvation (Matthew 5:14-16).

When we are saved by grace through faith we become justified. **Justification** is defined as the forgiveness of sin and release from guilt and punishment as an act of grace by which God pardons the sinner and accepts them as righteous, on account

of the atonement of Christ. *“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness”* (Romans 4:5). Justification allows us to say, “just as if I never sinned.” We stand before God free from our sins. *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus”* (Romans 8:1). This is what justification is. It is the taking off of our righteousness which is as filth in the holy eyes of God and putting on the righteousness of Christ. We stand before God not in our own ability but truly in Christ’s.

God’s grace does not end by a simple pronouncement that we are justified or being covered by Christ’s righteousness. The true grace of God is that sinners become saints because the grace of God renews our mind and our heart. It makes us a new person in Jesus. This is the work of **sanctification** in our life. Sanctified means to be “set apart” or “making holy.” When we come to Christ we are set apart from our sins. This is called that born again experience. We are no longer the same person.

The work of sanctification progresses throughout our entire walk with God. It is the grace of God that continually sets us apart from the world and sets the mind of Christ upon us in greater

portions. It is a blessing of God that He works to sanctify us by grace in this life to a definite point of our spiritual growth so that we are entirely God's. Mind, body, soul, spirit, strength, or however we describe every portion of who we are is entirely sanctification or committed to God.

"I BESEECH YOU THEREFORE,
BRETHREN, BY THE MERCIES OF
GOD, THAT YE PRESENT YOUR
BODIES A LIVING SACRIFICE, HOLY,
ACCEPTABLE UNTO GOD, WHICH IS
YOUR REASONABLE SERVICE."

ROMANS 12:1

"LET US THEREFORE, AS MANY AS BE
PERFECT, BE THUS MINDED: AND IF
IN ANY THING YE BE OTHERWISE
MINDED, GOD SHALL REVEAL EVEN
THIS UNTO YOU. NEVERTHELESS,
WHERE TO WE HAVE ALREADY
ATTAINED, LET US WALK BY THE
SAME RULE, LET US MIND THE SAME
THING." PHILIPPIANS 3:15-16

“AND THE VERY GOD OF PEACE
SANCTIFY YOU WHOLLY; AND I PRAY
GOD YOUR WHOLE SPIRIT AND SOUL
AND BODY BE PRESERVED
BLAMELESS UNTO THE COMING OF
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.” 1
THESSALONIANS 5:23

Not only do we have a new life, a new way of thinking, and new desires, we also belong to God in that we are adopted and born into the family of God. We are recipients of the moral nature of God through the new birth and heirs to riches of God’s glory through adoption. **Adoption** is the act of God where He places His own children in the position of responsible heirs.

“FOR YE HAVE NOT RECEIVED THE
SPIRIT OF BONDAGE AGAIN TO FEAR;
BUT YE HAVE RECEIVED THE SPIRIT
OF ADOPTION, WHEREBY WE CRY,
ABBA, FATHER,” AND 1 JOHN 3:1
“BEHOLD, WHAT MANNER OF LOVE
THE FATHER HATH BESTOWED UPON
US, THAT WE SHOULD BE CALLED
THE SONS OF GOD: THEREFORE THE
WORLD KNOWETH US NOT, BECAUSE
IT KNEW HIM NOT” ROMANS 8:15

We sometimes think in modern day society that we do not need to be adopted because we are born into the family of God. We never hear of being adopted into a family we were already born into. We already carry the family name. Yet, being saved not only makes us born into the family of God but also adopted into the family of God. Not only do we inherit the moral nature of God through Christ, but we also have equal access to the Father. *“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ...”* (Romans 8:17)

It is amazing to think that not only does God view us as His children, but He also views us as children that have access to all of riches of His bountiful grace. We are joint-heirs with Christ and each other in grace. We are not just bloodline family but also active heirs that can use this grace and power in our lives today.

The fact that God justifies us and adopts us gives us such a great assurance that we are truly His children and in His will. We have a know-so salvation. We do not have to doubt our salvation, but we can rest assured that we have found this favor in God’s eyes as His children.

In salvation we are saved from our past as our sins have been erased. In the present time salvation works in us to free us from the power of sin and helps us to continually live for God. We look forward to the future because salvation will bring us to a place where we are saved from the presence of sin. We call this final area of salvation **glorification**.

“FOR WE KNOW THAT THE WHOLE
CREATION GROANETH AND
TRAVAILETH IN PAIN TOGETHER
UNTIL NOW. AND NOT ONLY THEY,
BUT OURSELVES ALSO, WHICH HAVE
THE FIRSTFRUITS OF THE SPIRIT,
EVEN WE OURSELVES GROAN
WITHIN OURSELVES, WAITING FOR
THE ADOPTION, TO WIT, THE
REDEMPTION OF OUR BODY.”

ROMANS 8:22-23



HEAVEN

Heaven and eternal life is the reward to those that are faithful to the end of this life.

“For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; for whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” Philippians 3:20-21

At the end of time, Jesus Christ will reveal the reality of Heaven to all.

“AND I SAW A NEW HEAVEN AND A
NEW EARTH: FOR THE FIRST HEAVEN
AND THE FIRST EARTH WERE PASSED
AWAY; AND THERE WAS NO MORE
SEA.” REVELATION 21:1

Revelation 21 and 22 reveal much about what we will enjoy in heaven. There we will be able to enjoy those blessings in the presence of God in glorified bodies that never give into sickness and death (1 Corinthians 15:51-58, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 1 John 3:1-3)

Heaven Stage 1

Heaven stage 1 occurs when a person in Christ dies and goes to be with Him in a disembodied state. Inferred from both Philippians 1:23 and 2 Corinthians 5:8. In a sense, Heaven stage 1 might be seen as a "holding place" or "Abraham's Bosom" for the righteous in Christ. Inferred from the story of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16:19-31, and Ephesians 4:8-10).

Heaven Stage 2

- The "New Heaven and New Earth" where believers in Jesus will dwell forever in his presence, possessing resurrected bodies. Inferred from 1 Corinthians 15:35-58, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, and Revelations 21-22.

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

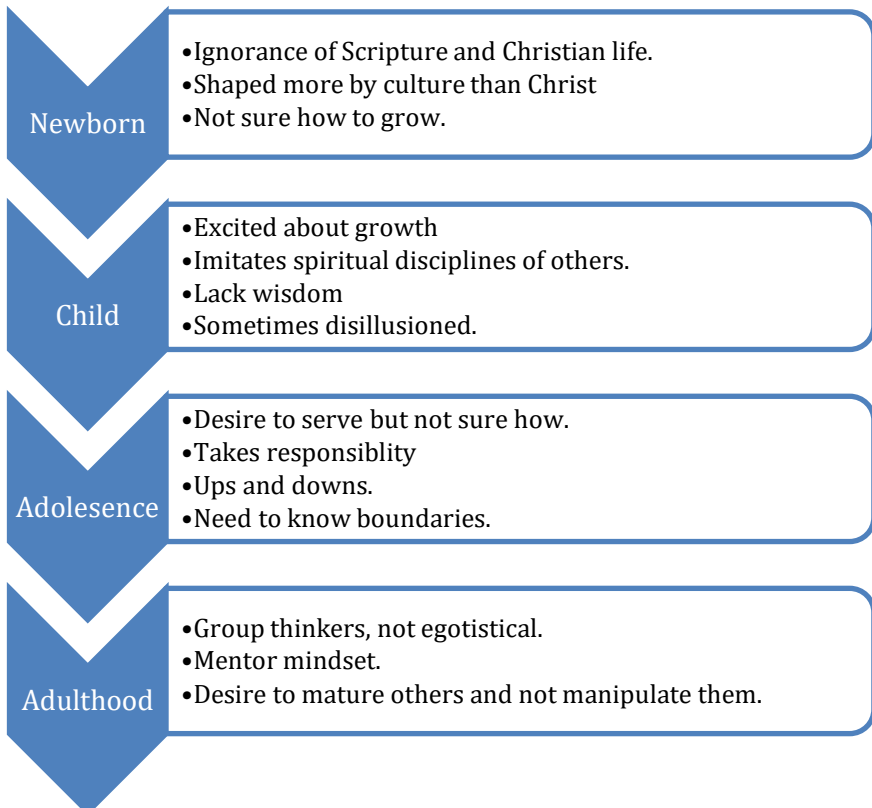
Knowing what you believe is only half of the story. The other half is allowing those truths to penetrate every area of our life. Following scriptural truths are displayed in our thinking, our speech, and our actions. Belief and behavior are closely connected. Right belief should lead to right behaviors. Therefore, it is important that we begin to learn basic disciplines of the Christian faith that can help us grow towards spiritual maturity.

Spiritual growth for the Christian believer can be an interesting study but it helps us focus. Scripture teaches that increase in our life comes solely from God (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). Bible study strengthens our knowledge and familiarity with the teachings of God. Prayer strengthens our faith and dependence on God. Worship as a congregational and personal act increases our joy through the fellowship of God's people and is the catalyst of other types of progress. These things though do not mean spiritual growth by themselves. Spiritual disciplines such as these are only means to move us to a place where we can grow.

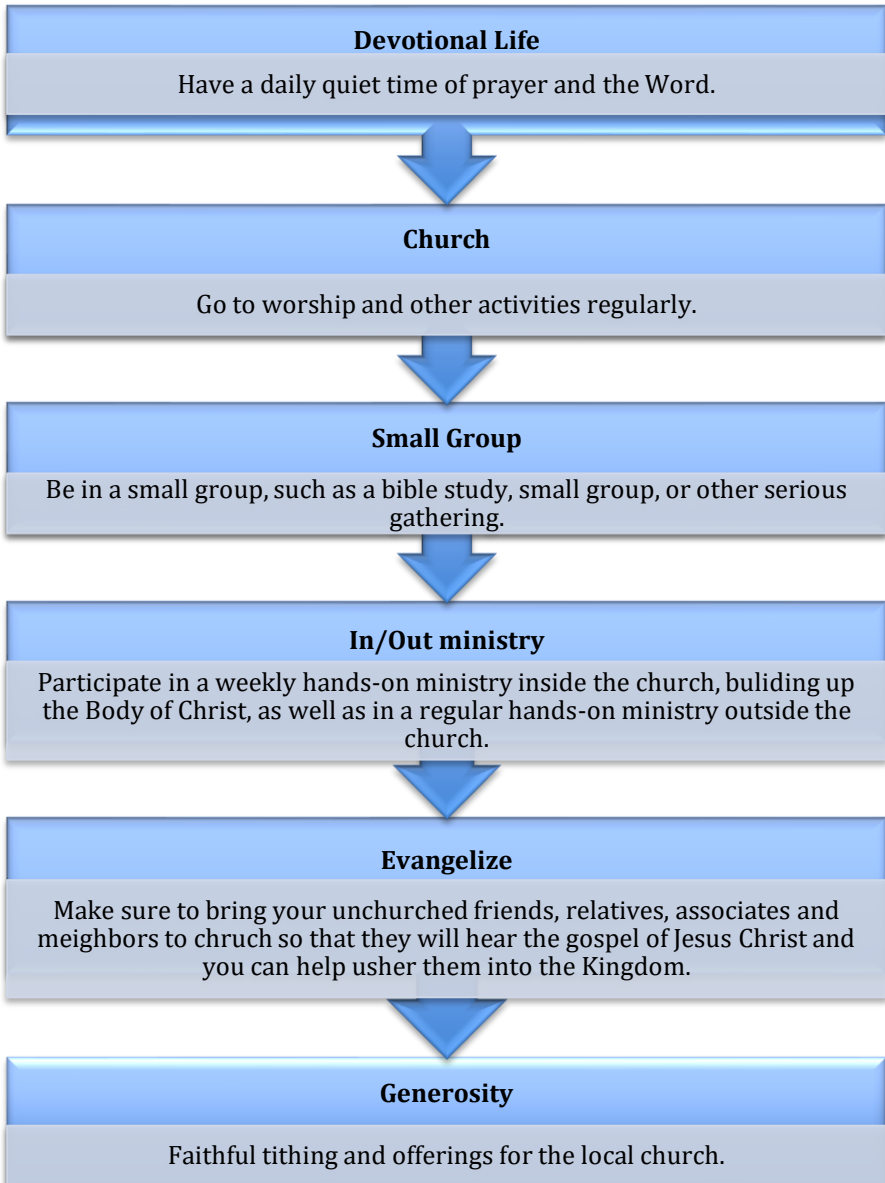
Growth as a Christ-follower is similar to placing a bucket underneath a waterspout. Bible study,

prayer, and fellowship place us under a spiritual spout. Together and individually, these disciplines make us readier to receive spiritual increase when God brings maturation in us.

One way we understand the maturity of the believer is from the Scripture use of our natural growth stages (1 Cor. 13:10-12; Heb. 5:12-14, 6:1; 1 Pet. 2:2, Eph. 4:13-16).

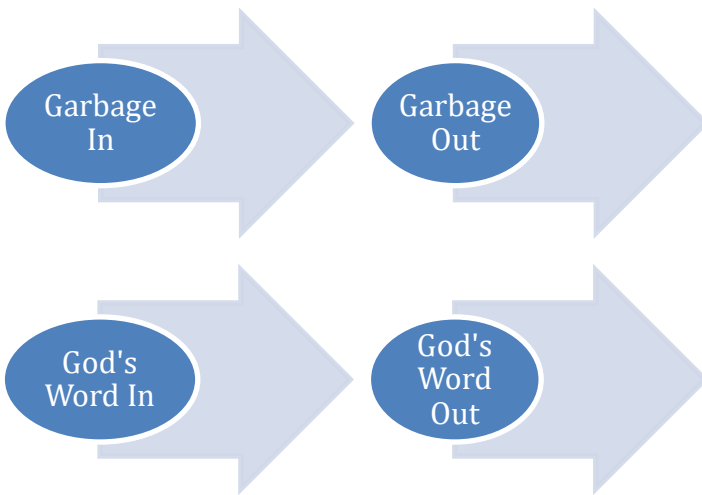


In a nutshell, disciples of Jesus need to develop new habits that help them grow in grace.



BIBLE STUDY

Bible study is an essential discipline to practice. There are correct ways of reading scripture that can help us understand what we are reading and protect from making errors in our interpretations. There is a special benefit from simple readings of the Word. Our thoughts are cleansed as we read the Scripture and hide it in our heart (Ephesians 5:26). Our ability to receive God's blessings is greater when we have filled ourselves with His Word.



The Bible is not a newspaper and should not be read as such. When we read the newspaper we usually head straight to our favorite parts and never

pay much attention to the rest. Sometimes an article stands out to us so we turn to it. We never really getting into the paper but only look at it in a way that makes us feel up to date at the moment. The Bible is different. The scripture is not just about being barely filled every morning by one scripture or memory verse. The Bible is full of blessings and direction. We must discipline ourselves to take time to read it.

We first must learn to read the Bible and to take our time and enjoy it. A satisfying reading of Scripture internalizes and personalizes the scriptures into our imaginations. You may find yourself rereading a **passage** or even one verse. You may highlight the scriptures, words, and phrases that jump off the page and speak to you. Memorizing verses becomes a part of a growing passion for the Word.

It is important to understand that the Bible was written to a specific audience, at a specific time, for a specific purpose. However, while it is technically their mail in a way, it is our mail as well. God's Word is eternal and relevant regardless of culture and age.

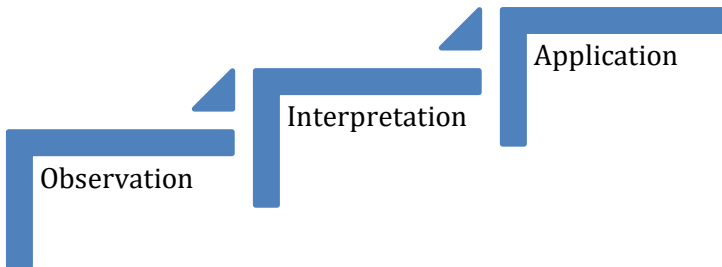
Take some time and read through Luke 2:1-20. As you read through the passage begin to imagine the scenery. You have two different settings with one in the barn and the other a dark pasture full of sheep. Smell the aromas? Hear the animal sounds? How does this differ from a reading of Joshua 6? The sound of people marching outside echoing in the city walls. The shouts of people and the trumpet blast. The fires burning. By creating a vivid picture of what we are reading in our minds is a step we can take in studying the scripture.

We must make time for our daily readings of the Word. There may be times when the Lord lays a desire on our heart to read the Word at a certain time. But, that does not mean we cannot set aside certain times to read and study. There are many daily reading guides a person can find online. Most study Bibles contains in them. If you can't find one in a study Bible or do not have access to one, a quick search on the Internet can yield instant results. The main point is that there is no reason not to read the Bible and to make a daily habit of it. It would be wise to set a goal of twenty minutes a day for daily reading to begin. After making this a habit these twenty minutes could grow to an hour of devotional reading and Bible study each day.



Once we have established a habit of reading the Word of God it is important that we learn how to really feast on it. *“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby”* (1 Peter 2:1). It would be hard for us to come to a correct understanding of scripture if we went straight to applying our first thoughts of it only to us.

There are three primary steps in Bible study:



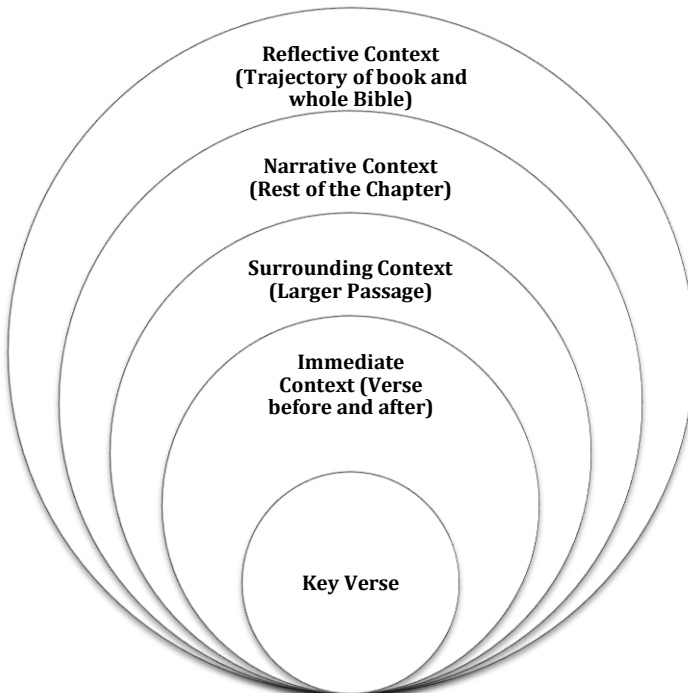
The first step is **observation**. The scriptures were first intended for an original audience. They were the first recipients of these revelations from God and there were specific messages contained within them that dealt with their culture and the events around them. This first step would be to observe the scriptures, much like we have already done.

In order to understand what these people were going through and what was happening in their day we may need to seek help from other sources. There are certain questions that we will want to start answering. We will want to answer questions about the setting of the passage. We will want to ask questions about the structure of the passage. Here are a few sample questions to ask:

1. Who is the author or speaker?
2. Who were the original recipients?

3. Why was this book written? What was the occasion of the book?
4. What historic events surrounded this book?
5. Where was the book written? Where were the recipients?
6. Are there any repeated words or phrases?
7. Does the author make any comparisons?
Draw any contrasts?
8. Does the author raise any questions? Provide any answers?
9. Does the author use any figures of speech?

All of these questions help us to understand the



context of a scripture. Context determines for us what something means based on how it fits with its surroundings. Many times verses are interpreted out of context. This can be very dangerous and corrupting to our understanding of the Word.

Another step of Bible study, **interpretation**, is where some commentaries and Bible dictionaries come into play. This can give a person new windows through which insights on a particular subject or text is gained. Commentaries can help with the historical and grammatical issues of a text. Sometimes when you are reading the Bible or someone’s commentary you may notice the books are abbreviated. The most common abbreviations are...

Genesis	Gen.	Job	Job
Exodus	Exod.	Psalms	Ps.
Leviticus	Lev.	Proverbs	Pro.
Numbers	Num.	Song of Solomon	Song
Deuteronomy	Deut.	Isaiah	Isa.
Joshua	Josh.	Jeremiah	Jer.
Judges	Judg.	Lamentations	Lam.
Ruth	Ruth	Ezekiel	Ezek.
I, II Samuel	I, II, Sam.	Daniel	Dan.
I, II, Kings	I, II Kings	Hosea	Hos.
I, II Chronicles	I, II Chron.	Joel	Joel
Ezra	Ezra	Amos	Amos
Nehemiah	Neh.	Obadiah	Obad.
Esther	Esther	Jonah	Jonah

Micah	Mic.	Ephesians	Eph.
Nahum	Nah.	Philippians	Phil.
Habakkuk	Hab.	Colossians	Col.
Zephaniah	Zeph.	I, II Thessalonians	I, II Thess.
Haggai	Hag.	I, II Timothy	I, II Tim.
Zechariah	Zech.	Titus	Titus
Malachi	Mal.	Philemon	Philemon
Matthew	Matt.	Hebrews	Heb.
Mark	Mark	James	
Luke	Luke	James	
John	John	I, II Peter	I, II Pet.
Acts	Acts	I, II, III John	I, II, III John
Romans	Rom.	Jude	Jude
I, II Corinthians	I, II Cor.	Revelation	Rev.
Galatians	Gal.		

Once a basic historical and grammatical understanding of the Word is gained, as close to its original intent as can be, we can really begin to interpret its spiritual truth. Interpretation is when we ask what the passage means to them in their time and us in our time. Basically we are asking the text to tell us, “What are the timeless principles that spoke to the original audience and now to us today?”

In order to do this it may be wise to once again use commentaries for help. While they are somebody else’s interpretation (and may not always be right) they do open up our understanding and gives us a wide array of stances on the scriptures. To

begin interpreting a passage we first look at what we learned from prior observations. Such as with John 3:16, we learn:

1. John was the beloved disciple of Jesus.
2. John's Gospel was written for this purpose; *"that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name"* (John 20:31).
3. This verse is found within Jesus conversation to Nicodemus, a ruler that came to Him by night.
4. Chapter 2 ends with Jesus leaving the people because of their belief only being in His miracles and not in who He was.
5. Chapter 4 is the story of Jesus with the woman at the well that comes to true faith in Jesus.

That is a lot of information and ground that we have already gained by observing the context of John 3:16. So how does that affect our interpretation? We can begin to ask questions and answer them. Here's some more help on gaining interpretation of John 3:16 with methods that can be applied to other passages in the Bible.

Word Study and Grammar

1. Love – What do we know about God's love?
2. World – What does the author mean by world?
3. Whosoever – Is that everybody?
4. Believe – John's favorite word? What is belief? Is this faith? How does belief in Jesus save?
5. Only Begotten Son – Who is Jesus? Was he claiming to be God's Son here?
6. Everlasting life – What's this mean? How do we receive that?

Flow of Biblical Content

1. How can we develop an understanding of what true belief is? This is why John is writing.
2. How does the progression of chapters two through four demonstrate the type of faith Jesus is looking for?

Of course these are just a few things to help you get started in interpreting a passage. Another helpful aid is the S.P.E.C.S. acrostic::

S: Is there a sin to avoid?

P: Is there a promise to claim?

E: Is there an example to follow?

C: Is there a command to obey?

S: Is there a scripture to memorize?

From interpretation we can then move on to apply the truths of a passage to our lives. This is where the relevancy of Scripture to its modern day hearers comes into play. This normally can be answered by asking the question, “What specific change can I make in my life, home, church or community based on this passage?”

PRAYER

Conversation with God provides a healthy addition to our relationship with Him. Just like conversation between spouses, the relationship we have with God and its strength can either grow or become weakened by the time and effort we put into our prayer life. Scripture gives example after example and admonition to be a people of **prayer**.

Daniel had made it his practice to pray three times a day (Daniel 6:10). It got him into trouble with the world but it also got Him through it.

Through the Psalms David recorded the words of his prayers in songs (Psalm 7, 13, 18, 51, 61, 143). The apostle Peter while in jail was delivered from prison when a congregation was having a prayer meeting for him (Acts 12:1-17, especially verse 5). Jesus told His disciples to be a people of prayer and called the temple a place of prayer (Matthew 21:13). He even gave his disciples a lesson on how to pray when they asked (Luke 11:1-13).

Prayer is not something that requires a special incantation of words. The effectiveness of it does not depend on the posture of our bodies, whether standing, kneeling, or laying down. It is not whether our prayer is silent, whispered or out loud. The strength of our prayer comes from the posture of our heart and our faith in the One we are praying too. Through prayer our hearts are connected with God through the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle Paul tells us that we are to, “*Pray without ceasing*” (1 Thessalonians 5:2). What exactly does that mean? Are we to be a people that constantly have our head in the clouds or heads bowed down to the earth? Prayer is to be a constant awareness of the presence of God and that His ear is always open to us. Being engaged in unceasing prayer helps us to begin to understand what David

wrote in Psalm 139:1-18. This is confident assurance to our prayer life. Knowing that God is always abiding with us and that God *“is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us”* (Ephesians 3:20). We can pray with confidence. Nothing is too hard for God.

Jesus taught His disciples how to pray in one simple prayer.

“AFTER THIS MANNER THEREFORE
PRAY YE: OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN
HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE THY NAME.
THY KINGDOM COME. THY WILL BE
DONE IN EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.
GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.
AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE
FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS. AND LEAD
US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT
DELIVER US FROM EVIL: FOR THINE
IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER,
AND THE GLORY FOR EVER. AMEN.”

MATTHEW 6:9-13

This simple prayer was the example Jesus gave to the people for proper prayer. Simply it follows this outline that we can use to pray our prayers.

1. To who: Our Father which art in Heaven.

2. Praise & Adoration: Hallowed be thy name.
3. Intercession: Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven.
4. Request: Give us this Day our Daily Bread.
5. Confession: Forgive us...Lead us...

Another easy to use acrostic to outline our prayer is A.C.T.S.

A. Adoration

C. Confession

T. Thanksgiving

S. Supplication.

What these two simple outlines show us is the components of a rich prayer life. We must first come to God in Worship, praise, thanksgiving and adoration. When we enter into the presence of God through prayer we are entering into the presence of the King and our Father. Not just the man up stairs. There should be a sense of awe and respect in our prayers toward God. We would do well to seek prayers that do just this; To praise God for who He is and to thank Him for what He has done.

Another part of our prayers is confession. For many these may seem like something only sinners do

when they seek salvation. Confession though in every prayer is recognition of who we truly are before our God. As Isaiah said in the presence of God,

“WOE IS ME! FOR I AM UNDONE;
BECAUSE I AM A MAN OF UNCLEAR
LIPS, AND I DWELL IN THE MIDST OF
A PEOPLE OF UNCLEAR LIPS: FOR
MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THE KING,
THE LORD OF HOSTS.” ISAIAH 6:5

Confession may include the believer’s repentance of faults or hidden sin. However, it also comes from the idea that we confess our need of God’s daily provision and guidance. We are unable to do anything on our own. We confess that our humanity is in need of God’s grace at all times.

Thanksgiving is where we acknowledge what God has already given. The blessings of God are in abundance and sometimes we have to train our mind and our eyes to recognize them. Thank God for our homes, our family, job, and health. We can also thank God for our church, pastor, and those that walk in life. There are so many things that we can find to be thankful for.

Lastly, there is supplication for others and making personal requests. Prayer is a time to ask God to meet the needs of others. Prayer is a time to tell God all the details of everything that concerns you. He already knows but through prayer we can contribute to the lives of others and lend them strength. Through prayer we seek and find help from God for our personal challenges and problems.

Prayer is an amazing tool that God has given to us. We need make a habit of praying to God every day. This helps us fight the urge to make Him a cosmic vending machine that we go to whenever we have a need. If the only prayers we say are for supplication and requests we will be spiritually weak. Prayer is affirmation of our dependence upon God but also that He is infinitely greater than us and worthy to be praised.

God does give definite answers to prayers and we need to testify to others about them. Many people have false expectations of God about how He answers prayers. In listening to testimonies we learn that God's answer to our prayers may not always come in a manner that we expected. Sometimes God delays the answers to our prayers (1 Samuel 1:5-7, 20; Luke 1:13). Romans 8:26-27 reminds us that we don't always pray for the right things. The Holy

Spirit intercedes on our behalf for the things we truly need because He knows our heart and situation better than we do.

The **church** or body of Christ serves a very important role in our growth and development. A church belongs to God and is composed of people who have been born again into God's family. Based upon the context of Scripture the word church is used to signify two different understandings of church. The universal church is everyone that has accepted Christ as his or her personal savior. This is why we can go to different areas of the world and greet another Christian as a brother or sister in Christ. The universal church is the entirety of all born-again Christians and is what is defined as the true church of God. Then there is the local church. The local church is a group of believers that live within a certain radius of each other, a group of believers that share like beliefs or a place that a group of believers attend as their main place to worship God.

Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Thessalonica, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea were all local churches. All of these churches members were able to come to an area accessible to them to worship God.

The most noticeable difference between the universal and local church is the membership. When a person receives the salvation of God then they are added into the fellowship of the universal church because God knows who His people are. The local church is supposed to be part of the universal church but sadly there are members of the local church that are not really a Christian.

The Church is also described as being the body of Christ. This is because the body of Christ has diversity. Also the Church is the body of Christ because even though there is diversity, it is the diversity that creates unity. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-19, Paul paints a picture for us that the church is the body of Christ. As the body has many members, so the church has many members. Each member has a different job to do, but each is just as important.

Paul demonstrates the picture of the church being a body that there is unity and diversity. Verses 20-31 indicate the problems that arise when one member wishes to be another member. The body cannot function properly in the face of jealousy.

The Church is also described as being the bride of Christ. These references can be found in Ephesians 5:25-31, John 14:1-3, and Revelation 19:7.

There are several references of Christ as the lover and bridegroom to the Church.

The Jewish custom was that a young man would go and find him a wife (Jesus coming to earth). Then that man would go and purchase his wife (Jesus died on the cross). That young man would then go back to his father's house and build on an additional room to be his bride's room (Jesus in heaven building a mansion for us). When the room was done the young man would come back and retrieve his bride (the Rapture.)

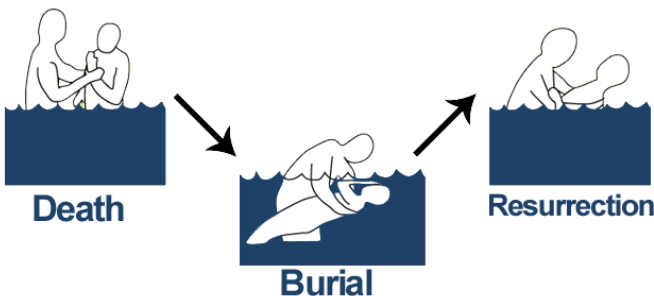
Finally the Church is described as the building of Christ. Jesus the Cornerstone in Psalms 118:22. Jesus is the Foundation of the Church in 1 Corinthians 3:11. Finally, Jesus is seen as the Builder of the Church in Matthew 16:18. The church is given by God and is built on Jesus Christ. Jesus is the corner stone upon which the church is built and everything that the church stands for is centered upon Him.

In summary it is easy to see by all of these different names or pictures of the church that salvation is set up to be experience as a group. It's all about being together as a community. We cannot grow in the faith and live our lives by ourselves.

What else is the church supposed to be doing? Primarily there are two **ordinances** that Christ prescribed as an outward duty or an expression of our testimony to be done by the Church. The two ordinances are baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Baptism is a symbol of the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. In baptism, the believer is testifying that they are "in Christ" when He died on the cross, that they are buried with Him, and that they have risen to newness of life because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

"BURIED WITH HIM IN BAPTISM,
WHEREIN ALSO YE ARE RISEN WITH
HIM THROUGH FAITH OF THE
OPERATION OF GOD, WHO HATH
RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD."
COLOSSIANS. 6:3-4



Before a person can be baptized, they must understand enough to be saved. Like the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:35-37, some people will need detailed instruction before they will understand God's way of salvation. In some people it may take years of instruction. Once a person has been instructed in the way of salvation and has accepted Christ as their Savior, they are ready to follow the Lord in baptism. The Bible order is always salvation first, then baptism. “

THEN THEY THAT GLADLY RECEIVED
HIS WORD WERE BAPTIZED: AND THE
SAME DAY THERE WERE ADDED
UNTO THEM ABOUT THREE
THOUSAND SOULS.” ACTS 2:4

“AND AS THEY WENT ON THEIR WAY,
THEY CAME UNTO A CERTAIN
WATER: AND THE EUNUCH SAID, SEE,
HERE IS WATER; WHAT DOTH
HINDER ME TO BE BAPTIZED? AND
PHILIP SAID, IF THOU BELIEVEST
WITH ALL THINE HEART, THOU
MAYEST. AND HE ANSWERED AND

SAID, I BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST
IS THE SON OF GOD. AND HE
COMMANDED THE CHARIOT TO
STAND STILL: AND THEY WENT
DOWN BOTH INTO THE WATER,
BOTH PHILIP AND THE EUNUCH; AND
HE BAPTIZED HIM.” ACTS 8:36-38

The **Lord's Supper** is explained in each of the four gospels; Matt. 26:26-30, Mark 14:22-26, Luke 22:17-20 and John 13:2-10. Jesus instituted it on the night He was betrayed. In 1 Corinthians 11, the apostle Paul discusses in detail the meaning of the Lord's Supper.

FOR I HAVE RECEIVED OF THE LORD
THAT WHICH ALSO I DELIVERED
UNTO YOU, THAT THE LORD JESUS
THE SAME NIGHT IN WHICH HE WAS
BETRAYED TOOK BREAD: AND WHEN
HE HAD GIVEN THANKS, HE BROKE IT,
AND SAID, TAKE, EAT: THIS IS MY
BODY, WHICH IS BROKEN FOR YOU:
THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.
AFTER THE SAME MANNER ALSO HE
TOOK THE CUP, WHEN HE HAD
SUPPED, SAYING, THIS CUP IS THE
NEW TESTAMENT IN MY BLOOD:
THIS DO YE, AS OFT AS YE DRINK IT,
IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME. FOR AS

OFTEN AS YE EAT THIS BREAD, AND
DRINK THIS CUP, YE DO SHEW THE
LORD'S DEATH TILL HE COME." 1
CORINTHIANS 11:23-26

The Lord's supper has roots in the **Passover** feast of the Old Testament. It was the Passover meal that Christ shared with His disciples the night He was betrayed. The Passover looked ahead to what Christ would do; the Lord's Supper looks back to what Christ did. We are to observe the Lord's Supper in remembrance of what Christ did for us on the cross of Calvary. One of the reasons the Lord's Supper and baptism is considered to be an ordinance is that it was practiced in the early church as well as being explicitly commanded by Christ (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-42,46).

Lastly, the church provides us with a place to grow and become equipped to evangelize the world. The church has the purpose to evangelize to the lost.

"GO YE THEREFORE, AND TEACH ALL
NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE
NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE
SON AND OF THE HOLY GHOST:
TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL
THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE
COMMANDED YOU: AND, LO, I AM

WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN UNTO THE
END OF THE WORLD. AMEN.”
MATTHEW 28:19-20

To **evangelize** is to share the knowledge of salvation from God, which we have experienced firsthand and then to bring it to other people. Evangelism is converting unbelievers to faith in Jesus by the preaching of God’s word.

Evangelism is a
process of
communication.

Evangelism produces
spiritual life.

Evangelism meets
needs.

Evangelism sharing
the good news of the
gospel.

Evangelism is leading
people to a personal
relationship with
Christ.

WORSHIP

There is still quite a bit more that the church does for its community. It first provides a place of worship for the believers. Acts 2:46-47 reads,

“AND THEY, CONTINUING DAILY
WITH ONE ACCORD IN THE TEMPLE,
AND BREAKING BREAD FROM HOUSE
TO HOUSE, DID EAT THEIR MEAT
WITH GLADNESS AND SINGLENESS
OF HEART, PRAISING GOD, AND
HAVING FAVOUR WITH ALL THE
PEOPLE...”

This implies that while individuals can praise God by themselves, that it is also in order for the community to gather together to share testimony and give praise to God. There is a deep inward fellowship that the biblical writers called “koinonia.” It was worshipful fellowship that experiences the power of the Spirit.

An easy way to describe our worship gatherings is a conversation with God. He is always seen as the one that initiates worship and we respond (John 4:23-24). God seeks worshippers and we gather as a reaction to His blessing to give back praise.

God blesses us so we gather to
give praise.

We respond by
gathering

God calls us to worship.

We respond by
praising God.

God speaks to us through His
preached Word

We respond through
prayer.

God sends us out to obey

We respond by obeying

There are many expressions of worship. However, any of these expressions must be accompanied with a spirit of truth and not be from the flesh (John 4:23-24).

Expressions of Worship

- Prayer
- Scripture Reading
- Testimony
- Singing/Music
- Baptism
- Communion/Feetwashing
- Tithe/offering
- Marching
- Running
- Shouting, and more

FELLOWSHIP & ACCOUNTABILITY

Being active in a local church's fellowship is not an option. In Hebrews 10:23-25, we are told:

“LET US HOLD FAST THE PROFESSION
OF OUR FAITH WITHOUT WAVERING;
(FOR HE IS FAITHFUL THAT
PROMISED;) AND LET US CONSIDER
ONE ANOTHER TO PROVOKE UNTO
LOVE AND TO GOOD WORKS: NOT
FORSAKING THE ASSEMBLING OF
OURSELVES TOGETHER, AS THE
MANNER OF SOME IS; BUT
EXHORTING ONE ANOTHER: AND SO
MUCH THE MORE, AS YE SEE THE
DAY APPROACHING.”

It is through the fellowship of Christian believers that we are encouraged and challenged to keep strong in the faith. We help push each other on.

Secondly, the church provides us with a place where we develop healthy relationships with other people. Growth within the church is dependent on the quality of the relationships between believers. Some of the major principles that lend to building of relationships in the church challenge believers to edify, confess faults, forbear, empathize, submit to, accept, forgive and admonish one another.

The Apostle Paul noted in Ephesians 4:3 that unity of the Spirit is an endeavor we need to pursue.

Conflict among God's people is possible but it can be beneficial. The following diagram helps us handle conflict in a way that brings glory to God.

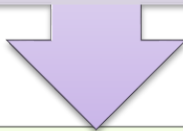
Glorify God

How can I please and honor God in this situation?



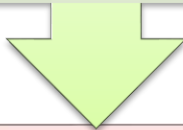
Get the Log Out of Your Own Eye

How can I show Jesus' work in me by taking responsibility for my contribution to this conflict?



Gently Restore

How can I lovingly serve others by helping them take responsibility for their contribution to this conflict?



Go and be reconciled

How can I demonstrate the forgiveness of God and encourage a reasonable solution to this conflict?

THE PURSUIT OF GOD

A truth seen in scripture is that there are many battles in our life. All temptations and times of our soul feeling oppression can all have an affect on our relationship with God if we are not faithful to Him. Whether they are financial, physical, mental, or relationships with family, friends and neighbors, each can trip us. How can we pursue God and maintain our experience with Him with the knowledge that the Devil is in hot pursuit of us?

“BE SOBER, BE VIGILANT; BECAUSE
YOUR ADVERSARY THE DEVIL, AS A
ROARING LION, WALKETH ABOUT
SEEKING WHOM HE MAY DEVOUR”
(1 PETER 5:8).

To start we must remember to be strong in our prayer life. We must be open to God and be aware of our constant need of Him. The verse above reminds us of the ferocious nature of the Devil who works against us. Reading on we are reminded,

“WHOM RESIST STEDFAST IN THE
FAITH, KNOWING THAT THE SAME
AFFLICTIONS ARE ACCOMPLISHED IN
YOUR BRETHREN THAT ARE IN THE
WORLD. BUT THE GOD OF ALL

GRACE, WHO HATH CALLED US UNTO
HIS ETERNAL GLORY BY CHRIST
JESUS, AFTER THAT YE HAVE
SUFFERED A WHILE, MAKE YOU
PERFECT, STABLISH, STRENGTHEN,
SETTLE YOU.” 1 PETER 5:9-10

Secondly, we must guard our thoughts and not entertain temptations in our hearts. The Bible tells us that sin comes from the heart.

“BUT THOSE THINGS WHICH
PROCEED OUT OF THE MOUTH COME
FORTH FROM THE HEART; AND THEY
DEFILE THE MAN. FOR OUT OF THE
HEART PROCEED EVIL THOUGHTS,
MURDERS, ADULTERIES,
FORNICATIONS, THEFTS, FALSE
WITNESS, BLASPHEMIES: THESE ARE
THE THINGS WHICH DEFILE A MAN.”
MATTHEW 15:18-20

Any hope of escaping temptation first begins in the heart. If a sinful thought or desire is not dealt with immediately, it may lead to sinful behavior. This is done through prayer, confession with brothers and sisters, and by reading the Bible. At the first feeling of a tempting thought, it may be of some help to quote a scripture verse, sing a hymn, or call a friend.

By drawing our thoughts to God we receive deliverance from temptation.

It also helps to establish patterns of holy living by maintaining Biblical standards. There has to be a consistency in our thinking and actions to continue to grow as a disciple of Jesus. Godly actions and deeds come from a heart that is kept pure and a life that is disciplined by prayer and the Bible. God commands believers to be holy and blameless in their thoughts and actions simply because He is holy (1 Peter 1:15, Leviticus 11:44). We do not practice the morality of world. We are called to live according to the truths taught in the holy word of God.

The call to holiness though is commitment and obedience of our whole self to God. As we strive to live as Christ taught we gain the mind of Christ.

“I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST:
NEVERTHELESS I LIVE; YET NOT I,
BUT CHRIST LIVETH IN ME: AND THE
LIFE WHICH I NOW LIVE IN THE
FLESH I LIVE BY THE FAITH OF THE
SON OF GOD, WHO LOVED ME, AND
GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME” (GALATIANS
2:20). “LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU,
WHICH WAS ALSO IN CHRIST JESUS.”
PHILIPPIANS 2:5

We become transformed by that mind and we become living examples of God's will. This will be seen in our pattern of living.

Being a disciple of Christ does not come without discipline. God has given us the power and strength we need but this does not rule out our responsibility. We are to make every effort that the Spirit enables to do these things. To grow spiritually, we must be disciplined in every area of life: social, mental, emotional, physical, and moral. Dealing with these areas are very important. The most important disciplines gain in our lives are still the daily practices of studying God's Word and prayer. These disciplines must be established if we are to overcome this world.

GLOSSARY

Words in Bold

Adoption – The act of God where He pronounces a believer as a child of God.

Baptism – The act of being fully immersed in water signifying a believer's commitment in Jesus. Portraying the believer's death, burial, and resurrection.

Bible – The sixty-six God inspired writings of holy men revealing God, His will towards creation, and His involvement with it.

Church – First, those from all nations and all times that have followed God. Secondly, those in local areas that meet to worship and minister to God.

Curse – In reference of scripture it is the withholding or blocking of a blessing that negatively affects the quality of life.

Devil – Once a beautiful angel in heaven till pride and sin was found in him. Referred to as the tempter and accuser of all people. A personal enemy to all people and worker of evil against the will of God.

Doctrine – Simply means “teaching.” Christian doctrines is the teachings of the Bible.

Essence – In reference to the trinity this term covers the attributes that make up someone or something.

Eternity – A plane of existence in which there is no time. Thus no beginning or end.

Evangelize – To go and share the good news of the gospel.

Evolution – A theory about creation in which chance is heavily relied on. That what we see now has always been in some other form. That what we see now has common ancestors or lineage.

Faith – Trust and belief in Jesus Christ and His Word.

General Revelation – The idea that God has made Himself known through the natural creation.

Goodness – In reference to God it is His blessings on all people.

Grace – Unmerited favor and unlimited love.

Heaven – The place of eternal rest and peace for those who believe and follow Jesus.

Hell – The place of eternal torment for those who do not follow Jesus.

Heresy – teachings that are not in line with normal teachings of the church and scripture.

Holy – Quality of God in which He is separate from creation, pure, and righteous. Holiness is His possession alone.

Image – A special quality of imitation or mirroring the nature of another.

Immanence – Term referring to the nearness of God to creation.

Iniquity – Living in “lawlessness.” Acting in a way as though there is no governing laws.

Inspiration – In regard to the Bible, this term signifies the way that God breathed upon the writers of the scriptures.

Interpretation – Observing and finding the meaning of a scripture.

Justice – God’s ability to do what He wants with what is His.

Justification – the act of God by which He pronounces freedom from sin upon believers.

Lord's Supper – The act of partaking of the Jesus' blood and body and receiving the benefits it brings.

Mercy – The act of showing favor on those that deserve punishment.

Moral Attributes – the attributes of God that part of who He is like or the common traits of the Trinity's personalities.

Natural Attributes – The attributes of God that are part of His abilities.

Omniscience – The idea that God is all knowing.

Omnipotent – The idea that God is all powerful.

Ordinance – A prescribed duty or act.

Pagan – Refers to religious traditions and beliefs that are anything other than Christian.

Pantheism – the belief that God or the gods are a part of creation and are inseparable.

Passage – In regard to the Bible, this term refers to a certain group of scriptures for reading or study.

Passover – A Jewish feast celebrating the passing over of the death angel while in Egypt and deliverance of Israel away from slavery.

Persons – In reference to the Trinity, this term refers to the qualities of personhood or what makes someone or something a unique and individual person.

Prayer – First, an intentional act of devotion and intercession in which a person has conversation of God. Secondly, an awareness of God's constant presence.

Prophecy – First, a special revelation of God about things in the future. Second, a discourse on the Word of God.

Repentance – The willful turning away from a sinful lifestyle to a life of discipline and commitment to God.

Righteousness – It is right doing and right living. Choosing right and never wrong. Choosing Good and never evil.

Salvation – The state of God's grace upon the soul of a person that believes and follows after Jesus Christ. The results are release from past sins, transformation in the present life with the ability to live victoriously over sin, and in the future from the presence of temptation and sin.

Sanctification – The nature of grace that brings transformation in people’s life. First seen in the awakening of sinner’s consciousness to sin called conviction. Then in the instant transformation also called the new birth. Followed by a remainder of life in transformation toward an entirely sanctified life. Ending with a final sanctification or glorification in which the believer is taken to heaven.

Sermon – a special discourse on Word of God meant to teach, encourage, and warn.

Sin – First, the referring to the nature of mankind that shows through in willful rebellion against God. Secondly, the acts of willful and ignorant breaking of God’s law.

Soul – the eternal part of human kind.

Special Revelation – the idea that God has revealed Himself personally to individuals who in turn wrote down the interaction. The Bible is the special revelation of God.

Spirit – the spiritual consciousness toward God in human kind.

Theophany – Special appearances of God in physical forms.

Transcendence – The idea that God is infinitely above all creation in His attributes.

Transgression - Breaking the law of God.

Trinity – Though not found in the Bible this term is easily seen in its teaching. It is the teaching of One God in Three Persons.

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