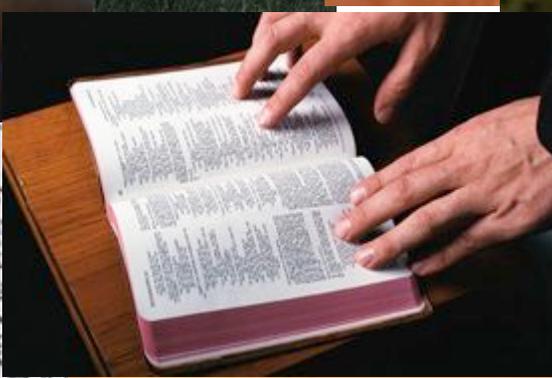




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שענו אליו ישענו:



בדים אל יד אדונים, באנו לפניך גדונים. והושיענו אליו
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אלהי ישענו: הו נשנו טום במתען. עדיך נחום ותיון,
בשנו והושיענו אלהי ישענו: זכת הלב ודבש. נא אל
ט טאבת חתום, והושיענו אלהי ישענו: מעט כשאקה. בוד
ישל צדים אל אמנה, והושיענו אלהי ישענו: כרת ברית

MEANING IN GOD



Bible Study Handbook

A resource for leading our friends to Christ and strengthening disciples

Atlanta Metropolitan Christian Church Edition (2009)

(Slightly modified from Original Philadelphia Version of 2004)

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the many people who contributed to this handbook. First of all, we give thanks to God the Father for adopting us into his family. We give thanks to God the Son, Jesus the Messiah who died in our place so that we could be free from enslavement to sin. We thank God the Holy Spirit who continually reminds us that we are sinners who have been forgiven, who gives us the strength to say no to sin, and who empowers us and teaches us to live godly lives day by day.

We'd also like to thank the brothers and sisters of the Greater Philadelphia Church of Christ, especially those who sacrificed some of their time, thought, and energy to submit studies for this handbook. Whether or not your study was included in this edition, we appreciate your effort and desire to help others to know and follow God's Word.

We thank the leadership of the Greater Philadelphia Church of Christ for proposing and supporting the idea for this handbook, for submitting the "Life and Doctrine" studies, and especially for their assistance in publishing and making this handbook available to all of the members of the Greater Philadelphia Church of Christ.

We thank the teachers and leaders of the San Diego Church of Christ, especially Jeff Chacon, for granting us permission to include their studies in this handbook. Much study, care, and thought went into creating the San Diego studies with the intent of simply presenting the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ.

We thank Douglas Jacoby for graciously allowing us to include many studies from his book, *Shining Like Stars, Millenium Edition*. Our handbook, in some ways, is simply our local attempt to provide the type of guidance that Doug has provided for churches all over the world for decades. You can thank Doug personally by contacting him at www.DouglasJacoby.com.

We also would like to thank Phil Arsenault for contributing the studies for teens. We often say that our children are the future of Christianity. Teens are, in fact, the vanguard of Christianity not just for future generations, but right now. By helping our teens to grow and thrive as Christians, we help many more people than we know.

Finally, thanks to Chris MacDonald, Rob Ferry, and Joey Harris for compiling, editing, reviewing, and putting the handbook into its final form. We owe a special thanks to Chris who designed for the studies a single, common format, which is both easy to look at and easy to use.

Please give us feedback for the next edition of the book either personally or by sending email to handbook@gpcc.org.

Rob Ferry and Joey Harris
April, 2004

WHAT IS THE BIBLE STUDY HANDBOOK?

You are holding in your hand a new and exciting Bible study resource! In this novel handbook, you have access to nearly 140 self-contained Bible studies, encompassing over 300 pages of information - all in one place, all searchable by keyword or scripture, and all in a standardized format to make navigation simple. We have provided this resource on CD-ROM (saving a few trees!) so that you can search the document and print out individual studies as you need them. The handbook is a reference tool designed to provide years of use as we study the Bible ourselves, with fellow disciples, and with the lost.

This document was reviewed by the Evangelists, Teacher, and Interim Leadership Group of the Greater Philadelphia church of Christ (GPCC) for overall accuracy (Are the scripture references correct? Are the conclusions sound?) and for spelling and grammatical correctness, as well as stylistic uniformity. We purposefully have allowed latitude for a variety of personal opinions and differing viewpoints. As such, the finished product does not constitute a formal doctrinal statement of the Greater Philadelphia Church of Christ or of any other church using this material.

Where Did This Handbook Come From, Anyway?

The GPCC Bible Study Handbook took a lot longer and ended up a lot bigger than we originally had in mind. One of the many issues discussed by the brothers and sisters of the GPCC in 2003 was the role of "the Studies" in helping people to become Christians. Some felt that the studies themselves were problematic, while others felt that the studies were fine (believing that it was their (mis)use by some people that had caused problems). There were people saying that we didn't need to have any set group of studies at all, we could "just use the Bible." Others pointed out the need for some sort of guidance, especially for those who were new to the Scriptures themselves. Many members expressed a desire to continue studying the Bible with their friends and family, but wanted to have a little help as to how to do so effectively.

With this in mind, the church leadership proposed an evangelistic bible study handbook which would include studies from anyone in the congregation who wished to participate. The hope was that doing it this way would make it less likely to be biased than having a single person simply draft up a new set of studies. It would also involve the entire congregation creatively and allow the Spirit to use the gifts of many instead of just a few.

Rob Ferry and I explained this proposal to the entire church in early September of 2003 and gave some guidelines as to the format of submissions. The goal was "to create a handbook of Bible studies which members can use to help their non-Christian friends **come to Christ** and help their fellow brothers and sisters to **mature in Christ.**" We asked "anyone who is an active member of the GPCC to submit their favorite Bible study that teaches a topic important in **converting someone to Christ** or instructs a current disciple how to **mature in their walk with Christ.**"

Over the next few months, we collected submissions from the congregation. To these we added the "Life and Doctrine" series developed by Walter Evans and taught to the church early in 2003, as well as some studies specifically for teens (although these studies are great for any age!). We also asked the San Diego Church of Christ if we could include the set of studies that they had developed earlier in the year based upon the basic gospel message as preached and taught by the apostles in the New Testament. Finally, we received permission from Douglas Jacoby to include studies from the Millennium Edition of "*Shining Like Stars*" (for more information on this book, please see www.DouglasJacoby.com or www.dpibooks.com).

So that's how we got to the book you now hold in your virtual hands. Now we'll look at what this handbook is for and how to use the handbook.

What's the Purpose of This Handbook?

Let me begin by stating what this handbook is not:

- This handbook is **not** an infallible or complete guide to Christian doctrine and practice. The New Testament, however, **is**.
- This handbook is **not** your only (or even main) source of information on how to study the Bible. The Bible should always be your first and major focus. This handbook is one of many aids to help to be more effective as you study the Bible with others.
- This handbook is **not** a set of studies that you must go through in a particular order. In some cases, it may make sense to present some concepts before others (e.g., who Jesus is and the message of the Cross before you study the meaning of baptism). However, this is really up to you. We try to give you some indication of this in the studies themselves, but the final decision is up to the Holy Spirit, you, and to some extent the person with whom you are studying.
- This handbook does **not** take the place of working alongside other disciples to learn from those who have more experience or biblical knowledge. It is both beneficial and encouraging to share the gospel "two by two" with others. Many of you will use the studies intended as helps for Christian growth, however, in private, personal study, or with others in "one another" relationships, or even in bible discussion and discipleship groups.

This handbook is meant to provide a number of studies on many different topics that pertain to teaching someone the basics of Christianity: who Jesus is and how to begin following him, how to become a Christian, how to live the Christian life as part of a local church which in turn is part of the Body of Christ, and how to grow to be more like Jesus as you live out your daily life. Instead of a single set of pre-defined topics and studies, you now have an entire book of studies from which you can select the ones which best meet the needs of the person with whom you are studying. Each study gives some indication of the intended audience (*e.g.*, a person who is not yet a Christian but wishes to be, a person of a different faith, a fellow believer, a new disciple, a teen disciple, a family member, etc.).

The handbook is divided into four sections

Section One - studies submitted by members which cover the "basics" for helping someone to become a disciple

Section Two - studies submitted by members which will help mature disciples

Section Three - studies submitted by members that don't easily fit in the first two sections, for example, specialty topics for the non-Christian, and special helps for the mature Christian.

Section Four - studies NOT submitted by GPCC members OR Study Series

- GPCC Life and Doctrine Series from Winter 2003
- Teen Character Studies
- San Diego Studies
- Selected studies from *Shining Like Stars, Millennium Edition*

How Do I Use This Handbook?

There is **no single right way** to use this handbook. The following is **one way (but not the only way)** it can be used:

1. When you've reached the point at which you and your friend have agreed to study the Bible together, take a few moments to discuss with them what you might study. Most people will appreciate you asking them about their needs. You can talk about a range of things that they would be interested in studying, but you should be able to soon identify something you both can agree upon as what you should study first (or next, if you've already studied together). Before you have this conversation, look through the handbook and think about what you already know about the person. Try to anticipate what some of their needs might be so that you can give them a helpful answer if they say, "I don't really know. What do you think we should study?"
2. Once you've agreed upon what you're studying, take some time to go over the study yourself. If you can, try to give the person with whom you are studying the Scriptures that you'll be studying together ahead of time so that they can read them in context and think about them. This may deepen their conviction, allow them to have better questions, and expands the opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work in their heart through the Scriptures.
3. After studying (and if appropriate, praying) together, try to generate a list of questions that arose during the study. Use these questions to determine what you should study next or in the near future.
4. You will notice that in some instances there are several different studies for the same topic (e.g., Repentance or Cross or Word). This represents the fact that different individuals submitted separate studies on the same topic. You can examine the studies and chose the one which you believe would be most applicable for the person with whom you are studying. Just as there are different recipes for Chocolate cake to suit every taste, there are different, yet equally effective, approaches to studying individual Bible topics with someone.
5. The handbook was designed to work like a cook book, meaning that just as different recipes call for different ingredients in differing amounts to make the same dish (e.g., a Chocolate cake) the people we study with will be converted by God using differing groups of studies. For example, someone who already has a deep conviction about the Bible being the word of God and who reads daily and who is applying it to his or her life already likely won't need to do a Word study. In contrast, you may encounter a religious person who has some doubts about the word of God. In this instance, using a couple or three of the Word studies in the handbook may help to alleviate their doubt about the accuracy and authenticity of the Bible.
6. Lastly, to make a solid decision for Christ, certain basics of the Christian faith need to be studied. For more direction on what these topics are, consult the LIFE AND DOCTRINE series or the GOSPEL STUDY GUIDE, both of which appear in this handbook. Topics such as Jesus, the Word of God, sin, the cross, repentance, grace, false doctrines, baptism, and God's church will likely be required for most of our friends who study the Bible.

If you need help, just ask a disciple you respect for help. Try to keep in mind that some concepts will need several studies before they are clear (e.g., church life, humility, grace) and some are foundational for every other study (e.g., who Jesus is and the meaning of the Cross). We did ask those who submitted studies to indicate whether their study was dependent upon any previous studies or knowledge. But you will have to give each selection careful thought. Remember that you are working with the other person to help them grow in the knowledge of God and that God is in control of the entire process.

What If Something I Need to Study Isn't In This Handbook?

That's OK! As we said before, this handbook is not complete. In fact, it's not closed either. You will definitely come across issues which aren't addressed by any study in this handbook. When this happens, search the Scriptures for some answers to your question or issue. Try to develop a simple study based on what you learn from the Bible. Ask others for their opinion and advice on the study. If you and others find the study helpful in helping others, then please consider submitting it for the next edition of the handbook. We'd love to have more studies. Our intention for this handbook is that it may serve as a helpful resource of the church, by the church, and for the growth of the church to the glory of God. Enjoy!

Joey Harris
April, 2004

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**SECTION ONE:
BIBLE STUDIES FOR
HELPING SOMEONE
TO BECOME A
DISCIPLE**



Studies submitted by members

Seeking God



Someone just
starting to seek
God

Theme: Who is God

Purpose: Simple and quick study to introduce someone to God and
Jesus

Main Study

What do you know about God?



Acts 17:18-28

Unknown God to knowledge of him doesn't equate to belief
God set everything as is so that perhaps you might seek him out.
Nothing happens by coincidence.



Jeremiah 29:11-13

God has a plan for you and only he knows it.
To prosper you, not to harm you, to give you hope
How could you seek him with all your heart?



Exodus 3:13-15

Who does God say he is?



John 8:58

Who does Jesus say he is? (John 1:1-2; 14:6-8)

Conclusion

Jesus is God in the Flesh

Study out the scriptures. (Luke 24:27; 44-45)

FAITH



Someone from a
non-Christian
background

Theme: Faith

Purpose: To introduce the concept of faith, to show where it comes from, how to get it, and why it's so important.

Main Study

 **Mark 11:22-24**

Faith is powerful! God wants us to have faith.

 **Hebrews 11:1, 6**

Q What is faith?

Q Why do you think God wants us to have faith in him?

 **Romans 10:17**

Where does faith come from? Reading the Bible, hearing the Word preached

 **Mark 1:35, Luke 5:15-16**

This is where Jesus got his faith: bible study, prayer.

 **James 2:14-17**

Q How can you tell if someone has faith?

A Look at the fruit of their life.

Challenges

Q Do you want more faith?

Q Are you willing to do what it takes to get faith?

Set up next bible study.

Importance of God's Word



Non-Christians

Theme: Word of God

Purpose: To teach what the Word of God can do

Main Study

 **Romans 10:17**

Faith in God comes from the Word.

Q What is the message? (the Good News of Christ)

 **James 1:21; 1 Corinthians 15:1-2**

The Word can save you.

Q How does it save you?

 **I Timothy 4:16**

Fight Against Temptation to Sin (**Matthew 4:1-11**)

Q How did Jesus fight against temptation?

Q What is significant about Satan using scripture to tempt Jesus?

 **II Timothy 3:16-17**

The Word can fully equip you.

Q How does it equip you?

 **I Peter 3:15**

Give hope to others

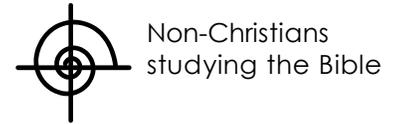
Q What is your hope based on?

Conclusion

 **Mark 12:24**

Q How important is the Word of God to you?

Jesus is The Word



Theme: A Word of God study through the Gospel of John

Purpose: To develop conviction about the Word of God

Introduction

There is a phrase that goes, “Change is good” and rightly so. But it’s helpful to know that some things in this world don’t need to change, like the Bible. Even Jesus declares, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” [Matt 24:35] Even if everything seems upside down in our lives, the Bible, the words of God, can remain the constant rock we need to hold to weather the storms of life.

Main Study

John 1:1-5, 14

Discuss some things you see in this passage.

Why ‘Word’ is capitalized; how long Jesus has been around

Why “the darkness has not understood it”? The Word becoming flesh

John 6:35

Q What does this passage mean?

A How is it that we’ll never go hungry if we come to Jesus? (His words are food for our soul. [See Matt. 4:4])

John 6:66-69

Background on this passage is that Jesus just got finished teaching some ‘new’ concepts to his disciples and the crowd

Q Why would many disciples turn back and no longer follow him?

A They didn’t like his “words”, i.e.,

Q “What he was teaching?”

Q In contrast, what was Peter’s response?

A “You have **the words** of eternal life.” (Even if you don’t like the truth, that doesn’t change the facts!)

John 8:31-32

Q What was Jesus charge to the Jews that believed him?

A Put it into practice. (Belief alone is not obedience; I may believe & know something is right, but still *choose* not to do it. Jesus called them to put their belief in his words into action.)

Q How does Jesus say we can know the truth?

A By holding to his teachings (words).

Q What’s the benefit of knowing the truth --- wealth & ‘easy-street’?

A Knowing the truth can set you free from a life of slavery to sin.

John 12:47-50

Lots to talk about here! Let’s take it 1 verse at a time.

v. 47

- Q What does Jesus say about the person who does not “keep” (obey) his words?
- Q Why did Jesus come to earth?
- A To save us!! (Very encouraging to know!)

v. 48

- Q If Jesus is not the judge, who or what is? God? Moses? The 12 Apostles?
- A There is a judge. According to the verse, we (all people) will be judged according to “the very words which [Jesus] spoke”. Rejecting Jesus & not accepting his words will lead to condemnation. (Church attendance or giving away a lot of money will not get you to Heaven.)

v. 49

- Q Where did Jesus get his “material” from? How did he know what to teach?
- Q Did Jesus put his own “spin” or interpretation on what he heard?
- Q How do we know?
- A The Bible says he was told WHAT & HOW to say it. It’s right from God!

v. 50

- Q Do these words & teachings only result in a good moral earthly life?
- Q Does it only keep you out of prison & on God’s “good side”?
- A Jesus’ words from God lead to eternal life; eternity in Heaven with them.

Conclusion

Review aloud the main points that you learned today. Pray and put God’s words into action.

Who Jesus Is



"Pagan," Jew,
person from non-
Christian
background

Theme: Introduction to who Jesus is

Purpose: To establish that Jesus existed and begin to develop a faith in Jesus

Main Study

1. Jesus is an historical fact

 **Luke 1:1-5**

Luke, a doctor, researched all of this very carefully; not just fanciful fiction

 **Matt 1:1-17**

Jesus' lineage - he didn't just appear out of nowhere

 **Luke 2:1-7**

Luke sets the historical time period and background for Jesus' life

2. Jesus' impact

 **Acts 1:8**

Jesus' impact has spread all over the world.

* Discuss things that have been impacted by Jesus (i.e. the year we live in, based on the date of his birth; the Bible is the #1 bestseller of all time, translated into hundreds of different languages)

* Share vulnerably about how your life has personally been impacted by Jesus

3. Jesus is from God

 **Hebrews 1:1-3**

 **John 1:1-5, 14**

The way to get to know God is through Jesus.

 Do you believe that Jesus existed and is from God?

Challenge

Read 1 chapter from the book of Mark every day, write down what you've learned about Jesus. Share what you've learned when we get together next week - set up the next study.

Three Characteristics of Jesus



Someone from a non-Christian background

Theme: Different aspects of Jesus' character

Purpose: To introduce a non-believer to different, possibly surprising aspects about Jesus' character, and inspire them to become more like Jesus

Introduction

 **1 John 2:3-6**

The way we get to know God is by living how Jesus lived. It doesn't matter what we say, or who we claim to be. Now, how did Jesus live?

Main Study

Love of Jesus:

 **John 13:1-5, 12-17**

Jesus showed love by serving, considering others more important than himself. He called us to do the same thing.

Zeal of Jesus:

 **John 2:13-17**

Jesus was zealous to clear the temple, the place where people worshiped God, of anything impure. Are you surprised he went to such extremes?

Q How do you expect Jesus to be?

 **1 Cor 6:19-20**

God describes our bodies as his temple, and zealously wants to keep his temple pure.

Q What steps do you need to take to accomplish this?

Humility of Jesus:

 **Matthew 18:2-3**

Jesus lifted up a little child.

Q What qualities of children do you think we need to imitate?

A (*i.e.*, willingness to learn, always asking questions, lots of faith and trust)

Challenge

Choose one of these 3 qualities to work on this week. Set up a study for the next week.

Jesus: The Resurrection



Someone from a
non-Christian
background

Theme: Jesus' resurrection

Purpose: To teach about Jesus' death and resurrection and develop a faith in the power of God

Introduction

 **1 Cor 15:3-8, 11-19**

The resurrection is crucial to the Christian faith; belief in it is not optional

Main Study

 **Mark 15:15-16:14**

Read aloud an account of Jesus' death and resurrection:

 **Matt 16:21**

Jesus predicted his own death and resurrection many times.

Q How do some people try to “explain away” the resurrection?

A Jesus wasn't dead? John 19:31-35

A Hoax by the disciples?

 **Luke 23:55-24:3, 24:9-12**

They were surprised

 **John 20:25**

They demanded proof

Just about all of them were martyred for their beliefs!

 **Acts 4:13**

There's power behind the resurrection!

 **Acts 17:30-31**

Power to change our lives

Share how the resurrection has changed your life!

Challenge

Choose to believe in Jesus and the resurrection.

Read more accounts, keep studying and praying.

Go on to study about the Word of God.

Set up next bible study.

Why the Cross?



Anyone considering becoming a disciple or a mature Christian needing to be reminded of where he/she stands with God.

Theme: We all deserve death and eternal separation from God, but God's expression of unequivocal love, allowing his son to die on the cross carrying our sins, saved us and allowed God to stay faithful to his word.

Purpose: To teach someone that Jesus' death on the cross may be hard to understand, but it was the only way for God to make it possible for us to make it to heaven and be with God forever rather than separated from him forever. To gain appreciation for God's/Jesus' sacrifice and their love for us and to reinforce the fact that our behavior, good or bad, in no way makes any difference in our salvation.

Main Study

1 Cor. 1:18-21

- We are clue-less when it comes to understanding the cross
- Historically hard for Jews, Greeks, others to believe that a powerful God, the creator would make himself weak to the point of death on a cross
- Today it is easy to become hardened reading the account of the crucifixion and not be moved; we have a hard time "connecting" with God
- VS 21, the Bible says in fact we cannot come to know God by human reasoning

Genesis 2:17 – God's Directive

- God's initial statement of fact; if you eat from the tree you will die- its unequivocal
- Also Romans 6:23 and Romans 3:23—all mankind has sinned and is under a death sentence

Isaiah 59:1-2—The Effect of Sin

- The effect of our sin is that it literally separates us from God; we are incapable of being in his presence. Hell indeed was experienced by Jesus on the cross because he was separated from God for bearing our sins.

Romans 5:6-10—God's Solution

- The only way for God to stay true to his word and at the same time save us from ETERNAL separation
- God purchased our redemption
- We bring absolutely NOTHING to the table. We cannot be good enough, do enough good deeds, donate enough money, pray enough to merit ANYTHING from God.

EXAMPLE: A Christian (according to the Bible) reverts back to sinful ways, gets drunk and is killed in an auto accident. He still goes to heaven even though he died under sinful circumstances because his behavior, good or bad, has no impact on his being saved by God's graceful gift. (This in no way is a license to sin; also, perpetual, deliberate sin can result in loss of forgiveness – **Hebrews 10:26-31**)

1 John 1:7-

- We need to continually be open with God and others about our sin. If we do the blood Jesus spilled on the cross will continue to purify us and renew God's purchase of our redemption
- While it is true that we cannot do anything to merit salvation, if we don't confess our sins and strive to live a Godly life we are essentially saying Jesus sacrifice is meaningless to us and our sin that hurts God is OK (see Romans 6:1-2).

Conclusion

Throughout history, man has failed to understand and even scoffed at the crucifixion of Jesus as unnecessary and unworthy treatment of our God. Even so, our wisdom is incapable of understanding why it had to happen this way, except to say that the Bible tells us that without Jesus taking on the sins of all humanity we would not be capable of being in God's presence. But since God loves us and wants a relationship with us, he was willing to sacrifice his son and allow the two of them to be separated (the definition of hell: separation from God) and still live up to his word. There is absolutely nothing we can do to be with God, other than to rely TOTALLY on the redemption provided by Jesus!

A Cross for You



Non-Christians and
Christians

Theme: The arrest, trial, suffering and death of Jesus

Purpose: To move the reader to truly appreciate, take full responsibility for and respond to the Cross.

Main Study

The following comments are just guidelines. Your own convictions and heartfelt feelings and personal impact are far more convincing in helping someone take the cross personally.

1 Peter 3:18

- Sums up the purpose and incident of the Cross
- Your sin is the only reason Jesus would have ever had to die.
- He did all this to bring you near to God.
Tie in person's sin throughout this study, being specific and graphic.

John 12:21-33

- vs.27: Your sins caused Jesus to know when and the way He was going to die throughout His whole life.
- Imagine knowing every detail of your slow and agonizing death throughout your entire life. It would haunt you every day, yet Jesus never let it affect His ability to continually give to others.

Mark 14:34-43

- Vs. 34 Jesus is overwhelmed from because of the spiritual burden he is about to carry, which includes your sin and the sins of the world.
- Vs. 36 Jesus doesn't want to have to bear your sins, but He has to. Your sin is your responsibility, but Jesus bore the burden of your sin for you."

Mark 14:53-15:23

- Vs. 62 Jesus sealed His death and salvation for you by saying that He was the Son of God.
- Jesus didn't suffer from dying. He suffered from what He experienced before He died.
- 14:65, 15:15-20 - Jesus suffered throughout the night from approximately 10 pm to 6am: 8 continual hours of being struck in the head and face, being flogged, being spit upon repeatedly, being kicked while lying on the ground, mocked, insulted, etc.

Isaiah 52:13-16

- Jesus was unrecognizable and severely disfigured from all the blows to the head, His back being mangled, being kicked repeatedly while on the ground, etc.

Mark 15:24-37

- Jesus was crucified by?
- Jesus was hanging on the cross from 9am to 3pm.
- Vs 33-34 - Jesus assumed our sin and since God cannot have anything to do with sin, He had to turn His back on His own son. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

John 19:33-37

- The flow of blood and water leads us to believe that Jesus' heart had burst. Jesus experienced an emotional "broken heart", too, as a result of God turning His back on His son.

Isaiah 53:1-6

- Vs. 4-6 Your most serious sin is crucifying the Son of God
- Vs. 4-6 You can't receive forgiveness until you've accepted personal responsibility.
- Vs. 4-6 If you were the only one to ever live on this Earth, Jesus would have come down and died for your sin.

Conclusion

1 Peter 2:21-25

Christ's example calls us to respond to and participate to the cross in repentance, baptism, daily living and ultimately if so called to, death.

Suggestions

Watching a cross video, writing a letter of response to God, fasting the next day, etc.

Of First Importance



Those who are studying the Bible to become disciples or for disciples who need to gain a Godly perspective of Jesus' resurrection and the importance that it has in our lives.

Theme: Resurrection

Purpose: To teach that of first importance is: that Jesus died for our sins and was raised on the third day

Introduction

Life only seems to get busier and busier. Despite all of our advancements in technology, the pace at which we live our lives, especially in America, seems to gain speed! With responsibilities to our families, workplace, and communities, will we ever get the breather that we know that we need?

What are some of the things that are of first importance to you right now?

- Folding and sorting the laundry
- Taking care of the kids
- Preparing for the next exam
- Cleaning the house
- Making our finances work
- Planning our future: the next job, financial security, legal matters, etc.
- Worrying about our personal health or that of a family member/friend
- Preparing dinner
- Thinking about what others think of us
- Daydreaming about our future mate and our lives together
- Purchasing a home

Somehow, these things can always seem important, and yet are never finished projects.

Main Study

If God examined our lives.....what is on our minds and hearts...what would HE say is of first importance to us? Let's take a look at what God says is of first importance.

1. Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and was raised on the third day.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Q Do I really believe that Jesus died for my sins?

Q What specific sins (past and present) did he die for?

Pray that God gives us a soft conscience to be aware of our sins, so that we can repent of them and approach Jesus for forgiveness. (See Galatians 5:19-21, 2 Timothy 3:1-5, Romans 1:18-32, James 4:17). *Note: If this theme is new, a suggestion would be to do a complete study on sin and another on repentance. The remainder of this study could go hand-in-hand with a study on repentance.*

- Jesus was buried for 3 days. How not “good news” the good news would be if the story of Jesus ended here.
- Jesus rose from the dead to life again. Jesus' purpose was to conquer sin and then return to his father, but also to pave the way for God to be our father and our God without the hindrance of sin .

- John 20:10-18 Jesus says that he is returning to “my father and your father, to my God and your God”. How does this scripture make you feel? You can tell that Jesus himself was consumed not with his life on earth or on making plans for his departure from it, but with his relationship with God and seeing him in heaven. Do I share his consumption?

Q What can I do practically to get more in touch with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus?

2. We are meant to share in his resurrection. Romans 6:3-10

- Baptism provides our entrance into God’s grace. We were baptized “into” him. Where must we have been before that moment? How confident should I be in his grace after that moment?
- See the allusions to the most important events in our lives: our birth, marriage union, and death....baptism is all of these things: a birth into grace, a union with Jesus, and a death to our sins. Wow!

Do you believe this?

Q If you have been baptized before, is this what you thought that you were participating in?

Q If so, are you living a resurrected life?

- We must remember that day: (*Romans 8:12-17, Galatians 3, 1 Timothy 6:12*) and strive to live a life worthy of God’s grace (*Ephesians 4:1+*). How eager am I to share this grace with others? (*1 Corinthians 15:34*)

Q If not, what should you pursue to get to this point? *Acts 2:36-39*

3. We will rise again.....to heaven! (1Corinthians 15:51-58)

- Once we have become God’s sons/daughters via faith/repentance/baptism on earth, we should live in the confidence that we will be changed upon God’s call for us to enter his final grace in heaven.

Q Do I really believe this?

Q Do I believe that God’s grace is sufficient to ultimately overcome my sins (2 **Corinthians 12:9**)? *Note: A couple of reading recommendations: In the Grip of Grace (Max Lucado) and What is so Amazing about Grace (Phillip Yancey)*

- **Hebrews 6:19-20**. The hope of heaven is an anchor for our soul.

Conclusion

Meditate on the ultimate purpose of God’s death, burial, and resurrection.....for us to stand in the presence of our Father and our God and to know his acceptance both in this life and eternally in heaven. Make practical changes that demonstrate to God our understanding of what is of primary importance.

Afraid No More



WOMEN: women studying the bible who are having trouble getting broken about their sin.

Theme: Repentance

Purpose: Help women understand how God feels when we sin, and lead them to desire to change and repent

introduction

Study out your OWN sin, confess it, and agree with God. Then pray for gentleness and courage.

Note: This study should only be done out of a friendship with trust, and can seem a bit harsh, but it's worth it!

Main Study



Genesis 6:5-8

This describes our hearts now, always inclined to sin.

- Q How did God feel about our sin?
- Q How did he respond at the time?



Romans 7:14-25

We get trapped by our sin and feel like we have no control over it. The only answer is God, amen!

- Q What is the confusion the writer is feeling?



James 1:13-21

It's our own evil desires that lead us to sin; we can't blame anyone else!



Psalm 36:1-2

- Q Why can't this person see his sin?
- Q What is holding you back?



John 3:19-21

- Q Why are people afraid to be open about their sin?"
- Q What happens when we get open?



Psalm 51 (all of it)

Vs. 17 God wants us to have a broken and contrite spirit. Ultimately we've sinned against him. Suggestion: If you've written a sin list, go through and write down how each of your sins hurt the other person/people involved, and how they hurt God.

- Q Vs.16 How do we try to earn forgiveness from God?
- Q Vs.13-15 What was David's response to God saving him from his sin?



Proverbs 28:13

Hiding our sin does not 'fix it'
We must confess our sin.

We must renounce (repent of it, quit, change) our sin

Submission



WOMEN: Use this study personally to help yourself submit to the God given authorities in your life, and with friends who are finding resistance from their husbands when it comes to their spiritual progress and commitments.

Theme: Biblical submission

Purpose: To help women studying the bible to understand the role of submission, and the obstacles to that in their marriages.

Main Study

1. Submission, Huh?

1 Peter 3:1-6

Read all and discuss in the following order:

- Q What is submission?
- Q What does God say about it?
- Q Why do you think he puts it this way?

Break down the passage in a progressive set of questions. Do not preach. Let God work as the discussion develops. Help the person bring out the areas of resistance in her life. Share about your own struggles. Be open at every turn, but do not monopolize or over-spiritualize the conversation.

Let the word speak and help the person toward her own conclusions. For instance:

- Q Why would God say with out talk?
- Q How does too much talk effect communication with your husband?
- Q What does God say will win them over?
- Q What could you change in your behavior that would impress your husband?
- Q How does God's example of purity and reverence apply to you?
- Q In verse 4, what does God mean by a gentle and quiet spirit?
- Q How can even our spirit not be "quiet"?
- Q How is life around your house?
- Q What does your husband think of your tone?

Talk about Sarah's example in verses 5-7.

- Q How does this strike you?
- Q What is God's warning?
- Q Can you see how the most emphasized conflict is between "doing what is right" and "not giving way to fear"?
- Q What are your biggest fears when it comes to submission?

2. What God's Word Says on Submission

1 Peter 2:13

Let's take a minute and see what God's word says to help us with this. Go back to 1 Peter 2:13 and read through God's whole discussion on submission. Look at the big picture and

help your friend see the way God wants us to completely rely on him. Ask about other areas in her life, like work, parents, and authorities.

- Q How surrendered is she to God working in these situations?
- Q What has to grow?
- Q Is it her trust in God?
- Q Is it her knowledge and trust in his word?
- Q Is it a matter of surrendering her pride and seeing that others can be right too, or that there are other ways that will succeed?

Be careful here not to become a counselor or to over simplify her situation. She could have deep trust issues. Over all, let her come to her own convictions about getting her life more in line with the scriptures.

3. Fear



1 Peter 3:7

Go back to 1 Peter 3:7 and revisit the area of fear.

Conclude the study by reading verses 7-12. You will read about the husband's role a bit in verse 7, but set that aside for now. The real focus of the study is to empower her. Focus on verses 8-12.

Look at the encouragement and practical help God gives us here:

- Q Vs. 8 What is God's goal?
- Q Vs. 9 How do we handle "evil"?
- Q Vs. 10 What does God say about honesty?
- Q Vs. 11 What is the goal seen again here? How can you pursue peace in your marriage?
- Q Vs. 12 Look at what God's focus is the whole time we are going through any of this. What are his eyes on? What is he listening for?

Conclusion

Help your friend see that God wants things to change in her marriage and her spiritual life, and that he is very much involved and eager to help. God knows these habits are tough to change, but he'll be with you all the way as you put his word into practice.

Encourage your friend to re-read the entire chapter and to finish the parts after v12 at home. Also ask her to commit to pray about different areas and to really watch for God's answers. Have a time of prayer together before you end, and keep your friend and her needs in your prayers as well. When you meet again review the study and discuss any questions that come up. This study will surface issues that can be addressed in later studies.

Repentance (Author #1)



Those studying the Bible, after discipleship, sin and cross

Theme: Biblical repentance

Purpose: To help someone repent of sin

Main Study



What is repentance?

Greek: μετανοεω,ν (meta-noay-o) Metanoayo comes from two words meta – along/with and noayo - thought process. It means to change one's mind. In biblical context, it was for the better and to turn away from sin.



Acts 26:20

- God calls us to repent and to show our repentance by our actions.



If you say that you have repented, and continue to sin, have you truly changed your mind? Though we will not be perfect, our actions should show our repentance.



Luke 3:8-14

- Again, God calls us to bear good fruit: actions that show our repentant heart.
- V.9 John warns that if we do not repent we will perish



Luke 13:1-5

- God calls all of us to repent or we will perish!



What should I do?



Acts 2: 37-39

- The people asked the apostles the same question and the people were called to repent and be baptized!



When I become a Christian, do I still need to repent?



Romans 8: 13-14

- Romans was addressed to Christians (Ro 1:7)
- We are called to live according to the Holy Spirit, not our sinful nature.
- Paul warns that we will die spiritually, if we don't live a repentant life.



What should I do if I sin as a Christian?



2 Corinthians 7:9-11

- The Christians were called to repent
- There are two types of sorrow: worldly and godly

- The sorrow desired by God leads us to repentance, eagerness to change, hatred towards our sin, alarm, wanting to do what is right.
- Again we will never be perfect and will sin as a Christian, but we are called to repent.

Conclusion

1 John 1:7-10

- Let's walk in the light: living a repentant life. God will forgive us.
- Note: As a Christian, if you sin today you do not become unsaved until you repent. We are saved by God's grace, however we should not continue to live in sin.

Repentance (Author #2)



Non-Christians

Theme: Repentance

Purpose: To teach biblical repentance

Introduction

Q What is Repentance?

Q What should I know and teach?

Depending on which language is being considered, the word(s) translated “repent” or “repentance” (and cognates) in the bible always indicates change, whether of “the mind,” according to the Greek notion, or of “the heart.” From the Jewish perspective, “the heart” was the seat of passions, dispositions, intentions, and generally speaking, all thoughts and speech. Of course, this view of the heart (in repentance) entails a change of action and life direction as well because the intent of the Law and especially Jesus’ particular ministry (with the Sermon on the Mount in view) was that devoted thought and action should be combined in daily living before Yahweh.

The following represents a very brief outline of essential points or themes about repentance as it appears in Scripture, though not necessarily in order of importance. It is meant to spur on further study and provide a simple (although not simplistic) view from which to draw for personal study with friends or self. There are two passages pertaining to each point, though many others can be cited. Repentance must be viewed as “a whole,” **combining** a certain disposition of the heart, action, and speech (worship) in one dedicated movement toward God.

Main Study

1. Repent with *Whole Heart*/not self-pity

 Deut. 30:2, 8

 2 Cor. 7:9-11

2. By Removing Obstacles-“make straight paths for God”

(Preparation for God to arrive and deliver—derived from OT passages in Isaiah concerning the promise of God’s return; see Matt. 3)

 Acts 19:18

AC 19:17 When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. ¹⁸ Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. ¹⁹ A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. ²⁰ In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

 Matt. 3

3. Central to the entire Gospel message/New Covenant

Not an optional piece; John the Baptist, Jesus, and disciples/apostles all emphasized it.

 **Acts 20:21**

I have declared to **both Jews and Greeks** that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

 **Acts 26:20**

4. Prompted by God's goodness

 If God loves you, why would he call you to change?

 **Romans 2:4**

So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? ⁴ Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

 **Acts 2:38**

Ultimate Reason: THE CROSS

5. Lack of repentance leads to "death"

In the various senses of the word, but especially with regard to being kept out of the "age of salvation," or the inheritance of the "new heavens and the new earth" in the resurrection.

 **Hebrews 6**

Therefore let us *leave the elementary teachings* about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again **the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death**,...

 **Luke 13**

6. Prayers of Repentance

 **Psalm 51**

 **Daniel 9**

 **Ezra 9**

 **Nehemiah 9**

Why, Who and How Often Should We Forgive



Disciples and Non-Christians

Theme: Forgiveness, Repentance

Purpose: Learning to implement forgiveness as a response to Jesus' forgiveness of our sins

Main Study

1. FORGIVENESS DEFINED:

Forgiveness is the act of giving up one's right to avenge. As Christians we are commanded by God alone to submit the right to God to take revenge. When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He made clear that the right to avenge was God's (**Luke 11:1-4**). He said "Forgive us our sins as we also forgive everyone who sins against us. In Matthew 6:14-15, He stated that when we forgive others, our Heavenly Father will also forgive us, but if we do not forgive others, then the Heavenly Father will not forgive us, either. Clearly this is reason enough to forgive.

There was a situation I had with someone a few years ago. I was very, very, deeply hurt. I knew I HAD to forgive the person. For weeks I prayed that the hurt would be taken away so then I could forgive the person. Nothing happened. I was getting cold to the person whenever we crossed paths. Then I realized I was not praying for forgiveness but just to get over my hurt. I prayed and asked God to forgive the person through me because I couldn't do it on my own. Immediately, I felt the burden lifted and the hurt gone.

2. HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE FORGIVE?

Jesus used the parable of the unmerciful servant to teach us forgiveness and the cost of NOT doing it. He further explains to us in **Matthew 18:21-35** that we should forgive seventy times seven (490!) times. This figure could very well be infinity because I don't think anyone would actually count the number of times and stop at 490.

3. WHO SHOULD WE FORGIVE?

"If your brother sins against you....." **Matthew 18:15**.

"...Lord, how many times shall I forgive my Brother when he sins against me?" Matthew 18:21.

I think we should forgive all who sin against us because we are one family of believers in Christ. In **Genesis 50:15-21**, Joseph exercised one of the greatest acts of forgiveness when he told his brothers he couldn't take the place of God. To put it another way, he could have said I forgive you because God did it through me.

The Bible gives us many examples of why we should forgive anyone who sins against us. Remember when we made the choice to become disciples we also accepted the consequences that come with that choice. Let's look at an example of why we should forgive – or better still, ask God to forgive through us. **Ps 130:3** – "If you, O Lord, kept a

record of our sins, O Lord, who could stand?” Remember in Matthew 6:15 we are told that if we do not forgive men their sins, our Father in heaven will not forgive our sins.

Take a look at ourselves through David’s eyes in **Psalm 51:5** – “Surely I was sinful at birth and sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” Clearly we are prone to sin, thus we **MUST** forgive so that God will forgive us sinning against HIM.

Jeremiah 33:8 says: “I will cleanse them from all the sin they have committed against me and will forgive all their sins of rebellion against me.” God wants to restore all of us back to himself, but HE will not accept us with sin. HE is willing to forgive us ALL of our sins but we **MUST** forgive so we will also be forgiven.

Conclusion

I think the main reason why we should forgive and why forgiveness is a major part of our choice to be disciples is to explain the following passage where JESUS gave these words to Nicodemus: “For GOD so loved the world that HE gave HIS only begotten Son, that whoever believe in HIM shall not perish but have eternal life. “For GOD did not send HIS Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through HIM” (**John 3:16-17**). A relationship with JESUS for eternity is what is promised to us as Christians. Jesus was willing to forgive us ALL of our sins by dying on a cross to demonstrate his love and to redeem us from sure death and damnation. We have a choice. Remember, if we reject this offer, here is the alternative explained in **Romans 6:23**: “For the wages of sin is death...”

Brothers and sisters lets all accept the choice of eternal life with Jesus, by accepting one of the major parts of the choice we made when we said JESUS is LORD, because the alternative will be our destruction physically and spiritually.

Love Your Neighbor



Someone who is
studying the Bible
to become a
Christian

Theme: Loving others

Purpose: To teach our responsibility to ‘love our neighbor’

Introduction

This study is designed to teach about the responsibility to “love their neighbor.” The ideal time for this study is after the person has committed to “dying to their sins and living for righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24).

Main Study

Matt 22:34-39

- The greatest commandment includes loving your neighbor as yourself.
- Being a Christian means devoting yourself to loving others. We are destined to live a life of love.

Q Who is your neighbor?

- △ The church: our brothers and sisters
- △ Lost neighbors, friends and family
- △ The poor

Loving the church

Colossians 1:18

- The church = Jesus’ body. If we love Jesus, we will love and care for his “Body,” too!

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

- Christians are not intended to have unhealthy dependent relationships with each other or be independent. The goal is to have relationships that are INTERDEPENDENT!
- In other words - you need the church and the church needs you!
- We each have a role to fill to help build the family of God, and...
- If we distance ourselves from God’s family/Jesus’ body we risk distancing ourselves from God himself...we may even die spiritually on our own.
- We must be committed to: loving and allowing ourselves to be loved.

Galatians 5:13-15

- Once we are free (as in, freed from the slavery of sin– see Gal 5:1), we are truly free to serve each other through love.

Other references can include:

 **Hebrews 3:12-13**

 **Hebrews 10:23-25**

 **Romans 12:4-5**

Q How will you change your life to be committed to serving the church through love?

Loving the lost

Luke 19:10

- Jesus came to love lost souls – he looked for them and saved them.
- If we are committed to being his followers, we too should imitate his passion for seeking and saving the lost.

Luke 5:31-32

- Jesus came to heal the spiritually sick.
- If we are committed to being his followers, we too should have a heart for those who are in need of spiritual answers to their problems.

Other references can include

Matthew 28:18-20

Mark: 1:16-20

🗪 What will it take for you to be committed to loving the lost the way that Jesus did?

Loving the Poor

Matt 25:31-46

- The way we treat the poor - by being aware (not apathetic) of who is poor around us and living a lifestyle that offers help – is a salvation matter for Jesus.

Matt 6:1-4

- This passage assumes that a believer gives to the needy (“When you give to the needy...”).
- It is not to be done out of obligation or for show. The goal is to be so self-motivated by God’s example and teaching, and by the condition of the poor, that we do our “act of righteousness” in secret – without getting attention for it or recognition.

🗪 Have you made a commitment in your heart to love and care for the poor?

🗪 Have you thought through what you will need to adjust in your life to do this?

Conclusion

1. The Christian life is a life of love: caring for others and serving them.
2. As Christians we make a commitment to give our thoughts, prayers, time and labor more than ever before to love the church, the lost and the poor.
3. Will you?

Being a Christian is a relationship thing



Anyone who needs to understand that being a Christian is about loving God and others

Theme: Love

Purpose: To teach the importance of Love in a Christian's life

Introduction

1. God Loved Us First
 - a. **John 3:16** – God so loved us he gave us the very best
 - b. **Romans 5** – even while we were still sinners
 - c. **1 John 4:16-19** – he initiated with love, so we can respond in love
 - d. **Mark 12:28-31** – “most important command” Love God with heart, soul, mind and strength

Main Study

2. How can we Love?
 - a. **John 14:15** – Obeying his commands is showing love to God (introduces Word of God study) (see also 1 John 5:3-5)
 - b. **Luke 7:36-50** – Repentance from sin is showing love to God (introduces Sin/Repentance study)
 - c. **Matt 25:31-46** – Serving the needy is showing love to Jesus (introduces study on serving the poor and needy)
 - d. **1 John 4:19-21** – Loving your brother (Christian brother or Human brother?) is showing love for God (introduces discipleship and/or church study – relationships in the body).
 - e. **Luke 12:22-34** – Seeking first the kingdom is showing love to God
 - f. **Mark 5:1-20** – Sharing your faith is showing love to God (introduce evangelism study)

Conclusion

Christianity is not just rules or philosophy – but a relationship based on Love – Love God!

The Marks of Discipleship



Anyone, male or female, who may or may not have a religious background but simply wants to know what it takes to be a true follower of Jesus.

Theme: Indicators to show someone if they are following in the footsteps of Jesus.

Purpose: To enable someone to determine if they are willing to change their lives as necessary in order to be a disciple of Jesus.

Introduction

Have you ever wondered what it takes to be a follower of Jesus? Do you think the people in Jesus day had a harder or easier time following him? How would you react if you were one of the men in **Mark 1:16 – 18**?

- Q What has happened in 2000 years that has made Jesus' call different? Do people today see following Jesus as radical and active, or mild and passive?
- Q How has Jesus' call to follow been watered down over the years? Has it been replaced by anything else?
- Q How do you think you would feel if you were one of the men being called in **Mark 1**?

Main Study

Luke 5: 1- 11

Let's read a text that shows another example of Jesus calling someone to follow him. As I read the passage, I'd like you to make mental notes of anything that you think would be needed for someone to follow Jesus.

Background – We learn from Luke that this is early in Jesus ministry and he just beginning to call together followers. He had previous contact with Simon (4:38) but had not yet called him to follow. Jesus takes the opportunity of the waters edge to preach to the people and use Simon's boat to teach the people.

- Q After Jesus was finished with the crowd was he really interested in a fishing trip, did he really want to catch fish?
 - A No he wanted to catch Simon. He had to get his attention by beating him at his own game – fishing. Simon had failed and fallen short, Jesus brought in the largest catch Simon had ever seen.
- Q What does God do to get our attention? Has God done anything to get yours?

Now that Jesus has Simon's attention – we can learn from the situation.

What are some keys that you see from the text that show Simon was willing to follow Jesus – what are some marks of discipleship?

1. **v. 5** “Because you say so” To be a follower of Jesus we must be willing to override our feelings in order to do God's will. The Bible gives us a guide for our lives but we must be

willing to overcome feelings that get in the way. Simon was tired and had failed that day as a fisherman. It would have been easy to say “no thanks” to the fishing trip or throwing out the nets, but because Jesus said so – he did so.

🕒 What are some areas that are hard but we should do because God says so?

A disciple is willing to override feelings in order to do God’s will.

2. **v. 8** “Go away from me Lord, I’m a sinful man”. Simon is humbled by Jesus and sees his sin. On one hand he is embarrassed and wants Jesus to go away. On the other he falls on his knees and is open with Jesus about his sinful state.

🕒 What are some areas in our lives that we have a hard time talking about?

A disciple is willing to be open with their lives even if it is hard or embarrassing.

3. **v.10** “Don’t be afraid, from now on you will catch men”. A follower of Jesus is not just in it for themselves, but to help others have a relationship with God. It becomes the reason for contact with people, to see if there is anyway to help them find faith and build a relationship with God.

🕒 Do you see yourself being able to help others find faith?

🕒 What would stand in the way of this in your life?

A disciple is others focused and has a mission and a ministry.

4. **v. 11** “...left everything and followed him”. The disciples were willing to get things out of their lives that might compete with their walking with Jesus. This is a radical idea and means things change in our lives.

🕒 Are there things in your life that would keep you from following Jesus? What are some of them?

A disciple is willing to remove anything that gets in the way of their relationship with God.

Conclusion

These are four marks or signs of discipleship that show if we are willing to change and follow Jesus.

How do you measure up?

Do you see yourself wanting to change in order to be a follower or disciple of Jesus?

When is the next time we can get together to study again?

Only Every Effort Will Do



Non-Christian who is lukewarm,
Disciple who is lukewarm

Theme: Things needed to get into Heaven

Purpose: To get lukewarm or stale people serious about God

Introduction

- Q What is something you do with 110% of your effort all the time (B-Ball for me!)
- Q Why do you put so much effort into these things?
- Q Would this bring you any joy at 80% or 50% capacity?
(For some, B-ball is OK at 80 or 50%. Not for me – its not fun and I don't win at 80%. I hate to not have fun and I hate to lose!)

Main Study

 **Luke 13:22-23**

- Q Why does this guy ask if only a few people are going to be saved?
- Q How can we be like this guy in our lives?
- Q How can we be like this guy spiritually?
- Q What is the impact of us not making every effort on the things we mentioned earlier? (Our areas of 110% effort)
- Q What is the impact of not making every effort spiritually?

The idea is to inspire the person studying to make every effort! WHY?

It gets us to heaven!

It's more fun!

It's worth it!

If you are bored with Christianity you are not making every effort!

The temptation is to make LESS effort and find joy elsewhere.

- Q What areas of your Christianity do you need to make more effort in?
- Q How can you do that?
- Q How can I help you, specifically?
- Q When will you start?

Conclusion

The challenge is to decide to make every effort to be a disciple!

Christian vs. Disciple



Non-Christian

Theme: True disciples

Purpose: To compare an individual's definition of disciple and Christian to what the Bible says

Introduction

Note: Have the person write down their own personal definition of a Christian and a disciple on separate pieces of paper.

Main Study

Q Have you ever seen the word 'Christian' or 'Christians' in the Bible? (It appears three times: once in the plural form)

 **1 Peter 4:16**

Q What does it mean to "bear that name?" (Bearing a name is not by choice.)

 **Acts 26:28**

Q What is Paul hoping King Agrippa will become? (Agrippa places the name "Christian" on Paul.)

 **Acts 11:19-26**

Q How does the Bible define a "Christian" or "Christians?"

Did you know that the word 'disciple(s)' appears in the Bible almost 300 times?

Note: Disciple means "follower."

Q If only the disciples were called "Christians" than which word would you look up to understand what a true "Christian" is?

 **Luke 9:23-26**

 **Luke 14:25-33**

 **Luke 9:57-62**

 **John 13:34-35**

Conclusion

Look at the separate pieces of paper with the definitions on it. Identify and relate to what was just learned.

 **John 8:31-32**

Q Are you a true disciple or not?

New Birth - A New Beginning



Individuals who have had conversion experiences in the Christian faith

Theme: Make sure your conversion was biblical

Purpose: To help those with a Christian religious background place their conversion experiences within a biblical context and to assist them in reconciling prior beliefs with the scriptures

Main Study

John 1:9-13

When someone comes to faith in Jesus, something happens. For some, it is a distinctly memorable event, for others a slowly growing realization. Some describe it as a "religious experience". The Bible confirms that something important does happen at this time, and it should not be discounted

"Receiving Jesus" as described here, is a spiritual conception. Those who "receive Jesus," who "believe in His name" receive something from God - the right (or power) to become children of God. Notice that these new believers are not called children of God at that time, but they can now become a child of God.

Physical conception is like that. A new life has begun, but there still is a period of gestation to go through. If all goes well, the new person will be born, more or less when expected. Some come earlier and some later. Conception does not always result in birth. Some die in the womb. Some are born with difficulty and do not survive the birth or die young because they are weak. Spiritually the same is true, although the gestation period is far less predictable. It can be hours, days, or years.

John 3:1-8

Nicodemus describes having come to believe in Jesus. He has come to Him and acknowledged Him. But Jesus makes it very clear that he still needs to be born. Nicodemus is confused and asks whether he needs to find a way back into his mother's womb! Essentially Nicodemus was already in the womb, spiritually. But he still needed to be born again - a spiritual RE-birth.

Jesus' emphasis makes it very clear that no life in God is possible without a second birth, a birth of water and the Spirit.

Gal 3:26-27

Because of the new birth, you are now a child of God. Baptism corresponds to the birth by which a new child is born into the family of God. Someone who comes to have some faith, but skips the process of spiritual birth essentially is remaining in the womb and cannot experience the fullness of the saved Christian life.

1 Peter 1:3-9

As a new child of God, you have an incredible inheritance.



1 John 3:7-10; 1 John 5:18

Those born of God must live a new life, no longer living in sin.

Conclusion

Spiritual rebirth is more than a checklist item on the way to conversion. It represents our new beginning as a child of God. Spiritual rebirth begins with a spiritual conception, which is a significant event in the life of a believer. Some will have vivid memories of coming to faith, when they received the right or power to become a child of God. Without the fulfillment of rebirth, that takes place in biblical baptism, believers remain in the womb or their faith dies out. In baptism we are reborn as children of God. We receive an incredible inheritance and must live as a member of God's family, renouncing sin and living a new life.

Ready to Be Baptized?



Anyone close to making a decision to be baptized as well as anyone questioning the validity of their own baptism.

Theme: Death to self before following Jesus

Purpose: To demonstrate that Baptism is a simultaneous point of death and new life; therefore one needs to be prepared to be surrendered and to spiritually die to self

Introduction

Arguments abound on how ready one needs to be before being baptized. Questions like: Does one really have to be a disciple before and if so, how much of a disciple does one need to be? How much does one need to know? How much sin does one need to confess? One thing IS clear: Baptism is a simultaneous point of death and new life; therefore one needs to be prepared to be surrendered and to spiritually die to self before deciding to be baptized.

Main Study

 **Luke 14:33**

- "Anyone"- This is a statement for all time
- A person must be willing to give up all before following Jesus

 **John 12:48**

- One must be committed to accepting all of Jesus' words.

 **Romans 6:1-6**

- There are 15 references to death referring to what takes place at baptism in the first 13 verses
- You wouldn't let someone bury you unless you were totally willing or "committed" to be.

 **1 Corinthians 9:21**

- After baptism, you will be subject to Christ's law (A commitment to a standard of, "What would Jesus do?")

 **1 Corinthians 14:25**

- God's desire is for the secret's of our hearts to be laid bare when first coming to the fellowship

 **Acts 26:20**

- People were taught to prove their repentance by their deeds.

Conclusion

 **Colossians 2:12**

- Ultimately being willing to give up everything and die with Christ takes a lot of faith and it is this faith that makes our baptism a transforming event.
- This faith is what raises us and saves us: Faith that we'll give up everything.

- If you've been baptized and didn't give up everything (intentionally), then how could you die when you didn't have the faith to?

Sensitive issues in dying to self: Forgiving everyone, willingness to tell family of decision without fear of persecution, secret sins "too embarrassing" to be open about, etc.

Suggested next study: The Cross. Nothing else will motivate someone to die to self and surrender all like seeing one's individual responsibility for the death of Jesus

Your Biblical Role in God's Church



Non-Christians who are studying the Church before their baptism and Christians

Theme: A Christian's duties in God's Church.

Purpose: To portray the various duties and purposes of a Disciple in God's Church

Main Study

I. Daily Initiation - Hebrews 3:13

1. Using any or all of the means available to encourage other disciples (Spending time with, being in the fellowship, phone calls, E-mails, letters, cards, etc.)
2. Helps keep others faithful and it allows us to be encouraged so that our own hearts do not become hardened.

II. Devoted To Prayer

1.  **Ephesians 6:18**, To daily pray for the specific needs and lives of as many as possible in the Church (Family, Ministry, Leaders, Friends, Personal Fruit, etc.)
2.  **James 5:14-16**, Pay special attention to the sick and needy through prayer and fasting. (Mark 9:28-29)

III. Searching For and Meeting or Getting Help for The Spiritual Needs of Your Brothers and Sisters.

1.  **Galatians 6:1**, Takes being aware and asking the right questions out of love and concern.
2. Takes using the Scriptures out of love to help them
3.  **Matthew 18:15-16**, Jesus has provided a way for us to resolve all situations of sin and conflict in His Church.

IV. Being aware of, Meeting and/or Getting Help for Physical Needs in The Church

1.  **Acts 4:32, 34-35**, Giving generously of time and material resources.

V. Having an Open Life

1.  **James 5:16**, Lack of confession displays a lack of trust, honesty and causes the rest of the Church to be disenabled in putting into practice their roles.
2. Confessing not only sins, but even hardships, struggles, frustrations, temptations, etc.

VI. Absolute Forgiveness

1.  **Colossians 3:13-14**, True forgiveness expresses itself by initiating love, friendship and care towards those that have sinned against us; training ourselves to view them the way God has chosen to forgive us.

Conclusion

Everyone fulfilling their roles in God's Church leads to a unified Church that grows in every way while glorifying God.

Members of God's Household: A Study Biblically Defining the Church



Non-Christians who are studying the Church before their baptism

Theme: The Church of The New Testament

Purpose: To define the Church to a new believer.

Main Study

What is the Church?

The Worldwide and/or any Group of baptized followers of Jesus walking in the light as He is in the light. Each individual assumes a different, yet indispensable role in the health and growth of Christ's Body with Christ as the head or leader through spirit and His word. They are united in effort to fulfill Christ's great commission given in **Matthew 28:18-20** of discipling the nations, baptizing them and training them in every phase of Jesus' teachings while seeking to be unified with all Disciples worldwide.

Who is the head of the Church?

Colossians 1:15-18

- Jesus has supremacy over the Church just as He had supremacy over His physical body while on Earth.
- Jesus was the physical manifestation of God on this Earth. With Jesus now in Heaven, we as the Church are the physical manifestation of God with Jesus as the head

At what point does one enter the Church?

1 Corinthians 12:13

- When baptized, God buries our old life while coming to live inside of us and transforming us into a part of His body.

What is the standard for remaining in the Church?

1 John 1:7

- Our fellowship with God's Church is dependent on our faithfulness to following Jesus.

What part do we play in the Church?

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

- To assume this role, one must be physically present with the Church.
- In the Church, we need everyone and everyone needs us.
- We must share (as if we had gone through it ourselves) in other disciples victories and blessings and other disciples hardships.

How closely knit & committed to one another should we be?

John 17:20-23

- Perfect unity is our goal and standard
- Our unity must be fought for based on the teachings and life of Jesus and not divided as a result of opinions or disputable matters.
- The World will see our unity and be drawn to us

Conclusion

Many over the centuries have abandoned these simple principles and have disqualified themselves from being the body of Christ. Just as one individual can leave Christ and cease to be a part of the body so can an entire congregation either in action, teaching or both.

Further Study

What is your Biblical Role in God's Church?

Colossians - Christian Basics



Non-Christians

Theme: Fundamental beliefs of the Christian religion.

Purpose: To study the basics of Christianity with people in one sitting, and using just one book of the Bible

Main Study



Colossians 1:1-23

The apostle Paul mentions the word "gospel".

"Gospel" means good news. In this chapter he describes different aspects of the gospel:

- the hope of heaven;
- God's grace;
- being qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints;
- being rescued from darkness;
- having redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

All this is accomplished through Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God.

Through the shedding of his blood on the cross we can be reconciled to God - under the condition that we continue in the faith.

In **verse 6** it talks about the gospel spreading throughout the world. The good news is spread by those who recognize it to be good news - those who understand God's grace.

In **verse 10** it explains that once we choose to follow Christ, we should live a life worthy of the Lord, serving others by doing good works, and growing in the knowledge of God. One way to grow in the knowledge of God is to read the scriptures.



Colossians 1:24-2:23

In **verse 6** it talks about Jesus being Lord, meaning our master. We are to live in him and continue to live in him. His teachings must take precedence over worldly teachings.

In **verse 12**, baptism is mentioned. Baptism is more than just a ceremony. There is deep significance to it. In baptism a person is buried with Christ and raised with Christ.

It also mentions here that God raised Jesus from the dead.

There are a lot of people who believe that Jesus was a good moral teacher, but don't believe in the resurrection. The resurrection is a core belief of the Christian faith and to be a Christian, one must believe this.



Colossians 3:1-4:1

Followers of Christ are expected to set their hearts and minds on things above, where Jesus is seated at God's right hand. This takes self-control. It's easy to get caught up in all of the things of this world, but that's not what God wants for us.

The ungodly behaviors of a person's old self need to be put to death, and they need to be replaced by virtuous behavior.

Things like sexual immorality, greed, malice, slander, and lies need to be replaced with things like compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love. Love is clearly the most important. Without it, a person is just following a set of rules.

Paul also instructs people to teach each other from the scriptures. That way, Christians are always learning, growing, and being renewed.



Colossians 4:2-18

The outstanding point in this chapter is "devote yourselves to prayer". Prayer should be a regular activity in a Christian's life.

The letter ends with "Grace be with you." Grace is what it's all about.

Unlike other world religions that teach that a person can reach a state of perfection or Nirvana on his own, Christianity teaches that we need God's gift of grace, and he provided it for us through Christ.

Conclusion

Possible questions:

Q What do you believe about Jesus?

Q Do you want to learn more about Jesus?

If yes, suggest that they read Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, focusing on the things that Jesus taught and on the ways that he loved people.

How to Love An Invisible God



Any non-Christian with a fairly strong religious background

Theme: Obedience to God

Purpose: Identifies excuses for NOT obeying God

Introduction

📖 **Deuteronomy 7:9-11**

We see a multi-dimensional side to God.
A relationship with God requires that we LOVE him.

📖 **John 14:15**

🗨️ How do you express love to a spiritual being?
Ⓐ By keeping his commands!

🗨️ What are some commands of God?

🗨️ What are some excuses for not obeying?

Main Study

1 – Partial obedience versus 100% obedience

Read the story of King Jeroboam 📖 **1 Kings 13:1-19** and stop.

🗨️ What ‘punishment’ should be given for the disobedience?

Ⓐ Nothing, verbal warning, a spanking, death? Discuss.

Read 📖 **1 Kings 13:20-25**.

🗨️ Why did God kill him? Discuss.

Ⓐ Commands were easy, the original command came directly from God, his witness was ruined.

2 – Common sense versus obedience

Read 📖 **2 Samuel 6:3-7** - Uzzah

The ‘natural’, ‘common sense’ solution (save the ark) was NOT the correct thing to do.

Common sense = majority – but majority are not right most of the time!

Obedience must take priority over our ‘natural’ reactions, feelings.

(God’s commands about handling the Ark are in 📖 **Numbers 4:5-15**)

3 – Being religious versus being obedient

📖 **Leviticus 10:1-2** – Nadab and Abihu

Don’t take liberties with what God says.

E.g., what does the Bible say about ‘church’, ‘baptism’, ‘morality’?

Don’t grow careless in your obedience.

Don’t let traditions get in way of Biblical truth.

Sometimes the most educated (Nadab and Abihu were ordained sons of the famous priest Aaron) miss the boat!

4 – Preconceived ideas versus obedience

📖 *2 Kings 5:1-15* – Namaan

Elisha not meeting directly with commander Namaan must have seemed an insult. (Vs 10)
Washing as a leper with open sores in the dirty Jordan river didn't seem to make sense. (vs 10-12)

What types of preconceived ideas do we have about church?

Boring, for old people, for 'wimpy' people

Conclusion

Loving God means we obey his commands.

- 🗋 What commands of God are you obeying?
- 🗋 Do you have any of these 4 excuses for not obeying God?
- 🗋 What commands of God are you not obeying?
- 🗋 What can you do to begin to obey God? Read Bible, pray, study, repent of sin, etc.
- 🗋 When can we study again?

HOW TO PRAY



Non-Christians who are not familiar with what the Bible teaches about prayer. Newly baptized disciples would also benefit from the study.

Theme: How to Pray Effectively.

Purpose: To help someone begin a powerful prayer life

Introduction

The study focuses on one extended passage that provides much discussion on the topic along with clear answers to common questions. Other shorter passages could be used as reinforcement of the ideas presented in the main scripture. If discussion of the main passage takes most of the study time, the reinforcement passages could be assigned for the person to study on his own before the next meeting.

Main Study

1. Read LUKE 11:1-13

- Q Is praying something that comes naturally?
- Q Are we born knowing how to do it?
- A Jesus' disciples asked to be taught. They had to be shown how to do it.
- Q Do you think Jesus meant for them to just repeat this every time they needed to pray?
- A Jesus' example of how he prayed was that of a conversation with God. The prayers in the Bible and examples of believers praying in the Old Testament and New Testament are not memorized prayers.
- Q So if Jesus did not want us to pray memorized prayers, what did he want to communicate in this passage?
- A This is a pattern of what to pray about.
- Q What are some characteristics of effective prayer according to the example in this passage?
- A Humility toward God and his authority; dependence on God for even the things we can take for granted; aware that we are all sinners and need God's forgiveness on a daily basis; wanting God's protection especially from Satan.
- Q What does God want from us in prayer according to the passage?
- A He wants to be asked, he wants to be viewed as a loving father because that's what he is.
- A He's not a genie in a bottle and he's not the Wizard of Oz.

Take note of verse 1. Evidently the disciples saw the power in Jesus prayer life and wanted it for themselves – that's why they asked to be taught.

Jesus had a certain place to pray – it was a habit, it was part of his life. If Jesus needed to pray, certainly we'll need to pray also.

2. REINFORCEMENT PASSAGES

 JOHN 17: 1-26

Notice how close to God Jesus is. How unselfish his prayer is at a time when if he could ever have been excused for being selfish – this would have been it.

 **ACTS 5:23-31**

Not a memorized prayer. It is a request of God at a time of great need. God answered immediately.

 **HEBREWS 5:7**

Jesus put his heart into praying (loud cries and tears). It wasn't rote, routine, memorized or perfunctory. He needed to be close to God so certainly we do.

 **JAMES 5:16**

We need to pray with each other to help us overcome sin. The more sin we avoid, the more effective our prayers become.

 **ACTS 1: 12-14**

The disciples needed each other (all 120 of them) and prayed 'constantly' (meaning very often).

 **ACTS 10: 1-2**

Praying is noble. It is right up there with fearing God and giving to others in need.

 **ACTS 12: 5-17**

Prayer can bring about miracles.

 **MARK 1: 35**

Praying early in the day, in a quiet place is good. Why do you think Jesus did this?

CONCLUSION

Prayer is essential to having a relationship with God. The more we follow Jesus' example of prayer the closer we'll be to God and the more effective our prayers will be.

**SECTION TWO: Bible
Studies for Maturing
Disciples**



Studies Submitted by Members

It Takes Two to Make a Thing Go Right



People studying the Bible; young disciples; or those disciples needing a 'refresher'

Theme: A study on the 2 greatest commandments

Purpose: To get a person to draw closer to God through a relationship of love

Introduction

There's a song titled, "It Takes Two to Make a Thing Go Right" and although the song is about human relationships, there's also something to be said of our relationship with God. It doesn't need to be agonizing or steeped in tradition & laws.

Main Study

Read/ review the 10 Commandments in Deuteronomy 5 or Exodus 20. *{choose one, not both}*

- Q Which of these commandments do you think are the greatest two? Why?
- A Jesus answers this in **Matthew 22:34-40**

Now read **Matthew 22:34-40** (optional parallel passage in **Mark 12:28-34**)

- Q From the text, what are the two greatest commandments?
- A Love God & Love your neighbor
- Q Which of the Old Testament 10 commandments do these 2 correspond with?
- A None of them, directly
- Q Where are these 2 commandments from? Did Jesus make them up for the Jews?
(**Deut. 6:4-5** = 'Love God'; **Leviticus 19:18** = 'Love your neighbor')
(a) {teach them how to lookup Bible footnotes if they don't know how}
- A They come from Scripture! Who would've guessed these unknown verses?!?
- Q What does Jesus mean in verse 40, 'All the Law & the Prophets hang on these 2...?'
- A The entire Old Testament (39 books!) can be summed up in 2 commandments!
- Q What are some ways we can 'love God with all our heart, mind, soul & strength'?
- A Study the Bible, obey the Bible, pray to do His will, share His word with others, take care of all His people (the poor & needy), etc.
- Q What are some ways we can 'love our neighbor as ourselves'?
- A Serve them, pray for them, meet their needs, study the Bible with them, etc.
- Q Would you say these ways describe your current relationship with God & others?
- Q If not, in what specific areas do you need to grow in or change?

Conclusion

In summary, we see that Jesus taught a relationship with God is based on love. A large donation of money and church attendance isn't what will attract God's attention, rather our hearts and efforts to love him and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

Homework

- 1) Memorize one location (book & chapter) of greatest commandments in the NT: Matthew 22, Mark 12, Luke 10
- 2) Pray to be motivated by love instead of fear / obedience in living for God
- 3) Pray to become more loving to others & meet their needs

Called To Worship



Non-Christians
early into their
studies and
Christians.

Theme: God's Desire for True Worshipers

Purpose: To demonstrate why God created us as well as our two-fold purpose of worshiping God and calling others to worship Him

Introduction

Webster defines worship as: "1: to honor or reverence as a divine being or supernatural power, 2: to regard with great or extravagant respect, honor or devotion..."

The original worshipers: You need only look up one or two of these verses since they repeat the same thing: **Exodus 3:12, 4:23, 7:16, 8:1/20, 9:1/13, 10:3/7**

God called the Israelites out of Egypt not primarily to rescue them, but primarily to be free to worship Him.

Main Study



John 4:21-24

God is seeking after TRUE worshipers (Us).

One cannot worship God as one pleases and profess it to be personal between God and them. It must be Biblically sound.

God is seeking worshipers- We must also call others to worship God.



Matthew 2:2,11

These shepherds relished the opportunity to come into the presence of the Lord in order to give Him the gift of worship.

The motives in following God of a "True Worshiper" aren't, "What's in it for me" but rather, "What's in it for God?"



Luke 2:20, 5:25, 17:15, 18:43, 24:53 (Read 1 or 2)

During Jesus' life & ministry, a natural response to His love, healing & miracles were praise/worship



1 Peter 2:9

Once again, scripture demonstrates that God has chosen us for the purpose to declare His praises.



Romans 12:1

Surrendering our lives God in obedience and service is an act of worship (Our thinking, our actions, etc.)



Hebrews 12:28

Worship that God finds acceptable is with reverence and awe.

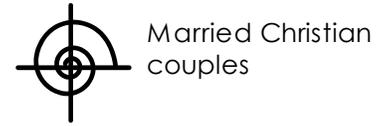
If you wonder what this means for you, think at least of a combined response you'd have to meeting the president, meeting the doctor who is saving your child's life and being at your favorite sporting or entertainment event. (*i.e.*, God wants our whole heart (Mark 12:30) expressed in worship.

Conclusion and Ideas

Pray through Psalm 119; 1 section per day; experiencing the heart and actions of a "True Worshiper"

Begin daily worshipping God. Use "101 Reasons and 101 Ways To Delight in The Lord" studies for inspiration.

Conflict Resolution



Theme: From our experience, conflict within our marriage generally comes from our failure to obey God's word in thought, word and deed.

Purpose: To help our marriages glorify God

Introduction

Ask yourself: When do you generally have conflict? More often than not, it is when you do not get your way or you cannot get your spouse to accept your view of things. Another question to ask yourself: How important to me is it to have this fight? Can we find a solution before we begin?

As an initial introduction about my husband and me, we generally do not have a lot of conflict in our marriage. Both of us contend with health problems on a daily basis and have learned that conflict is a HUGE energy waster. If it is a matter of difference of opinion, we are always striving to achieve harmony. If it is a matter of differing view of Scriptures and the spirit-led direction of our marriage, then we will battle through our conflict to achieve resolution.

Main Study

 James 4: 1-2

1. Fighting Fair

- Commit yourselves to honesty and mutual respect: Proverbs 15:1
By nature, my husband and I are very open and honest people. However, we have spent a lot of time learning to respect each other's viewpoint as vital and important.
- Lay down your deadly weapons; agree that the time is right to resolve conflict: Anger that means to hurt is sin. My husband and I do not have discussions when either of us is angry ("cooling off" period). We also learned from our pre-marital counseling to never use the word "divorce" as a weapon in any fight.
- Never offer criticism without a solution: my husband and I find we are always working on this area. No one ever likes to be criticized, but at least criticism is a little more palatable when your spouse offers a solution on how to correct the area of disagreement.
- Watch your words and guard your tone: Ephesians 4:29
This is an area of weakness for me and an area of strength for my husband. I can count on one hand the number of times my husband has ever spoken harshly to me in our marriage. You need to choose carefully when you have a difficult discussion, especially if tired or emotional. If I try to resolve conflicts at those times, I find that my words are harsh or blunt and my emotions are raw and on edge.
- Always help clean up any mess you make: Ephesians 4:32
At the center of tenderness is compassion. We always make sure any conflicts that we have are resolved. Neither of us keeps a record of wrongs or brings up any disagreements from the past. When we're done with a discussion, we're done!

2. Making wise decisions through conflict

- Be willing to always listen to your spouse and be direct about what you want:
The hardest thing for my husband and me at the beginning of our marriage was that he was always trying to solve my problems. As most wives know, we just want our husbands to listen to how we FEEL. If he listened to my view, it was a lot easier for me to accept his decisions whether they turned out well or not. Also, when decisions went badly, I had to resist the tendency to say “Told you so”. It is also helpful to share your decision as a couple after a conflict with another spiritual couple to gain their insight and wisdom.
- Be willing to toss around ideas (there is frequently a verbal and non-verbal partner): have a time where you can discuss ideas and concerns without trying to resolve everything.
- Define the decision (including pros and cons) and wait for the right moment:
Both of us like to weigh out the pros and cons of a decision. We don’t like to resolve conflict and make a decision during the heat of our emotions.
- Be willing to use outside resources (people, books and so forth):
Both of us appreciate the spiritual input from other couples in resolving conflict. We’ve sat down with other couples and presented our viewpoints, especially on significant decisions. For example 1 ½ years ago, I was faced with a difficult job situation. My husband did not want me to quit my job, because he was concerned about our finances. We sat down with a couple in the church and spent about 2 hours working through the issues so that we could make a mutual decision. We also have used books, tapes and other spiritual materials to assist us in looking at our own thinking differently.
- Always pray through decisions - must be resolved on both sides: Prayer together after decision which involved conflict is key! Both of us have found our hearts quieted when we pray together.

3. Ending recurring arguments

- Learn to recognize the cycle that leads to recurring arguments - recognize what you are arguing about: Psalm 133: 1
We generally have found that if we have a recurring argument then we are really fighting about a deeper issue. Here again we frequently need another couple to help us to sort out what is really going on between us and what the root cause is for the difference. You will always have differences but ones that cause irritability and tension in the marriage in our experience are not good.

(The Healthy Marriage Handbook, 2001 was used as a source reference for ideas presented in this study.)

Faith & Works



Anyone wanting
to mature in Christ
after baptism

Theme: Works of obedience are evident in a disciple's life

Purpose: To spur disciples on to obedience to God and greater works for God

Introduction

Very important: This study only concerns those who lived, or are alive after Jesus died on the Cross.

Main Study

Eph 2:8-10

- We have been saved by God's mercy and unmerited favor not by our righteous deeds that we did. Furthermore, we gained access to this salvation through our faith, not by our good deeds. However, our faith in Christ and relationship with Him will produce good deeds and righteous acts in us.
- εργον {Ergon, or erga (p)} in Greek is what we translate as work in the Bible. It means an act, deed, thing done, a product, etc.

Rom 4:2-5

- Our faith in Christ is credited to us as righteousness



If we are saved by God through our faith in Jesus and our faith in Christ is credited to us as righteousness, then why should I obey God's commands or do good deeds if I am already saved?

Rom 1:5

- Obedience comes from faith. True faith produces obedience in us.

James 2:14-25

- Faith by itself without action is dead before God. Faith alone without action nullifies the faith one may claim. True faith produces in us works that show our belief in Christ.

John 8:31-32

- Again, Jesus points out that our faith is truly evident by what we do.

Conclusion

God's salvation is a gift to us that we did not deserve nor were given because of our righteous deeds. God saved us through Jesus Christ's death on the Cross. There is nothing we can do to be saved other than believing in Christ followed by our act of faith participating in the water baptism into Christ Jesus. Again, God saves us, not our righteous acts in these circumstances. However, true faith in a believer will result in obedience to God's commands. Someone cannot say truly say that they have a saving faith, if works/obedience does not follow. We will not be perfect in our obedience, but our obedience will be evident.

Side note



If I am saved by faith, then why do I need to get baptized?

 **Col 2:11-12**

Baptism is an act of faith and the procedure in which God uses to save us. Again we don't save ourselves, but God saves us. It is not a work we do, but the work God does in us.

 **John 3:5**

 **Acts 2:38**

 **1 Pet 3:21**

Fruits of the Spirit



Young Christians to start or grow in the Lord, humbly and to help people learn how to do things in the spirit.

Theme: How to live 'In the Spirit'

Purpose: Practical direction for living out 8 fruits of the Holy Spirit

Main Study

Joy

- Putting your joy in Christ is important. Something that is constant. **Philippians 1:26**
- Praying in the spirit makes us joyful. **Ephesians 6:18**
- Being disciplined and getting things accomplished creates joy. Not being idle. **2 Timothy 1:7**

Peace

- Praying to God who gives peace with all kinds of requests. **Isaiah 9:6**
- Making agreements with people over differences. **Romans 12:18**
- Remembering Christ went through punishment on the cross for us knowing he did not deserve it. So if people cause you problems know that realistically we deserve everything bad but we have life through Christ and we get hope which we do not deserve brings peace. From that we serve others. **Acts 2:36-37**

Patience

- At work if people do wrong, do not retaliate by saying something not loving but love people and serve them even more. Being patient with people when people do wrong to you over and over again. Loving people and suffering will break down the walls. **James 5:10**
- When your patient you are being careful and you will probably do what is right. **2 Timothy 4:2**
- Know Jesus had unlimited patience. Knowing he was going to the cross his whole life. He ran away when people where about to kill him. He did not surrender to them. He knew his time had not come.

Kindness

- Taking the low road, being kind gains respect. **Proverbs 11:16**
- We tend to overreact when we do not understand. If you are kind we understand what the other person is going through. **2 Corinthians 6:6**
- Being kind and not expect anything in return.

Goodness

- Thinking about each situation each stage of your life and make it submissive to God. **Philippians 1:6**
- Not sure if something is good. Fine. Test it, try it, if it comes out a good conclusion it is good. Doing it with the right motives. **1 Thessalonians 5:21**
- Know we are created to do good works. **Ephesians 2:10**

Faithfulness

- Starting a thing and finishing its work. Sometimes it is hard. It is easy to start but hard to finish work. **3 John 1:3**

- Being faithful takes understanding. Sometimes we need to learn and perhaps go to school to learn to be faithful at a job. **Luke 12:42**
- In everything we do our purpose is to be faithful. Faithfulness is doing things right by believing. **1 Peter 4:19**

Gentleness

- Everyone notices gentleness. **Philippians 4:5**
- If we are gentle we both are trying to deal with sins together. We are slowly trying, little by little, help people grow in the lord and change. **Colossians 3:12**
- If we are gentle the tone of our voice will be gentle. **1 Peter 3:15-16**

Self control

- Think before we react. It takes patience. **2 Timothy 3:3** and **1 Peter 4:7**
- If anger builds up because we know scriptures and a sin builds up in the other person. Self-control is key. With knowledge we tend to overreact or interrupt when we see sin. **2 Peter 1:6**
- It is important if you are young in age and young in spirit.

Conclusion

In conclusion I would like to talk about love. None of the fruits of the spirit are complete without love. Love is being humble. Not being too busy because humility knows its limitations. We choose to be busy. Humbleness always admits when it is wrong. For an example: someone approaches you and asks if you want to hang out and you say I am too busy. Let's say the person says, "bro, I would like to hang out." A humble person would say let me look at my schedule and see what I can do. I am sorry for not giving you hope. Humbleness always apologizes and always admits sins.

Love is not always easy. It does not say how good we are or even thinks it, it is not arrogant, it is not rude, love does not manipulate. Love hungers for the right things. It smiles and gives a happy face. Serving God and people is awesome! Read **Matthew 22:37-40** and also read **1 Corinthians 13** and also **Romans 12**. Years before I became a Christian I would think love is the only thing I have to do; forget the rest. Ha Ha Ha.

Getting Out of the Boat



Searchers and
Christians

Theme: A study of how we need to take chances with our faith

Purpose: To see how important it is to trust Jesus even when it may not appear to make sense and to review how comfortable we are in our faith and see where our fears prevent us from knowing Christ

Introduction

This study is inspired from the book by John Ortberg, *If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat*.

Main Study

Matthew 14:22-33

- Q How did the disciples enter the boat?
A At Jesus' command, they obeyed him completely.

Discussion – Obedience is no guarantee of being spared adversity, or that Jesus will be there at a convenient time for us (like at 3:00 AM, as in this scripture)

- Q What does Peter exemplify?
A He distinguishes between faith and foolishness. He shows obedience, but with wisdom, he asks “If it is you then command me to come to you”.

- Q What was the weather like?
A Bad! It scared even the seasoned sailor – wind, waves, and darkness!

Discussion – Let's look at what Peter is doing and how it relates to us. He has sudden insight into what Jesus is doing – he is passing by. Jesus is inviting us on the adventure of a lifetime, but are we scared to death?

- Q Would you choose the water or the boat?

Discussion – The boat is safe, secure and comfortable. But the water is rough, there is a storm, and there is a good chance that you will sink...

1 John 4

In the spirit of 1 John 4, let's discuss the theme of “getting out of the boat”

- Q What does it take to get us out of the boat?
A Something to make you leave the comfort of routine existence and abandon yourself to the high adventure of *really* following God.
- Q What is your boat?
A Something that represents safety and security apart from God
A Something that you put your trust in when life gets stormy

- △ Something that keeps you from joining Jesus on the waves
- △ Something that pulls you away from extreme discipleship

It is what produces the most fear in you, especially when you think of leaving behind the comfortable and stepping out in faith. Possible boats include:

- a. Relationships without commitment
- b. Work without satisfaction, but fear of changing it
- c. Secrets such as addictions, etc.
- d. Family expectations
- e. Success and wealth (such as the Rich Young Ruler in Matthew 19)

Discussion – What about the other 11 disciples? Did they always remember the day when the carpenter’s son called them to risk everything? The rich young ruler said no. The other disciples said _____.

Conclusion

Take a look at your boat.

🕒 In what area of your life are you shrinking back from fully and courageously trusting God?

Fear will tell you what your boat is. Leaving it may be the hardest thing you will ever do, but the rewards are everlasting.

Intimacy With God



Non-Christians who struggle with getting close to God and the concept of God really loving them and Christians seeking to revive their relationship with God.

Theme: God's plea throughout the Bible to have an intimate relationship with us.

Purpose: To help us see God in a different light as an intimate, feeling God rather than our limited perception of only an All-powerful judge that barely tolerates us

Main Study

I. Hindrances to Intimacy

- 1.) We have a backwards view of God, His love and his compassion.
- 2.) We make every effort to meet our needs and heal ourselves with our own devices.
- 3.) We don't have the proper view of who we really are and how great our need is, and we don't have the security and understanding of God's grace to see who we really are.

II. The Holy Spirit living in us is a comforter and counselor



(Matthew 11:28-30, John 16:7).

We have the opportunity to be more tended to with individual attention than the twelve disciples while they walked with Jesus. We must create the atmosphere for it.

- a) We see in nature a small but very compelling reflection of God's love. Matthew 23:37, Isaiah 49:15-16,
- b) How we violate this intimacy: Jeremiah 2:13, Isaiah 57:10-13a, John 6:27
- c) Why we violate this intimacy: Romans 7:14-25, Revelation 3:17-18
- d) God's invitation to an intimate walk: Isaiah 42:5-6, Isaiah 55:1-3, John 4:13-15, John 6:35,50-50, John 14:23,16,18-20,26-27, John 7:37
- e) How our response should be: Isaiah 26:9, Isaiah 50:4, Psalm 42:1-2,63:1-6, Psalm 119:20,62,97,120,127,131,148,164, 103,114, John 4:15
- f) We as the Bride of Christ: Isaiah 62:5, Matthew 9:15, 2 Corinthians 11:2, Revelation 19:7
- g) An undivided devotion: Examples... Exodus 33:1, 7-11, Having our own daily "tent of meeting(s)." 1Corinthians 7:32-35, Making God and our walk with him as real as an earthly spouse or marriage. Job 23:12, Psalm 131:1-2, Being still and quiet before God. Psalm 5:1-3.

Conclusion

Use as many resources as possible for practical purposes including other studies (101 reasons to delight in the Lord, 101 ways to delight in the Lord, worship related studies, etc.) and getting advice from other disciples.

JESUS' PRAYER LIFE



Non-Christians early into their studies and Christians seeking to revive their relationship with God.

Theme: Jesus' prayer life as demonstrated in the Gospels.

Purpose: To teach and inspire us how to relate to and rely on God.

Main Study

Matthew 14:13

"When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns."

Matthew 26:39-44

"Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will. Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done." When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing."

Mark 1:35

"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."

Mark 6:46-47

"Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray. When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land."

Luke 3:21

"When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened."

Luke 4:42

"At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them."

Luke 5:15-16

"Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."

Luke 6:12-13

"One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles:"

 **Luke 9:18**

"Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?"

 **Luke 9:29**

"As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning."

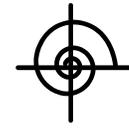
 **Luke 11:1**

"One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

 **Hebrews 5:7**

"During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission."

Real Men Are Real Friends



Primarily Christian
men

Theme: A study on the relationships that men need to have with each other

Purpose: To see how God has called on men to have Christian relationships with each other and to point out the necessity of these friendships

Introduction

If you study the many clinical cases of young and older people with various forms of depression, you will find one common denominator – most of them do not have a close, intimate friend (source: Rev Mark Connolly at www.spirituality.org/issue52/pg10.html). But what is a friend? How do you define this concept?

Main Study

Let's look at what Dr. Jim Conway wrote about the value and purpose of friends (source: www.midlife.com/html/resources/articles/RA29_building.htm):

- a. Friends are enablers – through each other you both accomplish goals and purposes in your lives
- b. Friends provide perspective – they see the side of issues that you don't see
- c. Friends provide encouragement – they can point you in new directions you might not tackle
- d. Friends prevent stupidity – they keep you from making poor choices
- e. Friends provide safety, retreat, and comfort – when you are weak, they are there
- f. Friends provide courage to face life – they enable you to meet both success and failure
- g. Friends provide strength against temptation – they help you not to give up and go in a direction that may lead to sin

Q But as men, do we have a problem making real friends?

A Men's problem – “superficial friends”.

In his book The Friendless American Male, David Smith writes, “Women seem to have a monopoly on meaningful intimate relationships...Men have friendships which relate to work or play, but seldom go beyond the surface...”

- Men are buddies, not deep friends
- They do not share their *inner selves* with each other
- They play together, but they do not expose their personal problems to one another
- They share problems *outside* of themselves, but not themselves

Also, some social scientists also feel that male relationships, if they exist at all, are usually superficial and self-serving.

From “Building a Church through Friendship” (www.users.on.net/mec/answers/26_fri.htm), there are three levels of friendship:

1. Casual friends or acquaintances
2. Close personal friends
3. Intimate best friends – those few whom we share our deepest feelings, maybe only 3 or 4 people at most in men’s lives

 **John 13:20-30**

- Q Which level of friendship does this represent? (Especially Vs. 22)!
- A Only level 1 – Judas had concealed his contacts with the Pharisees despite the fact that he had been with them for some time (years), but they *really did not know* each other!
- Q How is this possible? Look at v.28-29, why are the disciples so clueless?
- A Discuss various possibilities such as focusing on Jesus, their basic competition with each other (**Luke 9:46**), etc.

Now let’s look at an example of real friendship.

 **Read Luke 5:17-20**

- Q What do you think the homeowner thought (his roof was being cut open!)?
- Q What level of friendship do we see represented by the friends of the paralytic?
- A Level 3 – They were logical, determined, assertive, patient, courageous, strong, encouraging, and enabling...
- Q Look closely at v. 20, what do you see?
- A Jesus notes *their* faith, not just the faith of the paralytic! Their faith saves him!

 **Ephesians 2:20-23**

Every stone depends on the others and supports the others

 **John 15:14-15**

Jesus’ disciples are his “friends”, not his servants!

Conclusion

We need to be a Christian friend to others, to develop close personal and intimate relationships. As men, we can all do better at this! We need to be involved with each other’s lives and be willing to put in the effort to start deep and lasting friendships, and not wait for someone else to initiate friendships.

The Sermon on the Mount Study



Disciples or non-Christians

Theme: Building a Christ-like character

Purpose: To help the believer understand the implications of discipleship using the Sermon on the Mount

Introduction

 **Matthew 28:16-20**

One very important part of the Great Commission is “teaching to obey everything” Jesus taught his disciples. But what did Jesus teach? What specific teachings do you know that Jesus taught the twelve? Let’s look at the Sermon on the Mount as a guide.

Main Study

 **Matthew 5**

-These are the most extensive teachings of Jesus to his disciples. (Vv. 1-2)

-The Beattitudes, go over each.

Q What do they mean?

-Poor in Spirit-humility and selflessness

-Mournful-compassion and concern

-Meek-not exerting authority

-Hunger and thirst righteousness-longing to do what please God

-Merciful-compassionate and forgiving

-Pure in heart-having the right motives, dealing with your heart

-Peacemakers-looking for peace and unity

-The persecuted-willingness to face opposition for Jesus

-Being a good example to the world. Vv. 13-16

Anger and forgiveness Vv. 21-26

Lust Vv. 27-30

Divorce Vv. 31-32

Making promises Vv. 33-37

Retaliation Vv. 38-42

Loving your enemies Vv. 43-48

 **Matthew 6**

-Giving to the needy Vv. 1-4

-Prayer and forgiveness Vv. 5-15

-Fasting Vv. 16-18

-Materialism and greed Vv. 19-24

-Worry and faithlessness Vv. 25-34

Talk about each one, share from your life where applicable.

Ask about the challenges with each one with the disciple.

End with prayer together.

Wealth and Christianity



All Christians in
general

Theme: A study on the nature of material wealth and how the Bible describes its relationship to believers.

Purpose: To determine whether one can be “wealthy” in material possessions and be a follower of Christ

Introduction

More passages in the Bible deal with wealth and possessions than any other subject!

Main Study



Matthew 19:16-26 – “Rich Young Man (Ruler)”

Comment: This is a very difficult passage at first glance. Ask the audience if after reading this passage, can anyone who is “wealthy” get to heaven?

What was the real problem with rich man?

His relationship with his money, not the money itself. Look at the commandments that Jesus asks if he has kept. These commandments make up 5 of the 6 commandments of the second table of the 10 Commandments (the Decalogue) – all dealing with human relationships. Jesus intentionally omitted the tenth commandment – “Do not covet” and added Lev 19:18, the summation of the second half of the Decalogue, which is also the second part of the “greatest commandment” that Jesus gave us in Mark 10:31. The young man was trying to attain salvation through works righteousness and was guilty of coveting his wealth and not loving his neighbor. (Note: part of this discussion is from the NKJV MacArthur Study Bible)

Why were the disciples “greatly astonished” in verse 25 by Jesus’ comment in verse 24?

Read Deuteronomy 8:6-11, 17-20, and 28:9-11 – The disciples (and others at that time) literally took these passages to mean that wealth = blessings instead of blessings *can* equal wealth. So they thought that the Rich Young Ruler had been blessed for keeping the covenant laws. Ironically we know through various New Testament scriptures (such as found in Romans), that the old covenant is and was *impossible* to keep.



Luke 19:1-10

Read about Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10

What is different about Zacchaeus as compared to the Rich Young Ruler?

Zacchaeus was willing to make restitutions which was proof that his conversion was genuine, which was the fruit, *not the condition*, of his salvation (the book of James parallels this point). Hebrew law required a penalty of one-fifth as restitution for money acquired by fraud (Leviticus 6:5, Numbers 5:6-7), so Zacchaeus was going above what was required by law. The law required 4-fold restitution only when an animal was stolen or killed (Exodus 22:1), other wise only a 2-fold restitution was required if the animal was found alive (Exodus 22:4). But, Zacchaeus judged his own crime so severely that he acknowledged that he was as guilty as the worst robber. Very likely this was a costly commitment, especially since he was giving half of his goods to the poor. However, there was no requirement that he give away any money that he rightly acquired. Obviously Zacchaeus did not suffer from the

same issues with his wealth as the Rich Young Ruler. (Note: part of this discussion is from the NKJV MacArthur Study Bible)

 **Acts 4:32-37 (read to review)**

 **Acts 5:1-11**

Read about Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11

Q What is the problem here really?

A Faking spirituality, hypocritical, selfishness, hypocrisy (money is not the real issue)

Conclusion

There is not *necessarily* a problem when Christians have wealth. Wealth itself isn't a problem; it is the place that wealth takes in our lives that is important. We need to heed Jesus' words in **Matthew 6:19-24**, that we cannot serve both God and money, but we can make wealth available for God's work. There were many wealthy Christians (disciples) in the Bible including "a rich man" Joseph of Arimathea (**Matthew 27:57**); Mnason, a benefactor for Paul and an "early disciple" (**Acts 21:16-17**); Philemon (entire book of Philemon); Job and his life; etc. Wealth can be a blessing, but we need to remember where it comes from and how to use it wisely for God.

Other supporting scriptures:

 **Luke 12:16-24**

Parable of the Rich Fool

 **Luke 16:19-34**

Rich Man and Lazarus

 **Luke 18:9-14**

Parable of Pharisee and the Tax Collector

 **Acts 2:42-47**

Fellowship of Believers

 **Luke 21:2-4**

Poor Widow's Offering

 **Matthew 25:14-30**

Parable of the Talents

 **2 Corinthians 8**

Macedonian church offering

 **Book of Amos**

 **Book of Philemon**

You First!



Christians and
non-Christians

Theme: Ingratitude/Testing God

Purpose: To assess whether we are asking God to ‘prove’ himself again for us

Introduction

Imagine this scene:

As you are walking along a lonely path, it leads you beside the towering remains of some old stone structure. The stone wall looms above you, and you feel dwarfed beside it. You spot a small stone in the wall that appears loose, and decide to take it home remember the feeling of smallness the wall has given you. As you wiggle the stone, the boulders around it start to shift. In horror you try to replace it, only to find that the gap is too tight, and the stone you have pulled will only still the shifting wall while you are holding it . . .

How it must have felt to walk through the Red Sea while God held up the water on both sides!

There are walls like this all around us, but do you recognize them? Do you see the situations and/or perils that could have hurt us badly, but that God has held back so that we could pass in safety? What has been your response to God? Do you still need to see a miraculous sign?

Main Study

 **Ps 78: 40-58**

Q How did the Israelites test God?

A They did not remember His power **v.42**, and did not keep His statutes **v.56**, and aroused His jealousy with their idols **v.58**.

Q Think about how God has blessed your life; what has He done for you?

Q Had God proven his power to the Israelites? How? **v.43-55**.

Q How has God proven His power to you?

Consider how jealous God was in **v.58-59** when He heard them honor other gods, and the consequence of their disobedience!

Q What idols are tempting you?

Q Are you dividing your heart: do you allow them to share in the heart that you committed to God?

Q What sort of heart did God want to see? **v.70-72**.

Q How do many people react . . . what do people want when times are rough?

 **Ps 79: 9, 12-13, Ps 80:3, 17-19**

Q Do you recognize the pattern?

Q Do you say “you first” to God?

Q Do you say to the fire: “If you give me some heat, I’ll give you some wood!”?

Q What was God’s reaction to the Israelites?

Q Are you any different, does God have to prove Himself again to you?

Q Do you say “If You, then I” to God?

Conclusion

Have the faith to submit to God’s will! Jesus returned to personally teach Paul what He wanted Paul to teach to us! Read Romans 12:1-2 and consider the sort of “if/then prayers” that God will respond to!!!

Pray about it!

You First (Part 2)!



Christians and
non-Christians

Theme: Ingratitude/Testing God

Purpose: To assess whether we are asking God to ‘prove’ himself again for us/to see if we are willing to take the first step instead of waiting for God to take the first step

Introduction

Have you ever noticed the miracles that God surrounds us with? Have you been awestruck at an unusual bird or flower, or a sunset? Have you felt powerless in the midst of a storm, or small as you gazed at the ocean or down from a mountaintop? These are kisses from God, His lovely way of reassuring us that He is all around us; glimpse of His Power and loving kindness! So are the changed hearts we see in disciples!

Main Study

1Sa 9:27-10:8

Consider David, a man “after God’s own heart”.

Saul had been given a “message from God”, and in v. 10:8, Samuel told Saul to wait for him for seven days to come to offer sacrifices. During the next week, amazing things happened in Saul’s life, including everything that God had told him through Samuel. To have seen these things, to have won an incredible military victory, and be crowned King! But read what happened on the seventh day!

1 Sam 13:13-14.

Because Saul had not kept God’s command, he lost the kingship, and God had searched out a man “after His own heart who *would* keep it: David! The qualification that David would have the kingship and a kingdom that would endure forever was his submission to God’s will. Do you want God to give an eternal kingdom to you? How is your submission? Do you, from the heart, desire to do God’s will?

Can’t you see that God has already given first?

Psalm 40

Read Psalm 40 with this in mind, and consider a heart after God’s own heart! David waited patiently for God. **v.1.** Because of a new song God had given him, many would hear of and trust in the Lord **v.3:** David sang and told people about it!

Blessed are those who trust in God, not false idols. **v.4.**

In **v.6-9**, God tells us through David that it is not sacrifices or offerings that He desires, rather He wants us to keep His law in our hearts, and to *desire* to do His will!

David not only desired to do so, but gave an outward sign in verse 6a of his lifelong submission, as if he were a slave to God!

 **Exodus 21:6-7**

Read Exodus 21:6-7 to put this sign into context. The master would pierce the ear of the slave if the slave wanted to give himself over for life! And David said that God pierced both his ears!

How about you?

Are you willing to endure pain to show God how much you love Him?

Can people tell where you stand by looking at you?

Conclusion

Make the decision that every time you want to ask God for something, that you will remember that He answered first, and pray for God to help you to imitate David, and to help you to have a heart that pleases Him!

Power of Prayer



Christians and
Non-Christians

Theme: Prayer

Purpose: To learn when and how to pray

Introduction

Prayer can be defined a solemn request or thanksgiving to God as an object of worship. It is one of the most important acts of our Christian life. Praying should be done with specifics to God.

As a child growing up, my mother would teach me to pray by her example. She would spend long periods of time at my bedside praying. She first gave thanks to God for life, family, and friends, etc. Then she would pray for healing for those who are sick, for comfort and health for all in positions of leadership, and finally for forgiveness of sin for herself and her children. She taught me this same format. After reading and studying the Bible for myself, I have seen a different format that I want to share with disciples.

I believe God teaches us

- 1 – When to Pray
- 2 – How to Pray
- 3 – How Often to Pray
- 4 – Why to Pray

Main Study

WHEN TO PRAY

When should we pray? I believe we should pray for any and on ALL occasions. We are reminded in the Bible to pray for everything. In **Proverbs 3:6**, Solomon wrote: In all your ways, acknowledge him and HE will make your paths straight (emphasis mine). Many disciples suggest a quiet time in the morning to pray. That's good. In **Psalms 5:3**, David says "In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation." However, we should also pray at other times and on ALL occasions, too (**Eph 6:18**).

Q When should we pray?

A Pray without ceasing (**1 Thessalonians 5:17**) and pray on ALL occasions with every request.

HOW TO PRAY

Jesus gave us the format in what is commonly called the Lords prayer – **Matthew 6:9-13**. Jesus used this format when he prayed for us in **John 25:20-25**. His prayer had specific requests. He prayed for future believers (us!). He prayed that we have unity and that we would behold His Glory. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, He taught them to honor the name of God by putting God first in every thing. In Luke 11:9, Jesus further told us to "ask and it will be given, seek and it will be found, knock and it will be opened to you. In **Luke 12:32**, Jesus reminds us to seek His kingdom (His will for our lives) and these things will be given to you.

HOW OFTEN TO PRAY

Jesus uses a parable in **Luke 18:1-9** to explain to us that we should always pray and not give up. Paul tells us in **Philippians 1:18** to pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. He further reminds us in **vs. 19** to be alert and pray for other disciples.

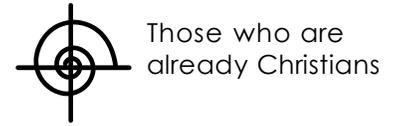
WHY SHOULD WE PRAY

Jesus tells us in **Mt 6:12** that we should pray for the forgiveness of sins: forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors. We are reminded by James the way we should pray when we are in trouble in **James 5:13**: “Is anyone of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone of you happy, let him sing songs of praise.” We should pray for faith. James tells us that if we are sick we should pray. He uses Elijah as an example of a praying man and stresses the fact that Elijah was just a man like us (**James 5:13-20**). Finally we should pray for our brothers and sisters who stumble, as we are reminded in **1 John 1:16**: “If anyone of you sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life.

Conclusion

Prayer is actually talking to God. If you have a need in your life, talk to God about it. If it is His will, His will will be done in your life in a manner you are expecting. Paul spoke of prayers in **2 Corinthians 13:9** – our prayers are for our perfection. Remember, God answers all our prayers according to His will – Thy will be done!

Do Not Worry (Trust in God)



Theme: An aspect of trusting in God with our personal lives

Purpose: To help people understand what 'worry' means and how to avoid it

Introduction

For some of us, worry is a part of life. If we are parents, we worry about our children. If we are students, we worry about our grades or how we appear to others. If we are employed, we worry about the quality of our work or if we can keep our jobs. We may even worry about the time of our death. Some of us are taught to worry and yet others think that to worry is to be concerned. To be concerned is to care. However, constant thought about the concern leads to anxious thoughts or worry.

What does Jesus tell us about worrying?

Main Study

 **Matt 6:25-34**

25"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

28"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

NIV

In the Spanish NIV, 'Do not worry' is translated as 'No se preocupen'. 'No se Preocupen' literally means 'Do not be preoccupied'. To be preoccupied is to be absorbed or engrossed by a thought. The question is 'Am I thinking about this situation more than I'm thinking about God or heavenly things?' If the answer is yes, then I am being controlled by my thoughts instead of being in control of them.

 **2 Cor 10:4c-5**

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Basically, if we are unable to bring about change ourselves, then we should just pray about it and let God take it from there. In addition, we should pursue God, his realm (kingdom) and doing what is right. Study out kingdom and discover just how huge this is.

 **James 5:13a**

Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray.

 **Phil 4:6**

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

"Do not worry" is a command from Jesus himself. We need to do all we can to avoid this.

 **Luke 10:41-42**

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Q What did Mary do?

A She sat and listened to what Jesus said.

A She made Him and His lessons the priority in her life.

 **Ps 55:22**

Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.

Imagine your life being carried by God in His hand. God cares about our lives more than we ever could.

 **Phil 4:7**

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Conclusion

Only when we avoid worrying will it be possible to have the peace God spoke about in His Word.

There are many other scriptures on this subject.

Suggested Reading: **Luke 12:22-31** and **1 Peter 5:7**

Giving Advice



Those who are
already Christians.

Theme: Knowing when and when not to give advice.

Purpose: To examine biblical principles about giving opinions

Introduction

There are certainly times as Christians when we need to counsel one another.

Main Study

Consider:



James 5:19-20

My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

We need to look after each other. But, we still need to have restraint in regards to when and how we advise others.



Proverbs 16:2

“All a man's ways seem innocent to him,
but motives are weighed by the LORD.”

We need to consider our motives when we're advising someone. It needs to be for the right reasons. There are times when we may feel compelled to give our opinion, but we really shouldn't:



Proverbs 10:19

“When words are many, sin is not absent,
but he who holds his tongue is wise.”



Proverbs 12:23

“A prudent man keeps his knowledge to himself,
but the heart of fools blurts out folly.”

One example of this is in matters that are disputable:



Romans 14:1-4

Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

You need to separate those things that are clearly commanded for us to do in scripture from those things that are not.

 **Proverbs 29:20**

“Do you see a man who speaks in haste?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.”

When someone comes to you and asks for advice, be humble and do not give a hasty answer:

 **Proverbs 18:13**

“He who answers before listening - that is his folly and his shame.”

Carefully listen to the person explaining his or her situation and try not to interrupt:

 **Proverbs 18:2**

“A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions.”

If someone decides not to take your advice, don't try to make him take it:

 **Luke 22:25-26**

“Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.”

It's his choice whether or not to follow your advice.

 **Proverbs 26:12**

“Do you see a man wise in his own eyes?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.”

After all, you are just a fellow servant, and your advice may not be the best

 **Galatians 5:13-14**

“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.””

Keep love in mind.

Leadership and Unity



Christians,
especially those in
a leadership
position.

Theme: A study on the necessity of unity between Christians and the necessity of leadership to make this happen

Purpose: Unity (not uniformity) among Christians is a challenge, but with God's help, it can be achieved. This study will look at what it means to be unified and how to defeat the enemies of Christian unity

Introduction

This study is inspired from the book by Ferguson and Shaw, Golden Rule Leadership.

Main Study

Matthew 12:22-26

Q What does this say about unity?

A Discussion – “Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined...” (v. 25)

Let's look at what it takes for leaders and followers in God's churches to experience the unity God desires for us and for His glory.

Q Specifically, how can we avoid being a “divided kingdom”?

Genesis 11:6 “Tower of Babel”

Q What is God saying about unity?

A Nothing is impossible (even selfish goals)!

John 17:20-23

Q Why do we need unity? (*i.e.*, What was Jesus' prayer?)

A (v. 23) “May they be brought to complete **unity to let the world know** that you sent me and have loved them, even as you have loved me.”

Takeaway: Every group of Christians since the time of Jesus is meant to be completely united.

Ferguson: “It is easier to lose conviction about unity's connection to God's blessing sooner than baptism's connection to it. Therefore, we risk continued blessings by God. Unity is a challenge, but not an insurmountable one or God would not have commanded it!” Let's look at three enemies of unity:

1. Selfish Human Ambition

Look again at Genesis 11. If our motives are bad (selfish, etc.), then God will scatter us.

Q We must be careful to not do what?

A We must not lead in order to “get something” out of it. The correct motivation is “to bring glory to God and unity to God's people.” (See **John 17:23** again!)

2. Competition

3 John 9-10

This could be called “competition” today. Here John cites competition as having two deadly effects on unity. These are (1) malicious gossip or verbal attacks, and (2) isolation and separation within the fellowship.

Q What is wrong with wanting to be our best?

A Nothing! (Trick question)

Q What is wrong with wanting to be the best?

A We come close to wanting “to be first”

Takeaway: How much is Diotrephes alive in you and me? However, the theme of 3 John – rebuking and correcting in love is critical to God’s work. We will see this in a moment...

3. Fear

Ferguson: “In Joshua 22 the ten tribes feared that their brothers would get them into trouble, and the two half tribes feared that they would be forgotten by the larger group, the center of the “movement”. They nearly destroyed each other because of fear.”

Q What does the Bible say about this type of fear?

A Read 1 John 4:18 – “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.”

Ferguson: “With God, fear is the beginning of wisdom, but love is the stuff maturity, confidence, and longevity are built on.”

Psalm 133:1-3

Finally, the rewards of unity – “...For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.”

Conclusion

Leadership and unity are a challenge. Worldly concerns such as selfish ambition, competition, and fear can make us destructive towards our own goal of unity. We must remember to work in love with one and other if we are to realize the blessings that God has promised in Psalm 133.

RELATIONSHIPS



Non-Christians who lack positive relationships and/or need encouragement to build friendships with disciples. Baptized disciples, for whom building relationships is a weakness.

Theme: How to have biblical friendships.

Purpose: To help someone understand what type of relationship God wants to have with us and therefore, what type of relationships we ought to have with each other

Introduction

The study focuses on one extended passage that provides much discussion on the topic along with clear answers to common questions. Other shorter passages could be used as reinforcement of the ideas presented in the main scripture. If discussion of the main passage takes most of the study time, the reinforcement passages could be assigned for the person to study on his own before the next meeting.

Main Study

 **LUKE 19:1-10**

- Q In regard to relationships, why is it significant that the Bible mentions that Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector and wealthy?
- A He would have had few friends. Tax collectors were viewed as greedy, unscrupulous, traitors, enemy of their fellow Jews.

Since Jesus was God in human form we can use his example of befriending Zacchaeus as an illustration of how God befriends us.

- Q What are some characteristics of God's friendship with us that you see illustrated in this passage?
- A He accepts us unconditionally.
- A He seeks us out and finds a way to get into our lives.
- A He's glad to have us as his friend. (It's not burdensome for him)
- A God does not react to social status or lack thereof the way we do.
- A Getting to know God inspires positive change in us.
- A A friendship with God is not shallow or self seeking.

Since Jesus was sent to Earth as an example for us to follow, this passage is very instructive of the kind of relationships we are to have with each other.

- Q Where can you find relationships that are based on the characteristics evident here?
- A Only among those who are striving to follow Jesus and take his words to heart will exhibit these traits. Get to know more disciples of Jesus. Spend more time with them.

Reinforcement Passages

 **ACTS 2:42-47**

When people are devoted to God and each other, this is the kind of unity that naturally develops. It is the way families are supposed to be but so often are not.

 **ACTS 4:32-35**

Real friends meet each other's needs. They're united by Jesus' teachings. When one is joyful, all are joyful. When one is sad, all are sad (one in heart and mind).

 **ROMANS 12:10-16**

 **GALATIANS 5:13**

 **EPHESIANS 4:2**

 **COLOSSIANS 3:13-16**

A few of the 'one another passages'. There are many more.

 **PROVERBS 17:17; 18:24; 27:6a; 27:9**

Cultivate friends who will do this.

Conclusion

The Bible is where we find God's model for true friendship. God's church is where it is practiced.

Resolving Conflict



Those who are
already Christians.

Theme: Living at peace with each other

Purpose: To teach Christians what the Bible says about getting along with each other

Main Study

Matthew 18

Verses 15-17 are sometimes used as a format to disfellowship people from the church, but in context, this chapter is about NOT losing people. It's about giving people (within reason) every possible chance to repent and be reconciled. God doesn't want anyone to be lost.

If there is a conflict between you and someone else, it's your responsibility to go to him alone to try to resolve it. Only when that doesn't work do you bring someone else in. And then, it should be only one or two others. This is not about gang-tackling the person. This is about revealing the truth. One person may not be able to communicate things adequately. Others may be able to help.

Only if this fails do you go to the whole church with the issue. Following this scripture may lead to removal from the fellowship, but not necessarily. This is about how a person is to be approached.

Remember, the goal here is not to get rid of the person. The goal is to help the person to get right, while having patience and mercy and forgiveness on him. It's inevitable that other Christians will sin against you. When it happens, you need to handle things the right way.

Luke 6:36-42

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." He also told them this parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher. "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

When something goes wrong with someone else, it is your responsibility to look at yourself first.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Q "Was I at fault for what happened?"
- Q "Am I guilty of the same thing that I see this person guilty of?"
- Q "Is there anything I should change so that this doesn't happen again?"

Only after you check yourself on an issue, can you see clearly to help someone else with that issue.

On the other side of the coin, if someone points out a fault of your own, don't be preoccupied if he is also guilty. Fix yourself first, whether you're doing the correcting, or whether you're the one being corrected.

 **Hebrews 12:14-15**

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

The goal is to be at peace with each other. Watch out for roots of bitterness!

 **1 Peter 3:8-9**

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

Never repay evil with evil! Live in harmony.

Further Study

 **Luke 17:1-4**

 **Mathew 5:21-24**

 **Ephesians 4:1-6**

 **1 Thessalonians 5: 9-24**

 **Proverbs 14:9**

 **Proverbs 17:9**

What We Say



Those who are
already Christians.

Theme: Being righteous with our words

Purpose: To help people to see the importance of controlling our speech

Main Study

There are a plethora of scriptures on the subject of what we say. Let's look at a few of them.

James 1:26

“If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.”

Those are strong words. What we say is tremendously important. We need to keep a tight rein on the tongue.

Let's look at what Jesus says on the subject.

Matthew 12:36-37

“But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

If we're going to be held accountable for being *careless*, then we need to be *careful*.

Luke 6:27-28

"But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”

This is not natural, and the world tends to do exactly the opposite of this. James gives one reason why this is so.

James 1:19-21

“My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.”

If we let ourselves be led by anger, we will not do what is righteous in God's eyes. We need to humbly accept this teaching and become slow to speak instead of reacting impulsively.

Proverbs 11:12

“A man who lacks judgment derides his neighbor,
but a man of understanding holds his tongue.”

It has become commonplace in the world to cut down other people for almost any reason, but as Christians we shouldn't be that way. Sometimes even when we're just playing around we say things that are inappropriate.

 **Proverbs 26:18-19**

“Like a madman shooting
firebrands or deadly arrows
is a man who deceives his neighbor
and says, "I was only joking!"”

This doesn't mean that we can never joke around, but we need to be careful that it doesn't come across in a hurtful way. Our priority should be to be righteous more than to be funny. There is another area that we should consider. That is being people of integrity.

 **James 5:12**

“Above all, my brothers, do not swear-not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned.”

If we are people of our word, others will see that, and we won't have to make an oath to back something up. But, this takes effort on our part to do what we say. Now let's look at one more verse.

 **Ephesians 4:29**

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

Our goal should be to always say things that will be beneficial, not things that unnecessarily break people down. Sometimes how we word something will vary from person to person, because it needs to be according to *their* individual needs.

Conclusion

There are many other scriptures on this subject.
Suggestion: Read all of Proverbs on your own.

Section Three – Special Topics



Studies submitted by members

How did Jesus field questions?



Disciples

Theme: Responding to questions people may have about your faith

Purpose: To be prepared to give an answer (or question!) to anyone who questions you.

Main Study

1. Turns question on questioner, but slightly changed.

Matthew 22:18-22

“But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, “You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me?” Show me the coin used for paying the tax.” They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, “Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?” “Caesar’s,” they replied. Then he said to them, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.” When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.”

Matthew 21:23-27 (John’s Baptism)

“Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you this authority?”

Jesus replied, “I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John’s baptism--where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men?” They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ But if we say, ‘From men’--we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet.”

So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.” Then he said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”

2. Connects with their background/base knowledge

3. Silence

4. Answered in Parables (similarity—principle evident in everyday life)

Luke 13:18-19

“Then Jesus asked, “What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? It is like a *mustard seed*, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air perched in its branches.””

Luke 15:3-10 (The Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin)

“Then Jesus told them this parable: “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”

““Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and

says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'"

(Student—if mom died and left money for tuition)

5. Exposes People's Hearts (character flaws in practices)

When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other *traditions*, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.

Mark 7:5-13

So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?"

He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:

" 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'

You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the *traditions* of men."

And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own *traditions*! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.'"

6. Gives an Assignment

7. Uses Scripture

 **Matt. 22:29:** Ignorance of Scriptures

 **Mark 2:25:** "have you never read..."

 **Luke 24:13-32:** Jesus did a fulfillment of prophecy study.

8. Uses Logic/He shows the lack of logic in their position.

Mark 3:22-29

"And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons." So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house. I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin.'"

Excel in This Grace of Giving (2 Cor 8.7)



Disciples

Theme: Our role as disciple to give financially to meet the needs of the church and the less fortunate

Purpose: To teach a disciple how to use his/her finances to glorify God.

Introduction

Giving financially to God can and should be fun and rewarding part of our friendship with God. Through giving we can bring honor to God, change the eternal destiny of others, provide for the poor and keep our hearts tied to God. Remember, the heart is more important than the amount. The Bible abounds with scriptures about this topic, so get out your Bible and here we go.....

Main Study

1. God's Overall Economic Plan



2 Cor 8:13-15, Acts 4:34, 1 Cor 9:9-11

Those who have will support those who have not.

2. The Demand Side - the need for money

God has commanded us to take the gospel to all nations, to care for God's family, and to take care of the poor along the way.



Mt 28:18-20

With only a tiny percentage of world saved, it is going to take millions of dollars to teach the world about Jesus, but it is the best investment - infinite return - a soul in heaven - for a small investment. Where would you be without someone's contribution?



Eph 4:11-16

God has provided a way for us to continue to grow spiritually.



Num 18:20-21; 1 Cor 9:9-11

Priests (OT)/paid ministry staff (NT) - people who were called and/or have chosen to forgo a secular job to spend more time serving God.



Gal 2:10

The need is great with 200 million kids in the world malnourished, 17 million children dying each year due to infectious disease, and 3.1 billion people in world making <\$1,000 per year.

3. The Supply Side - God's Funding Source



Mt 6.21

Q Where is this money going to come from?

A Much depends on us. Giving is not optional. It is even a matter of salvation.

In contrast to taxes and the government, where we are under obligation of law (give or else), our giving to God should come from His inspiration. The joy of our salvation should lead to rich generosity. (**1 Pet 1:8-9; 2 Cor. 8:2-5**) Jesus' compassion should help us grow in the sensitivity to the needs of others (see **Mat 9:36-38; Mark 6:34-37**)

God supplies us with the resources to give (**2 Cor. 9:10-11**) and returns to us in proportion to the amount we give (**Luke 6:38**).

Examples from Mosaic law of ways to give:

Tithe of crops and animals for the Levites (**Num 18**) and at times the aliens, fatherless and widows every third year (**Deut. 14:27-29**)

Un-gathered harvest for the needy (**Deut. 24:19-21**)

Q Can you find cereal/grain/meat offerings, peace, fellowship, sin, free will, wave, heave, and votive offerings?

Q What were these for?

Ways we can give (each of which is a gift to God and can bring you joy in your friendship with Him):

- Regular weekly contribution - supports local congregation – staff salaries, building rental, etc.

- Poor contribution - all kinds of needs in Phila. and abroad; also helps disciples adopt children

- Giving to foreign missions – helping to save people around the world

- “Free will offering” - Feel inspired to just give extra - maybe got a bonus at work or want to give God a gift because you love Him (like buying a present for your special someone) or you sacrificed something during the week so you can give more.

- “Legacy gift” - for ex: perhaps received an inheritance and want to give HOPE a large sum of \$ for a specific purpose to honor your parents OR set up a charitable trusts that helps out you and the church

- “Random Acts of Kindness” - like buying groceries for a hungry family, giving clothes to the needy, taking a homeless person to lunch, sending a kid to camp who couldn't go otherwise

Ways we can rob God: Mal 3:8-12

- Ungrateful heart: when we think we earned something or something is owed to us instead of being grateful for all God has given us, our giving will suffer both in quantity and quality.

- Also just think of the ways God may have saved you money: free marriage/dating/relationship counseling (and it works!), free resume advice, free money management advice.....

- Mismanaged finances – we make a commitment to give but can not follow through; bounced checks: costs you and church money and time; (be humble, ask for help)

Greed: according to Greek dictionary “a desire to have more” - equated with idolatry (**Col 3:5**); watch out for this sin (**Luke 12:15**)

Q Have you ever confessed this sin?

How much should I give to God?

History lesson:

- Cain & Abel – **Gen 4:1-5**:

🕒 What are the qualities of an offering that God would look upon with favor?

- Abraham gave a tenth of all of the spoils from the defeat of Kederlaomer and its allies to.

- Melchizedek king of Salem or Jerusalem (**Gen 14:17-20**).

Did God command Abraham to give a 10th?

Was it just something he was moved to do?

- Jacob (Abraham's grandson) vow's to build God an alter and give Him a tenth if God does takes care of him (see **Gen 28.20-22**) - To Jacob worshiping and giving went hand-in-hand with making the Lord his God.

🕒 Did he give a tenth because that was the example set or could it have been a natural part of worship?

- Mosaic law: Giving of tithes (10th of crops and animals) was codified under the law.

- Even Jesus said the Pharisees were doing the right thing when they gave a tenth of their spice crop (**Lk 11.42**). Only those of us extreme legalists can appreciate cutting every tenth leaf for the Lord off of our spice crop in our kitchen window!

After Jesus: We are free from old way of the law and can now serve in the new of the Spirit (**Rom 7:4-6**). The New Testament does not state what to give, we are free to choose.

Principles of giving:

- Focus and get in touch with the needs first, then work on your budget

- Give to God first, then to your needs (**Eze 44:30, Pro 3:9**)

- Giving is between you and God, not you and the church (see **Pro 3:9**)

- Do not use your freedom of how you use your money to indulge your sinful nature and become materialistic (**Gal 5.13**)

- If you are a disciple, you've already given it all to God in your heart (**Luke 14:33**)

- Excel in grace of giving (**2 Cor 8.7**) - Not just the minimum or just what others expect; not just the routine –“its built into my budget so I don't have to think about it”.

🕒 Do you currently consider your giving to be excellent?

- Give in proportion to your income (**1 Cor 16.2**) - this is one benefit of giving a 10th – disciples who make more give more, but there still is an income distribution that allows the congregation to reach out to all of society

- Give cheerfully, not reluctantly or under compulsion (**2 Cor 9.7**)

- Give sacrificially – **2 Sam 24:24**

- Consistent giving helps the church determine and manage its budget.

Give with faith – see Luke 6.38, Mal 3, 2 Cor 9:6, Mat 6:33.

Consider all the ways how God has managed to take care of your physical needs.

🕒 Have you limited your giving or are you free, under the Spirit, with no limits? (**Gal 5:18-23**)

Conclusion

In conclusion, what you give is between you and God, but has a great impact on the lives of others and yourself. Pray for guidance. Seek advice. Look at the eternal picture.

Q What role has giving a 10th played historically with God's people?

Q What way do you think God wants us influenced today by those examples?

Q What about the example of the early disciples in Acts or of the widow in **Mark 12:42-44**?
God has blessed us richly in America, usually even those of us whom are considered "poor" in America. Use your money to draw others and yourself closer to God.

Worshipping God as the Creator



Non-Christians early into their studies and Christians seeking to revive their relationship with God.

Theme: A cause and effect theme in the Old Testament between God's Creation and how the creation is to help us respond to the Creator

Purpose: To teach and inspire us how to respond to and honor God appropriately.

Main Study

Worshipping God as the Creator: Part I

In The Beginning...

Imagine before the creation. Picture it. There was nothing physical: No air or even space, for that matter. Not even the boundaries of the universe (which God infinitely supersedes) existed. Then, out of nowhere, every atom of the universe of which there are about 100 billion of on the period at the end of this sentence and the perhaps 100 billion galaxies in which many contain billions of stars appeared out of nowhere.

It is obvious that God is worthy of the utmost praise and worship for this point alone. These verses will hopefully paint that picture even better using a two-column cause and effect. They list the works of God with the praise due Him within the same chapter.

God Created.....	Therefore God is Worthy of.....
📖 I Chronicles 16:26	📖 I Chronicles 16:27-31
📖 Nehemiah 9:6	📖 Nehemiah 9:5
📖 Psalm 8:3	📖 Psalm 8:1-2,9
📖 Psalm 19:1	📖 Psalm 19:14
📖 Psalm 33:6	📖 Psalm 33:1-3
📖 Psalm 95:4	📖 Psalm 95:1-3, 5-7

Application: Take time out as often as possible, if not every night, to close out your day going outside on your knees and looking up at God's creation. God becomes a lot more real, our sins of the day become more severe and the Cross becomes more astounding, monumental and cutting. As well, your passion in prayer for change and the lost becomes ever increasing.

Worshipping God as the Creator: Part II (Overdue For Worship and Praise)

It's beyond our thinking. God wasn't hiding it all. He just made it all appear without any strain or effort. He could do it an infinite amount of times over if He wanted. Truly He is worthy of continual worship and praise. Keep in mind when reading these verses that worshipping God is not just a nice addition to our faith. It is the purpose for our very existence on Earth. Our Awesome God expects it and it's what gives us undying joy.

God Created.....	Therefore, God Is Worthy Of.....
📖 Psalm 102:25	📖 Psalm 102:21
📖 Psalm 104:2-5	📖 Psalm 104:1
📖 Isaiah 40: 12-15,22,25-26,28	📖 Isaiah 40:9
📖 Isaiah 42:5	📖 Isaiah 42:10
📖 Isaiah 45:12	📖 Isaiah 45:21, 23-25
📖 Isaiah 48:13	📖 Isaiah 48:9

Additional Verses: 📖 *Jeremiah 32:17*, 📖 *Acts 14:15*, 📖 *Hebrews 11:3*

Application: Throughout your day from start to finish, exalt God as a great creator and again when praying under the stars at night, praise our infinite God. God can tend to become a lot smaller and we can feel a lot less accountable to Him with four walls and a ceiling. Satan does not want God to seem as tangible and real to us as all of his temptations are. We need daily time to experience God's greatness in the ways the men in these verses did.

Conclusion

Closing: 📖 *Job 26:14*

101 Reasons to Delight in the Lord



Everyone

Theme: Scriptures referencing reasons to delight in the Lord

Purpose: A reference to give people inspiring reasons to respond to many of the studies, especially the worship study

God will strengthen me (2 Th 3:3)	God delivers me from every temptation in the world (1Co 10:13)
God is able to forgive me (1 Jn 1:9)	God will fight for me (Dt 1:30; Ne 4:20)
Without God I am harassed and helpless, but with God all things are possible (Mt 9:36; Mt 19:26)	Nothing is too hard for God (Ge 18:13-14)
He is compassionate and comforting (2 Co 1:3-5)	He makes me holy so I can experience him firsthand (Heb 12:10ff)
God gives wisdom without finding fault (Ja 1:5)	God's will is intelligible (Ps 119)
His grace and Word enable me to do every good work (2 Co 9:8; 2 Ti 3:16-17)	He hears and responds to me (Da 10:12)
He is close to his devotees (Jer 30:21)	His arm is not too short save nor his ear to dull to hear (Is 59:1-3)
He has chosen me to be his child (2 Th 2:13)	His will is clear and attainable (Mic 6:8)
He will always give me what I need if I seek him first (Mt 6:33; Is 58:11)	He's made me a new creation (2 Co 5:17)
He has set me free from the laws of sin and death (Ro 8:2)	He will give those who delight in Him the desires of their heart (Ps 37:4)
He teaches me how to overcome the world (Jn 16:33)	He has defeated death and offers eternal life (1 Co 15)
God knows himself and me better than I do and, therefore, has the best solutions for any problem (Ps 139:1-4)	God is available to all people everywhere simultaneously (Ps 139:7-12)
God made me (Ps 139:13-16)	God will lead me in the way everlasting (Ps 139:24; Jn 14:6)
He offers a delightful inheritance (Ps 16:5-6)	He is my shepherd (Ps 23)
God ransomed his only begotten son (Jn 3:16)	God gives life to the full, replete with joy (Jn 15:11)
God is slow to anger and abounding in love (Ps 103:8-14)	He cares for me, anxieties and all (1 Pt 5:7-8)
He is strong, yet gentle (Ps 18:35)	He encourages "partying" (Ro 12:13)
He is humble, his yoke easy and his burden light (Mt 11:28-29)	He's preparing a place for me in heaven (Jn 14:2-3; 1 Co 2:9)
His son is my advocate, interceding for me and able to save completely (Heb 7:23-24)	He is my only hope for righteousness (Ro 5:18-19)
He restores lives (Ps 71:20-21)	He rules (Mt 8:26; 1 Ch 29:11)

He walks and communes with me (Jn 14:13-17, 25-27, 30-32)	He has all authority on heaven and earth (Mt 28:18)
God has a glorious, clear mission in which he wants me to participate (Mt 28:18-19)	He promised to be with his disciples always (Mt 28:20)
He personally intervenes in human history, even in my personal life in order to save me (Ac 9:1-19)	In all things, he works for the good of those who love him (Ro 8:28)
He is faithful even when I am not (2 Tim 2:13)	His wisdom is pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere (Ja 3:17)
We are his sons and daughters (1 Jn 3:1)	I am precious, honored, and loved in his sight (Is 43:1-4)
He is knowable (Gal 4:9)	He is my Father (John 20:17)
He has delivered me from the futility and frustration of attaining divine approval by human effort (Ga 3:1-5)	He can turn my heart of stone into a heart of flesh (Ez 36:26)
He can encourage my return no matter how far I've strayed (Is 44:22)	He does not treat me as my sins deserve, but as his long lost child (Lk 15:11-32)
He wants to powerfully work within me (Eph 3:20)	God has big dreams for me and plans to fulfill them (Jer 29:11)
He has given me incredible men and women for brothers and sisters (Rev 1:9)	God offers his standard by which I can check my thoughts, attitudes, motives, and deeds (Heb 4:12-13; 1Ch 28:9-10; Jn 12:47-48)
He hears me and forgives me when I humble myself and turn to him (2 Ch 7:11-16; 1 Jn 1:9)	God delights in me (Zeph 3:17)
Pursuing God's heart always produces dividends (Ps 63:1, 5)	God inspires and instructs me how to be Christ-like (Ph 2:1-5)
Living for Christ, not myself, is the most rewarding life (Ga 2:20)	He helps me when I'm weary (Ps 32)
His love and others' covers a multitude of sins (1 Pt 4:8)	God wants me to be the best I can be and helps me to be so (Ps 18:32-35)
God is just (Lk 18:1-8)	God can turn my pride into humility (Da 4:37)
I'm blessed when I trust God over and above man (Jer 17:5, 7)	God is constant in a changing world (1 Pt 1:24-25)
He untangles me (Heb 12:1-2)	God honors those who walk with him (Ge 5:24)
God is my light (1 Jn 1:7)	He teaches me to be content with what I have (1 Ti 6:6-8)
He gives me a new identity (Gal 2:20)	He is worthy (Rev 5:12)

God gets to the root of the matter (Ja 4:3)	God shows me how to truly love people (Ja 5:12)
He makes known what pleases him (Heb 11:1-6; 1 Pt 4:1-11)	He gives an intimate view of Jesus' heart so I may become like him (Ph 2:1-11)
I get a divine, eternal perspective on matters (Jn 1:1-8)	He is where true power lies (Ps 33:17-19)
He's my joy in times of trouble (Ja 1:2)	God has a vision for my life (Ph 1:6)
He is my source of understanding (Pr 3:5)	God is near (Ac 17:26-27)
He helps me to be temperate and trustworthy (1 Ti 3:11)	No matter what I've done, there's no penalty to be paid, no condemnation (Ro 8:1)
He is able to sympathize with my weaknesses (Heb 4:15)	He defines true love (1Co 13:1-13)
He will never forsake the righteous (Ps 37:25)	He is my confidence (Heb 4:16)
His grace is all I need (2 Co 12:9)	He blesses the children of the righteous (Ps 37:26)
He is my peace (Col 3:15)	I want to know how forever feels (Titus 1:2)
He is my redeemer (Is 54:5)	He makes my cup overflow (Ps 23:5)

101 Ways to Delight in the Lord



Everyone

Theme: Practical ways to delight in the Lord

Purpose: A reference to give people inspiring and practical ways to respond to many of the studies, especially the worship study.

Write a letter to God	Make a prayer garden
Drive through the country, singing and praying to God	Pray on your knees
Pray in supplication with your arms up as if to offer and/or receive a gift	List 1,000 things you're grateful for
Make a list of God's blessings and display it for all to see	Visit a prison
Buy God a rose and leave it at your favorite quiet time spot	Go out with a good friend and discuss life and times and God
Be a first-world missionary in your community for a period of time	Sleep on the streets with the homeless
Go on a private overnight retreat and focus on God	Study creation under a microscope or magnifying glass
Pray under the night sky before going to bed	Fast
Repent of a persistent sin	Overcome a fear by faith
Invite a mess of people to church, sharing your faith as you go	Call a friend and, as an ambassador of God, tell him or her that God loves them
Forgive someone with whom you struggle or has hurt you, from the heart	Apologize and ask God and someone against whom you may have sinned to forgive you
Pray in a cemetery and contemplate your life's meaning and goals	Read a whole book of the Bible straight through
Write your own Psalm or gospel	Read an inspirational book
Take twelve stones and build a monument to God with each stone representing one of God's attributes	Make a book of your favorite scriptures
Have an on-the-spot Bible study with someone	Hug someone
Write a list of your sins, remembering who you are before Holy God	Be kind to a mean person
Go on a prayer walk before everyone gets up and pray for as many people as possible	Unplug from the world (TV, radio, internet, etc.) and plug into God
Confess a secret sin	Have a quiet time by candlelight
Exercise so as to be alert, energetic, and healthy for God	Listen to inspirational music
Sing loudly, clearly, and joyfully in the shower	Have an "iron sharpening iron" conversation with a trusted friend
Host a Bible discussion in your neighborhood or at your workplace	Make a financial sacrifice in order to give generously to God
Donate blood	Seek spiritual advice about an important matter
Discuss God's kindness with someone	Organize a block party with all your neighbors
Have consistent devotionals with your kids for a month	Visit or contemplate the site of your baptism

Hang out with a child and learn from them	Watch Upside Down with your family group
Host a communion night	Attend a baptism or wedding
Write and pray through a list of “impossible prayers”	Review an old spiritual journal or sermon notes
Build an altar to God and offer your all	Pray without mentioning yourself
Contact your spiritual parents and thank them	Make a family prayer wall somewhere in your house
Watch someone else’s kids so they can have an extra long QT or an overnight getaway	Initiate a prayer chain
Give sacrificially for adoptions	Have an all-night prayer or prayer marathon
Copy and frame your favorite Bible passage	Make a treasure chest or photo album of favorite Kingdom memories
Make a time capsule containing convictions about delighting in God and your heart’s deepest desires	Copy your favorite scriptures onto a parchment scroll and give it to someone special
Learn everyone’s first and last name in your family group, sector, or region	Be the first to church
Be the last to leave church	Bring more friends than ever to a church event
Take advantage of every evangelistic opportunity for 24 hours	Go to an assisted living facility or hospital and talk to someone over milk and cookies
Make an anonymous contribution or gift for someone without telling anyone about it	Read the gospel of Mark out loud
Pull out an old songbook and have a “Classics” singing devotional	Have a QT by a serene body of water and get some peace in your life
Honor your parents with an awesome, out-of-the-blue thank you letter	Envision, pray for, and pursue a specific person and invite them to church
Study in-depth about God’s Holy Spirit and decide to stay in step with Him	Have a bonfire devotional with your family and friends
Make extras for dinner and offer it to someone in need	Re-do your calendar and to-do list, making God and his kingdom your number one priority
See how many people you can encourage in a day	Write out some of your most memorable QTs and share them with someone
Study the parables of Jesus for a month, imagining you’re in the audience and hearing those words for the first time	Re-write passages of the Bible, substituting “me, my, I, etc.” at appropriate places in order to personalize your study
Begin reading a new version of the Bible	Write a book, play, or song about God
Do an in-depth study on God’s love for you	Notice the people God puts in your path and allow yourself the time and energy to care about them
Imagine walking beside Jesus for a day	Write a spiritual haiku poem

Encourage a friend who is down or has left the Lord	Dance before the Lord
Figure out a way to consistently and personally care for the poor	Tell your kids about the “simple” things God does for you throughout the day
Draw or paint your favorite scenes of the Bible	Adopt
Go on a prayer hike!	Pray for God to build a solid church in your home town
Visit a kingdom website and learn what God is doing all over the world as well as in individual lives	Come up with your own list of 101 ways to delight in God

To Judge or Not To Judge?



Non-Christian who is defensive,
Disciple who needs some boldness

Theme: Judging others

Purpose: To show people there are two types of judging – good and bad

Introduction

- Q Judging – what comes to mind?
- Q Ever judge anything? Talent show,....

Main Study

 **Mt 7:1-5**

- Q Have you ever heard someone say – “Don’t judge me, only God knows my heart!”?
- Q So, should we not do any ‘judging’?
 - A No! Actually the Bible says to deal with your own sin, THEN help someone else to see their own sin and help them to repent of it.

- Q Why do people so often accuse well-meaning Christians of ‘judging’ them?
 - A They are defensive because of their own sin!
(Concede: Sometimes Christians are less tactful than they ought to be)

- Q Do YOU judge?
 - A We do it all the time. E.g., We assume people who are at church are Christians!

- Q Does scripture actually encourage us, then, to judge?
 - A Yes – if we mean, make an assessment, tell someone who is not adhering to the Bible that there will be repercussions if they don’t begin to live by the Bible, to let people know that if they don’t believe in Jesus they will NOT go to heaven, to help someone to repent of a sin by showing them specifically that God will not tolerate a given behavior, etc.

In these instances, we are not judging, but we are letting the BIBLE judge the lifestyles and beliefs of people we are studying with by holding them accountable to what God has written.

Judging is not US making an assessment, but rather the BIBLE speaking to the person.

Examples of GOOD judging in the Bible:



Mt 7:15-16

We are to judge what is false teaching/teachers by examining people’s lives.



2 Tim 4:2-4

We are to discern what is myth and what is sound teaching.
The prescription is to correct, rebuke and encourage people to get in line with the Bible.



1 Cor 5:12

Disciplinary judging of members in the church



Acts 4:12

Claiming that outside of Jesus there is NO other way to heaven.

In these (and many other passages) we are asked to judge, or make assessments. In saying this, it does NOT mean that we act as someone's judge and jury or have the power to pronounce verdicts – only God can do that. What we are doing is informing them of how GOD will judge.

Examples of BAD judging:



Mt 7:3-5

Hypocritical judging – or judgmental spirit, or self-righteous attitude – wrong!



Romans 16:18

Flattery (We don't mind this type of judging!)



James 4:11

Slandering or grumbling against a brother



John 7:24

Superficial judging, judging before getting the facts, assessing only on appearances



Heb 10:30

Final judgment – reserved for God alone. We don't hold the gavel – God does.

Conclusion

It is not presumptuous to use God's Word to judge. If we DON'T use Gods' word in this way to help others, WE are judging that Gods word isn't true, or that He won't keep His word on judgment day.

Predestination



People with Calvinist background – those who believe we have no choice in becoming saved or not

Theme: False teaching

Purpose: To correct the false teaching of predestination

Introduction

This is a Biblical examination of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. The Calvinist teaching holds that God determines for each individual whether he will be lost or saved. Each person is unable to respond to the Gospel on his own; God by His own will selects those He wants to save. The unselected are inevitably lost. Does this conform to Scripture?

Main Study

1. The Biblical Case for Predestination



Eph. 1:4-11

Does God predestine?

Yes. He knows the outcome before it happens.

Q Does this mean he predetermined which individuals are saved?



Rom. 9:10-18

God decides to whom He will show mercy



Rom. 9:19-24

Man has no right to argue or complain



Acts 13:48

Some are appointed to eternal life



Acts 16:14

God opened heart of Lydia, a person He wanted to save



Eph. 2:9

Faith is from God; we can't be saved without faith, even that comes from God

2. A Biblical Principle: Each Person Must Choose God's Way



Deut. 30:15-20

There are two possible outcomes for us: life and prosperity, death and destruction; we are urged to **choose** life



Josh. 24: 14-22

Joshua calls on the people to **choose** to serve God



Matt. 7:13-14

Enter by the narrow gate; the most popular choice is not the right choice

 **Luke 8:4-18**

Watch how you receive God's word

(Note that this could be a great passage to teach predestination. We could erroneously assume that the ground along the path chose to be hard *if* it were not for Jesus' own conclusion, "Consider carefully how you listen.")

 **Acts 2:40-41**

Peter pleads with people to be saved

Note the emotional tenor tone in all these passages: there is a sense of great seriousness and urgency. In each case there is a chance that the listeners may choose the right path and be saved. But there is also a very good chance that they will make the wrong choice and if they do the results will be disastrous. The speaker seems to be uncertain as to what choice they will make. Does this sound like the choice is predestined? To teach that each person has no capability on his own to choose to follow God's will undermines this pervasive Biblical theme.

 **Acts 17:4; 10-12**

Some were persuaded by teaching; people of noble character examined scriptures to see if teaching true, some believed

3. Another Principle: God Wants All to Be Saved

 **1 Tim. 2:3-4**

God wants all to be saved

 **Jn. 3:16**

God loved the world, sent His Son, and whoever believes can be saved

 **Acts 10:34-35**

God does not show favoritism

The conclusion, then, is that God does not predestine people to be saved or lost; if God willed that the determination were His alone then everyone would be saved. Instead, God provides the means to salvation but allows each person to decide for himself if he will accept the offer or not. What does God predestine then?

4. God Predestined the Establishment of His Kingdom

 **Isa. 9:6-7**

The king will come

 **Matt. 16:18**

The church will be built; it cannot be overcome

 **Eph. 3:2-11**

The creation of one body of people, the church, saved by grace was God's plan

 **Heb. 12:22-28**

The church, the kingdom of the saved, is eternal; it cannot be shaken

The tone in the passages dealing with the establishment of God's kingdom is far different than those dealing with individual choices. There is no uncertainty. The final outcome is not in doubt. God has determined definitively that His kingdom will be founded and will endure forever. Those who become a part of it are saved. Their rewards are not in jeopardy.

We conclude, then, that when Paul says in **Eph. 1:5** that God "predestined us to be adopted as his sons" the "us" he refers to is those who have chosen to be part of his church. God predetermined that Jesus would have a group of people who would follow him and be saved.

5. If He Doesn't Predestine Individuals, How Could He Be Sure Anyone Would Be Saved?

 **Rom. 8:28-30**

God foreknew not only that some would accept the gospel but also he knows who will accept; he provides the gospel to those people; he guides and nurtures; he calls some who do not accept. He does everything short of making the choice for people.

What about the **Romans 9** passage? Doesn't it say that God decides who will be saved? Yes. The theme of the book of Romans is that salvation is by grace through faith. Salvation is not based on any works, specifically keeping Jewish laws. Some Jewish teachers in the early church had serious reservations with that aspect of Paul's teaching because they concluded, correctly, that the result would be many Gentiles being saved and many Jews being lost. If that were the case, they reasoned, then God was reneging on his promises to the nation of Israel who were supposed to be his chosen people. Paul in Romans attacks that viewpoint on many fronts. In chapter 9 he is simply saying (very forcefully) that God has a right to decide who is saved. He has never abdicated that right. Paul does not say that God decides arbitrarily, that there is no basis for the decision, that we can't know the basis, or that it does not involve any response from people. We know from other passages that God's plan is to offer the gospel to people and accept whoever responds. This is just the teaching that the Jewish teachers were disputing.

Encouragement



Christians and
Non-Christians

Theme: Encouragement

Purpose: How to find encouragement from God's scriptures

Main Study

Psalm 25

- ⁴ Show me your ways, O LORD,
teach me your paths;
⁵ guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long.

Psalm 25

- ⁹ He guides the humble in what is right
and teaches them his way.
¹⁰ All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful
for those who keep the demands of his covenant.

Psalm 25

- ¹⁴ The LORD confides in those who fear him;
he makes his covenant known to them.
¹⁵ My eyes are ever on the LORD,
for only he will release my feet from the snare.

Psalm 37

- ³ Trust in the LORD and do good;
dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.
⁴ Delight yourself in the LORD
and he will give you the desires of your heart.
⁵ Commit your way to the LORD;
trust in him and he will do this:
⁶ He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn,
the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.
⁷ Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;

Psalm 37

- ²³ If the LORD delights in a man's way,
he makes his steps firm;
²⁴ though he stumble, he will not fall,
for the LORD upholds him with his hand.

Proverbs 3

- ⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
⁶ in all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight.

 **Proverbs 11**

¹⁶ A kindhearted woman gains respect,

 **Proverbs 16**

³ Commit to the LORD whatever you do,
and your plans will succeed.

 **Proverbs 16**

⁷ When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD,
he makes even his enemies live at peace with him.

 **Proverbs 16**

¹³ Kings take pleasure in honest lips;
they value a man who speaks the truth.

 **Proverbs 19**

²¹ Many are the plans in a man's heart,
but it is the LORD'S purpose that prevails.

 **Proverbs 19**

²³ The fear of the LORD leads to life:
Then one rests content, untouched by trouble.

 **Proverbs 24**

¹⁷ Do not gloat when your enemy falls;
when he stumbles, do not let your heart rejoice,
¹⁸ or the LORD will see and disapprove
and turn his wrath away from him.
¹⁹ Do not fret because of evil men
or be envious of the wicked,
²⁰ for the evil man has no future hope,
and the lamp of the wicked will be snuffed out.

 **Matthew 11**

²⁸“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

 **John 14**

²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

 **Romans 12**

²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

 **Galatians 6:9**

⁹Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

 **Ephesians 4**

²Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

 **Philippians 4**

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

 **1 Thessalonians 5**

¹⁶Be joyful always; ¹⁷pray continually; ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

FEAR of the Lord



Disciples and Non-Christians

Theme: Reverence to God

Purpose: To understand what fearing God means and that fear of God is a good thing

Main Study



Proverbs 1:7

In this verse we see that it is a healthy feat. It is not actually a fear that one is to be afraid. It is just saying that fearing the Lord will bring about the opening or beginning of knowledge. In other words, realizing that the Lord is the only One to fear and that there is no need to worry about anything because it is all controlled by the Lord our God – from the minute you set foot on earth until your departure.



Proverbs 8:13

Here we see that to fear the Lord is to hate evil. In this verse, we are actually being told how to show our fear for the Lord by hating evil. Turning from sin is how we hate evil. Having nothing to do with sin or anything therein is to fear God.



Proverbs 14:26

Here the Bible simply states that whoever fears the Lord will always be taken care of and looked after with no worry. Again, one has to truly fear the Lord by his actions and in his heart.



Proverbs 14:27

The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life. In other words, fear of the Lord is an ingredient that God will use to call someone and reward that individual with life everlasting. As Jesus says, “everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life.” **John 3:15.**



Proverbs 15:16

Here the Bible states that even if you have very little (material things or anything, really!), it's much better to fear the Lord and do what is righteous in His eyes rather than being rebellious and have much. Read also **Matthew 19:16-24.**



Proverbs 15:33

The fear of the Lord will teach us wisdom, in that one can truly understand how to live life and live it to the full. When you think of it, it makes logical sense because God is perfect and if we fear God, then we too will strive for perfection in everything that we do, which will lead to understanding things and ultimately gaining wisdom.



Proverbs 16:6

This is simple in that the Bible again says that if you fear the Lord, you will avoid evil, because you will be turning and running from iniquity (sin) in order that you may please the Lord and live righteously for him.



Proverbs 19:23

The fear of the Lord leads to life. Exactly, when one understands that fearing the Lord will lead to living a righteous and obedient life according to His Word, which leads to us hearing the message, which leads to us having faith, which leads to us believing in Jesus Christ, which leads to our salvation, which leads to eternal life with Him (Jesus Christ) and the Father (the Lord God Almighty) – For ETERNITY!

The Sabbath



Seventh Day
Adventists, Jews
and everyone
else with
questions on the
Sabbath

Theme: The Sabbath

Purpose: To give a balanced, in-context Biblical presentation of the original purpose of the Sabbath, God's plan to change it, and its implications living under the New Covenant

Main Study

1. Reason for the Sabbath

 **Exodus 31:12-13**

The Sabbath was created as a sign between God and the Israelites

 **Exodus 20:10-11**

It represented the seventh day of the creation cycle where God rested from His work; therefore, the Israelites were to rest on the seventh day.

 **Deuteronomy 5:15**

God instituted the Sabbath to remind the Israelites that God rescued them from Slavery out of Egypt

2. God's Desire and Plan for a Change

 **Isaiah 1:13-14 (8th Century B.C.)**

God had grown weary of the sacred days of the Israelites, which specifically included the Sabbath.

 **Jeremiah 31:31-34 (6th Century B.C.)**

God was prophesying His making of a New Covenant, which would not be like the first one. (Matthew 26:28)

 **Hosea 2:All, 11,23**

God prophesies a time when He will stop all the Old Covenant celebrations including the Sabbath.

3. Living under New Covenant

 **Ephesians 2:13-15**

Through Christ's blood, the law was abolished and replaced with the "Christ's Law" 1

Corinthians 9:21.

 **Colossians 2:16-17**

"Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ."

 **Hebrews 3:16-4:11**

Even though the Israelites while in the desert for 40 years rested physically every Sabbath, they never shared in God's true Sabbath for them.

When you become a Christian, you enter God's true Sabbath for you.

Additional verses

 **John 5:16-18**

 **Matthew 12:8**

 **Hebrews 8:4-11**

 **Galatians 3:10-25**

Spiritual Timeline



Theme: Conversion validity

Purpose: To create and compare your friend's spiritual timeline/conversion to the timelines/conversions of people in the Bible

Main Study

Help person to draw their own spiritual timeline.

- Q When did you repent?
- Q When did you first believe in God?
- Q When did you get baptized?
- Q When did you get your sins forgiven?
- Q When did you receive the Holy Spirit or Ghost?

Note: Place timeline out of sight.

1 Cor 14:33

God is a God of order

Reference these:

-  **Mark 1:14-15** (repent and believe the Good News)
-  **Mark 16:15-16** (believe + baptism = saved)
-  **John 3:3-6** (born of water and spirit)
-  **Acts 2:38** (repentance + baptism = forgiveness and then Holy Spirit)

- Q What timeline would you form based on the above scriptures?

Compare with conversion of:

1. Ethiopian Eunuch (**Acts 8:26-38** plus verse 37, in footnote)
2. Jailer and his family (**Acts 16:30-34**)

Conclusion

- Q How does your timeline compare to what you derived from the scriptures?

Baptism: Special Study



For someone who needs an in-depth study on baptism

Theme: Baptism for forgiveness of sins

Purpose: To instill a conviction for the purpose of and need for baptism

Main Study

Baptism

Greek—*baptizo*—“to immerse, cover over, plunge”

1. John the Baptist revised the traditional Jewish practice of *Tebilah*—giving it a new meaning and urgency by demanding that those who sought to enter the New Israel should submit to a baptism of repentance and remission of sins.

This marks the beginning of the “good news” of God’s return as King (end of the exile), the final exodus (connected with the desert setting):

Mark 1:8--And so John came, baptizing *in the desert region* and preaching a *baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins*. Vs 5: The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

Matt. 3:11—“I baptize you with water for repentance...but after me will come one who...will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

Luke 3:16—The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ. ¹⁶ John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will [immerse] you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." ¹⁸ And with many other words John exhorted the people and preached the good news to them.”

Acts 1:5—“For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

2. Paul seems to take it for granted that baptism was a crucial part of the conversion process.

Rom. 6:4--We were therefore buried with him through *baptism* into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Gal. 3:27--You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷ *for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.* ²⁸ **There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.** ²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Also, read **1 Cor. 1:13; 6:11; 12:13**

Col. 3:9-11—Do not lie to each other, *since you have taken off your old self with its practices*¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

¹¹ Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

- The parallel between these passages rests on the idea that a Christian is *putting off*, as one would “take off” a garment, the old nature and *putting on* the new nature, which is not of human effort or innovation but is entirely the work of God. This is also consistent with the historical findings surrounding what was actually practiced in baptism—namely, that the person was baptized completely naked¹, only to resurface and have a robe or garment placed upon the body. Several sources suggest this, as well as all the early drawings of baptism in Christian art. It is also interesting that this motif is in both passages closely tied to a statement about the “oneness” of believers in Jesus; that is, perhaps baptism reinforces or confirms the notion that all persons, regardless of former identity or ethnic boundary, are united in Christ.
- Additionally, most of the allusions to baptism in Paul’s letters occur as part of an effort to correct misunderstandings and argue on the basis of a common starting point with which all readers (or listeners) could identify. That is, Paul attempted to have the Christians *recall* their baptismal experience and the instruction that accompanied this experience of first becoming Christians because it is what was central to the future course of their life. They were essentially called to “live up to” the memory. Read **Romans 6; 8:12-17, Gal. 3, 1 Cor. 1-4, 12** and similar *reminders* (called “paraenetic reminders”) in Colossians and Ephesians.²

Col. 2:11-- In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ,¹² having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

- This passage indicates that the waters of baptism represent the divine judgment over sin, with the initiate accepting death as a sentence on sin; however, because Jesus has died the very same death (bore the same judgment), we may be united with him in this death and subsequently be raised with him in resurrection. The old nature dies, transformed by Jesus’ through a spiritual circumcision, and replaced with the new humanity offered by the Risen Lord.

In baptism, Christians enter into a bond with Jesus that grants the believer a victory or supremacy over the ‘principalities and powers’ of evil that seek ultimate death.

¹ Meeks, Wayne A. (1983, 2003) *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Pg. 150-155

² *ibid.* pg. 154

3. Baptism in the Pastoral Epistles

1 Tim. 6:12—the “good confession in the presence of many witnesses”—most likely a baptismal allusion.

1 Peter 3:18-21—In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water,²¹ and this water symbolizes **baptism** that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,²² who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

A difficult passage; nonetheless, baptism is compared to at least two aspects of the Genesis flood account, **salvation “through” (1) water and (2) new creation**. To be sure, the water was not imbued with power or contained special properties, but the experience and power that God exercises in the event echoes that which is evident in taking Noah and the others through the ‘waters of judgment’ only to be re-introduced to ‘*new life*.’ Here again we take notice of the significance of Jesus’ death and, especially, resurrection.

Baptism was also linked with the gift of the Holy Spirit. The account of the dove’s descent upon Jesus at the moment he arises from the waters of baptism (**Mark 1:10; Matt. 3:16; Luke 3:22; John 1:31-3**) strongly “suggests that the Spirit would come to Christians through the same rite as it had come to him.” This position is strengthened by the fact that the Spirit is usually associated with new life or the (re) creation of life, and was at work in raising Jesus from the dead. As **1 Peter 3:18** says, “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. **He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.**”

Furthermore, that the power of the Spirit was bestowed upon Jesus at baptism accords well with the idea that those who were admitted into the fellowship of Christians should be baptized with his baptism. If converts were baptized “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (**Acts 8:16; 19:5**) or “in the name of Jesus Christ” (**1 Cor. 1:10, 13**), it was because it was under the authority of Christ’s life and ministry (death, etc) that the forgiveness of sins and salvation was offered to them, and they were brought together with Jesus in a powerful event.

Along the same lines, notice how in **1 Cor. 1:10-16**, Paul presents the idea of allegiance, loyalty, or identity as a “follower” (“one of you says, ‘I follow Paul’; another ‘I follow Apollos’; another ‘I follow Cephas...’) as dependent or grounded upon some interrelated issues:

- (1) the recognition of the agent of the ultimate sacrifice (“Was *Paul* (or Apollos or Cephas) crucified for you?”) *and*
- (2) the authority of the ‘name’ into which a person is immersed or united (“Were you *baptized into the name of Paul* (or Apollos or Cephas)?”).

Put simply, Paul wonders how they can legitimately claim to follow anyone other than Jesus, especially in consideration of what should be *taken for granted*: that neither the crucifixion was achieved by any of the men who are mentioned nor do any of them

exemplify the authority or power of Christ (*‘the name’*) that is present in the union of baptism. There are undoubtedly a variety of events or experiences on which Paul could draw to make his point, yet ‘crucifixion’ and baptism signify the appropriate grounds for determining *who* should be followed and *why* he should be followed.

In light of the above comments, the passages of **Luke 12:49, 50** and **Mark 10:38f** deserve some attention:

Luke 12:49-50- I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a **baptism** to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!

Mark 10:38-40 - You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the **baptism** I am baptized with?" "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the **baptism** I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

The synoptic writers in these instances are tying the idea of immersion, or being “covered over” (even “overwhelmed,” as fits most Septuagint (LXX) allusions of immersion) with the notion of death. Jesus may very well have viewed his baptism by John as a “symbolic inauguration” into servanthood and death. So, when Paul speaks about being united with a crucified Christ, he may be interpreting and elaborating this part of Jesus’ mission story.

Once again, the gift of the Spirit is tied to discussion of baptism in several other instances:
1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:38; 9:17 f.; 19:1-6.

Acts 19:2-5 - There he found some disciples and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? "They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." So Paul asked, "Then what **baptism** did you receive?" "John's **baptism**," they replied. Paul said, "John's **baptism** was a **baptism** of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.

Paul ties the “receiving” of the Holy Spirit with the “receiving” of a certain baptism. These men had learned of John’s baptism but had not been updated, as it were, about what occurred after John’s ministry was complete and superceded by Jesus.

The case of Cornelius is an exception, as Peter’s own words seem to indicate: "**Acts 11:15** - As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had *come on us at the beginning*". He had not seen anything like this since Pentecost, which is the event Peter is referring to by the clause, “at the beginning.” This apparently occurred ten years before the ‘Cornelius event.’ The overt display of the Spirit’s outpouring was geared toward conveying a simple message that Peter and the other Jews were slow to assimilate or had not even begun to conceive as a possibility (as Peter’s problem with eating “unclean” foods intimates): Gentiles *too* were offered the hope of salvation and new life in the Holy Spirit, achieved through the victory of the redeemed, true King, Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore, the Gentiles

were not to be regarded as “unclean,” so as to be excluded from the promises of God (as the prophecy of **Joel 2:28**) clearly conveys: “I will pour out my Spirit on all people...”).

Finally, a few comments on the passage **1 Cor. 10:1-13** are in order, with specific attention to verses 1 through 4. Here, Paul takes the exodus narrative and identifies Jesus with the Rock that provided water for the Israelites (**v. 4b**) and indicates that the crossing through the Red Sea is equivalent to a “baptism,” or better yet, an *immersion* of sorts. Now, it can be said with certainty that there is no record in the OT of anyone being plunged or immersed “into” Moses or in the Red Sea. In fact, it is generally accepted that the triumph of the crossing could be partially attributed to the fact that no one drowned or was “taken” into the waters (unless you were one of Pharaoh’s soldiers). However, here, as in other passages of Paul, there is a significance that is attributed to “passing through” water; these waters exemplify both judgment and salvation, with the latter assured if one passes through *to the other side*, so to speak (once again, this was not the case with those who were drowned in the Flood or the soldiers pursuing the Hebrews). In light of these observations, the parallels with Christian baptism can be discerned: the initiate is crossing through judgment and death (a flood or torrent) and coming out to a new life, redeemed and rescued by God’s power—the final exodus from bondage.

Further thoughts:

The Unforgivable Sin

I happen to agree to with the stance of the late George B. Caird, that there is ultimately only one sin for which forgiveness cannot be extended: to “put oneself beyond the reach of God’s forgiveness.”³ This is consummated in numerous ways:

- (1) Unforgiving attitudes toward others—“If you do not forgive others their sins, neither will your Father forgive your sins” (**Matt. 6:12, 15; 18:23-35; Mark 11:25**).
- (2) Denial of the bodily nature of Jesus (or the Incarnation). The author of 1 John considers that mortal sin, the Antichrist, is to deny the reality of the incarnation (**1 John 2:22; 4:2, 3; 5:16**). To deny that “in the human life of Jesus the divine love was manifested to all is to cut oneself off from the saving knowledge of God.”
- (3) “Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” (**Mark 3:28-29**). By taking account of the context, a strong explanation is provided. Jesus has been accused of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub. By imputing what is clearly an act of goodness to the power of Satan, his critics are blunting their own ability to recognize good from evil and therefore run the risk of being unable to recognize the work of God in their midst. “To blaspheme the Holy Spirit by calling his works evil is to deprive oneself of a standard of judgment for one’s own life,”⁴ and hence to preclude the possibility of repentance.
- (4) Refusal to listen to the Gospel—Luke’s gospel is clearest in rendering the extreme risk of and judgment relating to a refusal to listen to God’s call (**Luke 10:12-15; 11:29-32; 14:15-24**). A similar ring of urgency is evident in the verses of **Hebrews**:
 - “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” (**Heb 2:3**)

³ Caird, George and Hurst, L.D. (1994) *New Testament Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pg. 116

⁴ *ibid.* Pg.117

- “It is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they then commit apostasy.” (**Heb 6:4-6**)
- “If we sin deliberately after receiving a knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgment” (**Heb 10:26-27**)

Many cite **Romans 8:28ff** to buttress a case for “eternal security,” or perseverance of the saints. However, how would one reconcile such a passage with **Jude 21**: “keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.”? It appears that the only thing that can keep any one believer away from God’s love is the *choices* that shape the disposition of the soul or heart. Although nothing in creation can take us away from God, *we can* take ourselves away by submitting to the power of evil.

Conversion in ONE Study



For a non-Christian
who is VERY open

Theme: Conversion

Purpose: How to study the whole plan of evangelism in one sitting

Main Study

Read all of Acts 2

- a. Jesus
 - i. from Old Testament – prophesy about him - remarkable
 - ii. from New Testament – miracles he performed – remarkable
 - iii. Death on Cross – love for us – remarkable
 - iv. Resurrection from Dead – power he has – remarkable
- b. Me
 - i. I am personally responsible – sin
 - ii. Appropriate Immediate Response
 1. cut to the heart (Godly sorrow)
 2. trust (faith) “What shall I do?”
 3. repent
 4. be baptized
 5. added to their number
 - iii. Natural long-term response
 1. vs. **42-47**
 - a. devotion
 - b. commitment
 - c. brotherhood
 - d. sacrifice

Section Four: Study Series



Life and Doctrine Studies

Walter Evans

Teen Character Studies

Phillip Arsenault

Gospel Study Guide

San Diego Church of Christ

Guard the Gospel

Douglas Jacoby

Intermediate Guard the Gospel

Douglas Jacoby

Advanced Guard the Gospel

Douglas Jacoby

Follow Up Studies

Douglas Jacoby



Biblical Authority



For new members who need the basics of Christian doctrines or older members who need a refresher

Theme: Biblical Authority

Purpose: To instill or refresh basic biblical principles of a Christian's life and doctrine

Introduction

 **1 Timothy 4:16** - *“Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.”*

1. God believes in balance – life and doctrine. Explain the need for both. Example of two wings needed to fly the airplane, one not more important than the other.
2. What happens when we emphasize one over the other – extremes, unbalanced, confusion, strong opinions. We see it in the religious world – life **or** doctrine.
3. Purpose of this class – to revisit basic biblical doctrine and to make sure we are all unified so we can live the lives that God wants us to.

Class Topics:

1. Introduction and Biblical Authority
2. Salvation and our Mission
3. The Church pt. 1 - The Body of Christ Universal
4. The Church pt. 2 - The Local Congregation
5. Advice, Opinions, and working together

Main Study

1. How the religious world determines “God’s will” for their lives.

- a. Feelings – God gave me a sign. Very subjective, inconsistent, and impossible to prove.
- b. Religious Writings – Non-biblical documents, creeds, and non-inspired writers that religious groups have built their doctrines around.
- c. Religious Leaders – Men and women who may be good religious people (or not) that the religious group holds as authoritative.
- d. History and Traditions – The many things that religious groups do that have been passed down over the ages. Most people who practice and believe these things have no idea how they started.

All of these approaches are subjective and very inconsistent.

2. God isn't arbitrary and would not allow us to wander around in confusion. God wants us to know his will for our lives.

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

 **2 Timothy 3:16** - *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

3. God knows we need a reliable standard. The Bible is credible. It has withstood scrutiny from the areas of:

(Use any brief personal knowledge for below)

- a. Archeology
- b. Evidences
- c. History
- d. Higher Criticism
- e. The Test of Time

 **1 Peter 1:24** - *“All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the wild flower; the grass withers and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord stands forever.”*

4. The Bible is designed by God to be taken personally. It starts with you.

 **Hebrews 4:12** - *“The Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”*

5. It is also designed by God to be applied to others.

We are sometimes so afraid of being called judgmental that we won't let the Bible do its work. Like a doctor who uses a medical book to diagnose a disease, we should be willing to use the Bible to help people spiritually. The issues of Matt. 7:1-3 is about being judgmental in a condemning way and also about being a hypocrite. But it does not mean that we can't evaluate where people stand with God using the Bible as our standard. Jesus says, “Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment.” (John 7:24)

 **Matthew 7:1-3** - *“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the same measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?”*

6. Biblical Commands vs. Guiding Principles.

God wants us to understand what his commands are. At the same time we can use guiding biblical principles to determine what we should and shouldn't do, although we can't say these are direct commands of God. Example - Leviticus 18:20 says, *“Do not have sexual relations with your neighbor's wife and defile yourself with her.”* To violate this goes against **a command** of God and is therefore a sin. In Genesis 39:11 we read about Joseph and Potiphar's wife. We can use this scripture to show that Joseph was willing to flee from sin and that this is **a biblical principle** to show how we need to stay out of bad situations that may lead to sinning against God.

We need our own personal Bible Study to know God's commands as well as understand biblical principles. Going against God's commands is a clear violation and sin. Going against biblical principles may simply be bad judgment, temptation, ignorance, stupidity, or even rebellion **that could lead to sin.**

7. Two important things that we know from the authority of Scripture:

- a. The World is in a lost state because of sin. This is the universal problem that everyone needs to come to terms with.

 **Isaiah 59:1-2** - *“Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear to dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”*

 **Romans 3:9, 23** - *“What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin”*
“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”

- b. There is no salvation outside of Jesus Christ.

 **John 14:6** - *“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”*

Conclusion:

God wants us to have balance in terms of understanding the need for “life and doctrine”. In order to grasp God's will we need a standard that is reliable and consistent. That standard needs to be the Bible. We should be willing to have the Bible applied to us and in turn we should not be afraid to use it to evaluate others or even religious groups. We need to be careful to search the scriptures to understand the difference between biblical commands and guiding principles that enable us to determine God's will for our lives. The most important thing that we learn from God's word is that the world is separated from God because of sin and Jesus is the only solution to the problem. We should be willing to stand firm on this issue using the Bible as our standard and authority.

SALVATION AND OUR MISSION



Anyone who needs to understand the biblical basis of salvation and our purpose

Theme: How to be saved/our mission on planet earth

Purpose: To show how someone is saved and to encourage someone on our mission

Main Study

Q How are we saved?

A We are saved by Grace – make no mistake.

Ephesians 2: 8-9

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.”

- We have at times de-emphasized grace so that it makes others things regarding salvation seem like works.
- There is absolutely nothing that we can do that could ever earn our salvation
- Just because we are saved by grace doesn't mean that we don't respond to God's grace by doing things or being obedient to His word. (Cheap grace in the religious world –“I don't have to do anything, I'm just saved”)

Q What are some Biblical examples of “indicators” that people had in their lives before being saved?

(“Indicators” are things demonstrated in peoples lives that show a desire toward salvation)

Acts 22: Paul's Conversion

- Belief -:8 Paul goes from an unbeliever to acting upon belief that Jesus is Lord. See also Rm 10:9
- Obedience -:10b “Get up and go...” Paul was willing to follow instructions and to follow Jesus' words. See also Jn 15:10
- Discipleship -:10a A disciple is simply a “follower”, in this case of Jesus. Paul became a follower of Jesus and was willing to let other followers of Jesus influence his life (Ananias).
- Repentance - :12 It is implied from the text that Paul had repented from sin of putting Christians to death based on his interaction with Ananias
- Others – see below

There are plenty of scriptures to build a case for these issues and others (confession, commitment, understanding ones sins etc.) to be necessary before a person is saved. It is also important to note that the measuring of these issues is very subjective and therefore we need to be careful not to construct “rules” around these issues which make it harder than necessary for people to be saved.

On the other hand we also need to be honest and realize that person who wants to be saved but is not willing to repent, for example, is not ready for salvation and we need to have biblical convictions on that point.

Q When are we saved? – our sins are forgiven at Baptism.

- Ⓐ Although the above list and others are necessary for salvation, they can be in a person's life and that person still not be saved. Exp. being engaged vs. being married.
- Ⓐ God wants us to be clear on when we are united to him.
- Ⓐ Remember (class #1) the real issue is sin, and Jesus is the solution.
- Ⓐ Many people in the religious world are confused on this point or have no Biblical understanding on when a person crosses over from lost to saved.
- Ⓐ We need to understand and teach Biblical Baptism

Things to know about Baptism: *from William Barclay – commentary on Romans*

- i) “We must remember that baptism in his (Paul’s) time was different from what it commonly is today.”
- ii) “It was adult baptism, a man came to Christ as an individual, often leaving his family behind.”
- iii) “Baptism was intimately connected with confession of faith. A man came to a decision to cut his life in two, a decision which meant nothing less than beginning life over again.”
- iv) “Baptism was by total immersion...when the water closed over his head it was like being buried. When he emerged from the water, it was like rising from the grave.”

Baptism is where sin is forgiven and we share in the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus.

 **Romans 6: 3-4, 6-7**

“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.”

There are plenty examples in the Bible of Baptism

- v) **Acts 2:38** – Day of Pentecost
- vi) **Acts 8: 36-38** – The Ethiopian
- vii) **Acts 9, 22** – Paul’s conversion stories

A Word about Counting the Cost

It is clear from Luke 14:28, that Jesus wanted those who followed him to be sure of what they were getting into. He counted the cost with his disciples on other matters as well, like in Mark 10:38, where he asked his disciples, “Can you drink the cup I drink?” Counting the cost in advance provides some insurance that a new Christian will not crumble at the first

sign of hardship or challenge. Thus, it is our practice to review with candidates for baptism, the details of the Christian life that they are about to enter. It is important to understand that the items that we discuss in counting the cost are not additional conditions of salvation and should not be treated as such. They are simply an honest attempt at full disclosure to ensure that the person is fully informed about the consequences of the decision that they are making.

Conviction on Salvation

We must be clear that although there are many elements that show that someone is on the path to salvation there is also one clear line that God draws when a person goes from being lost to saved – that line is at Baptism.

Religious teachings contrary to this:

- a. A person is saved when they accept or pray Jesus into their heart.
- b. Baptism is necessary but only after a person has been saved as an act of obedience. (Outward sign of inward grace)
- c. Infants need to be sprinkled (called baptism) because of original sin.

OUR MISSION

Matthew 28:19-20

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.”

1. If we understand that the world is lost, and we know from God’s word what people need to do, then our mission is to get the word out! Paul tells us in **1 Cor. 9:19** *“Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone to win as many as possible.”*
2. We need to understand that even good religious people that have many of the “indicators” are still lost if they have not been baptized biblically and we should not be afraid to share our faith and study the bible with them.
3. We need to understand that Satan doesn’t care if someone is lost because of ignorance, religious pride, laziness, or a lack of information – he just wants them to stay lost!
4. Our Mission is in the “Great Commission” to go and make disciples and baptize them... Each and every Christian needs to take this seriously and do everything he / she can to save as many as possible.

THE CHURCH – THE BODY OF CHRIST UNIVERSAL



Anyone who needs to understand what the biblical church is

Theme: The Church

Purpose: To help anyone accurately understand what the ‘church’ is

Main Study

1. Preconceived Ideas – How we view the church

- a. Coming from denominational background – church = “a religious meeting house”, a holy place, a social gathering point.
- b. Growing up in the Kingdom – church still has structure, ways to do things, order of worship, words we use.

2. The Word Church

EKKLESIA – (W.E. Vine = ek – “out of”, klesis = “a calling”) – so church = is composed of those who have been called out.

 **Matt 16:18** – “on this rock I will build my church”, Jesus used the word.

3. The Church is the Body of Christ

 **Ephesians 1:22-23** - “And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

 **Colossians 1:18** - “And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.”

- A. Jesus has a physical body on earth – the church.
- B. Jesus is the head of the church – not any man on earth.
- C. The church needs to look like Jesus to the world.

4. How a person becomes a part of the Church (See “Salvation and Our Mission” study above)

“Anyone who takes on the heart of a disciple, repents of their sins, and is baptized for the forgiveness of sins is a part of God’s church.”

- A. It happens at baptism – (you are not voted in later)
- B. You receive salvation, the Holy Spirit and membership into God’s family, the church, with all it’s blessings and privileges at same time.
- C. We all become one in Christ – Galatians 3:26 – no racism, class, labels, discrimination in the church. We are all the same.

5. The One True Church

1. There is only One True Church – the Single body of Christ.
Anyone who repents of their sins and is baptized for the forgiveness of sins becomes a part of God’s church, the body of Christ.

 **Ephesians 4: 4-5** “There is one body, and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism;”

2. The misunderstanding of **1 Cor. 12:12-19**
 - A. Used to endorse denominationalism – “many parts one body”
 - B. Written during a time where there were no denominations – only one church, same doctrine. (*there were other religions though*)
 - C. Paul uses a metaphor “the body” to show that the parts are individuals in the church not separate denominations.

Q *Are there Christian Denominations that are not a part of the “One True Church”?*

Yes, if the church’s doctrine doesn’t match with scripture in the area of how to become a Christian, then they are not biblical Christians and therefore cannot be a part of the one true church. (However we need to be open to the possibility of individuals who have had a biblical conversion but who are in an unscriptural group because of circumstance, and where the individual doesn’t fully support the doctrine of that group. They in fact are Christians in search of their bros. and sisters in Christ.)

Q *Can we evaluate where a people stand based on the doctrine they hold to?*

Yes, if they profess a doctrine that doesn’t teach the scriptural way to become a Christian then they are not holding to the scriptures and need proper biblical teaching.

Q *Is it the name of a Church that makes someone saved or lost?*

No, “you can’t judge a book by its cover”. Biblical names for the church in the N.T. are as follows –

Church of God	Acts 20:28
Churches of Christ	Romans 16:16
The Way	Acts 9:2

Also – The Believers, The Church, The Saints, etc.

- A. We must be careful not to be too quick to judge those outside our fellowship but may have scriptural conversions.
- B. We must also understand “the principle vs. the practical”. Although we need to be clear that there are brothers and sisters outside our understanding of fellowship, the reality is that they are few and far between. Based on **Matt. 7:13*** it is safer to assume that many more people are lost than are saved (even in the religious world) and we need to share our faith accordingly.

***Matt. 7:13** “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.”

6. The ICOC Issue

It has been taught and propagated that the International Churches of Christ are the one true Church and anyone outside this group is lost.

- i) This is wrong and should not be taught. God doesn't give us the right to draw boundary lines around his Kingdom. That is for Him to decide.
- ii) This attitude and approach leads to arrogance. We need to be aware of sins of pride and condescension toward others.
- iii) There are those who have left the ICOC and our fellowship for reasons other than sins that would separate a person from God (difference of opinion, harsh treatment, misunderstandings). These individuals should not be labeled a fallaways. They are simply no longer members of our particular fellowship and should be referred to as "former members". Judgment about if a former member is a "fallaway" is exclusively up to God. See **Matt. 13:30** - *"Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn."*

Conclusion

7. The Uniqueness of God's Church

 **Acts 2:42 – 47.** This is the start of God's church, those who had separated themselves from the world and were joined together in fellowship.

- i) There was a unique difference between the church and the world around them. We need to be just as unique and use the pattern we see in Acts.
- ii) We receive many blessings being a part of God's church. God truly takes care of his family.
- iii) We must resist the temptation from the world to blend in and conform to its patterns.
- iv) We must resist the temptation to blend in with the religious world around us and compromise on doctrine.
- v) We must have the conviction that God's Unique Church is the best and only answer for the lost world around us and we need to be urgent to bring as many as possible into His family.

THE CHURCH – THE LOCAL CONGREGATION



Anyone who wants to know more about how a biblical church operates on a local level

Theme: Church

Purpose: To understand how the local church operates

Main Study

1. Autonomy vs. Brotherhood

As Paul instructed Titus to “appoint elders in every town” (**Titus 1:5**) it is clear from the N.T. that each church was to have its own specific leaders. This led to churches being able to govern themselves and make independent decisions from other congregations in matters of opinion and judgment. On the other hand in the N.T. we also witness cooperation between congregations (collection of funds for the poor) and letters that were circulated between churches to maintain unity among God’s people. We can see in the N.T. that autonomy and brotherhood was not an either / or situation.

- a. Dangers of Autonomy - lack of objectivity, lack of vision, lack of new and creative ideas, and suspicion of other congregations, pride and independence.
- b. Dangers of Hierarchy – loss of local control, local needs not being met, local leaders don’t take responsibility, attitudes toward other groups and leaders, problems involving money spent with no perceived local benefit.

2. Biblical Roles in use today

1. Elder – Three terms used interchangeably. Elder = age, respect, and social function of the man. Shepherd (or Pastor) = one who shows care for the flock. Overseer = one who keeps watch over the flock in a more general sense. The Elders were stationary and were in a long-term relationship with the church. In fact the Elders (after being appointed by Evangelist) led the church and the preachers answered to them. An Elder must be married, well established in the community and local church, have believing children, and manage his family well. (**Titus 1:6**)
2. Evangelist – “one who proclaims the good news” (**2 Tim. 4:2**). They are the preachers and tended to roam from church to church, or in large situations from one part of the church to the other. Evangelists were to appoint Elders, defend the faith and train up other ministers. There is no specific list of qualifications for Evangelist.
3. Teacher – Needed to teach the scriptures. Noted in **Eph. 4:11, 1 Cor. 12:29**, and **James 3:1**. Different from preachers, one instructional the other motivational. Held to a higher standard. No specific list of qualifications.
4. Deacon – (diakonos) = servant or minister. Transliterated word, lends to confusion and stereotypic ideas of deacons. Deacons in the early church were simply servants that met many needs both specific (waiting on tables) and ministering to groups of

people within the church. It is such a broad term in the N.T. that an evangelist was considered a deacon (**1 Tim. 4:6**) and Paul the Apostle referred to himself as a deacon or servant (**Eph. 3:7**). Although the general impression from the scriptures was that a deacon was a man who was married and had children, a case could be built for women deaconesses in the case of Phoebe (**Rom. 16:1**). All this to say that it is a broad term and will be defined regarding our local church as described below.

3. Local Leadership Decisions

 **Hebrews 13:17** - *“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy and not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.”*

Just as God gives us direction through the scriptures on how the church should be run, he also gives the local leaders authority where they want to draw the line. Biblical interpretation can have a liberal and a conservative side so it's up to the leaders to decide which direction to lead the people and where to come down on the issues. This gives each individual congregation a uniqueness and personality that need not conflict with scripture.

4. Leadership Titles and Authority

As we've watched the Kingdom grow over the years we have tried to keep up with that growth by assigning non biblical leadership positions to various individuals. The problem with this approach is that non-biblical titles that are given authority can lead to an unhealthy hierarchy and attitudes within the membership. There becomes a separation between the “leaders” and the membership and communication breaks down. It is all right to have roles that aren't clearly named in the Bible as long as they are simply seen as servants to the members and are under the direction of Biblical leaders.

5. Questions Regarding the Leadership of the GPCC

Having set the groundwork for Biblical leadership, here are some anticipated questions regarding the local leadership of the GPCC.

- Q Who is qualified to be a deacon in the GPCC?
 - Any married man with children who satisfies the Biblical qualifications found in **1 Tim. 3: 8-13** and is commended by the congregation.

- Q Will we have deaconesses in the GPCC?
 - This matter is undecided at this time, but will be reviewed by the leadership.

- Q How will Deacons be selected?
 - The membership after prayer and study will offer suggestions to the Eldership.

- The Eldership will then check with the individuals to see if they desire to serve and whether they meet the threshold Biblical qualifications for Deacons. (**1 Tim. 3: 8-13**)
- The Eldership will then submit their list of candidates for Deacons to the congregation “to be tested” (**1 Tim. 3:10**), meaning that there will be a period of time for Biblical and personal evaluation by the membership of the candidates.
- The deacons will then be announced to the congregation.
- Deacons will serve in specific areas (i.e. benevolence, facilities etc.) and also working with groups within the congregation.

Q How will the women’s ministry change in the GPCC?

- There will no longer be the title of the Women’s Ministry Leader, but rather Women’s Ministers.
- Women’s Ministers will be those women appointed by the leadership and will be often, but not always, married to an Evangelist.
- The wives of Elders will still be, and always have been, simply the Elders’ wives.

Q What about those in the full time ministry?

- There will no longer be a Lead Evangelist.
- Interns will stay the same as those training in the full time ministry.

Q What about the Board of Directors?

- The Board is not an ecclesiastical body and therefore is not used in the making of spiritual decisions for the church
- The Board has a legal and financial responsibility to make sure the church is operating according to the laws, bylaws, and policies of the church.
- The Board is not controlled by the Elders, Evangelist or any fulltime staff person. The board will work in concert with the Biblical leaders for the best possible outcome for the church.

Q How will the Board be selected?

- Currently a subcommittee of non-staff personnel are reviewing the process and will announce plans soon.
- Board members are voted on by the congregation at large.

Q What about leadership for special areas of ministry like singles or teens?

- This is an area that will require further study and Biblical understanding. The Eldership is committed to addressing the concerns expressed by all segments of the congregation.

Conclusion

6. Trust and Respect

 **Romans 13:1** - *“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.”*

 **Romans 13:7** - *“Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect, if honor, then honor.”*

This is by no means a complete study of church leadership. As we learn together things will adjust and change, and this is a good thing. In the mean time let us all make sure that we show each other the proper respect. The Leadership is to respect the needs of the church and take care of those needs. The membership is to respect the God given authority of the leaders to make decisions for the whole group and be willing to sacrifice personal opinions for the sake of unity. All this comes from a foundation of trust, something that we as leaders are working hard to restore in the lives of the membership of the GPCC.

OPINION, ADVICE, AND WORKING TOGETHER



Anyone who
needs help in
getting along
with other people
and being a team
player

Theme: Unity and advice

Purpose: Teaches how to have unity amidst diversity and the importance of advice to the Christian

Main Study

1. The Unique Make up of the Church

A. Unity and Diversity

God's church has a unique blend of personalities which brings encouragement but also challenges to the fellowship.

 **1 Cor. 1:10** - "I appeal to you brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought."

 **Gal 3:28** - "There is neither Jew or Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

- Jesus' disciples - **Matt. 10:3** Matthew the tax collector vs. Simon the Zealot
- Early Church – Jew vs. Gentile issues
- Church today – We don't screen out personality types or backgrounds, rather welcome all into the Kingdom of God.
- Reality – People make Jesus Lord, but still bring in their background, opinions, and feelings into the church.

B. Can We All Get Along?

1. Heaven (**Rev. 5:9**) will be made up of every tribe, language, people and nation. We better learn to adjust to each other no matter how different.
2. The World can't do it. Hatred, racism, bigotry, and division
3. Religious World can't do it either. Different churches to reflect the rich, poor, races, and social structure.
4. We need to show the world God can overcome the barriers and that true Christians can be diverse and yet unified.

2. Free to have an opinion

A. It's fine to have and express opinions in the church on various topics i.e. political, social, sports, entertainment etc.

 **Cor. 8:4** - "So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one."

We could say the same about many things that we have opinions about – that “they are really nothing at all”, the scriptures don’t speak about them, we’re not in sin if we do or don’t abide by them. We in effect are free to have our opinions in the Kingdom of God.

B. We also need to be willing to sacrifice our opinion or “right” to have that opinion if it causes another to struggle.

 **1 Cor. 8: 9-13** - “Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak.”.....

- Matters of opinion that are not sin can lead to sin and cause division.
- We should be willing to remove the stumbling block for anyone who has a weakness in this area.
- Do not assume that the whole church should follow your opinion or try to force others to follow your opinion. It’s fine to communicate your opinion but (see next point).
- We should all be willing to sacrifice matters of opinion for the sake of unity in Christ.

3. Working together in the Church

A. The church is a family (**Gal. 6:10**) and like our physical families there needs to be a blend of unity and freedom. It is important to know where to place the unity and where we are free to be individuals.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Biblical Commands | Unity |
| • Biblical Principles | Unity |
| • Decisions by Biblical Leadership | Unity (Heb. 13:17) |
| • Disputable Matters (Rom. 14:1) | Liberty / Unity |
| • Matters of no consequence | Liberty |

B. The Biblical leaders of the church can choose to have guidelines within the local congregation even on matters of opinion for the sake of unity. (For example – which night to have mid-wk meetings etc.) Good leaders will be sensitive to the people and listen to the needs before making important decisions that will impact the lives of the members.

C. The membership of the church should be willing to submit to the leadership believing that their leaders keep watch over them and have their best spiritual interest in mind. As we have learned from the past few months, leaders are held accountable by God for their decisions (**Jas 3:1**). Members should feel free to communicate with their leaders but once a decision has been made, they are willing to submit for the sake of unity.

4. Advice in the Church

1. Seeking Advice

Phil. 2:12 - “...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling...”

- We are all responsible for our own salvation, and our own decisions.
- It is foolish not to get advice. **Prov. 12:15, 13:10, 19:20**
- Advice is not binding – it is up to you, but you must accept the consequences. Your decisions can impact many people in the church.

Guidelines for getting advice

- Realize that when you ask someone for advice you are asking them to get involved in your life.
- Ask advice from someone you respect spiritually and in the area you are dealing with.
- Don't shop around for the advice you want to hear.
- Don't assume that the advice you receive applies to everyone else.
- Sometimes you will get bad advice. Make sure you forgive.
- Make sure you take responsibility for the final decision.

2. Giving Advice

Realize that giving advice is serious business and that the brother or sister is putting trust in you and your wisdom. If you don't feel competent in that particular area, **don't** give advice. It's OK to get advice before you give advice, but be careful of gossip or violating a person's confidence without them knowing you were going to talk to someone else.

Guidelines for Giving Advice

- Be quick to listen, and slow to speak (**Jam. 1:19**). Avoid quick judgments, realizing that there are many things past and present that you are unaware of.
- Practice the Golden Rule (**Matt. 7:12**). Would you follow your own advice? Does the advice make sense? Is it practical?
- Avoid simple answers to complicated problems. Phrases like, "you need to be more spiritual", or "your hearts just not in the right place" can be more hurtful than helpful.
- Don't start what you're not willing to finish. Be committed to see the situation through.
- Realize that some people are in need of professional help and be OK with that. We have wrongly implied at times that it is unspiritual for someone to seek out a counselor, therapist, or psychologist. It is fine to seek these professionals out, although wisdom is needed in making the proper selection.
- Keep God in the middle of the situation. Study scripture, pray together and stay focused on the spiritual issues at hand.
- You pray and study before you go into the situation, being ready to be used by God.

Teen Character Studies



What's Your Dad Like?



Young teens just entering the teen ministry or new teen disciples

Theme: Character Study Series

Purpose: The goal of this study is to help a teen to begin to build a relationship with their heavenly Father

Introduction

Important Note: Ask the teen to write out their view of God before you get together to study the bible. When you sit down to study, ask them to give you their essay, and hold on to it until the end.

A teenager's view of their dad will effect how they view God. In order to be in a healthy relationship with God, the teen must understand what God is like and begin to love him deeply.

Special Notes: Even if the teen's dad is not with the family, he still has a presence and an impact on his child's life. Use the introduction time to draw out how they feel about him, whether present or absent. Also, be sure to encourage teens who do not have a great example in a dad that God is the perfect Dad for them.

Open your time together by sharing about your own dad.

Think about your own dad. Pretend I've never met him or heard about him. Describe him to me.

Some sample questions to help the teen:

- What does your dad love to do?
- Hate to do?
- What are some of his best character traits? Worst?
- How do you know how he feels about you?
- When is he most proud of you?
- What makes him mad?

Main Study

 **Luke 15:11-24**

- Q What is the son like before he left home?
 - A Selfish – took his dad's money before he was even dead
 - A Very sinful – reckless, wild, sensual

- Q Even though the son was really mean to his father when he left, how did the father respond when the son returned?
 - A Excited
 - A Gave him gifts
 - A Called people together to celebrate

Bottom line: God is compassionate and loving Father who desperately wants to be with us. He is not judgmental God, waiting to zap us for every mistake. He is not an uncaring God, laughing at our pain. He wants to welcome each one of us home in our relationship with him.

John 8:1-9

- Q What was Jesus' reaction to this woman's embarrassing, humiliating sin? (Keep in mind that Jesus' character is the exact representation of God's character.)
- A Sensitive to her embarrassment
 - A Treated her sin like any other – not, “Oh, I can't believe you did that!”
 - A Totally forgiving, even though that sin was punishable by death

Bottom line: Forgiveness is part of God's character. Understanding our need for forgiveness and God's willingness to totally forgive us helps to draw us closer to Him, to love and appreciate Him more.

Hebrews 12:5-11

- Q How does this passage say it feels to be disciplined?
- A Like hardship
 - A Painful
 - A Unpleasant
- Q Why does God discipline?
- A For our good (to keep us from walking on evil paths)
 - A So we can learn lessons in order to make better decisions in the future
 - A So we can be secure that he loves and cares for us
- Q What is our Dad in heaven like?
- A He unconditionally loves
 - A He forgives all of our sins
 - A He disciplines us for our good
 - A He believes in us and wants us to live happily ever after

Jeremiah 29:11

This passage sums up how God takes care of us when we seek him.

Conclusion

Heart Check

- Q Do you want to be closer to God?
- Q Let's read your essay now. Is your view of God different now than when you wrote this?
- Q Do you see any relationship between how you personally view your earthly father and how you view your heavenly Father?

Practicals

Write out a one-page essay about what you have learned from this study and why you think this is an important study to do in order to become a disciple or to grow as a disciple.

Pray every day to see God as the bible describes him, not as you feel or think.

Understanding God's Grace



People who are about to become disciples and are wondering "what happens after I become a Christian and sin?". Also, for Christians who feel constantly guilty after they sin.

Theme: Grace

Purpose: To understand what God's grace really is

Main Study

 **What is your definition of Grace? (Write it down)**

 **Isaiah 30: 18**

"Yet *the Lord longs to be gracious to you*; he rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!"

 **John 1:14**

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, *full of grace* and truth."

 **How do we come under God's grace?**

 **Romans 6: 1-14**

- After repent of our sins and are baptized (for the forgiveness of our sins and to receive the gift of the holy spirit Acts 2:36-38) it's the beginning of a new life for us
- We are no longer slaves to sin v.11
- Now we can live for God and the desires of His heart v. 12-13
- The moment we get up out of the baptistery, we become under God's grace v. 14

 **What is God's grace?**

 **Ephesians 2: 1-14**

- It's what saves us
- It can't be earned
- It's a gift from God

 **Titus 2: 11- 14**

- It teaches us to say no to "ungodliness and worldly passions"
- It trains us to be self controlled, upright and godly

 **Hebrews 4: 14-16**

- It's available for us at our time of need

 **2 Corinthians 12: 7- 10**

- God's grace is sufficient for us (it's all we need) **2 Corinthians 9: 8**

What happens when as a Christian we sin (which is inevitable)?

1 John 1: 5- 10

- We confess our sins
- We repent and decide to walk in the light (the way of God and Jesus Christ)
- Jesus' blood purifies us from **all** sin

Conclusion

- God's grace is a very special gift.
- It can't not be earned by good behavior, a sinless life or any amount of effort we make
- God grace allows us to start over. It keeps us from being defeated by past sins, mistakes and failures. It allows us to be free from guilt.
- It keeps us depended on Him.
- It will only be because of God's grace that we get to be with Him in Heaven one day.

Further Scriptures on Grace

 Romans 3: 21-24

 Romans 5: 15-17

 2 Timothy 2: 1

 2 Peter 3: 18

Bad Attitude



Young teens just entering the teen ministry or new teen disciple

Theme: Character Study Series

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to help a teen to see that having bad attitudes is ungodly

Introduction

- Q What are some qualities of a person with an attitude?
- A Disobedient
 - A Talks back
 - A Does not want to listen
 - A Not joyful
 - A Gets angry very quickly
- Q Would you consider having an attitude an okay thing if...
- 1 - someone did something to you to cause you to get an attitude?
 - 2 - you tend to be a person who naturally has an attitude?

Having a bad attitude goes against everything Jesus stands for. Being your best for God is making conscious decisions to do what is right; including making a decision not to have a bad attitude.

Main Study

Philippians 2:1-15

- Q What does God expect of our attitude?
- A Be likeminded with Christ
 - A Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit
 - A Be humble
 - A Consider others better than yourself
 - A Look to others' interests
 - A Attitude like Christ
 - A Be a servant
 - A Act according to God's purpose
 - A Do not complain or argue
 - A Shine like a star in the universe
- Q How does God expect your attitude to be towards others?

 **1 Timothy 6:18-21** Do good. Be rich in good deeds, be generous, share and turn away from godless chatter.

 **Philemon 1:7** Give joy and encouragement; refresh the hearts of others

 **Hebrews 13:17** Obey your leaders. Make their work a joy and not a burden.

📖 How does God expect your attitudes to be when someone gets you upset?

📖 **James 1:19-20** Listen before you speak. Do not get angry.

📖 **Proverbs 29:22** An angry man only stirs up more trouble for himself and he commits many sins.

📖 **Proverbs 29:11** A fool vents his anger. A wise man keeps himself under control.

Conclusion

📖 Are you known to have bad attitudes?

Ask yourself and then others. Think about people you have attitudes toward or situations that have upset you and think about why. Based on what you have learned in this study, think about how you can better deal with those people or handle situations that upset you. Then apologize for your attitude and repent.

Ready for Battle



Theme: Character Study Series

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to help a teen to see his life everyday as it really is, a spiritual battle

Introduction

Everyday is a spiritual battle for disciples. Everyday brings two things: opportunities (to do good) and temptations (to do bad). Every Christian needs to be prepared for both.

Main Study

1 Peter 1:13

- Q What are some of the opportunities to do good that you face day to day?
- A Serving family members
 - A Making friends, especially with less popular people
 - A Doing excellently in schoolwork and activities (sports, clubs, etc)
 - A Serving or giving to the poor
 - A Calling other disciples, writing cards or making gifts to encourage themothers?

Bottom line: God commands us to be prepared so that we can use each day the best way possible. It is not enough to coast through life or show up at worship services and just hang out or “see what happens.” We need to make definite plans and then be ready to put the plans into action each day.

1 Peter 3:15

Sometimes we make definite plans to go out and share our faith. Other times though a situation comes up in school or with friends where people start talking about spiritual things. Do you know what to say in those conversations?

- Q Are you able to share your convictions about God, about right vs. wrong – not just invite people to church?

Bottom line: God says we must be prepared to give an answer at all times.

2 Corinthians 2:11

Unfortunately, Satan is always plotting for his side of the battle. Sometimes you know in advance when he is going to go after you. Other times you get surprised.

- Q Are you prepared to deal with these specific temptations – in other words, do you know exactly how to react when the situation comes up?
- A People flirting with you or asking you on dates
 - A Friends trying to persuade you to “party” with them, to drink or do drugs
 - A The temptation to lie about something, cheat on a test/paper/homework, or otherwise be dishonest
 - A “Little” irritations like not getting enough sleep, younger siblings interrupting you, losing your watch or earrings...

Bottom line: We should not be surprised when these things happen or when these temptations come up. God says be aware and be ready to do the right thing.

Conclusion

Psalm 5:3

Q How do you prepare yourself?

A The basics! Talking to God and listening to his word will get you thinking about godly things and setting spiritual priorities. This is how Jesus got ready for the day's challenges and opportunities. Also, think about the schemes that Satan usually throws at you, and the ones that older teens say they have gone through. Pray and get advice about how to handle those things. Then you will be ready when the battle starts.

James 3:17

When a situation comes up that you have never dealt with before, you can usually handle it by asking yourself that very basic disciple's question: "What would Jesus do?" If you answer that question wisely, this scripture in James will describe your actions.

Cross Motivation



Theme: Character Study Series

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to help a teen disciple draw motivation from the cross of Jesus to walk with God when life gets hard

Introduction

As you embark on your Christian journey you will need the proper motivation to take your walk with God to greater heights and for God to be able to get the most out of your talents. That motivation should come from the Cross of Jesus.

Keep in mind that Jesus died for you to give you salvation as you read the following scriptures:

 **Matthew 26: 36-68 (read 10 verses at a time)**

 **Matthew 27:11-55**

Talk about the different qualities about Jesus that you appreciate in the account of the crucifixion. Remember, Jesus died for your salvation.

To keep a burning passion to live the Christian life, and to keep the proper motivation, you must have an extreme appreciation and the strongest sense of gratitude for Jesus and the cross.

Main Study

 **Revelation 1:4-5**

- We were slaves to sin before we became Christians.
- The blood of Jesus has freed us from slavery to our sins.

Q How does this help you to be more grateful to Him?
What sin have you changed the most since you became a Christian?

 **Hebrews 8:12-13** - Jesus not only forgives your sin, but forgets about it.

- Q How should this help you to be more grateful for Jesus?
- A He does not hold things over our heads.
 - A He chooses to forget about our sin so we can move forward in our walk with God.

 **I John 1:7** - the blood of Jesus continually forgives us of our sin during our Christian life.

- Q How should this help you be more grateful for Jesus?
- Q How should this motivate you more not to sin?
Bottom line: The greatest motivation not to sin is unconditional love, and Jesus loves us.

Conclusion

 Read **John 15:9-17**. The cross should motivate you to give your best for Jesus daily. Remember as you go through some of your tougher times as a teenage disciple, that Jesus is not only Lord, he is your friend as well. (John 15:13-14)

Write one page on what you have learned from this study and save it so you can read it during different times of your life.

Family



Young teens just entering the teen ministry or new teen disciples

Theme: Character Study Series

Purpose: The goal of this study is for the teen to see how important his/her family relationships are to God

Family relationships are second only to your relationship with God. It is an absolute must that a teen's heart for their family is in the right place. There needs to be a deep abiding love and respect for their parent(s) and a strong, inseparable love for each sibling. From this study there needs to be a distinct change in the teenager's relationship with members of his family.

Note: This is not a study about the parent(s)' or sibling(s)' weaknesses. Hear the teenager out if they feel the need to voice some of the weaknesses so you do not frustrate them. Then you go back and respectfully talk those issues out with his parent(s). Strongly emphasize to the teenager that this study will focus specifically on what he needs to change.

Introduction

Q What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses in your relationships with your family?

Some possible answers:

Strengths

-cheerful, loving, affectionate

Weaknesses

-irresponsible, disrespectful, independent

Proverbs 23:22-26

Q What do you think will bring the greatest joy to your parent(s)?

A Listening to them

A Living by the truth

A Changing how you live at home

The goal of this study is for you to change your dynamics in your relationship with your family. The results will bring greater joy to your family.

Main Study

John 19:25-27

Q As Jesus was dying on the cross, what are some words you would use to describe how he looked after his family?

A Compassion, love, care

Bottom line: If Jesus shows that kind of care for his family, especially making sure his mother was taken care of, while dying on a cross, we need to daily care about our own families by being righteous and loving toward them.

1Thessalonians 5: 12-13

Q Who should you respect?

- Ⓐ Those over you in the Lord (Your parents fit into these categories!)
- Ⓐ Those who work hard
- 🗨️ How can you show greater respect for your parent(s)?
 - Ⓐ Listen right away
 - Ⓐ Obey right away
 - Ⓐ Verbally express to them that you love and respect them frequently or write it to them in cards or letters.

Bottom line: You have been given so much by your parents. You need to give back by always showing the respect they deserve and God expects you to have for them.

Ephesians 4:29 – 5:1

- 🗨️ How do you get along with each sibling? (Go through each one.)
- 🗨️ In your relationship with your sibling(s), what should you get rid of?
 - Ⓐ Bitterness
 - Ⓐ Rage
 - Ⓐ Anger
 - Ⓐ Any bad feelings
- 🗨️ How should you treat your sibling(s)?
 - Ⓐ With encouragement
 - Ⓐ With kindness
 - Ⓐ With compassion

Bottom line: In God's eyes, there is no such thing as sibling rivalry. You must treat all your physical brothers and sisters with so much love that this love is only surpassed by your love for God and your parent(s).

Conclusion

- 🗨️ What needs to change the most in your relationship with your family?
- 🗨️ How will you go about changing these things starting today?

Apologize specifically to your sibling(s) about how you have fallen short and express to them how you want to be different.

Write out a one-page letter to your parent(s) about how grateful you are for them, and how you will specifically change to show a greater respect for them (**Ephesians 6:1-2** and **1 Thessalonians 5:13**).

Fear of the Lord



Young teens just entering the teen ministry or new teen disciple

Theme: Character Study Series

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to help a teen see the difference between fear of people and fear of God

Introduction

 Proverbs 9:10-12, 10:8, 10:19

- Q What do you think it means to be wise?
 - A Making the right choices (God's commands)
 - A Having understanding
 - A Having fear of the Lord (Job 28:28)

 2Timothy 3:14-15

- Q What does scriptural wisdom make you ready for?
 - A Salvation
- Q Why does Paul say "continue in what you have learned?"
 - A You never stop (perseverance)

Main Study

 **Matthew 10:22-33**

This scripture tells us that there is a kind of fear that makes God happy, and a kind of fear that he does not want us to have. Can you tell which is which?

- Q Why does God want us to fear him?
- Q How does he feel about us according to passage v29-31?

 **Matthew 14:25-31**

Sometimes situations make us afraid.

- Q Why did Peter become afraid here?
 - A He was beginning to sink
- Q What did Jesus say the problem was?
 - A The lost faith and doubted

 **Psalm 27:1-2**

 **Proverbs 29:25**

- Q What does snare mean?
- Q How can fearing people be a snare? Why fear man when God is on your side?

 **Luke 12:4-5**

 **Psalms 2:10-12, 19:9, 34:9-10, 128:1-2**

 **Ecclesiastes 12:13-14**

- Q Why is it good to fear God?

- Q When we fear what people think of us more than we fear God, how does it show?
A afraid to share faith, feeling guilty, not having a lot of friends

Conclusion

Fearing people is allowing what they say or think to influence you not to do what is right. Not only can we be fearful of people, but we can also get fearful when situations seem overwhelming.

Heart Check

- Q Which kind of fear do you see most in your life? In what ways? If it is not fear of God, what can you do to change?
- Q In what ways can you hold onto your faith in God, or increase it so that you will be able to keep your focus on him?
- Q Are you willing to make a commitment to care more about what God wants for your life, than about what people think?

Practicals

- Q What can you do this week to fear God, and practice not caring what people think?
- A Invite someone to church
 - A Pray for your lunch
 - A Make a new friend
 - A Do something you know is right, but have been afraid to do

Write one page about what you have learned from this study, and what you intend to put into practice that will help you to be a disciple.

Gossip



Young teens just entering the teen ministry or new teen disciple

Theme: Character Study Series

Purpose: The goal of this study is to help a teen gain a deep conviction about how serious and hurtful gossip is

Introduction

- Q Why do people gossip? How do you feel when you find out somebody was gossiping about you? or your siblings? or your parents?

Main Study

Leviticus 19:16

- Q Why does God command us not to gossip?

Proverbs 11:13, 16:28

- Q What happens to your relationships with others when gossip is involved?

Proverbs 18:8

- Q What kind of damage does gossip do?

Proverbs 17:9, 20:19

- Q What should you do when someone tells you something about someone else? Why?

Proverbs 26:20

- Q What happens when you do not get involved with gossip?

Conclusion

Heart Check

2 Corinthians 12:20

- Q How do you think God feels when you gossip about his sons and daughters?
- Q Have you confessed gossip as a sin?

Practicals

Think about any time you have gossiped. Confess it, apologize for it, and repent!

By refusing to gossip you will be strengthening your friendships, you will be protecting people from getting hurt, and you will be pleasing God.

Grace



Young teens just entering the teen ministry or new teen disciples

Theme: Character Study Series

Purpose: The goal of this study is to help a teen to better understand God's grace

Introduction

The understanding of grace is the foundation for a love-motivated relationship with God, rather than one that is works-motivated. Often teens raised in the church can be little Pharisees in the making, knowing the requirements of the Christian life, but missing the heart motivation. Similarly, overachievers (in the world or in the kingdom) are valued by others and value themselves based on their performance. The goal of this study is to build security, self-esteem and worth based on God's forgiving love and not on their Christian duty or perfect performance.

Your personal examples and analogies will make the difference in their understanding of a potentially broad and complex concept.

Q What is grace?

Some possible answers:

- undeserved forgiveness
- an "in-spite-of" kind of love
- acceptance even without perfect performance
- real love

Q Where does grace come from?

- A Jesus receives the punishment for your sins instead of you (2Corinthians 5:21)
- A After baptism, the blood of Jesus covers over my sins, allowing me to be justified: "just-as-if-I'd-never-sinned" (1John1:7).

Bottom line: Grace is almost too good to be true, but it is! The goal of this study is to help you to see the real God who loves you and how valuable you are to him. He valued you at the cost of his only Son, whom he gave up so that there could be grace to forgive your sins and restore your relationship with him.

Main Study

Psalm 103:8-10

Q What are some sins in your life?

Q What do you deserve for them?

- A Punishment (grounding, removal of privileges, jail, etc.)
- A Not being trusted by people

Bottom line: God sees everything that we do and think, and he knows what we deserve. Yet, it is his grace that gives us forgiveness rather than punishment.

Luke 7:41-50

Q How many sins do you have?

- Q Do you have more sins or fewer sins than your friends in the world? Are your sins “not as bad” as theirs?
- A We all have many, many more sins than we could ever count
 - A Sin is sin is sin and it all hurts God more than we than we can imagine
 - A Getting our sins forgiven is amazing regardless of what kind of sins they are

Bottom line: The more you understand how sinful you are, the more you will appreciate grace.

Ephesians 2:8-9

- Q How many times do you need to obey your parents to receive one grace point?
- A There is no such thing as grace points!
 - A There is nothing you can do to be worthy of grace.
- Q Why is there no boasting when grace is involved? It is a gift!

Bottom line: God gives grace. We cannot earn it. Our role is to be grateful for it.

1Corinthians15:9-11

- Q What is Paul because of grace?
- A A forgiven man
 - A A Christian
- Q What effect did God’s grace have on Paul?
- A He worked hard for God.
 - A He lived his whole life for Christ (Phillipians1:21).
 - A He was a very grateful man.

Bottom line: Grace completely changes our lives.

Conclusion

Heart Check

- Q What should God’s grace produce in you? Does it?
- Q How should you respond to God’s grace? Will you?

Practicals

Decide that you will live for God because of his grace and not to earn his grace.
Write a one-page letter to God expressing your understanding of his grace (using a personal example from your life) and your gratitude for his grace.

Honesty



Young teens just entering the teen ministry or new teen disciples

Theme: Character Study Series

Purpose: The goal of this study is to get a teen to see that honesty is what God wants from teens and that when they are honest, they are like God

Introduction

Honesty is a critical character trait to have as a teenager. One of the tendencies in the sinful nature of a teenager is to lie. Lying manifests itself in half-truths, exaggeration and deceit. The goal of this study is to free teens from the trap of lying and to help them see that honesty is absolutely God's way.

Q Why do teens lie?

Some possible answers:

- afraid of getting in trouble
- want to look good in front of others
- ashamed and embarrassed about something

Share some lies you have told and why you told them- even from your teen years.

Q Who do teens lie to?

- A Authority figures (parents, teachers, ministry leaders, etc.)
- A Friends
- A Siblings

Q What do they lie about?

- A Performance (i.e., report cards, chores, sports performance, homework, etc.)
- A Treatment of others

Main Study

Psalm 139:1-18, 23-24

Name some different things that God knows about you.

Q Why does it make sense to be honest all the time?

- A God knows and sees when we even just think about lying.
- A God knows and sees when we tell half-truths, when we exaggerate, when we are deceitful and when we blatantly lie.

Bottom line: God knows everything about us. Lying to others instantly leads to lying to ourselves and ultimately lying to God.

John 8:44

Q What can you learn from this Scripture?

- A Lying is Satan's language

⚠ Satan is the father of lies

Bottom line: Satan is behind every lie.

 **Mark 7:22**

🗣 How would you define “deceit”?

⚠ Shading the truth

⚠ Not telling the whole truth, usually to make yourself or a situation look better

⚠ Not saying what you are really thinking, not being open (giving answers like “Fine,” “Okay,” or “I don’t know” when you know there is more in your heart than those)

Bottom line: Saying what you are really thinking is very important because that is the only way you can get the spiritual help you need to be able to change your heart.

 **Revelation 21:8**

🗣 Does God take lying seriously?

⚠ Absolutely yes!

Bottom line: Liars go to hell.

Conclusion

Heart Check

🗣 When are you most tempted to lie?

🗣 Are you willing to change your life and be totally honest all the time?

Practicals

 **James 5:16**

When you lie:

-confess it to the person you lied to.

-confess it to your parent(s).

-tell them that you are sorry and you want to change.

-then go on your way happily and joyfully because you did what was right before God.

Homework: Write out one page about what you have learned from this study, some things you have done or will do differently because of this study, and how all this will help you be a disciple someday or how it will help you be a better disciple if you already are one.

Humility



Young teens just entering the teen ministry or new teen disciples

Theme: Character Study Series

Purpose: The goal of this study is help a teen see pride in his/her life so that he/she can humbly accept and respond to the word of God

Introduction

Humility is essential in beginning and maintaining a relationship with God. Pride, the opposite of humility, is often difficult to see in oneself and difficult to define in one's character. It can be described as stubbornness toward God and his Word and others, or as independence from God or others.

Try to use specific examples of interactions you have observed between the teenagers and others that show a lack of humility and share from your own life as well.

Q What is pride?

Some possible answers:

- being stubborn
- thinking you are better than others or above others
- thinking your ideas are best and that things should always go your way
- not admitting wrongdoing or apologizing

Q What do you think humility is?

Possible negative responses:

- being wimpy and letting people walk all over you
- letting people tell you what to do
- having no opinions

Possible positive responses:

- listening to input and getting help from God and others
- taking correction well
- apologizing for sin

Main Study

Philippians 2:5-8

Q How was Jesus humble?

- A He was God but became a man.
- A He became a servant when he could have been a ruler.
- A He died for others.

Bottom line: To be like Jesus is to be humble.

Ephesians 4:2-3

Q How does God want us to get along and be unified with others?

- A Be completely humble and gentle (no selfishness)

- △ Deal patiently with people
- △ Focus on our love for others so that we can bear with their faults

Bottom line: To get along with others, we must put ourselves aside-that is what Jesus has done for us.

1Peter 5:5-6

- Q How can humility be like clothing?
 - △ Put it on everyday before you go outside
 - △ Not a natural part of us - has to be put on (thought about)
 - △ Should be the first thing people see about us

- Q What is in store for the humble person?
 - △ Grace!
 - △ “lifted up” – growth and blessing
 - △ Relief because his burdens and anxieties will be carried by God instead of himself
 - △ Better relationships (As God opposes the proud, so do other people!)

Bottom line: The humble person is on God’s team.

Conclusion

Heart Check

- Q Do you see the pride in your life? When is it hardest for you to be humble?
- Q Are you willing to change your prideful ways and attitudes and be humble toward God and others? Be specific about what ways and to whom.

Practicals

Isaiah 66:2b

God delights over the humble person and the humble person totally respects what the bible says. Humility is not being phony by not expressing your opinions, but humility is considering others before yourself and having the loving, selfless attitude of Christ even when you express your own opinions.

To be humble when you sin:

- accept full responsibility
- make no excuses
- do not be defensive
- apologize humbly and rejoice in being pleasing to God and like Jesus

When others sin against you:

- tell them in a respectful way (do not give in to fear or intimidation)
- focus on your love for them and not on what they have done to you
- forgive them and forget about it, moving on to being even better friends

Homework: Write out one-page description of how you have seen your pride and how you can turn it into a humility that will make you ready to study the bible to become a Christian.

Brotherly Kindness



Young teens just entering the teen ministry or new teen disciples

Theme: Character Study Series

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to help a teen to determine exactly what brotherly kindness is, to learn how to show it, and to plan ways to make brotherly kindness a part of his life

Introduction

 **2 Peter 1:5-7** "...make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness..."

God wants us to have the quality of brotherly kindness in our character and heart.

Main Study

 **Galatians 6:10**

Q Why does God want us to make deliberate effort to do good to others, "especially the family of believers."?

A we do not do it naturally

Think back on some of your latest conversations with your parents, teen disciples and leaders.

Q How much of your conversations are focused on yourself?

Q How much do you focus on noticing what others are feeling, and finding ways show them kindness?

 **Luke 6:35**

 **Hosea 11:4**

Q What do you learn about God's heart to show kindness from these scriptures?

Q Why do you think it is the nature of God to show kindness to people even when they do not deserve it?

Q How does that make you feel about him?

 **Proverbs 11:17, 12:25**

Q What will be the result in your life of having the quality of brotherly kindness?

A You will win many friends

A People will respect you

A People will look out for you

 **Colossians 3:12-13**

This list contains qualities of brotherly kindness.

Q Which of these qualities do you exhibit in your life? How?

Q Which do you feel you lack? Why? How can you grow in them?

Conclusion

Heart Check

- Q Do you make it a point in your daily routing to notice what other people must be in need of?
- Q Do you strive to lift burdens from your parents by helping out around the house?

Practicals

Make a list of four or five significant people in your life. Spend some time putting yourself in their shoes.

- Q What is going on right now in his/her life?
- Q What responsibilities does he/she have?
- Q How must he/she be feeling?
- Q What would I be feeling if I were he/she?
- Q What would I need from people if that were happening in my life?

Make a deliberate effort every day this week to show these people brotherly kindness. If you draw a blank, ask them how you can help them.

People-Pleasing



Young teens just entering the teen ministry or new teen disciples

Theme: Character Study Series

Purpose: The goal of this study is to help a teen to see the importance of pleasing God and seeking praise and approval from Him

Introduction

People-pleasing is predominant among teens. As they develop a stronger sense of their own identity, they seek approval and acceptance from others. Christian-parented teens are commonly motivated by people-pleasing to study the bible. They feel a great deal of pressure to study the bible to please their Christian parent(s), siblings and friends. They can strive to give the “right” responses to questions – not necessarily their own true heartfelt responses.

Q Whose approval is important to you ? Who do you want to please or get approval from?

Some possible answers:

- myself
- parents, teachers
- older disciples
- friends

Q Why?

- A To be accepted, liked, popular
- A To feel good about myself
- A Because it feels good to be praised

Main Scriptures

 **John 5:41-44**

Q What is Jesus teaching in this scripture?

- A We need to follow his example by focusing on getting praise from God, not people.
- A We will please whom we love.

Bottom line: These people knew the truth but did not follow it because of peer pressure. They cared more about their reputation with people than they cared about doing what was right before God.

 **Galatians 1:10**

Q What does Paul tell us about the difference between pleasing people and pleasing God?

- A They are opposites!

Q When are you tempted to do the God-pleasing thing but with people-pleasing motives?

- A Going to church
- A Obeying parents just because they said so, not because we want to please God
- A Serving, but wanting recognition for all you do by peers or leaders

Bottom line: When we strive to please God, we may not be popular with the world, but keep in mind that man's approval is temporary, while God's approval is eternal!

 **Mark 12:14**

- Q What does it mean to be “swayed by men”? Who are you most likely to be swayed by?
- Q What does “integrity” mean?
 - A Sticking to your convictions no matter what
 - A Doing what you said you would do and doing it on time

Bottom line: Jesus was not swayed by men because he saw them from a spiritual perspective. We need to imitate this quality in him.

 **2Corinthians 5:9-10**

- Q Why should we care about trying to please God?
 - A It does not just happen – it has to be a set goal.
 - A We all (every single person, whether we believe in God or not) will be accountable for our lives.

Bottom line: Jesus died for us. We need to live to please him.

Conclusion

Heart Check

- Q Can you relate to the people-pleasing Pharisees in any way?
- Q Have you counted the cost of studying the bible?
Becoming a Christian will affect your reputation with your non-Christian friends.
- Q What do your lifestyle and your priorities say about how much faith you have in God?

Practicals

Make three columns on a page. In the first column, list all the activities you are involved in - everything, including studying the bible, school activities, free time, etc. In the next column, write the reason you think you participate in it. Ask others who know you well to tell you why they think you are involved. Allow them to point out the areas where they see you “loving praise from men rather than from God,” and write their insights in the third column. Be honest and encourage honesty! Bring the list to your next study and review it with the disciple leading the study. This will help you to see who you are living to please and decide to please God instead.

Write a one-page essay about why you really want to study the bible. Include who you are trying to please by studying and why.

Purity



Young teens just entering the teen ministry or new teen disciples

Theme: Character Study Series

Purpose: The goal of this study is to help a teen to take hold of God's convictions about purity of heart and life. It will also help him/her to see that following God's plan is always the most fulfilling in the long run

Introduction

Our society exalts sexual immorality, and it is raging out of control. Teenagers have hormones that are newly active, and they can let them rage out of control. However, God has made it clear that he wants us all to let the natural sexual desires remain dormant until they can be expressed within the marriage relationship.

In the bible the term "purity" is most often referring to sexual purity, but it also is used to refer to being free from contamination by worldliness in general. Contaminated water is undrinkable, just as a contaminated heart is unacceptable to God. The purpose of this study is to help teenagers to understand and embrace God's convictions about purity.

Q Have you, or has anyone you know, had food poisoning? Do you know what happens? Since the food is contaminated and poisonous, the body does everything possible to flush the poison out! It is really gross, but if the poison is not removed, the person could die.

Q What are some ways teenagers are impure in everyday life?

Some possible answers:

- lustful thoughts/fantasies and "the second look"
- watching movies or TV shows with sexually explicit scenes and themes
- reading pornographic magazines or visiting pornographic sites on the Internet
- listening to or telling dirty jokes
- flirting (desiring attention from the opposite sex and acting or speaking in such a way as to get it)
- sexual immorality
- masturbation

Main Study

 **1Thessalonians 4:3-8**

Q What are some things we need to do to stay pure?

- A Avoid sexual immorality
- A Control our own bodies

Bottom line: God has high standards for us to be totally different from people in the world. We need to have the same expectations for ourselves as God does. He does not call us to anything that is not possible. When we are impure, we hurt God and ourselves and, if someone else is involved, them.

 **2 Timothy 2:22**

- Q What are “the evil desires of youth”?
- A Sensual pleasures like sex and drugs and reckless abandon
- Q Why do you think God says these evil desires have to do with youth?
- A They are new experiences, so they appeal to curiosity
- A Teenage bodies are changing sexually
- A The “young, wild, free, indestructible” mentality can take hold of young people.
- Q What does it mean to “flee” from something?
- A To desperately run away, usually from something dangerous (a murderer, etc)
- Q What does it mean to “pursue” something?
- A To go after it with all your heart

Bottom line: We have the right to choose where we spend our energy in life – whether on worldly goals or on spiritual ones. God calls us to run away from what our human nature screams for us to go after: destructive, worldly desires, activities and thoughts. We must, instead, go after the challenge of being godly in a godless world.

Ephesians 5:3-5

- Q How much is a hint?
- Q What does God say to replace impurity with?
- Q What does it mean to have no inheritance?

Bottom line: God takes purity very seriously!

Conclusion

Heart Check

- Q How are you different from your friends in the world?
- Q Are you willing to change your life, thoughts, and habits to be radically pure all the time?

Practicals

Read **Psalm 119:9**. Remember that when you are tempted, the Word will help you to resist sin. Memorize scriptures about purity/impurity to have ready for when you are tempted with this sin.

Read **James 5:16**. Confess your sin to someone who can help you. Remember that God loves you and forgives you! Next time, ask advice about movies, times with boys and girls together, dates, etc.

Write out a one-page essay about what you have learned from his study and how you were convicted. Write down how you are personally going to change and some things you will do differently from now on.

Respect



Young teens just entering the teen ministry or new teen disciples

Theme: Character Study Series

Purpose: The goal of this study is to help a teen see how important respect is to God and to teach him/her who needs to be respected

Introduction

In today's society, respect is in a sad state of affairs. We see a lack of respect in the classroom, in athletics and against those given authority by the government. But that is the world and it is different for those who love God. There must be an uncompromising, relentless expectation of young teenagers to respect those they are called to respect. Every aspect of disrespect must be challenged in their lives from this study.

- Q What does respect mean?
-Look up to; admire; listen to

The answer: to feel or show honor or esteem for; hold in high regard.

Main Study

Mark 12:28-30

Best place to start is respect for God.

- Q How do you love God with all your heart and soul (emotions)? Mind and strength (actions)?
- A Share your heart with him in prayer
 - A Do all God asks of you
 - A Serving God (i.e. by being a servant to others)
 - A Finding out, by studying, how to be with God in heaven
 - A Constantly think about God and what Jesus would do in every situation

Bottom line: You show respect for God by honoring him by who you are, what you say and how you live. Your respect for God will directly cause you to respect others, as he commands.

Ephesians 6:1-3

Respect your parent(s).

- Q How should you honor and show respect for your parents?
- A Obey them right away without complaining
 - A Love them unconditionally
 - A Listen attentively and look them in the eyes when they speak
 - A Be open with them (share your heart with them)
 - A Appreciate and value them for who they are and all that they do for you
 - A Have respectful body language

Bottom line: Any disrespect for your parent(s) needs to change. The result of respect is that it brings joy to God and joy to your family.

1Peter 2:17

Name others you absolutely need to respect

- sibling(s)
- leaders in the church
- teachers in school
- coaches of athletic teams
- policemen and other government officials
- people running clubs/activities you are a part of

1Thessalonians 5:12

Q Why should you respect spiritual leaders?

- A They have been given a responsibility and you should make their responsibility a joy
- A It builds your spiritual character to respect others
- A God says so

Romans 13:1-7

Q Why would you not follow rules, regulations, laws and guidelines?

- A To have an unfair advantage over someone
- A Because you are rebellious

Q Why should you follow them?

- A God expects you to
- A It builds your spiritual character
- A You contribute to order rather than participate in disorder

Name some rules, regulations, laws and guidelines you need to follow at home, at school and at other people's houses.

Bottom line: The fact of life is that there are rules, regulations, laws and guidelines to follow everywhere you go. God expects us to follow them as long as it does not contradict the bible. You must repent of any disrespectful attitude in any of these areas.

Overall bottom line: **Romans 12:10**. Respecting others and respecting rules will show how spiritually mature you are. Also, the more you respect people and rules, the more respect you will get back from others.

Conclusion

Heart Check

- Q Would God say he feels like you respect him? Would your parent(s)?
- Q To whom are you most tempted to be disrespectful? How will you repent?
- Q What rules, regulations, laws or guidelines are you most tempted not to follow? How will you repent?

Practicals

Write out one page about what you have learned from this study and what you will do differently because of it.

Note to leader of study: If a teen has an extreme problem with respect, he may have an extreme problem with respecting himself. Please do an appropriate follow-up study on that subject.

Righteousness (No Matter What)



Young teens just entering the teen ministry or new teen disciples

Theme: Character Study Series

Purpose: The goal of this study is to help a teen to understand biblical righteousness and to see the need to be righteous in every situation no matter what

Introduction

Righteousness is one of the most unpursued qualities of Jesus. To be righteous is to be like Jesus. The goal of this study is to challenge and inspire the teens to seek righteousness with all their hearts.

Be open about your life to facilitate openness in the teenager.

Q Describe “righteousness” in your own words.

Some possible answers:

- doing the right thing
- being obedient to God and parents
- obeying laws

Q When is it most challenging to be righteous?

- A During peer pressure
- A When things are hard
- A When you just don’t feel like obeying
- A When you don’t understand

Main Study

 **1John 3:7**

Q Who is righteous?

- A Those who do what is right
- A Those who are not led astray
- A Those who imitate Jesus

 **James 2:21-22**

Q What made Abraham righteous?

- A He offered Isaac
- A He obeyed God
- A He obeyed with faith

Bottom line: To be righteous is to do what is right and to obey God’s commands.

 **Matthew 26:38-39**

Q How was Jesus feeling?

Ⓐ Overwhelmed, sad and sorrowful, “This is hard,” “I do not want this.”

📄 How did Jesus respond to his feelings?

- Ⓐ He was open about them in prayer
- Ⓐ He was willing to do God’s will
- Ⓐ He made a decision to obey, no matter what

Bottom line: We must do what is right even when we do not feel like obeying God.

📖 **Acts 5:28-29**

📄 Why were the apostles being persecuted?

- Ⓐ They filled the city with the words of Jesus
- Ⓐ They made people feel guilty about hurting Jesus

📄 How did they handle the persecution?

- Ⓐ They were bold
- Ⓐ They obeyed God no matter what
- Ⓐ They did what was right or righteous

Bottom line: In the face of persecution or peer pressure, we must do what God says.

Conclusion

Heart Check

- 📄 Is righteousness a daily goal in your life?
- 📄 What areas are you most tempted to be unrighteous?

Practicals

📖 **Matthew 6:33**

Start every morning by seeking God first.

- pray to be righteous
- be open about areas of weakness
- when unsure of what to do, ask, “What would Jesus do?”

Write out one page about what you have learned from this study about righteousness, some things you have done or will do differently because of this study, and how this will help you be a disciple someday.

Strengthening Others: My Responsibility



Young teens just entering the teen ministry or new teen disciple

Theme: Character Study Series

Purpose: The goal of this study is to help teens see that they have the capability and responsibility to encourage and strengthen their brothers and sisters in the faith

Introduction

Instead of having a deep sense of responsibility for the spiritual growth of their teenage peers, many teen disciples have a “hands off” attitude. Some teens tend to pull away emotionally from other teens who are struggling in their faith or are not doing well spiritually. The goal of this study is to help teens get the conviction that encouraging and strengthening their brothers and sisters is something that God wants them to do and to give them practical ways to do this.

- Q If your little brother or sister (physical sibling) was in the middle of the street about to get hit by a car, what would you do?
- Q Why?
 - A Family is important to us
 - A We have an obligation to take care of family
 - A It is the right thing to do

 Read: **Ephesians 2:19**

Family is important to God too. When we get baptized, we become a part of God’s family, and we have an obligation to look after our spiritual brothers and sisters.

- Q Why do we feel a temptation to be timid or pull back from other disciples who need encouraging or are struggling in their faith?
 - A We are afraid to be hurt
 - A Afraid we will not know what to do, or will not be able to help
 - A We think it is not our responsibility we feel selfish and do not want to spend the time or energy

Main Study

 **Hebrews 10:24-25**

- Q In what ways can we encourage other disciples?
 - A Share a scripture from your quiet time
 - A Have a quiet time together (on the phone or in person)
 - A Share encouraging stories
 - A Ask how sharing your faith is going
 - A Go with them to share your faith if timid
 - A Pray with them
 - A Write cards, notes, etc.

Q Why does God want us to encourage others daily?

A To help keep others strong

A To help us keep a focus on others

Bottom line: We have an obligation to other disciples to encourage and strengthen them daily. Doing this protects his children, whom he loves, and helps us to grow as well.

 **Hebrews 3:12-13**

Q How can you see to it that your brothers and sisters who are struggling get stronger?

A Do not avoid them; stay close friends

A Call them; let them know you care

A Give cards

A Ask about what is bothering him or her

A Get advice if you do not know what to say

Bottom line: God expects all disciples to be responsible for their brothers and sisters. We must get involved in the lives of others to encourage and strengthen them. We cannot leave it up to someone else to do it.

Conclusion

Heart Check

Q Is encouraging and strengthening others a part of your daily life?

Q What areas do you need to pay closer attention to?

Practicals

Make a list of those who need encouragement and why.

Plan what you will do to encourage each of those people.

Gospel Study Guide



GOSPEL STUDY

GUIDE: the Gospel of Jesus



Someone who
desires to
become saved

Courtesy San Diego Church of Christ

Theme: The Gospel of Jesus

Purpose: To help a friend understand Jesus the Man, Jesus' Plan, and Jesus as the Son of God

Introduction:

Key Texts: **Acts 2 and John 1**

- Day of Pentecost = Jewish pilgrim feast celebrating the anniversary of the giving of the Mosaic Law at Mount Sinai (Refer: Acts 2:1)
- The Holy Spirit is poured out on the Apostles (Refer: Acts 2:2-13)
- Peter explains the significance of what is happening (Refer: Acts 2:14-21)
- Peter then preaches the very first "gospel" message about Jesus...
(Note: the word, "gospel" means "good news".)

Main Study

I. Jesus, the Man (Acts 2:22-35)

- A. The *Life* of Jesus (Acts 2:22)
- B. The *Death* of Jesus (Acts 2:23)
- C. The *Resurrection* of Jesus (Acts 2:24-35)

II. Jesus, the Plan (Acts 2:36-41)

- D. The *Lordship* of Jesus (Acts 2:36)
- E. The *Promise* of Jesus (Acts 2:38-39)
- F. The *Response* to Jesus (Acts 2:36-41)

III. Jesus, the Son of God (John 1:1-18)

- A. Jesus is *Eternal* (John 1:1-5)
- B. Jesus is *Announced* (John 1:6-13)
- C. Jesus brings *Grace and Truth* (John 1:14-17)
- D. Jesus *Makes God Known* (John 1:18)

Conclusion

- A. God can be known through Jesus.
- B. Jesus can be known through his written word (John 20:30-31).
- C. The book of John is all about who Jesus is and therefore who God is.
- D. Recommend: read through the book of John to learn more about Jesus.

GOSPEL STUDY

GUIDE: The Life of Jesus



Someone who
desires to
become saved

Courtesy San Diego Church of Christ

Theme: The Life of Jesus

Purpose: To establish the reason for God sending his Son and to provide an introduction to the person, the miracles and the claims of Jesus

Main Study

I. The Savior is coming (Two Old Testament prophecies about Jesus)

 **Isaiah 53:1-12** (The Savior – Messiah - is coming!) (750 BC)

1. Despised and rejected (verse 3)
2. Pierced for our transgressions (verse 5)
3. By his wounds we will be healed; brought back to God (verse 5)
4. Like a lamb led to the slaughter (verse 7)
5. He will bear sins and justify many (verse 11)

 **Zechariah 9:9** (The Savior – Messiah - is coming to Jerusalem!) (520 BC)

1. Bringing salvation
2. Righteous and gentle
3. Riding on a donkey

II. The Savior is here (Watch how Jesus' miracles backed up his claims.)

 **John 6:1-15** (The miracle)

Q What does this tell us about Jesus?

 **John 6:30-40** (The claim)

Q What does Jesus claim about himself and how does he validate his claim?

 **John 8:1-11**

Q What do we learn about Jesus from this scene?

 **John 11:1-44** (The miracle)

Q What does this imply about Jesus and about us?

 **John 11:25** (The claim)

Q What does Jesus claim about himself and how does he back up his claim?

 **John 11:45-53** (Two responses)

 **John 14:1-11**

Q What is Jesus claiming about himself in this scripture?

 **John 20:30-31** (Jesus did many other things like these.)

Q Why were these things written down for us?

For further study:

I. Prophecies about the Messiah:

Genesis 3:1-15
Psalms 22:14-18
Micah 5:2
Isaiah 9:1, 6, 7
Zechariah 11:12, 13
Daniel 9:24, 25

II. Claims of Jesus:

John 4:13
John 5:24, 25
John 7:16, 17
John 8:12
John 8:19
John 8:23
John 8:31, 32
John 8:46
John 8:51
John 8:58
John 10:7-9
John 10:11
John 10:30
John 12:32
John 12:49, 50
John 15:5

GOSPEL STUDY

GUIDE: the death and resurrection of jesus



Someone who
desires to
become saved

Courtesy San Diego Church of Christ

Theme: The Death and Resurrection of Jesus

Purpose: To help a friend come to know Christ

Introduction

Read **1 Peter 2:24**

Q Why did Jesus die?

Key Text: Read through the account of Jesus' death and resurrection (**John 18:28-20:31**)

Main Study

I. Jesus' Death

A. Flogging (**John 19:1**)

1. Victim was stripped naked; hands were tied above his head to a post.
2. Two Roman officials alternately whipped the victim until appropriate punishment or death had occurred under the supervision of a Centurion.
3. Scourges were whips made of leather thongs with balls of lead or bone tied into the leather thongs.

B. Crucifixion (**John 19:16**)

1. Victim carried the crossbeam to the place of execution.
2. Victim stripped of clothing, thrown back onto the cross beam and nailed through the wrists.
3. Crossbeam lifted onto the stake and feet nailed to the stake.
4. Hours of terrible pain to keep the breathing process going until exhaustion or dehydration or whatever other factor caused the victim to die.

C. Burial (**John 19:40**)

1. Jewish burial customs were very important. Body was washed and carefully prepared.
2. Three linen strips were used to wrap the body. Myrrh and aloes (gooey and sweet smelling substance) were spread between the strips of linen to stick it all together. Linen strip #1 was wrapped from one foot to the waist. Linen strip #2 was wrapped from the other foot to the waist. Linen strip #3 was wrapped from the shoulders around crossed arms to the waist. A separate cloth was placed over the head.
3. The body was placed in the tomb.

II. Jesus' Resurrection

A. Proof of Jesus' resurrection = eyewitness accounts

1. Peter and John find empty tomb (John 20:1-9)
2. Mary Magdalene (John 20:10-18)

3. Jesus' disciples (John 20:19-20)
4. Thomas (John 20:24-28)
5. Over 500 others (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

III. Importance of the Resurrection

- A. Proof that Jesus is the Son of God (John 20:30-31)
- B. Proof of Jesus' authority (John 2:12-22)
- C. Proof that there will be a resurrection and a Judgment day for all of us (Acts 17:29-31)

Conclusion

Read 1 John 4:9-10

The cross demonstrates God's Grace (God's unmerited favor on man).

Q What more could God do to show his love for us?

Q How does all this affect you, personally?

(Suggestion: take turns praying together about these things.)

Reasons Jesus Died:

Mark 10:42-45	To be a ransom for us
Luke 22:19-20	To help us
John 3:16-21	To save us because of love
John 12:20-33	To draw us into a relationship
Romans 5:12-21	To undo the sin issue
Romans 4:25	To make us innocent
2 Corinthians 5:14-21	To give us a new unselfish life
Galatians 3:10-14	To free us from legalism and give the Spirit
Galatians 6:14	To free us from "the world"
Ephesians 2:14-18	To unite us with all kinds of people in Jesus
Colossians 2:13-15	To remove our sins and legal obligations
Colossians 3:1-4	To give new lifestyle, freed from the old patterns
Philippians 2:5-11	To give us a new, humble attitude
1 Timothy 2:3-7	To unite us to God
Hebrews 2:9-18	To free us from the fear of dying
Hebrews 9:14-15	To forgive ALL sin
Hebrews 9:27-28	To take away sin
Hebrews 10:19-25	To give us confidence with God and each other
1 Peter 2:21-25	To be our example
1 John 1:5-2:2	To forgive us always
1 John 3:16-24	To show us how to love (sacrifice); to give comfort
1 John 4:9-21	To overcome our fear of punishment

More Evidence for Jesus' Resurrection:

Matthew 27:45-28:20

Mark 15:42 – 16:20

Luke 23:50 – 24:53

John 21:1-25

Acts 1:3-8

Acts 10:39-43

Acts 13:32-41

1 Corinthians 15:1-20

Acts 26:1-31

1 Peter 1:16-21

1 John 1:1-3

40 days of convincing proofs

Chosen witnesses

Old Testament foretold this

More eye witnesses

Paul's complete turn around

Eyewitness confirmation of predictions

Seeing and touching the dead now alive

GOSPEL STUDY

GUIDE: the promise of jesus



Someone who
desires to
become saved

Courtesy San Diego Church of Christ

Theme: The Promise of Jesus

Purpose: To help a friend come to know Christ

Introduction

Key Text: **Read Acts 2:38-41**

Main Study

I. The Promise

A. If you:

1. Repent (verse 38)
2. Baptized into Christ (verse 38)

Then:

1. Sins are forgiven (verse 38)
2. Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (verse 38)

B. This is “the promise” referred to in verse 39.

C. This promise is issued to every generation (verse 39), including ours.

II. The Forgiveness of Sins

A. **Acts 3:19-20** Sins wiped out

B. **Colossians 1:21-23** The extent of our forgiveness because of Jesus

C. **Ephesians 2:1-10** Saved by grace, not by works

III. The Gift of the Holy Spirit

A. **Titus 3:3-8** Salvation is the work of the Holy Spirit, not of man (Vs 6);

This salvation from the penalty of our sins (also called "justification") is what gives us the hope of eternal life (Vs 7).

B. **Ephesians 1:13-14** Holy Spirit is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance

C. **Romans 8:9-17** Living by the Spirit

IV. The Family of God

A. **Acts 2:40-47** Another promise: added to the Lord’s church

B. **1 Corinthians 12:12-13** Baptism into the body of Christ simultaneously puts us in a new relationship with God, as our adopted Father, and other Christians as our new family

C. **Ephesians 2:18-19** Through our union with Christ, we have become members of God’s household, God’s family, the church

Conclusion

A. Review the promise in Acts 2:38-41.

B. Share: What aspects of the promise are most important to you, personally?

GOSPEL STUDY

GUIDE: the response to jesus



Someone who
desires to
become saved

Courtesy San Diego Church of Christ

Theme: The Response to Jesus

Purpose: To help a friend come to know Christ

Introduction

Key Text: **Acts 2:36-41**

The preaching of the gospel was meant to bring about a response. It was meant to change people's lives.

Main Study

I. Faith: Changed Thinking (Acts 2:36-37).

- A. The people's response to Peter shows that they had come to faith in Jesus as their Lord (master) and Christ (savior).
- B. This faith in Jesus was more than an acceptance of the facts, but a trust in Jesus that moved them to action (verse 37).
- C. Saving faith must lead to action in our lives as well (Read James 2:14-26).
- D. The gospel message must be received with this kind of faith (Hebrews 4:2).

II. Repentance: A Changed Life (Acts 2:38)

🕒 What is repentance?

- A. **Acts 26:20** Turning from a self-determined life to one that strives to please God.
- B. **2 Corinthians 5:14-15** No longer living to please self, but to please God.
- C. **Galatians 5:19-26** Repentance is "crucifying the sinful nature (vs 24)".

🕒 What sins do you need to crucify? (Suggest: share with each other.)

- D. **Genesis 6:5-13** Repentance comes from taking responsibility for the pain our sins cause God.

Share: how our sins make God feel.

🕒 What does it mean that our sins crucified Jesus? (refer: **Acts 2:36**)

- E. **2 Corinthians 7:8-11** Godly sorrow leads to repentance.

🕒 Do you have godly sorrow about your sins?

🕒 If not, what element of godly sorrow do you still lack? (Offer help.)

III. Baptism: A Changed Relationship – from separated to united in Christ (**Acts 2:38-41**)

- A. **Isaiah 59:1-2** Our sins separate us from God.

B. **Acts 2:38-41**

1. Our sins are forgiven.
2. We receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
3. We are added to God's church.

C. **Romans 6:1-8**

1. Through baptism we die with Christ to the old life of sin
2. We are resurrected to a new life with Christ.

D. Galatians 3:26-29 Baptism is an adoption into the family of God. It is also analogous to a marriage ceremony. Baptism is when we are joined with Christ. In fact, the marriage relationship is often alluded to in describing the relationship of God's people to Jesus (Refer: Ephesians 5:23, 29, 31-31; Revelation 19:7; 21:2, 9; 22:17).

GOSPEL STUDY

GUIDE: the lordship of jesus



Someone who
desires to
become saved

Courtesy San Diego Church of Christ

Theme: The Lordship of Jesus

Purpose: To help a friend come to know Christ

Introduction

Jesus calls all of us to follow him and to make him Lord of our lives. When we do this, we are becoming disciples of Jesus (refer: John 8:31-32).

Main Study

I. **Acts 2:36.** Jesus is Lord (Master) and Christ (Savior).
(You cannot have one without the other.)

The Greek word for Lord used here means “master”. It was most commonly used to refer to the lordship of slave masters over slaves. Those who accept that Jesus is their Lord are accepting that he is the ruler over their lives—that he has ultimate and complete control over their time, possessions, decisions and so forth.

II. **Romans 10:8-13.** Anyone who comes to Jesus to be saved must make him Lord of their whole life. If Jesus is not Lord *of all*, then He is not Lord *at all*.

III. **Luke 9:21-27.** Following Jesus and making him Lord means denying self on a daily basis.

Suggestion: share what this means in your life.

IV. **Luke 14:25-35.** Counting the cost of becoming a disciple of Jesus, or making Jesus Lord.

A. Examples:

1. **Mark 1:16-18.** Following Jesus, fishing for men, and leaving everything.
2. **Luke 9:57-62.** No looking back.

V. **John 13:34-35.** Following Jesus includes following his example of loving people.

VI. **Mark 10:17-31.** The cost and the reward of following Jesus and making him Lord.

Conclusion

🕒 What will be the cost for you, personally, to become a disciple of Jesus and make him the Lord of your life?

🕒 Are you willing to do that?

Guard the Gospel



Jesus I: Jesus the Only Way



Someone who knows little or nothing about Jesus, the Bible, or Christianity

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Jesus

Purpose: To convince people of whom Jesus was

Introduction

Who was Jesus? What was he like? What did he say? Most people today do not know the answers to such simple questions as these, because they have not been taught from the Bible. The impression they have of the Son of God is a sketchy and distorted one. The following study, taken from John and Hebrews, will blow away the fog and reveal the truth about Christ.

Main Study

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| • John 1:14 | God became man in Jesus (the incarnation). Jesus is God in nature. |
| • John 6:35 | Jesus is the bread of life. |
| • John 8:12 | Jesus is the light of the world. |
| • John 14:6 | Jesus is the only way to the Father. |
| • Hebrews 4:15 | Jesus was also human, tempted as we are, qualified to relate to us. |

Tips



John 1:14—Tie this verse in with 1:1 to show that Jesus is God!



John 2:3-17—Extra passage. Clearing the temple, Jesus shows us the burning passion for the righteousness of God which we should have. (See Psalm 69 to understand the reaction of the early disciples to Jesus' conviction.) Do you have this level of conviction about the Lord?



John 3:1-10—Extra passage. Jesus teaches the teachers!



John 6:35—Jesus was not just a teacher of truth; he pointed to *himself* as the source of spiritual nourishment. Could any other man make those claims about himself? (This is one of the “I Am” statements.)



John 8:12—Jesus is light. Jesus taught truth from God so that we can see the way we should go. In the world there is disagreement about basic moral questions, and it is unfashionable to take a strong stand. Without Jesus we are truly in the dark.



John 11:25—Extra passage. Jesus promises eternal life to his followers, because it is his to give. Later, his resurrection proved this to be no empty claim.



John 14:6—Jesus is “exclusive.” This makes sense, because the only way *to* God is *through* God—through Jesus. But don't all paths lead to God? No! Why would God want to confuse us with a tangle of different, convicting and contradictory “ways”? (P.S.: No *other* founder of a major world religion ever made such claims.)

 **Luke 4:1-13**—Extra passage. Jesus was tempted. We imagine Jesus to be a superman, invulnerable and gliding through life with perfect ease. But Jesus was tempted like us: desires of the flesh (4:3-4), materialism (4:5-7), pride (4:8-12). This was not a one-time temptation for the whole of Jesus' life (v.13). He lived a life of struggle with Satan (Hebrews 5:7).

 **Hebrews 4:15-16**—Jesus is a sympathetic savior. Jesus understands our problems, because he both faced and overcame them all.

 **Hebrews 2:17-18**—Extra passage. Having suffered all that we suffer, Jesus is merciful. He not only understands, but *helps* us.

 **Hebrews 1:3**—Extra passage. This passage sums up clearly all we have learned about Jesus: he really is the “exact representation” of God's being.

Seeking God

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: How to seek God

Purpose: A useful first study to see if someone is willing to put God first in their lives



Someone who may be interested in learning more about God or who is actively searching

Introduction

Seeking God is a useful first study. In doing this study, you are essentially asking people if they are open to a change in their lives: to putting God first. A person's reaction to this study reflects his (current) openness to God. (You will probably want to skip this study in the case of someone who is already seeking.)

Main Study

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| • Matthew 7:7 | Seek and you will find. |
| • Matthew 7:13-14 | The way is narrow, and only a few are truly seeking. |
| • Matthew 6:33 | The only effective way to seek is to seek God <i>first</i> . |
| • Acts 8:35 | Let another person help you understand the scriptures. |
| • Acts 17:11 | Do your homework! |

Tips

 **Matthew 7:7**—This is a great promise. God is a loving father, and he wants you to find him!

 **Matthew 7:13-14**—If only a few *find* the way to eternal life, then only a few are truly seeking. How should we seek, then?

 **Matthew 6:33**—Ask what sorts of things keep us from making this our top priority. (Friends, family, social life, job, studies, worry.) Now let's look at some good examples of people seeking God:

 **Acts 8:26-40**—the Ethiopian is a great example of someone “seeking first.”

- Important man, very busy, yet still made time for God (Jerusalem trip).
- Seeking in the right place (Scripture).
- Was humble (asks for help).
- When he finds, he does not continue to “seek.” It is time to act. It has been said, “When a sincere seeker finds what he has been looking for, either he stops seeking or he stops being sincere.”
- He is a truly happy person afterwards; he has come to know God.

 **Acts 17:11-12**—the Bereans are another example of people “seeking first.”

- Noble character—integrity.
- Enthusiastic.
- Seeking in the right place (the scriptures)

- Read daily.
- Not naïve (healthy skepticism).
- Respond to the truth and become believers.

 **Matthew 13:44-46**—Extra passage. Man in field stumbles across treasure. (Most of us are like him—not actively seeking truth). Three results: joy (the result of finding); sold everything (commitment); obtained the treasure (as always happens when people seek first.) Merchant looking for fine pearls. (Some of us are like him—actively seeking the truth). Similar results.

Conclusion

Close with an invitation to regular Bible study, encouragement to study the scriptures daily, and the challenge to start attending church regularly.

The Word of God I

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby



To convince someone the Bible is true and to be obeyed

Theme: Bible as Word of God

Purpose: To establish confidence in the Bible as perfect and authoritative

Introduction

This study is absolutely foundational. Anyone who truly accepts it has an excellent chance of becoming a Christian. Aim: to establish confidence in the Bible as the perfect and authoritative Word of God, and to create an obedient spirit.

Main Study

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| • Hebrews 4:12 | (4:12-13) Relevant (living) & active (dynamic). Surgery & pain. |
| • 1 Timothy 4:16 | Life & doctrine both important. Then why are there so many opinions? |
| • 2 Timothy 3:16-17 | Not everyone is willing to accept <i>all</i> the Bible, and apply it. |
| • John 12:47-48 | Rejecting the Word = rejecting Jesus and salvation. |
| • Acts 17:10-11 | Right response: <u>R</u> ead <u>E</u> nthusiastically, <u>A</u> sking questions <u>D</u> aily |

Tips

 **Hebrews 4:12-13**—The Word penetrates like a sword. Studying the Word is penetrating; like the penetration of any sharp instrument. This means that at times it may “hurt.” Don’t shy away from the challenges.

 **1 Timothy 4:16**

 Which wing of the airplane is more important—the left or the right?

 Then ask, “Why have people come up with so many interpretations?”

Consider some of the reasons:

- ignorance of the word—Matthew 22:29, Hosea 4:6
- personality cults—1 Corinthians 1:12, Acts 20:30
- twisting scriptures—2 Peter 3:16, Genesis 3:1
- personal convenience—2 Timothy 4:3, Isaiah 30:10-11
- traditions of men—Mark 7:6-9, Colossians 2:8
- additions to the word—Proverbs 30:6, Revelation 22:18
- unwillingness to obey—John 8:31-32, John 7:17

 Then ask whose fault it is that there are so many differing interpretations—God’s or man’s?
The word of God *can* be understood, and agreement can certainly be reached on the fundamentals of the faith.

 **2 Timothy 3:16-17**—The Word is both inspired and useful. The following acronym provides even more reasons on why men have departed from the Word: **E**asy way (2 Tim 4:2-3, Isa 30:10-11, John 8:31-32), **eX**tra teachings (Proverbs 30:6, Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32, 1 Corinthians 4:6, Revelation 22:18-19), **I**gnorance (Matthew 22:29, Hosea 4:6, Isaiah 1:2, 2 Timothy 2:15), **T**raditions (Matthew 15:6-9, Mark 7:6-9).

 **John 12:48**—Remember taking exams? What if the examiner handed out the test early for all the candidates to study? Would you read it? Would there be any excuse for failure? Emphasize God’s generosity and fairness in revealing the standard for judgment.

Conclusion:

 **Acts 17:11**—For those approaching the Bible for the first time. The Bereans were eager to learn, and they trusted the scriptures, not just Paul. Do you have such a noble character?
Challenges:

- Read every day (suggest what to read: the gospel of John, for example).
- Do so enthusiastically.
- Ask questions; don’t just believe what anybody tells you! (Healthy skepticism.)
- Study that Bible daily. Make the scriptures your foundation.

 **2 Timothy 2:15**— Extra passage. For those already studying the Bible and excited about it. Are you lazy in your Bible study? God says, “Do your best!” God wants skilled, reliable workmen. Time to step up your Bible study!

Sin I

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Definitions of sin

Purpose: To get someone to specifically identify their sins so they can repent



Anyone who needs to realize they need forgiveness or who needs to understand what sin is

Introduction

The Sin study is a highly personal discussion. Most men and women will be much more open if this is a one-on-one as opposed to a two-on-one study. Everyone has sinned, and without specific conviction and specific repentance, there can be no conversion. The human tendency to rationalize and blame-shift must be confronted in love.

By the time you study sin with someone, you should have built up a good relationship—essential at this stage, because many of the things covered in the Sin study are challenging and personal.

It is tempting to go to one of two extremes when doing the sin study: too severe, or too soft! It needs to be convicting (John 16:8), but it mustn't become an interrogation session (1 Peter 3:15)! Don't say, "I'd better challenge his socks off, just to make sure." On the other hand, we must be careful that in our efforts to be diplomatic and considerate we do not tread too lightly, afraid to offend. God is not pleased with those who are soft on sin (Jeremiah 6:14). The right balance takes a lot of practice. If you are dealing with a person whose faith needs building up before making his decision, or with someone who likes the church but is not eager to change, a premature study of this subject could turn him off completely, or encourage him to rush into baptism without the faith and repentance to make the decision solid and lasting.

The aims of the *Sin* study are to help people to:

- See themselves as God sees them: sinful.
- Realize they need forgiveness.
- Identify sins specifically, to enable them to repent.

Main Study

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| • Romans 3:23 | All have sinned, fallen short. |
| • Mark 7:21-22 | Jesus got specific about sin! |
| • Galatians 5:19-21 | Sinful acts are obvious! |
| • James 4:17 | Making plans without considering God is sin. |
| • Isaiah 59:2 | Sin separates us from God. |

Tips



Romans 3:23—Everyone has sinned and fallen short. Analogy: Leaping across Grand Canyon – even the best Olympic jumper, though certainly jumping farther than me, still falls woefully short! In other words, no one is good enough to make it to heaven on his own. Most people are willing to admit that they have sinned. This verse provides a palatable introduction to a very confrontational study. Ask him what he thinks sin is. Possible answers: breaking God's law (1 John 3:4), not doing what you know you ought to do (James 4:17).

 **Mark 7:21-22**—We are responsible for our sin. It comes from our own hearts. Personal responsibility, despite upbringing, environment, genes, social pressure. Go through the specific sins. Define terms where necessary. Discuss in detail such sins as sexual immorality (adultery, premarital sex, homosexuality, masturbation, fantasies, incest, lust, pornography, abortion, child-abuse...) greed (materialism, selfishness), malice (grudges, refusal to forgive), deceit (lies, deceptiveness, work ethics), lewdness (language, dress), envy, slander, etc.

 **Galatians 5:19-21**—Be as specific here as you need to be!⁵ Sinful deeds are obvious. You don't need a Ph.D. in psychology to identify sin. Cover such specifics as debauchery, hatred, fits of rage, selfish ambition, and drunkenness. When going through a list, do not feel compelled to go into detail for each item. Tailor the scriptures to the individual. Define "entering the kingdom of God" (going to heaven). "Those who live like this": how many of these sins do we have to be actively indulging in to disqualify ourselves for heaven? Answer: only one.

 **Ephesians 5:3-7**—Extra passage. "Not even a hint": not only the action that is being condemned, but even the very appearance of evil. How do you respond when an off-color joke is told? People will try to talk you out of such a black and white position (5:6), but God expects as radical break from the world (5:7).

 **2 Timothy 3:1-5**—Extra passage (excellent for religious people). Notice all the "lovers": Lovers of themselves, lovers of money, without love, not lovers of the good, lovers of the pleasure, not lovers of God. Ask: What do you love? "Form of godliness": this refers to *religious* people.

 **Romans 6:23**—Extra passage. Though God wants us to enjoy eternal life, the wages of sin is death; we get what we deserve.

 **Revelation 21:8**—Extra passage. Hell is real. Cowardice and timidity are *sin*; lying and deceitfulness can cost us our salvation.

 **James 4:13-17**—"Sins of omission," not just "sins of commission."

 **Isaiah 59:1-3a**—Sin separates us from God, putting us in darkness. We're guilty (3a); our hands are dripping with the blood of Jesus. God is not an impotent old man (arm too short = arthritis; ear too dull = hard of hearing). Draw a picture of a person separated from the light of God by sin, thus putting him or her in the darkness. Ask, "Which side of the wall do you think you are on? Where would you go if you died tonight? Or course the honest answer is, "I'm in the darkness—I'm lost." If the person says he thinks he is right with God, you may

- Challenge him directly, asking him what makes him sure,

⁵ Other great passages: Ephesians 5:3-7: "Not even a hint." Not just the action, but the very appearance of evil is condemned. e.g., the club-party scene (1 Peter 4:4). In Revelation 21:8 we see that cowardice and lying are sin. (Not taking a stand, giving in to peer pressure...) 2 Timothy 3:2-5 chronicles the sins of religious people. Luke 18:9-14 is great for confronting self-righteousness. Finally, Romans 1:21-32 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 may prove helpful.

- Hold off, in the case of a very religious person who is fairly committed (and perhaps has even had a “conversion experience” and dealt with the more obvious sins) and convict him in the repentance study, or
- Reply candidly, “I doubt that very much” in the case of someone who is obviously involved in sin. Go back and explain from the verses you studied.

Conclusion

Clearly, man’s greatest problem is *sin*; his greatest need is *forgiveness*. Sin is against God—it is personal—and so He must decide to forgive us. Soon we will study the first step in receiving the forgiveness of our sins: *repentance*.

The Cross of Christ

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby



Anyone who needs gratitude and conviction for God's saving us in Christ

Theme: Jesus suffering on the cross

Purpose: To produce gratitude and conviction for God's saving us in Christ

Introduction

Jesus said that once he was "lifted up" he would draw all men to himself (John 12:32). The power of the Cross to transform someone's attitude and life should not be underestimated! The aim: to produce conviction and gratitude for God's saving us in Christ. Note: ask your friend to read Matthew 26-27 in advance.

The heart of our message is lost when we rely on our own human wisdom, make baptism the main issue (1 Corinthians 1:17-18), or fail to focus on the cross. As Christians we should be moved by Christ's death. Make sure you have conviction when leading the study, and don't be afraid to show your emotions.

Main Study

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| • Matthew 26:39 | Jesus had a choice, and he chose to die for us. |
| • Matthew 27:46 | We are "Barabbas"! |
| • 1 Peter 2:24 | "Die to sins, live for righteousness" is our response to the cross. |
| • Read Medical Account | Next Study |
| • Acts 2:36-37 | The cross cuts us to the heart, producing a readiness to obey God. |

Tips

Christ died for our sins. Analogies:

- **Soldier:** A soldier dives onto a grenade about to explode. In dying, he saves his fellow soldiers from certain death.
- **Train:** The little boy was playing on the railroad tracks, unbeknownst to his father. By the time the father noticed him, it was too late: he looked with horror as he saw two passenger trains speeding towards each other from different directions; they were on a collision course! The only way to prevent the collision was to redirect one of the trains off onto another track, where the boy was playing. The father had to act fast—it was only seconds before the collision, but he loved his son! What did he do? He threw the switch, saved the passengers, but in doing so he sacrificed his little boy's life. God threw the switch. It was the only way to save us. He watched his son die for our sins. Yet most of the world carries on along its selfish course, unaware and unappreciative of the sacrifice that God made for us.



Matthew's account (shorter version, Mark 15:16-39)



26:36-46: Jesus is dreading the cross—prays for the right attitude.



26:66-68: Beaten, mocked.



26:69-75: Denied. Have you ever denied Jesus? (Luke 9:23).

 **27:26:** Flogged.

 **27:27-31:** Mocked, crowned with thorns, spat upon, beaten.

 **27:32:** Crucified

 **27:46:** Abandoned by God. He bore not only the punishment due us, but also the actual *guilt*. He was separated from God (Isaiah 59:2, 2 Corinthians 5:21).

 **Matthew 26:36-46**—Jesus had a choice: “drink the cup” or not; he chose to die for us.

 **Matthew 27:46 (27:11-50)**— Like Barabbas, we don’t deserve to be set free. Jesus bore our guilt.

Medical account—Become familiar with the Medical account (next study), which is the next study in this book. If necessary, practice reading it aloud so that when you share it with your friends it will “flow.”

Our personal response to the cross:

 **1 Peter 2:21-25** (extra verses **Galatians 2:20, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15**). Die to sins and live for righteousness! Share your own personal response (leader of the study).

Conclusion

Acts 2:22-38 (extra verse Romans 5:6)—You are a sinner; you crucified Christ, you don’t deserve salvation. The Cross always produces commitment in an open heart.

 How are you going to respond? How *should* you respond?

A Medical Account of the Crucifixion



Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: The cross

Purpose: To help someone understand the physical and emotional suffering of Jesus' crucifixion

Introduction

This is a simplified medical account of Jesus' crucifixion (an adaptation of the "Davis" version). Other medical reports have been written – all useful but usually rather technical. This account aims to be readable to the average reader. I created this adaptation, with the assistance of Alex Mnatzaganian, in December 1989.

Hanging, electrocution, knee-capping, gas chamber: these punishments are feared. They all happen today, and we shudder as we think of the horror and pain. But as we shall see, these ordeals pale into insignificance compare with the bitter fate of Jesus Christ: crucifixion.⁶ No one is crucified today. For us the cross remains confined to ornaments and jewelry, stained-glass windows, romanticized pictures and statues portraying a serene death. Crucifixion was a form of execution refined by the Romans to a precise art. It was carefully conceived to produce a slow death with maximum pain. It was a public spectacle intended to deter other would-be criminals. It was a death to be feared.

Main Study

Sweat like blood

Luke 22:24 says of Jesus, "and being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground."⁷ His sweat was unusually intense because his emotional state was unusually intense. Dehydration coupled with exhaustion further weakened him.

Beating

It was in this condition that Jesus faced the first physical abuse: punches and slaps to the face and head while blindfolded. Unable to anticipate the blows, Jesus was badly bruised, his mouth and eyes possibly injured. The psychological effects of the false trials should not be underestimated. Consider that Jesus faced them bruised, dehydrated, exhausted, possibly in shock.

Flogging

⁶ Highly recommended: Martin Hengel, *The Cross of the Son of God* (London: SCM Press, Ltd: 1981).

⁷ The original version of our version of the Medical Account of the Crucifixion included these sentences: "*Haematidrosis* – bloody sweat – is rare, but well documented. Under great emotional stress, capillaries in the sweat glands can break, mixing blood in with the sweat. Luke's account is consistent with modern medical knowledge: Jesus was in emotional torment so intense that his body could not bear it." However, Luke only says that Jesus' sweat was *like* blood as it fell to the ground, not that it *was* mixed with blood. As disciples we must be careful not to overstate the case. There is no evidence that the early Christians preached the gore of the cross in an effort to sicken or shame those they were trying to convert.

In the previous 12 hours Jesus had suffered emotional trauma, rejection by his closest friends, a cruel beating, and a sleepless night during which he had to walk miles between unjust hearings. Despite the fitness he must certainly have gained during his travels in Palestine, he was in no way prepared for the punishment of flogging. The effects would be worse as a result.

A man to be flogged was stripped of his clothes and his hands tied to a post above his head. He was then whipped across the shoulders, back, buttocks, thighs and legs, the soldier standing behind and to one side of the victim. The whip used – the flagellum – was designed to make this a devastating punishment, bringing the victim close to death: several short heavy leather thongs, with two small balls of lead or iron attached near the end of each. Pieces of sheep's bone were sometimes included.

As the scourging proceeds, the heavy leather thongs produce first superficial cuts, than deeper damage to underlying tissues. Bleeding becomes severe when not only capillaries and veins are cut, but also arteries in the underlying muscles. The small metal balls first produce large, deep bruises which are broken open by further blows. The fragments of sheep's bone rip the flesh as the whip is drawn back. When the beating is finished, the skin of the back is in ribbons, and the entire area torn and bleeding.

The words chosen by the gospel writers suggest that the scourging of Jesus was particularly severe: he was certainly at the point of collapse when he was cut down from the flogging-post.

The mocking

Jesus was allowed no time to recover before facing his next ordeal. Made to stand, he was dressed in a robe by jeering soldiers, crowned with a twisted band of thorny twigs, and to complete the parody, given a wooden staff as a king's scepter. "Next, they spat on Jesus and struck him on the head with the wooden staff." The long thorns were driven into the sensitive scalp tissue producing profuse bleeding, but even more terrible was the re-opening of the wounds on Jesus' back when the robe was torn off again.

Further weakened physically and emotionally, Jesus was led away to be executed.

The crucifixion

The wooden cross used by the Romans was too heavy to be carried by one man. Instead the victim to be crucified was made to bear the detached crossbar across his shoulders, carrying it outside the city walls to the place of execution. (The heavy upright portion of the cross was permanently in position here.) Jesus was unable to carry his load – a beam weighing around 75 to 125 pounds (approximately 35-55 kg). He collapsed under the burden, and an onlooker was ordered to take it for him.

Jesus refused to drink the wine and myrrh offered him before the nails were driven in. (It would have dulled the pain.) Thrown down on his back with arms outstretched along the crossbar, nails were driven through Jesus' wrists into the wood. These iron spikes, about 6 inches long and 3/8 inch thick, severed the large sensorimotor median nerve, causing excruciating pain in both arms. Carefully placed between bones and ligaments, they were able to bear the full weight of the crucified man.

In preparation for the nailing of the feet, Jesus was lifted up and the crossbar fixed to the upright post. Then with legs bent at the knee, a single nail was used to pierce both feet, one foot being placed over the other. Again there was severe nerve damage and the pain caused was intense. It is important to note, however, that neither the wounds to the wrists or feet caused substantial bleeding, since no major arteries were ruptured. The executioner took care to ensure this, so that death would be slower and the suffering longer.

Now nailed to his cross, the real horror of crucifixion began. When the wrists were nailed to the crossbar, the elbows were intentionally left in a bent position so that the crucified man would hang with his arms above his head, the weight being taken on the nails in the wrists. Obviously this was unbearably painful, but it had another effect: It is very difficult to exhale in this position. In order to breathe out, and then take in fresh air, it was necessary to push the body up on the nailed feet. When the pain from the feet became unbearable, the victim would again slump down to hang by the arms. A terrible cycle of pain began: hanging by the arms, unable to breathe, pushing up on the feet to inhale quickly before again slumping down, and on and on. This tortured activity became more and more difficult as Jesus' back was scraped against the upright post,⁸ as muscle cramps set in because of the inadequate respiration, and as exhaustion grew more severe. Jesus suffered in this manner for several hours before, with a final cry, he died.

Cause of death

Many factors contributed to Jesus' death. A combination of shock and suffocation killed most victims of crucifixion, but in Jesus' case acute heart failure may have been the final trauma. This is suggested by his sudden death following a loud cry, after only a few hours: a quick death, it seems (Pilate was surprised to find Jesus already dead). A fatal cardiac arrhythmia, or perhaps cardiac rupture, are likely candidates.

The spear wound

Jesus was already dead as the executioners broke the legs of the criminals crucified alongside (in order to speed their deaths). Instead, we read that a soldier pierced Jesus' side with a spear. Where on his side? The word chosen by John suggests the ribs, and if the soldier intended to make Jesus' death certain, a wound to the heart was the obvious choice.

From the wound came a flow of "blood and water." This is consistent with the spear blow to the heart (especially from the right side, the traditional site of the wound). Rupturing the pericardium (the sac surrounding the heart) released a flow of watery serum, followed by blood as the heart was pierced.

Conclusion

The detailed accounts given in the gospels combined with the historical evidence on crucifixion bring us to a firm conclusion: modern medical knowledge supports the claim of the scriptures that Jesus died on the cross.⁹

⁸ In some locations, trees were plentiful, while in others upright posts needed to be fixed into the ground. It is quite possible that in the place where Jesus was crucified there was an abundance of trees, in which case the patibulum he and Simon of Cyrene carried was simply attached to a tree. Of course, whether Jesus was killed on a tree literally, or on a tree by metonymy (on the wood of a tree) is incidental to the point of the crucifixion.

⁹ Here follow sections from the original Cross study in the 1990 edition of *Shining Like Stars*:

The heart of our message will be lost if we rely on our own human wisdom, make baptism the main issue (1 Corinthians 1:17-18) or fail to focus on the cross. As Christians we should be moved by Christ's death. Make sure you have conviction when leading the study, and don't be afraid to show your emotions. As 1 Corinthians 15:1-3 makes clear, the cross is the heart of the gospel: we are saved because of the cross, since Christ died for our sins.

Analogies: (1) Soldier: A soldier dives onto a grenade about to explode. In dying, he saves his fellow-soldiers from certain death. (2) Train: The little boy was playing on the railroad tracks, unknown to his father. By the time the father noticed him, it was too late: he looked with horror as he saw the two passenger trains speeding towards each other from different directions; they were on a collision course! The only way to prevent the collision was to re-direct one of the trains off onto another track, exactly where his son was playing. The father had to act fast – it was only seconds before the collision – but he loved his son! What did he do? He threw the switch, saved

the passengers, but in so doing sacrificed his little boy's life. God threw the switch for us. It was the only way to save us. He watched his son die for our sins. Yet most of the world carries on along its selfish course, unaware and unappreciative of the sacrifice that God made for us! Both analogies explain God's love for us in sending his son into the world to die for our sins.

The pain of the Cross: Matthew's account (shorter version, Mark 15:16-39): 26:36-46: Jesus is dreading the cross – prays for the right attitude; 26:66-68: beaten, mocked; 26:69-75: denied. Have you ever denied Jesus? (Luke 9:23); 27:26: flogged; 27:27-31: mocked, crowned with thorns, spat upon, beaten; 27:32: crucified; 27:46: abandoned by God. He bore not only the punishment due us, but also the actual guilt. He was separated from God (Isaiah 59:2, 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Our personal response to the Cross: 1 Peter 2:21-25, Galatians 2:20, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (Choose one): die to sins, live for righteousness! Share your own personal response (leader of study). Acts 2:22-38 (Rom 5:6 optional):
i. You are a sinner; ii. You crucified Christ; iii. You don't deserve salvation. Concluding challenge: How should you respond? How are you going to respond?

Repentance I

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby



Someone who does not understand biblical repentance or who hasn't repented

Theme: Biblical repentance

Purpose: To determine if someone has truly repented

Introduction

This is the key study!¹⁰ Do it well and the baptism study will be a cinch. Cover it lightly and you're in for a long uphill battle! The purpose of the study: to clarify real repentance, clear away fuzzy thinking, and create a willingness to put God first. (Don't go directly into a baptism study! The New Testament teaching on baptism is not logically intuitive. No one appreciates it without having first come to an understanding of repentance.)

The aim of the study is two-fold: To teach the meaning of biblical repentance, and to make it clear whether the person you're studying with has repented. In order to achieve the second aim, the study focuses on five simple questions that can be posed from the scriptures.

Main Study

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| • Luke 13:5 | Repent or perish (only two categories of people). |
| • Acts 26:20 | Repentance is a decision leading to a radical change of lifestyle. |
| • 2 Corinthians 7:10-11 | Worldly & godly sorrow. |
| • Matthew 5:29 | Radical attitude. |
| • Acts 3:19 | Times of refreshing come. Repentance is a relief, not a burden! |

Tips

Luke 13:1-5—Good alternate passage: 2 Peter 3:8-12.

Acts 26:19-21—Repentance is a change of heart/mind. It is a *decision*. It is followed by deeds—one's life must reflect the change. It can be done in an instant, though the effects last a lifetime. Notice that opposition tends to come from religious people when repentance is preached (26:21).¹¹

Question 1:

Q Have you ever had a significant change in your behavior? A time when everyone said, "What's come over you? You're different"?

¹⁰ Special credit for this study must be given to Douglas Arthur. It was his conviction that repentance requires a separate session. The five key questions are also his.

¹¹ Biblical repentance is not Catholic *penance* (something you do to atone for your sin), nor is it Protestant *penitence* (which stresses feelings of contrition over actions). Although true repentance involves feeling (see Psalm 51) and doing (Proverbs 28:13), it is not so much something you feel or do as it is a decision.

2 Corinthians 7:10-11—

Analogy: Speeding. The officer pulls you over. Worldly sorrow—you're sorry you got caught. Good chance you will speed again. Godly sorrow—you're sorry you have broken the law, endangered lives, etc. In both cases you are sorry, but repentance comes only with godly sorrow.

Second analogy: Pregnancy: Your girlfriend gets pregnant. Worldly sorrow: sorry about the consequences. Start to use contraceptives instead. May have an abortion. Godly sorrow: will never be immoral again.

Godly sorrow produces a visible change in one's character (earnestness, eagerness to clear self, indignation, alarm, etc.) Thus you can tell whether one has repented or not.

Question 2:

 *Are you eager to do the will of God, or do you have to be coaxed?*

 **Matthew 5:29-30**—Radical attitude toward sin (negative side). Zeal to do the will of God (positive side). Ask: Do you think someone who has repented would study his Bible diligently? Attend all the church services? Share his faith with others?

World's attitude: sin is OK in moderation. God's attitude: sin is wrong—deal with it drastically!
Do you have a radically repentant attitude about ____ (be specific)?

Question 3:

 *Do you have God's attitude towards sin? A radical aversion?*

All three questions must be answered positively in order for someone to have repented.

Question 4:

 *Do you think you have repented in accordance with what the Bible teaches?*

We are almost always looking for a “No” answer. If someone claims to have repented, ask when. “Yesterday,” “a few weeks after I met you,” or “just now” are more likely correct answers than “when I was twelve,” “long ago.” Go back over the study again if you need to. Emphasize how narrow the road is. Be sure to ask, for there are extremely few religious people (even the committed ones) who have repented. Question him about his life and about the lives of the religious people he may look up to in his denomination. (I.e., Why do they accept *him* as a brother if he has never repented and become a true disciple?)

Question 5:

 How many people do you know who have truly repented?

If someone answers that most people have repented, he hasn't a clue about what you have just taught him. If he thinks that most people back in his old church have repented, again he has probably missed the point. Back up until he gets it right! Be sure to ask him about where he thinks his friends and family stand! Unless these things are clear, it is generally not advisable to go on to a new study.

Conclusion

 **Acts 3:19**—End the study positively!

Additional comments on Repentance:

Often as Christians grow to understand God's will more fully, or are convicted of sin, there is a tendency to doubt one's initial repentance. Remember: repentance is a change of heart—a decision—and a deepening walk with God in no way implied that one's initial decision was defective.

Although the percentage is extremely small, there are some non-Christians who have repented. Be sensitive and willing to concede that someone may in fact truly have repented. If someone is not actively evangelistic, fervent in his devotion to God, the chances are he has never repented.

Sincerity is not enough! A person needs a sense of sin, not Bible knowledge alone. Few have repented.

Baptism I

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby



Someone who
has repented and
wants to get right
with God

Theme: Baptism

Purpose: To explain how we receive forgiveness for sins and become Christians

Introduction

Not a study for anyone reluctant to repent. Be wise; delay the study until God has prepared their hearts for it!

Sometimes it may be wiser to do a preliminary study before plunging in to the Baptism unit.¹²
With a very religious person, the study will probably need to take place twice.¹³

¹² A preliminary study on baptism, to get people ready:

- a. Time perspectives in the New Testament (this explanation is useful for people who
- b. already have knowledge of the Bible):
 - Gospels: look forward to conversion.
 - Letters: look back at the Christian conversion.
 - Acts: shows Christian conversion occurring in the present.
- c. Two essential elements:
 - Forgiveness: the “Sin” study shows that man’s iniquities separate him from God (recall the diagram showing the wall of sin). No relationship between God and a person can exist until that sin is removed (Isaiah 59:1-2).
 - The Spirit: a Christian is someone in whom the Spirit of God lives. No relationship between God and a person exists till the Spirit is given (Romans 8:9).
- d. The Spirit. Receiving the indwelling of God’s Holy Spirit cannot precede the forgiveness of sins (Habakkuk 1:13, Isaiah 59:1-2). Yet similarly, forgiveness comes through the spirit (Titus 3:5, 1 Peter 1:2). A contradiction? No. God forgives someone’s sins and gives him the indwelling Holy Spirit simultaneously! Both forgiveness and receiving the Holy Spirit occur simultaneously.

In the baptism study, rather than try to correct false doctrines, focus on the positive work he does in the life of a Christian.

Main Study

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ephesians 4:5• Acts 2:38• Romans 6:3-4• 1 Peter 3:21• Acts 22:16 | Baptism is a basic Christian doctrine – and there’s only one. Repentance + baptism → forgiveness and the Spirit Participation, not just a parallel (diagram). Baptism is essential for salvation. The Bible is clear. ¹⁴ What are you waiting for? |
|--|---|

 **Ephesians 4:4-6**—The Bible identifies the basic, essential doctrinal areas. Baptism is not one of the peripheral items!

Let’s look at baptism in Acts, then in the letters, finally in the gospels. We find in Acts that baptism is how people were forgiven of their sins. Here we see people being saved (present tense).

 **Acts 2:36-39**—Already believed (2:37), but still not saved. Must repent first, then be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. “Every one of you,” “for all whom God will call” means no exceptions!

 **Acts 8:26-38**—Extra passage (Ethiopian Eunuch). The good news includes baptism (vv.35-36). “Down into the water” implies more than sprinkling.

 **Acts 16:33**—Extra passage (Philippian Jailer). Belief alone insufficient (16:31): must hear the word (16:32). Baptized in the middle of the night.

 **Acts 22:16** (The apostle Paul). Came to faith on the Damascus road. Fasted, prayed, alone three days (Acts 9:9). “What are you waiting for?...Wash your sins away...” (Urgency, cleansing).

Next we turn to the letters, which are all written to disciples—those who have already been baptized (past tense).

¹³ Be wise in studying conversion with a very religious person. We have already warned against the premature study of *Baptism*. Again, it is *essential* you study conversion only with people who are serious about their repentance. In Luke 3:7-9 we see John the Baptist turning away the self-righteous, insisting on “fruit keeping with repentance” before anyone was baptized by him. When studying baptism with a *religious person*, you may want to split the material between two sessions. First study conversion from the book of Acts (Acts 2, 8, 16, 22). If for some reason your friend does not accept that baptism is essential for salvation, and especially if he thinks he doesn’t need it himself, *do not* go on to the remaining passages. Do challenge him to consistently accept the Bible: the scriptures are clear. Study Naaman’s healing in 2 Kings 5—which yields some good parallels of the cleansing of baptism.

Question carefully about his repentance, asking specific question about change—especially evangelism. If there is complacency, study repentance again. Only proceed if you are confident there has been a change of heart. Next time you study, perhaps the next day, cover the remaining passages and talk about the implications.

¹⁴ Further baptism verses: Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:16, John 3:5, Acts 8:12-13, 9:18, 10:48, 16:15, 18:8, 19:5, 1 Corinthians 1:13-17, 10:2, 12:13, 15:29, Galatians 3:26-27, Ephesians 5:26, Colossians 2:12, Titus 3:5, Hebrews 6:2, 10:22.

 **Romans 6:3-4**—“Baptized into Christ” means baptized into (participating in) Jesus’ death. Buried with him through baptism (participation), raised (participation).¹⁵ Jesus’ death: blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7). “New life” = being born again

 **Colossians 2:12**—Extra passage. “Burial” (Romans 6:4)—baptism is immersion. Faith in power of God—to forgive us of our sins.

 **1 Peter 3:21**—Floodwater symbolizes baptism (not vice versa!) The Bible never calls baptism “symbolic.” It is not just a bath; the spiritual significance of baptism must be grasped. It is an *appeal* (RSV, Greek) to God for a clear conscience.¹⁶ It saves by the resurrection (Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12).

Finally we turn to the gospels, where Jesus spoke a few times of how people would be saved under the new covenant (future tense).

 **Matthew 28:19**—Extra passage. Baptism involves discipleship

 **Mark 16:16**—Extra passage. Belief + baptism = salvation

 **John 3:5**—Extra passage. Born again of water and spirit.

Conclusion

Recap what happens at baptism. Repentance must come first, then baptism. Analogy: must put film in (non-digital!) camera first, then take the shot. The result of obedience to God’s plan: forgiveness of sins (a right relationship with God) and the Spirit, which helps us to live with and for the Lord.¹⁷

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 shows that the gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Thus being baptized is sharing in the gospel.

¹⁶ The NIV rendition “appeal,” which reflects evangelical theology, is incorrect.

¹⁷ It may be helpful at this point to “de-mystify” the work of the Spirit. Explain how God does not have impossible expectations; his Spirit enables us to follow him.

In Ephesians 3:16 we see that the Spirit brings the power to live the Christian life. Indeed, God lives up to his promise to be with us in our mission to save the world (Matthew 28:20). Furthermore, in John 16:8 we see the role of the Spirit in convicting of sin. Nothing bizarre, however—remember, the Spirit works in our hearts through the word (John 6:63), transforming our personalities to be Christ-like (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). God wants us to grow spiritually all of the time. 2 Timothy 1:7 shows that the Spirit helps us in our evangelism.

False Doctrines about Conversion



Someone who needs to be aware that there are incorrect teachings on salvation

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: False Doctrines

Purpose: To show false teaching about conversion

Introduction

Begin the session with a summary of the New Testament teaching on conversion:

- Hear the message Romans 10:17, Acts 11:14
- Believe John 3:16, Acts 16:31
- Repent Luke 13:3, Acts 3:19
- Confess Jesus as Lord Romans 10:9, 1 Timothy 6:12
- Be immersed Acts 2:38, 1 Peter 3:21

Main Study

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| • Galatians 1:6-9 | False doctrine (teaching) is destructive. No one can alter the Gospel! |
| • Ezekiel 18:20 | “Original sin” is a false teaching. |
| • Hebrews 10:26 | “Once saved, always saved” is a false teaching. |
| • James 2:24 | Salvation by “faith alone” is a false teaching. |
| • Revelation 3:20 | Salvation through the “sinner’s prayer” is a false teaching. |

 **Galatians 1:6-10**—We need to take a stand, and not be “people-pleasers” (1:10). No one – religious leader, angel (see 1 Kings 13!), apostle – has the right to “update” the gospel!

 **Ezekiel 18:20**— The false doctrine of infant baptism is refuted by this passage (guilt is non-transferable). Those who advocate infant baptism hold that baptism remits “original sin.” Infant baptism is also refuted by Colossians 2:12 and Galatians 3:26-27 (personal, not proxy, faith is key in baptism). Moreover, it is impossible biblically to baptize babies because of the necessity of repentance. This false teaching was not officially endorsed by the Catholic Church until the early 5th century. The sister doctrine of “confirmation” is equally baseless.

 **James 2:24**—The false doctrine of salvation by “faith alone” is explicitly refuted by this verse. John 3:16 shows faith as the basis of our entire response to the gospel. This must not be taken out of context. Consider all relevant passages. Refuted also by John 8:30-32, Hebrews 5:9, Romans 1:5; 16:26.

 **Revelation 3:20**—The false doctrine of “praying Jesus into your heart,” or “accepting Christ,” of “receiving Christ,” was invented on the American frontier in the early 19th century! Examine this passage carefully, and its context! It is spoken to Christians, *already* saved (3:14, 22). “Be earnest and repent” means let Christ back into your life, not be converted initially. The passage mentions nothing about faith, confession, or baptism, as the readers are already converted.

 **John 1:12**—Extra passage. “Accepting” Christ is necessary for becoming a child of God (born again), but it is not sufficient. “Accepting” Christ biblically means accepting the words of Christ, receiving his message (12:48). Nowhere in the New Testament is there a record of anyone just saying a prayer and becoming a Christian!

 **Luke 23:39-43**—Extra passage. The false doctrine of the thief on the cross: “The thief wasn’t baptized, but Jesus said he would see him in heaven. What do you say to that?” Here’s what you say to that:

- **Mark 2:10**: Jesus had authority during his earthly ministry to forgive sins in command.
- **Romans 6:3-4**: Baptism is a participation in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection. The penitent thief could not have been baptized, as Jesus had not yet died.
- **Hebrews 9:17**: The new covenant (New Testament) was not yet in force, as Jesus hadn’t yet died under the old covenant.

Conclusion

 **Galatians 1:6-9** (once again)—A different gospel is no gospel. (See also 2 Corinthians 11:4). Anyone preaching or following a different gospel is eternally condemned. Doctrine does matter to the Lord! All these false teachings are condemned and condemning.

 **1 Corinthians 15:1-2**—Extra passage. We’re saved by the gospel, and must firmly hold to it as it was taught by the apostles. Otherwise we believe in vain.

The Church

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby



For someone who does not understand what the biblical church is or who needs to understand the importance of commitment to the church

Theme: The church as the body of Christ

Purpose: To encourage, inspire and teach God's plan for success as Christians

Introduction:

God's plan is total commitment to the church, which is the body of Christ.¹⁸

Main Study

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| • Colossians 1:18 | Jesus is the true head of the body, or church, ¹⁹ which is his body. |
| • 1 Corinthians 12:21 | We're members of this body. We need the church; the church needs us. |
| • Hebrews 10:24-25 | Will avoid "swerving" if spur others on and make all the meetings. |
| • Hebrews 3:12-13 | Daily encouragement prevents being hardened by sin. |
| • Acts 2:42 | Time capsule look at the early church. |

 **Colossians 1:18**—The church is not an institution, building, or denomination, but the body of Christ. Not an *organization*, but an *organism*. As there is only one head, so there is only one body.

 **Ephesians 2:19-20**—Extra passage. The church is not a *building*, but is compared to one because God dwells in his people, the church. It is also a family (1 Timothy 3:15). As with a natural family, you must be born into it. At that time God becomes your father, and every other Christian your brother or sister. The church is the kingdom of God, his people. The church must base itself on the New Testament (NT apostles and prophets [Ephesians 3:5, 4:11]—i.e. their teachings) in order to have a claim to legitimacy. It is through obedience to his word that we submit to Christ.

 **1 Corinthians 12:12-27**—Analogy: church = human body. According to 12:13, we are baptized into the church.²⁰ According to 12:14, the church needs us, and we need the church. The goal (12:25) is that there be no division in the body, rather equal concern and love for one another.

¹⁸ There is another approach to studying *the church* which is also very effective: tracing the following themes in the book of Acts: (1) Boldness, (2) Persecution, and (3) Growth. For each theme select verses from the book of Acts, proceed straight through for each of the 3 themes, and stress that these are characteristics of God's church.

¹⁹ Church = translation of *ekklesia*, which means assembly, or congregation. For example, in Acts 19 *ekklesia* is used three times of the illicit assembly of the enemies of the church! (19:32, 39, 40)!

²⁰ Moreover, we are baptized in the Spirit when we are baptized in water. The Spirit makes us members of the body of Christ.

 **Romans 12:5**—Extra passage. As in an earthly family, each member belongs to all the others. We are no longer our own! So surrender that independent spirit! We are interdependent, not independent (refusing direction) or dependent (refusing to take responsibility for our own decisions).

 **Hebrews 10:23-25**—To do well spiritually (“hold unswervingly”—analogy of car swerving all over the road) you need the church—this is God’s plan. Attend all the meetings of the body. Think in advance of how to meet the needs of other members of the body.

 **Hebrews 3:12-14**—Personal involvement in one another’s lives, lest sin cause anyone to forfeit salvation. We must persevere to the end (3:14). We are responsible for the spiritual welfare of our brothers and sisters in Christ. This entails openness (Ephesians 4:24), confession (James 5:16), counseling (Colossians 1:28), and daily encouragement (contact), as seen in many NT passages.

 **Acts 2:42-47**—Ask,

Q What are the characteristics of a New Testament church? (If people followed all these principles, what would the church be like?)

△ Devotion to God’s word, leading to a working knowledge of it.

△ Devotion to the fellowship.

△ Devotion to communion (Acts 20:7).

△ Devotion to prayer.

△ Sense of awe and excitement!

△ Generous sharing with one another, both of money and hospitality.

△ Growth of the body: not only spiritual, but also numerical. In the New Testament, this is the result of daily evangelism. (At this point you might trace the growth of the church in Acts if you have not already done so in the Discipleship study.)

Conclusion

Urge your friend to keep coming to as many of the meetings as possible. Stress that we will do poorly spiritually if we do not take advantage of the terrific opportunities to grow which God has given us in the church.

Intermediate Guard the Gospel



Jesus II: Jesus in Action



For those who
'claim' to know
Christ

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Who Jesus REALLY was

Purpose: To give someone a true biblical picture of Jesus

Introduction

Whereas the Basic Jesus study is for those without a lot of Christian background, this study especially meets the needs of those who claim to know Christ. It is a challenging study because it focuses on Jesus in action. When it comes to describing the manhood and character of Jesus Christ, there is a huge number of verses giving us a composite picture of the god-man in action.

As we will see, Jesus was a man of power! For first-timers hearing this study, there will be many surprises! (Note: the entire study comes from the gospel of Luke.)

Main Study

- Luke 24:4-7-11-12-13-23-2 (chapter sequence in study)
- *Agonidzesthai*
- Luke 23:34

 **Luke 24:19**—After his death, people remembered Jesus Christ as a powerful man, not a sissy.

In the following passages we get a mosaic picture of Jesus' life and his power.

 **Luke 4:1-4**—Power to resist temptation! Discuss several specific activities associated with “being a man.” Real men don’t follow the crowd at parties to show he can “hold his liquor”; real men go against the stream—when it’s flowing in the wrong direction.

 **Luke 4:28-30**—Authority! Taking a stand against prejudice, first message to hometown! They try to throw him off a cliff. If twenty or thirty men tried to throw you out the window, could you stop them? Clearly Jesus was no pushover! His authority was felt.

 **Luke 4:33-37**—Speaks sternly to demon. I would have fled in terror!

 **Luke 4:42**—Up early after busy night. *Packed*, not *wimpy* schedule!

 **Luke 7:14**—Against social convention when necessary. Imagine the guts needed to stop a funeral procession!

 **Luke 11:37-39, 44-46**—Strong talk to religious leaders—as guest at a dinner party! Have you ever talked to anyone that way?

 **Luke 12:49-51**—What drive he had! What a radical message!

 **Luke 13:24**—“Make every effort”: Greek *agonidzesthai*, contend for the prize (the root of *agonize* in English). To follow Jesus you have to really “go for it”!

 **Luke 23:34**—It takes strength to forgive. Any fool can harbor a grudge or take revenge, but it takes a real man to love and to forgive!

 **Luke 2:34-35**—People reacted strongly to Jesus, because he was such a strong character.

 Is this the Jesus you want to follow? If so, you are destined to become more and more like him. Watch out!

Sin II

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby



Anyone who needs to be convicted of sin to enable repentance

Theme: Expanded list of sins

Purpose: To teach what the Bible calls sin

Introduction

This study covers in greater detail than Sin I a number of issues that may arise in the course of a personal Bible study with a friend. Whether or all not these areas are relevant to the lives of your friends, or even to your own, you will want to gain a mastery of all the material in Sin II.

Main Study

- Matthew 12:32
- Colossians 3:5-9
- John 6:66
- 2 Timothy 3:2-5
- James 1:13
- Revelation 21:8

1. Alcohol

- There are cultural differences among countries. Drunkenness is the sin, not drinking *itself*. (Isaiah 5:11, Proverbs 23:29-35, Galatians 5:21.) In other words, though it is a dangerous subtonic, ethyl alcohol is not sinful *per se*.
- 1 Corinthians 8:9, Romans 14:21—Do not cause others to stumble.
- In the case of those who have been ensnared, it is probably wisest to counsel abstinence until the sin is under control.

2. Discos, Drugs, Gambling

- Titus 2:5, 8, 10—make the gospel attractive. Titus 2:7—be a good example.
- Discos, clubs, and the like: Ephesians 5:3—not even a hint! No one should get the wrong idea!
- Drugs: 1 Corinthians 6:20—taking care of the temple.
- Gambling: Matthew 25:21—responsibility with what we've been entrusted. As an institution, gambling hurts the poor, seniors, and minorities the most. Be careful.
- Proverbs 3:9—honoring God with our money.

3. Smoking – 10 reasons not to!

- It enslaves (Romans 6:12, 2 Peter 2:19).
- It is a bad example for others—(Luke 17:1-3a, Titus 2:6-10).
- The smoker knows it's wrong, and wouldn't recommend it (Romans 14:23).
- It hurts one's influence (1 Peter 2:12, 2 Peter 2:19): non-smokers, smokers trying to quit, religious people.
- It violates others' rights (Matthew 7:12, Philippians 2:4).
- It dishonors God with one's body (Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 6:20, 2 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:23).

- It takes years off your life (Ephesians 5:16).²¹
- It is a waste of God’s money—bad stewardship (Matthew 25:21).²²
- It’s a poor substitute for prayer as a means of dealing with anxiety (Philippians 4:6. 1 Peter 5:7).
- The Surgeon General has determined that smoking causes lung cancer, emphysema and heart disease. (No scripture, see any cigarette packet!)

4. The Occult

- Condemned in the O.T.:
 - a. Leviticus 19:31—Don’t consult the mediums (Isaiah 8:9).
 - b. 1 Samuel 28—Saul and the witch of Endor (1 Chronicles 10:13).
- Condemned in the N.T.:
 - a. Acts 19:19—Word spread as people gave up sorcery.
 - b. Galatians 5:12—Witchcraft will keep you from heaven.
 - c. 2 Thessalonians 2:9—Satan counterfeits miracles.
 - d. Revelation 21:8—A serious sin—Don’t play around!

5. Sexual Sin

- Living together (Genesis 2:24), even if not sexually immoral (Ephesians 5:3).
- Premarital sex (Genesis 34 [Shechem] and Genesis 29 [Jacob]) wrong under both covenants.
- Masturbation: address it. Importance of openness, both before and after conversion. Ask, where is the person’s mind while he or she is engaged in this act? (Matthew 5:28)
- Homosexuality: ask about it; don’t be embarrassed to discuss. It is dangerous! (1 Corinthians 6:9, Romans 1:26-27, Leviticus 18:22.)
- Other useful passages:

Genesis 39:9	Habakkuk 2:15	1 Corinthians 6:9, 18	Hebrews 13:4
Exodus 22:16	Matthew 5:28	2 Corinthians 12:21	2 Peter 2:14
Leviticus 18	Romans 6:19-21	1 Thessalonians 4:3	Revelation 2:21
Deuteronomy 22:20-22	Romans 13:14	1 Timothy 5:2	Revelation 21:27
Job 31:1	1 Corinthians 5:9-11	2 Timothy 2:22	Revelation 22:15

6. Materialism

- Proverbs 30:7-9—Seek the mean between poverty and riches.
- Ephesians 5:5—Not even a hint of greed!
- Gospel of Luke—This is one of his special emphases. (over 30 vv.)
- Recommended reading: *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, R. J. Sider.

Theological questions

²¹ The regular cigarette smoker runs a risk of death from lung cancer ten times greater than the nonsmoker does. Smoking more than a pack a day increases the risk of death from lung cancer twenty times greater than nonsmokers’ risk level. Only one out of twenty cases of lung cancer is cured. The death rate from all causes is 58% higher among smokers as compared to nonsmokers. A pack of cigarettes takes six hours off your life. Nonsmokers may 10 to 15 years longer than smokers. The death rate from heart attacks is three times greater with smokers than nonsmokers. Cigarette smokers between the ages of 45 and 64 miss 40% more work days than the nonsmokers (Credit: Rex Geissler).

²²It is reported, Americans consume approximately 591 billion cigarettes and spend \$12 billion for cigarettes annually. Think of what this money could be used for in terms of good constructive programs!

7. The Unforgivable Sin (Matthew 12:22-37)

- The healing was clearly of God.
- The hearts had become evil (vv. 33-37).
- The unforgivable sin is a (intractably) hardened heart.

8. Original Sin

- Psalm 51:5 is either literal or figurative. Compare with Psalms 22:9, 58:3, 71:6—and clearly it is figurative. Therefore Psalm 51 does not support the doctrine of original sin.
- Romans 5:12 (key verse)—if it teaches that all men are born *damned* because of Adam’s sin, then 5:18 must teach that all are automatically saved by Christ’s death. If so, where is there room for free will? It makes a lot more sense to say that on account of Adam’s sin all are *potentially* lost (that is, if and when they sin—“because all sinned”), and that through Christ’s sacrifice all are *potentially* saved.
- Ezekiel 18:20 shows guilt is not passed from father to son.
- Matthew 18:3, 19:14—children held up as a standard for disciples. Would he have done this if children were guilty and lost?

9. Prayers of Sinners—Are they heard?

- John 9:31, Psalm 66:18—sin can keep God from answering our prayers, but God will always help us to find if we are seeking. (Matthew 7:7, Acts 10:4)
- God hears our prayers (nothing escapes his notice [Hebrews 4:13], but obviously a Christian can approach God in a way that a non-Christian never could.
- Analogy: *servant vs. son*. The master of the house may grant a servant’s request, though he certainly has no obligation to, whereas he will freely grant the request of his son.

10. Disfellowship²³, excommunication

- Matthew 18:15-18—three steps in the case of someone refusing to be reconciled to another (quarrel, leadership problem, marital strife).
- Titus 3:10—two warnings, then disfellowship in the case of a divisive person.²⁴ See also Romans 16:17.
- 1 Corinthians 5:11—on the grounds of such sins as immorality, greed, idolatry, slander, drunkenness, swindling.
- Note: Idleness (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15) is not grounds for disfellowship, though it is grounds for a strong warning.

²³ Although something you ship is a shipment, there is actually no such word as “disfellowshipment.” The opposite of fellowship is disfellowship; the opposite of disfellowship is fellowship, not “fellowshipment.” (E.g., “Unfortunately there was a disfellowship at midweek service last week.”)

²⁴ A divisive person is by definition one who is dividing the body of Christ by beginning his or her own group, apart from the body. N.B.: Merely disagreeing with a leader does not constitute “divisiveness.” Nor does 1 Corinthians 1:10 forbid differences of opinion. See also Romans 14:1, 1 Corinthians 16:12, Acts 15:39).

Repentance II: Self-Righteousness



Someone unable to see themselves as a sinner

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Self-righteousness

Purpose: To help move someone who hasn't been moved by the Repentance study

Introduction

Sometimes a person is not moved by the Repentance study. Simply put, this person seems unable to see himself as a sinner. Repentance II tackles the self-righteousness that characterizes so many religious people these days. (Besides, it is a major theme in Luke's gospel!)

Main Study

- Luke 3-5-7-13-15-18 (sequence)
- Luke 5:32
- Luke 18:9



Luke 3:7-14—John the Baptist insisted on a serious change.

- Rebuked religious pride.
- Instructed people to repent of selfishness.
- Expected repentance to lead to fruit.



Luke 5:31-32

- In repentance we must see ourselves as lost.
- Jesus always preached against *self-righteousness*.



Luke 7:29-30

- We surrender our way to *God's way* in repentance and baptism.
- John the Baptist *held off* the Pharisees from being baptized—they had not repented.
- They had thus *rejected God's purpose* for themselves: an incredible waste of talent and influence.



Luke 7:36-51

- Pharisaical self-righteousness: “comparative religion”—comparing yourself to others.
- Gratitude, love, and commitment abound when we see ourselves as lost.



Luke 13:1-5 (may omit if already covered in the basic study)

-  *Repent or perish*. Any other option?
- It's either one or the other: people either *have* or *have not* repented.



Luke 13:6-9

- God is patient with us.
- Yet he expects change.

 **Luke 13:22-30**

- Make *every effort* (repent).
- Repentance is a matter of *salvation*.

 **Luke 15**—Three parables on repentance: skim over.

 **Luke 18:9-14**

-  Are you confident of your salvation? Are you a Pharisee?
-  Keeping track of your good deeds?
- Self-righteousness will condemn us!

Obedience



Religious person

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Necessity of Obedience to God's Word

Purpose: To counteract watered-down obedience and 'easy believism'

Introduction

This is an excellent study for a religious person, and perhaps even as a first unit. What an enormous theme in both testaments! Much of the religious world waters down obedience, preferring "easy believism"—talk about "grace," "faith alone," "judgmentalism," and "acceptance." The Obedience study sets the record straight.

Main Study

- Matthew 7:21-23
- John 14:24
- 1 John 2:3-6

Old Testament teaching—Let's examine three characters under the old covenant.

Saul—1 Samuel 15 (selected)

- **15:1-3:** Saul is asked to obey a specific command.
- **15:7-9:** Saul only *partly* obeys the command.
- **15:12-31:** He puts up quite a fight before admitting he has sinned. Rationalizations!
- Conclusions:
 - a. Partial obedience is disobedience!
 - b. Selective obedience is disobedience!
 - c. It's possible to be completely deceived about whether or not we have been obedient.

Uzzah—2 Samuel 6:1-7

- God views disobeying his word as serious!
- Sincerity does not remove guilt (1 Corinthians 4:4).



Does this sound unfair? David thought so too, until he learned what God's word said (See 1 Chronicles 15:12-15).

Naaman—2 Kings 5:1-15

- 5:10: God's word is plain and straightforward.
- 5:11: Beware an emotional reaction to God's word.
- 5:11: Surrender preconceived ideas
- 5:12: No, there are *not* any alternatives to doing what God says.
- 5:13: We need friends to help us to be objective and reason things out
- 5:14: God blesses obedience.
- 5:14: *Approximate* obedience is insufficient (five dips in Jordan, or seven dips in Pharpar).
- 5:15: We learn to appreciate and reverence God once we actually begin to obey him.

New Testament teaching: Let's see what Jesus and his followers taught about obedience.

Matthew 7:21-23

- These people were religious, active and possibly sincere—but lost.
- Only those who obey God will make it to heaven.
- It's possible to believe that you have a saved relationship with God yet not be saved at all.

John 14:15, 23-24

- Obedience isn't just part of the old law; Jesus and the New Testament discuss obedience again and again.
- Love and obedience are virtually equivalent.

1 John 2:3-6

- 2:3: You can be sure of your salvation: if you're living as an obedient disciple of Jesus.
- 2:4: If you claim you know him but are disobedient, you are a liar.
- 2:6: We must follow Jesus' lifestyle! Obedience is a central part of Christianity.

Conclusion

As we see, obedience was not rendered optional by the Cross. It has always been crucial for a true follower of God.

Q What has been keeping you from obeying?

The Resurrection

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby



Someone open to believing, but just needs a little 'evidence'

Theme: Resurrection evidences

Purpose: To provide a rational basis for believing in the resurrection

Introduction

This study is useful for bringing people to faith who are open to believing but just need a little “evidence.” The Resurrection receives a considerable amount of attention in the gospels and is a major theme in the sermons of Acts.²⁵

Main Study

- 1 Corinthians 15:19
- 1 Corinthians 15:17
- 1 Corinthians 15:6
- Flow chart (be able to reproduce it)
- Matthew 28:13
- Acts 17:31
- Acts 1:3

An historical event

Opening passage: 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, 11-19, 32. The Resurrection is *crucial* to the entire Christian message. It is “of first importance,” as Paul says. Then he insists that Christ *appeared* to many people. He provided “many convincing proofs” (Acts 1:3). As Paul insists, Christianity is an historical religion, based on historical events. The Resurrection is a real historical event, just like the Second World War or the building of the Pyramids. The whole Christian faith stands or falls on this single issue. If Christ was not raised:

- Preaching is useless.
- Christians are liars.
- Christian faith is useless.
- Our sins are still unforgiven.
- The dead have no hope of salvation.
- Christians are the most pathetic men in the world.
- We might as well seek pleasure, since life is so short.

Setting the scene

- Read one of the gospel accounts of the resurrection of Jesus (*Matthew 27:26-28, Mark 15:15-16:14, Luke 22: 63-65, 23:26-24:12, John 19:1-20:28*).
- Explain that the claims of Jesus stand or fall on the Resurrection.

²⁵ There have been many books written on the resurrection, such as Frank Morison’s classic *Who Moved the Stone?* and Josh McDowell’s *The Resurrection Factor*. If you would like more material but do not have time to read an entire book, you may enjoy chapter 9 (“Miracles and the Resurrection”) of my book *True and Reasonable, Revised Edition* (Woburn, Mass.: Discipleship Publications International, 1999).

- If Jesus *didn't* rise from the dead, then what *did* happen?

No lazy thinking—You can't just say, "I don't believe it!" and fold your arms. If you deny the resurrection, you must believe that:

- Jesus was buried, and stayed buried,
- Jesus never actually died, or
- His body was removed from the tomb.

Let's see if any of these assumptions hold water:

"Jesus was buried: Jesus stayed buried."—If you think this, you also think that

- They looked in the wrong tomb on Sunday morning, and
- hallucinated the risen Christ.

Taking these one at a time...

"Wrong Tomb!"—Do you really believe that:

- None of the disciples could remember where Jesus had been buried, not even Joseph of Arimathea (he owned the tomb and put Jesus in it himself, by the way).
- The Romans guarded an empty hole?
- Yes, that's what you're claiming!

"Holy Hallucinations"—Their emotions overcame them? Some contradictions in your claim:

- John 20:19 The disciples were not even expecting the resurrection. Thirsty men see water: Yes. Dejected disciples see Jesus: No.
- Acts 1:3, John 20:35 The disciples were skeptical, and needed "many convincing proofs". No hysteria here.
- Acts 2:31 They knew the corpse was the issue. If Jesus' body (and surely it is around *somewhere*) had been shown them, the disciples would have gone back to the fish trade.
- 1 Corinthians 15:6 The "hallucination" appeared to more than 500 people at once?

It is as easy as this to reject conclusively the notion of the "wrong tomb". The actual tomb of Jesus was definitely empty.

"Jesus was just unconscious" (Swoon Theory)—Yes, he felt refreshed after a couple of days in that nice cool quiet tomb. He didn't die. *Really?* Well then, logic demands that:

- Jesus *lied* to his disciples. He tricked them into believing he rose from the dead.
- Jesus survived all this: exhaustion, clubbing, torture, flogging, crown of thorns, beating (by which time he couldn't lift his cross), and crucifixion: around six hours suspended by nails through his wrists and feet, bleeding. Finally, a spear was plunged into his chest, right to the heart. Wrapped in linen and 75 pounds of preservative ointments, he lay in chill conditions for 36 hours. *Would you like to try?*
- John 19:32—The same executioners who broke the legs of the thieves *mistook* Jesus for dead. and the spear-thrust to the heart was a little too soft?
- When Jesus revived, he was strong enough to get up, unwrap himself, roll away the large stone, overpower the guard, walk several miles on pierced feet, and be calm and casual in front of his disciples.

- (Are you prepared to stand up for these claims? If Jesus didn't die, you *must*. Let's face it: Jesus received enough punishment to kill him several times over. Indeed, *Jesus was dead on the cross.*)
- Someone removed the corpse—The disciples did it, or someone else beat them to it. In other words, you think that:
 - a. The disciples were deceitful, or
 - b. “Someone else” had both the motive and the means to make off with the corpse.

How likely are these propositions?

- Anxious Apostles: Rather than lose face, the disciples staged the whole thing (Matthew 28:11-15). In other words:
 - a. The apostles lied, going against the teaching of their master.
 - b. They changed from cowards (John 20:19) to commandos!
 - c. Acts 4:20—They refused to come clean, even when they were threatened and later beaten, and most of them put to death for their deception.

No, the story just doesn't add up. The disciples did not move Jesus' body. Then who?... “All kinds of people (non-apostles) might have done it,” you claim? Hold on just a minute. If the body was stolen, then the disciples either lied or hallucinated, and we've already ruled-out those possibilities! We could stop here, but instead let's point the accusing finger at some suspects.

- Guilty gardener: *Motive*: if he was *against* the disciples, he's have given the corpse to the Jews. If he'd been for them, he would have ended their needless persecution. Either way, no motive for a theft. *Means*: He overcame sword and shield with spade and pruning-scissors!
- Thoughtless thieves: *Motive*: Ah! Must be something very valuable in there for a guard to be posted. Even so, is anything worth breaking Pilate's seal and risking punishment? *Means*: Assume they killed Joe Soldier. When disappointed by their find, would they, could they have eagerly stolen 220 lbs. (100kg) including ointments—of a dead man?
- Rebellious Romans: Christianity turned Jerusalem and the Roman World upside-down! Can you think of any reason why the authorities would want to encourage civil disorder?
- Jealous Jews: Again, what motive would there be? The Jews were the last ones on earth who wanted to be the people to believe the Christians' “lie.” If they had taken the body, they would have been the first to produce it.
- Sorcerous saucers: (Yes, people have claimed this!) Kind creatures “beamed him up” (Scottie). Let's agree that science fiction is exactly that!
- Ravenous worms: Do you get the feeling that we're running out of convincing ideas? Did worms eat the body over a short weekend?

Conclusion: Jesus Rose from the Dead!

In the light of all the evidence, doesn't it take *more* faith *not* to believe in the Resurrection than to accept it as true? Truly, Jesus rose from the dead! This is the only explanation that makes sense of all the facts, including Jesus' repeated prediction that he would rise on the third day. It is also the best explanation for the incredible transformation in the lives of the early disciples, as well as in the lives of his disciples today.

If the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead actually took place, then we have “good news and bad news.” The good news is, when Jesus returns, you too will be resurrected and have a

chance to live eternally with God.²⁶ The “bad news” is, you have to change. See Acts 17:30-31. The resurrection means we are under the obligation to repent – each and every one of us.

²⁶ This is better news than you may realize. When Jesus returns, we will be resurrected. Without our “resurrection body” (see 1 Corinthians 15) we cannot be taken up to heaven! See how vital the resurrection is? By the way, I believe the order of events biblically, beginning with our own exit from the world of the living, is: death—paradise—resurrection—judgment—heaven. Simply put, No resurrection, no heaven!

Grace

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Understanding Grace

Purpose: To have a balanced understanding of grace



Those with twisted understanding of grace or those having difficulty letting the past go

Introduction

A good companion unit to the Obedience study, Grace will be especially helpful for (a) religious people with a twisted understanding of grace, (b) all having difficulty forgiving themselves or letting the past go, and (c) followers of Christ who are flagging in their strength.

The apostle Paul appreciated God's grace perhaps more than any other man of his day, and he tells us that's why he accomplished so much (1 Corinthians 15:10). Since it's essential for us to understand the concept of grace and to teach it clearly, we choose Paul for a balanced understanding of grace.

Main Study

- Ephesians 2:8
- Titus 2:11
- 1 Corinthians 15:10
- G-R-A-C-E (learn acronym)



Ephesians 2:1-10

- We are dead to God in our sins. When we live the way the world wants us to, or follow our own desires, we become objects of wrath.
- Because of grace (God's love for us), we can be saved. We don't deserve it, but it's free for us as a gift if we accept it.
- It's through our faith in Christ that we're saved.
- God's love motivates us to do good works.



Romans 5:6-11

- Definition of grace: God loving us enough to allow Christ to die for our sins when we were his enemies. Acronym: God's Riches at Christ's Expense.
- We were lost sinners deserving only punishment, but he sent Christ to suffer in our place.
- Through Jesus' blood we are saved from God's wrath. (Blood must be shed for forgiveness—Hebrews 9:22, 28).



Titus 2:11-14

- Grace means salvation for us.
- God's love leads us to purify ourselves from sin; we won't take advantage of God's grace. (See Hebrews 10:26.)
- Since grace overcomes passion, it isn't a license for sin (Jude 4). Grace isn't cheap—it cost Jesus his life.



1 Corinthians 1:18-25

- The cross is God's powerful solution for sin.
- Without an understanding of God's love, the message of the cross will be foolishness to us.

 **2 Corinthians 5:14-21**

- Christ's love demands a response! (See 1 Corinthians 15:9-10.)
- Jesus bore our sins to the extent that he became sin, or a sin offering.
- God's love motivates us to live for him, and to speak for him.

Conclusion

 **1 Corinthians 15:9-10**

- Though it is not true that we are saved by working hard, it is true that those most affected by God's grace are God's hardest workers!

Faith

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby



Atheist tempted to dismiss God due to hypocrisy seen in churchgoers

Theme: Faith

Purpose: To comfort the disturbed and to disturb the comfortable

Introduction

Like Obedience and Grace, the Faith study is intended “to comfort the disturbed and to disturb the comfortable.” It is also beneficial when studying with an atheist who is tempted to dismiss God and religion because of the “practical atheism” he has seen in churchgoers.

Main Study

- Practical atheism
- Psalm 14:1
- Hebrews 11:1
- Hebrews 11:6
- James 2:22
- James 2:24
- Martin Luther



Psalm 14:1

- Faith isn't just an option, it's an attitude of the heart.
- You can be religious and yet still be a *practical* atheist. (Do you live as though there's a God?)



Hebrews 11:1

- Faith isn't just “believing in something you know isn't true anyway”!
- It's not just a leap into the dark. (It's actually a leap into the light!)
- It is spiritual *certainty*.



Hebrews 11:6

- It is *impossible* to please God without faith.
- We can and must believe that God exists.
- He is there and we will find him if we earnestly seek him.



James 2:14-26

- Faith without actions is useless.
- Striving to be righteous: deal with sin.
- Striving to have a relationship with God: prayer, Bible study.
- Striving to help others: church, evangelism, caring for the needy.
- Faith is complete only when it is *active* faith.
- Abraham's faith and actions worked together. In Genesis 22, God knew Abraham had true faith only at the moment of obedience (22:12).
- No one is justified by faith without deeds (James 2:24).
- Note: Because of his belief in “justification by faith alone” and “once saved, always saved,” Luther (1500s) rejected this passage and many like it.

Discipleship II: Excuses and Fear



For timid disciples
and prospective
disciples

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Overcoming timidity

Purpose: To remove excuses and inspire one to overcome fears

Introduction

An excellent follow-on to the basic Discipleship study, this unit removes excuses and inspires prospective disciples to face and overcome their fears. The study centers on five great men of God and how the Lord helped them to become powerful men of God. The study is especially helpful for people who are timid by nature.

Main Study

- Exodus 4:13
- Judges 6:15
- Jeremiah 1:6
- Isaiah 6:8
- Luke 5:10b



Moses—Exodus 3-4

- 3:10-12: feeling of insignificance
 - a. Moses is given an important mission.
 - b. Moses thinks God has got the wrong guy!
 - c. God is *with us* in our evangelism.
- 3:13: lack of knowledge
- 4:1: fear of rejection
- 4:10-12: lack of eloquence
- 4:13-14: reluctance to obey
 - a. This is the real issue!
 - b. God is angry with our excuse-making!

(Moses, already eighty years old, goes on to become a bold leader in God's kingdom!)



Gideon—Judges 6:11-16

- 6:11: fearful (threshing in the winepress at a time when God needed men of courage to rise up).
- 6:12: "Mighty warrior": God sees his potential.
- 6:14: "Go in the strength that you have": don't worry, just do your best.
- 6:15: Gideon claims he's too insignificant and unimpressive to follow and obey God.
- 6:16: God will be with you!

(Gideon repents of his fear and excuses and rescues his nation from the enemy—powerfully and bravely!)

Jeremiah—Jeremiah 1:4-8

- 1:5: God has a mission for our lives, too.
- 1:6: Excuse of youth (see 1 Timothy 4:12).
- 1:8: God rejects Jeremiah's excuse
 - a. God commands us not to fear.
 - b. God is with us! (God plus one is a majority!)

(Jeremiah spreads the word for forty years, even though most people reject him, and becomes one of the greatest prophets of all time!)

Isaiah—Isaiah 6:1-8

- 1:1: He has an awesome vision of the awesome God!
- 1:5: "Woe to me!"
 - a. Isaiah sees God in all his glory.
 - b. He realizes his own lostness.
 - c. He realizes the lostness of everyone else.
- 1:6-7: Experiencing God's forgiveness transforms our lives.
- 1:8: Then and only then are we ready to go and spread God's word.

(Isaiah too goes on to have a tremendous impact on his generation!)

Peter—Luke 5:4-11

- 5:5: Peter is willing to take Jesus at his word.
- 5:6: Incredible result—God's word is powerful!
- 5:8: Peter realizes who he's dealing with; knee-deep in fish he comes to Jesus, realizing his own sinfulness.
- 5:10: Jesus encourages Peter to evangelize.
 - a. He commands him not to fear.
 - b. "Catching men"—evangelism.
 - c. Jesus assures him that he "will" be effective.
- 5:11: We too must pull our fears and excuses up on the shore, and actively obey Jesus Christ!

(Peter ultimately confronts his fears and fulfills Jesus' prophecy of martyrdom (John 21:18-19).)

Additional characters: King Saul, Queen Esther, Ezekiel....

Conclusion

Peter and the others did great things for God because they gave up their excuses and stepped out on faith, despite their fears. You can do the same! God will change you, be with you, and enable you to do great things for him.

Baptism II

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby



Anyone confused by baptism or needing more conviction about baptism

Theme: Baptism

Purpose: To provide many illustrations and reasons for baptism

Introduction

For the basic study, see Chapter 11. This unit is a twenty-part mini-reference work, and will supply you with a plethora of angles on, illustrations of, and reasons for baptism!²⁷ You will probably have more proofs than you'll need in a lifetime!

Main Study

- 2 Kings 5:1-15
- Hebrews 11:30
- Mark 16:16
- Galatians 3:26-27
- John 3:5
- “Life line”
- Justin Martyr
- Shepherd of Hermas
- *Baptidzo*

1. The Life-Line

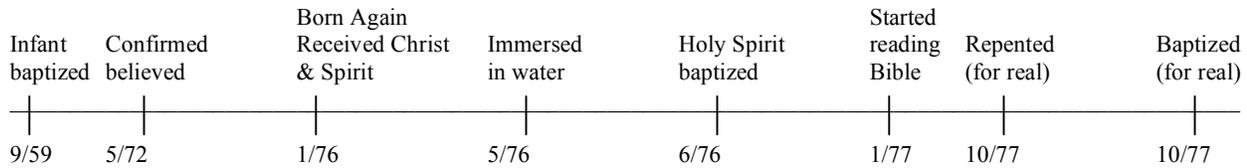
You can make a “life-line” just before the conversion study, or at least find out the facts ahead of time (when your friend thinks he became a Christian, whether he was baptized, whether he was “saved” before baptism, etc.) Include such items as when he was:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>i. converted</i> | <i>viii. became a Christian</i> |
| <i>ii. received Christ</i> | <i>ix. born again</i> |
| <i>iii. came to believe</i> | <i>x. repented</i> |
| <i>iv. forgiven of sins</i> | <i>xi. confirmed</i> |
| <i>v. joined church</i> | <i>xii. immersed</i> |
| <i>vi. infant baptized</i> | <i>xiii. “Holy Spirit” baptized</i> |
| <i>vii. received Spirit</i> | <i>xiv. truly saved</i> |

Even though many of these items may appear redundant, it is amazing what people will say to you, sometimes placing them all at separate points in time! Draw a time line. Have the person enter the relevant event/experiences, with dates. Then draw your own lifeline. Show that belief and repentance came before your conversion, and that all God’s blessings came at the point of baptism (nos. i, ii, iv, v, vii, viii, ix, xii, xiii, xiv).

Here is a sample life-line, in this case my own (D.J.). The life-line becomes factual only in 1977.

²⁷ (This unit was designed by Douglas Arthur in London, around 1984. Not the Latin, Greek, and Syriac sections – that was put in by me, in 1986.)



The life-line is useful because sooner or later you will need to find out how the religious person views his “conversion.” This will prevent him from “revising” his story in light of the new information he will have learned through your study of conversion.

2. Paul’s conversion

Paul believed (Acts 22:10), confessed (22:10), fasted (9:9) and prayed (9:11) for three days (9:9) obeyed (22:10-11) and repented, and still was not a saved man. He was *not* saved on the Damascus road, contrary to the teaching of virtually all denominations.

3. “Three lists”

Take a piece of paper and divide it into three columns. Write at the heads the columns:
 Infant baptism “Optional” believer’s baptism “Essential” baptism

Now go through the conversions in Acts and place each in the appropriate column (or two, if more than one view seems tenable from the single passage). The results are striking, with the vast majority of passages falling into the third category. This is not to imply that in the N.T. babies were baptized or baptism was optional – only to show how unlikely the two incorrect interpretations are.

4. Urgency of baptism

- Acts 16:33—the middle of the night!
- Acts 22:16—“*what are you waiting for?*”
- Acts 8:38—“Stop the chariot!”

So why do so many denominations today leave baptism to a convenient time (once a month, annually at Easter, etc)? Because it isn’t seen as essential to salvation.

5. Joy

Study the following verses: Acts 2:46, 8:39, 16:34. Joy follows the moment of baptism. Why? Because that’s when people were forgiven of their sins.

6. “Get up!”

- Acts 22:16—Paul had been fasting/thinking/praying for several days, but now he was asked to do something. The blessing depends on action!
- 2 Kings 5:1-14—Parallel: Naaman had been to see the prophet, but wasn’t cleansed from his leprosy until he did as Elisha instructed.

7. Is the power “in the water”?

No, but it is God’s power (Colossians 2:12), and that power becomes available—when? Only when we obey. (The term “baptismal regeneration” is the belief that the faith of the one being baptized is irrelevant, that the true power is “in the water.” This, of course, is a false teaching! So if someone asks you, “Do you believe in baptismal regeneration,” the correct answer, paradoxically, is “No.”)

8. Repentance first!

It is best not to study baptism with someone who hasn't yet repented (i.e., coming to the services, convinced the Bible is God's Word, beginning to share his or her faith, reading the scriptures on his own, without prodding). There are a few exceptions:

- Someone who is *not religious*, who has no religious preconceptions and no religious friends who might "poison" him (Acts 14:2). In Northern Europe, for example, where faith in God is rare and even going to church is seen as a bit unusual, studying baptism earlier on is fairly innocuous. In the United States, on the other hand, where "churchianity" is rampant, the premature study of baptism only leads to strife, as baptism becomes "the issue"—when it is not!
- *Religious people* who are highly committed, reasonably knowledgeable, and evangelistic. (We are *not* talking about someone only familiar with the Bible, sharing his faith now and again, even if he attends church regularly.) The Apollos type (Acts 18:24ff) is a rare exception among religious people.

Again, it is best not to study baptism with those who haven't repented because that if the person does not become a Christian, he/she goes away "armed" with (wrongly understood) information about your beliefs. The knowledge the person has about conversion is essentially useless, and may well be used to slander you, especially in the case of a religious person (Psalm 41:6). It is a naïve move to rush into discussing baptism prematurely, thinking that somehow the "plan of salvation" alone will change someone's heart.²⁸

9) "But aren't we saved by faith?"

Yes, we are, but *when* are we saved by our faith? Before that faith manifests itself into action, or after? Excellent example: Hebrews 11:30. The walls of Jericho fell "by faith," but the writer is showing us that *action* was involved. This was a matter of obedience. So it is with baptism.

10. "Isn't baptism a work?"

- Well, it is something you *do* (so is repenting, believing [John 6:29], etc.), but not in the sense of a work by which you obligate God to save you (as spoken of in Romans 4:4).
- Some say we cannot be saved by a *physical* act. Yet even the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was a physical act.
- Baptism is simply redeeming a coupon, collecting that which God has freely promised anyway. That fact that salvation is conditional on our response in no sense detracts from God's generosity, or from his grace.

11. But don't we believe into Christ?

No! In fact, the "into" Christ terminology is only in connection with baptism (Romans 6:3, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:26). Non-Christians are outside of Christ. Christians are in Christ. To get *into* a right relationship with God, you must be baptized.

12. "But I was born again before I was baptized!"

Romans 6:4—the new life begins in baptism. To claim that the new life begins *before* baptism (i.e., that we are born again first) is to say that the new creation is put to death! Many groups implicitly teach that we put to death the born-again self, since baptism is a death as well as a birth.

²⁸ See Ezekiel 43:10-11 for an insight on how to study the Bible with people.

13. Use “baptism verses”

Many, alarmed when studying out what the Bible says about baptism, prefer to turn to verses on *other* topics (faith, God’s love, etc)—anything rather than baptism! We must help people to be logical. When we study sin, we do not turn to the genealogies of Chronicles to find out what is right and wrong. We turn to passages about sin! When we study baptism, let’s look at the verses on baptism. So often people try to sidestep the issue by getting off on a tangent.

14. Difficult verse: Luke 23:43

Three points are to be made concerning the thief on the cross:

- Mark 2:10—Jesus had the authority during his earthly ministry to forgive sins on command.
- Romans 6:3-4—baptism is a participation in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection. The penitent thief could not have been baptized into Jesus’ death, since Jesus has not yet died.
- Hebrews 9:17—the New Covenant (New Testament) was not yet in force, as Jesus had not yet died. The thief died under the Old Covenant.

15. Difficult verse: Romans 10:9-10, 13

This passage is a favorite out-of-context proof of salvation by faith alone. Several things should be noted:

- The Romans do not need to be told how to be saved. They are already saved. Romans 6 specifies the time of their rebirth, in baptism.
- *Everyone* who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. In context (Romans 10), “everyone” means Jew and Gentile alike.
- Calling on the name of the Lord is done in baptism (see Acts 22:16). The passage does not mention baptism, but that does not mean that baptism is somehow optional.
- Paul’s argument is that faith/confession, which makes baptism powerful—(Colossians 2:12, Galatians 3:26-27) is something anyone can do, whether or not he is circumcised. We are not saved by works under the new covenant—nor were the people saved by works (law) under the old (Deuteronomy 30).
- Paul is discouraging Judaizing tendencies. We must examine Romans 10 in context! This is not written to non-Christians, telling them how to be saved, but to Jewish and Gentile Christians, urging them to accept one another in Christ.

16. Difficult verse: Mark 16:6

Belief plus baptism equals salvation. But why does it not also say “non-belief plus non-baptism equals non-salvation”? Illustration: *He who eats his food and digests it will live, but whoever does not eat will die.* Similarly, baptism follows logically from belief. Furthermore, John 3:18 says that whoever does not believe is condemned *already!* Thus there was no need for Jesus to say “but whoever does not believe and is not baptized...”

17. Difficult verse: John 3:16

It is incredible to think that this verse is often cited as proof that one does not need to be baptized in order to be saved! True, it does not mention baptism. Nor does Mark 16:16 mention repentance. Nor does Acts 2:38 mention faith. Obviously, we have to put all the pieces together, not playing games, picking or choosing the passages that best suit our purposes! A response to the John 3:16 line of reasoning has been suggested:

Christian: “Do you think you have to repent to be saved?”

Non-Christian: “Sure.”

Christian: "I disagree. I don't think you do have to repent."

Non-Christian: "Of course you do. What makes you say that?"

Christian: "Well, John 3:16 doesn't say anything about repentance."

Non-Christian: "Yes, but there are lots of *other* passages that make it perfectly clear that you have to repent to be saved."

Christian: "My point exactly!"

18. Linguistic arguments

- Insights from the Greek

- a. *Cheo* = *pour*. Never used in the N.T. in connection with baptism.

- b. *Hrantidzo* = *sprinkle*. Never used in the N.T. in connection with baptism. O.T. sprinkling with blood = background (sanctification).

- c. *Hydraino* = *apply water*. Never used in the N.T. in connection with water baptism—although it would be the ideal word, since it doesn't specify "mode."

- d. *Baptidzo* = *immerse*. This word is the one *always* used for N.T. baptism.

- Insights from the Syriac

Syriac is one of the languages into which the original Greek New Testament was translated. In the Syriac translation, which probably dates from the second century, *hamad* = *baptize*. (Its derivative, *mamaditho*, appears in John 5:4 and 9:7, and means *pool*.) In secular Syrian authors, *mamaditho* means a *bath* or *baptistery*. Clearly *immersion* is the action of the verb *hamad*, and not sprinkling or affusion.

- Insights from the Latin

Although not the original language of the N.T., Latin is another of the early versions. Often it is said that the King James translators (1605-1611) chose to *transliterate* the word *baptidzo* instead of to *translate* it, in order to avoid embarrassing the king. In fact, transliteration of the word dates back at least as early as the fifth century. The Latin Vulgate translation (completed in 405 AD) of Acts 2:38 reads:

Petrus vero ad illos: Paenitentiam, inquit, agite, et baptizetur unusquisque vestrum in nomine Iesu Christi... (Peter replied to them, "Do penance, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ...")

The Catholic church adopted *baptidzo* into their language (Latin) as *baptizo*. Why? Infant baptism appears to have been first practiced in the second century, although it was rare until the fifth century. By then it was widespread, special thanks to Augustine. In light of this, it is hardly surprising that the Latin church chose to create a new word, *baptizo*, instead of using the normal Latin verb *immergere* (to immerse).

19. Arguments from the Patristic Literature

References to baptism in the patristic literature (early church "fathers") abound! It is extremely clear from a survey of the early writings that for the first few centuries everyone was in agreement baptism was *for the forgiveness of sins*, meant *immersion*, and was the only way to become a Christian. Consider the following examples:

- Justin, *Apology*, 1, 61, c.150-165 AD: "As many as are *persuaded* and *believe* that the things are true which are taught by us... and decide to live *accordingly*, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the *remission of their past sins*, and we pray and fast with them. Then they are brought by us where there is *water*, and are *born again*..."
- Hermas, *Shepherd*, IV. iii. i, c.140-150 AD: "...when we went *down into the water* and received remission of our former *sins*."

- Irenaeus, *Dem. 3.41f, haer. 5.11.2*, c. 180-200 AD: “We have received *baptism for the remission of sins*... And this baptism is the seal of eternal life and the *new birth* unto God...”
- Creed of the Council of Nicaea, fourth century: “...I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins...”

Naturally, such evidences from early church history do not stand on an equal level of authority with the Bible, but they do shed light on the understanding of early Christians of what was involved in becoming a Christian. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, baptism in New Testament times was *immersion for salvation*—at least for the first few centuries!

20. Other assorted proofs

- Combination proofs:
 - a. Acts 2:41 + 2:47
 - b. Galatians 3:26-27 + 4:6
 - c. Ephesians 4:5+ 5:26
 - d. 1 Peter 1:3, 23 + 3:21
 - e. Ephesians 5:26 + 1 Peter 1:23 (James 1:18)
- Passages showing death and resurrection in Baptism:

Romans 6:2-7	1 Corinthians 1:13-17
Galatians 2:20, 5:24, 6:14	Colossians 1:13, 22, 2:20, 3:1, 3, 5
- Other verses:

1 Corinthians 6:11, 12:13	Titus 3:5 (John 3:5)	Hebrews 6:2, 10:22
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The Holy Spirit I

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby



Anyone with basic questions about the Holy Spirit

Theme: Holy Spirit

Purpose: Simple study on the actions of the Holy Spirit

Introduction

Since the Spirit is received at baptism, at least a few verses on the Spirit ought to be covered shortly after, or in connection with, the Baptism unit.

Main Study

- Acts 5:32
- Acts 8:18
- Romans 1:11
- Romans 8:9
- 2 Corinthians 12:12
- 2 Timothy 1:7

1. Indwelling

- Received at baptism (Acts 2:38, Acts 5:32, Galatians 3:26-27, 4:6).
 - a. Hence necessary for salvation (Romans 8:9, John 3:5, Titus 3:5).
 - b. Also described as baptism in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13).²⁹
- Helps us be transformed.
 - a. The Spirit changes us to become more and more like Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18).
 - b. The Spirit makes us fishers of men (2 Timothy 1:7).
 - Helps us to overcome our timidity.
 - Gives us power to live dynamic life.
 - Helps us to focus on others more than on ourselves, and so become more loving people.
 - Increases our self-discipline—Every area of our lives comes under the Lordship of Jesus.

2. Miraculous Gifts of the Holy Spirit

- Passed on by apostolic laying on of hands (Acts 6:6, 6:8, 8:6, 8:18, Romans 1:11, 2 Timothy 1:6, etc).
- When the generation after the apostles died, so did the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. There was no one around to transmit them.
 - b. Second century church history denies the presence of the miraculous gifts.
 - c. The supernatural gifts were a confirmation of the message (Acts 14:3, Hebrews 2:3-4, Mark 16:20), but miracles only confirmed the *spoken* word of God, never the *written* word. Once the N.T. was completed, therefore, there was no need for them any longer.

²⁹ For more on this, see chapter 24 of *The Spirit* (Woburn, Mass.: Discipleship Publications International, 1998), which deals with this intriguing subject. Simply stated, my view is that, just as the new birth involves water and Spirit (John 3:5, Titus 3:5), so baptism is immersion in water (Acts 8:36) and Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13).

- d. Signs, wonders, and miracles were marks of the apostles (2 Corinthians 12:12). Once the apostles completed their work and laid the foundation for the church (Ephesians 2:19-20), the supernatural apostolic ministry was no longer needed.
- e. Conclusion: there are no supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit today.

3. Are miracles impossible today?

- God still answers prayer (e.g. James 5:16), so you can't say that God never does anything fantastic anymore.
- But many "miracles" are of the devil (2 Thessalonians 2:9, Deuteronomy 13:1, Matthew 24:24, Matthew 7:22), or psychosomatic. This is particularly true of the Neo-Pentecostalism.
- Remember, apparently miraculous activity doesn't prove one's salvation (Matthew 7:22, 1 Samuel 19:18, etc).

Conclusion

The Advanced Holy Spirit study in the following pages covers ten difficult questions about the Holy Spirit.

**Advanced Guard the
Gospel Study**



The Word II

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby



For anyone who has questions about the validity of the Bible

Theme: Trustworthiness of the Bible

Purpose: To answer various questions about the Bible

Introduction

The *Advanced* Word Study (The Word II) will equip you to answer a number of questions commonly arising about the trustworthiness of the Bible. Accordingly, a question and answer format has been followed for this chapter.

Main Study

- Proverbs 30:6
- Hosea 4:6
- Matthew 22:29
- John 7:17
- Colossians 2:8
- Psalm 119
- Dead Sea Scrolls

Q Do we know anything about Christ or Christianity apart from what the Bible tells us?

- Sources: Tacitus, Suetonius, Thallus, Pliny (Roman sources), Josephus, Rabbinic literature (Jewish sources), New Testament Apocrypha, Patristics (more than 30,000 citations before 325 AD) (early Christian sources), Koran (Muslim source, 7th century AD). Conclusion: the Bible is only one of many sources for early Christianity. Many of these sources will be found in *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, McDowell, and *Jesus and Christian Origins outside the New Testament*, Bruce.

Q How did the Bible come together?

- “Canonization” was a lengthy and intricate process, governed by God’s providence. (*Kanon*—Greek for “reed, measuring rod, cane” Canon is the norm by which the inspiration and or authority of a book is measured.) The earliest written canon we have is probably the “Muratorian Canon,” dating from around 180 AD. Doubtless the majority, if not all, of the books of the NT were in circulation earlier than that date. The earliest canon which corresponds exactly to our present NT canon dates from the early 4th century. The OT canon seems to have been settled around the end of the 1st century AD. See *The Books and the Parchments*, Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, Bruce, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, McDowell.

Q Is the Bible accurate?

- Dead Sea Scrolls (1947) show the excellent textual transmission of the OT They date from around 200 BC to 100 AD. See *Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Bruce. The DSS

were discovered in the 1940s in the vicinity of the Dead Sea by a shepherd boy (named Mohammed)! *Before* the discovery of these MSS (manuscripts), which include all OT books except Esther, as well as other materials, the earliest surviving OT MSS dated from around 10th century AD! The most celebrated find is probably the two Isaiah scrolls, one of which proves the excellent textual transmission of Isaiah 53, a key Messianic prophecy.

Q **Is the King James Version the only “authorized” version?**

- It was a good translation for its day, but is now out of date (completed 1611). Never officially “authorized,” the KJV did not have access to DSS for OT, Greek papyrus finds (19th century) for NT. Furthermore, English language has undergone many significant changes since Elizabethan times.

Q **What about other English versions?**

- Be wary of *paraphrases* (Living Bible), exercise caution with *free translations* (New English Bible, Jerusalem Bible, Today’s English Version), teach from *dynamic equivalence versions* (New Living Bible, New International Version), rely on *stricter translations* (Revised Standard Version, New American Standard). In the English speaking world, the New International Version (dynamic equivalence translation) is now the most popular, and is reasonably accurate.³⁰

Q **Do we have everything the apostles wrote?**

- By no means! See Colossians 4:16, 1 Corinthians 5:9, 2 Thessalonians 3:17, etc. The NT furnishes us with part of what the apostles wrote, but not all. It is sufficient, but not exhaustive—otherwise our Bibles would be very fat indeed! See John 20:30 and 21:25. (There also exist the NT Apocrypha and NT Pseudepigrapha, not to be confused with these. NT Apocryphal writings for the most part date between the second and fourth centuries AD, and contain speculations about the childhood of Jesus, the travels of the apostles, the end of the world, etc. Pseudepigrapha are writings that claim [falsely] to be written by someone other than the true author. For example, men in the fourth century may have written a book and ascribed it to a first century person, such as the apostle Thaddaeus. Such fraudulent works are not difficult to detect.)

Q **7. Are Paul’s writings really inspired? Do they have equal authority with the words of Jesus?**

- See 2 Peter 3:15-16 (“*wisdom that God gave him,*” “*other scriptures*”). Peter certainly seems to have thought so! Furthermore, Paul’s writings were recognized by the early church. For a similar line of reasoning, see 1 Timothy 5:18, quoting Luke 10:7.

Q **8. Are there other inspired writings in addition to the Bible?**

- Galatians 1:6-9, 12. E.g., Mormons: *Book of Mormon* (1827), *Pearl of Great Price, Doctrines and Covenants*; Unification Church: *The Divine Principle*; Christian Scientists: *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. The gospel is non-adjustable, must not be tampered with or added to (1 Corinthians 4:6, Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32). There is no “latter-day revelation” (Jude

³⁰ In the United States, the NIV has, since the early 1990s, outsold the veteran KJV over two to one. (The NT translation was completed in 1973, the OT in 1978.)

3, 2 Peter 1:3, Ephesians 4:13, 1 Corinthians 13:10-11). The canon of inspired writings was apparently fixed by the late 1st or early 2nd century.

Q 9. What about the Apocrypha?

- Written in the period 200 BC-100 AD, these writings have not been considered inspired by Protestants since the 16th century (the Reformation). The Apocrypha had been widely used by the Catholic church since inception, and until 1546 seem to have been accepted even by Protestants. I would encourage you to study these writings and make your own decision as to their usefulness. They do fill in the gap between the end of the OT (late 5th century BC) and the beginning of the New (early 1st century AD). For example, 1 Maccabees (2nd century BC) is of considerable historical value. There are a number of allusions to the Apocrypha in the New Testament.

Q What if people do not believe in the Bible? What should we do then?

- Get them to read it! (Romans 10:17, John 20:30-31)
- They must be willing to put it into practice (John 7:17). Following God's word is fundamentally a *moral*, not an *intellectual*, issue.

Jesus III: The Great I Am



Adherents of
other world
religions or liberal
thinkers

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: The 'I Am' statements of Jesus

Purpose: To impact someone who is offended by the idea that one single religion might have the truth

Introduction

This study follows the “I am” statements of Jesus in John, and is excellent for beginners, adherents of other world religions, and “enlightened” or liberal thinkers offended by the idea that one single religion might have the truth.

Jesus is “the great ‘I am’” (John 8:58). This epithet refers to God himself. In Hebrew, YHWH (the Lord’s name), means “I am what I am.” The gospel of John is filled with allusions to a well-known OT text—Exodus 3:14, with its overtones of deliverance and redemption.

Main Study

- “I am” (Exodus 3:14)
- John 6:35
- John 8:12
- John 10:14
- John 11:25
- John 14:6

 **John 6:35**—Jesus is the bread of life.

- He keeps us going when we are spiritually hungry.
- God has set eternity in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11). But until a relationship with God fills the empty place in our heart, we will never be truly satisfied.
- OT connection: Exodus 16 (Manna).

 **John 8:12**—Jesus is the light of the world.

- “Darkness” involved being unsure where you are going in life, confused, fearful...
- This is a bold claim! Jesus does not say, “*There* is the light of the world,” but *I am* the light...
- OT connection: Isaiah 9:1-2 (Messianic prophecy).

 **John 10:14**—Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

- Sheep (biblically and pastorally) tend to wander.
- We need a shepherd.
- He cares for us sheep.
- OT connection: Ezekiel 34 (the Messiah as a new “David”).

 **John 11:25**—Jesus is the resurrection.

- It’s not reincarnation that Jesus is offering (Hebrews 9:27).
- Nor is it “afterlife” that Jesus promises (everyone will have that), but eternal life with God!

- Because of Jesus (and his resurrection), we too will be resurrected.
- OT connection: Psalm 16 (prediction of resurrection of Messiah).

 **John 14:6**—Jesus is the only way.

- An incredibly exclusive claim!
- People don't "accidentally" believe in Jesus (without knowing it)! It's a conscious decision (John 3:18.) In the same way, you don't get married by accident. It's by mutual agreement and happens at a specific point in time. If Jesus is right, no other position or religion is valid.
- No wonder Jesus received such opposition!
- OT connection: Deuteronomy 18 (the prophet like Moses who must be heeded).

Conclusion

There are many other "I am" verses we could have looked at (8:58, 10:7, 15:1, etc.). But this assortment of just five of the amazing statements of Jesus is enough to give us a good picture of how radical a character he was!

Repentance III: The Rich Young Ruler and Zacchaeus



Someone who finds it hard to see their need for repentance

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Repentance

Purpose: To help a religious person see where they really stand with God

Introduction

This study is a comparison of two men with two different responses to Jesus.³¹ The episode of the Rich Young Ruler is found in Matthew 19, Mark 10, and Luke 18. Zacchaeus is found, however, only in Luke 19. What do we see when we compare and contrast these two “would-be” disciples of Jesus Christ? The difference between the two may be just the thing which will help your religious friend see where he or she really stands with God.

In addition to Luke 19, for Zacchaeus, choose one of the three parallel passages on the Rich Young Ruler. Begin with the Rich man (the negative example), end with Zacchaeus (the positive example).

Main Study

- Matthew 19-Mark 10-Luke 18 (Rich Young Ruler)
- Luke 19 (Zacchaeus)

Similarities:

- Both appear to be well-known individuals.
- Both have money.
- Both took the initiative to find Jesus.
- Both “humble themselves” to approach Jesus—the Rich man *down* on his knees, the tax collector Zacchaeus *up* in a tree.
- The Rich man looks better on the outside. He speaks the religious lingo and is impressive to others. Zacchaeus is not; his profession is despised, he is corrupt, and even his physical appearance does not command respect.
- Both need to repent! Each has a major shortcoming, involving wealth.

Differences:

- Only Zacchaeus repents.
- The rich man is unwilling to let go of his “god,” his money.
- Zacchaeus responds quickly to Jesus.
- Zacchaeus *volunteers* to make restitution for his sins (2 Corinthians 7:10).
- Paradoxically, the “less likely” disciple finds salvation, whereas the “shoe-in” fails the crucial test.

³¹ Credit for Repentance III: The Rich Young Ruler and Zacchaeus goes to my wife, Vicki, who created it. She has used it with hundreds of women.

Conclusion:

The disciples are shocked when they realize the kind of repentance Jesus is looking for. (See the section following the failure of the Rich Man to put Jesus first.) And yet God's plan is to bless us a hundredfold! Remember, End positively.

Calvinism

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: False teachings

Purpose: To show the errors of Calvinism (also known as, *Reformed Theology*)



Anyone who believes in 'once-saved-always-saved' and other Calvinistic teachings

Introduction

John Calvin (1508-1564) was one of the leading thinkers in the Protestant Reformation. He re-taught many of the ideas of Augustine, bishop of Hippo (in North Africa), who lived 354-430 AD. Denominations that follow his thinking are numerous: Baptists, Presbyterians, Reformed, many Anglicans, even the original "Churches of Christ" (1690-1830). Calvinism is a unified and internally consistent system. The basic teachings are described by the convenient acronym: T.U.L.I.P.:

Main Study

- **T.U.L.I.P. (acronym)**
- **Romans 5:7**
- Acts 13:46
- 1 Timothy 2:4
- Hebrews 10:29-30
- 2 Peter 2:20

T.U.L.I.P.

Total Depravity
Unconditional Election
Limited Atonement
Irresistible Grace
Perseverance of the Saints

This is one of the most academic of our studies, and is intended to show the consistent error of Calvinism. (Sometimes this is also called "Reformed Theology.")

1. Total Depravity

- **Doctrine:** There is absolutely no good in fallen man. Before he is converted, all his actions and thoughts are sinful and selfish. Therefore there is absolutely nothing he can do to save himself; salvation is completely from God, and man plays no part in it. Only when God's Spirit quickens a man and enables him to believe can he be saved.
- **Supporting passages:** Calvinists appeal to Ephesians 2:1, Romans 3:12 and many other passages to prove that we are no more able to save ourselves than a corpse is able to rise up and walk.
- **Biblical emphasis:** Calvinism stresses the sinfulness and lostness of man. This is an emphasis sadly lacking in the religious world, which prides itself on its good deeds and empty rituals.
- **Error:** The Bible does indeed paint a dark picture of man's selfishness, but to say that there is no good at all in an unsaved person is going too far. Romans 5:7 and many other passages assume or imply that there is some good in the world at large. Cornelius was a good man (Acts 10:2, 35). As far as salvation goes, Calvinism grossly undervalues the part man plays in accepting the

salvation that God offers. To illustrate, we'd all agree that there is nothing a drowning man can do to save himself. But when he is thrown a life preserver, he must *decide* to accept it and then *do something* about it (grab on). Calvinism misses the obvious truth because it denies that man has *free will*.

- Logical link to next section: Total Depravity logically leads to the next of the five basic Calvinistic doctrines, Unconditional Election. Since there is nothing man can do to save himself, God and God alone decides who will be saved.

2. Unconditional Election

- The doctrine: *Unconditional Election*, or *Predestination*, teaches that the decision about who will be saved is 100% God's. He has decided in advance exactly who will be saved. Not only is there no way for us to save ourselves, but *even if we wanted* to be saved, unless God had already chosen us, we would have no chance of going to heaven.
- Supporting passages: God's *grace* saves us, and faith is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). Acts 13:48 speaks of "those who were appointed for eternal life." Revelation 20:5 mentions the "book of life," in which the names of the saved have been written. Romans 8:29 mentions predestination, so obviously who will be saved has already been determined
- Biblical emphasis: This doctrine emphasizes *God's sovereignty*, another truth missing in our selfish world, where everyone wants to determine the course of his own life. Furthermore, it is true that God is willing to save men and women of *any* race, nation, social class, income bracket or religious background; salvation is unconditional in that sense.
- Error:
 - a. To begin with, Ephesians 2:8-9 doesn't teach that faith is a gift from God (though ultimately God does help us to believe, through his Word, Christians, circumstances, etc). Ephesians 2:8-9 says that *salvation* is a gift from God!
 - b. Acts 13:48 discusses God's involvement in man's salvation, but Acts 13:46 clearly shows that man is justly responsible for accepting or rejecting the gospel. Again, free will has been overlooked!
 - c. Revelation 20:5 mentions the Lamb's book of life, but Revelation 3:5 implies that it is possible for our names to be erased from it. Psalm 69:27-28 is yet another passage shattering the notion that God's book contains only the names of the saved, and that the list is unchangeable.
 - d. Romans 8:29 says that Christians are predestined to become like Christ (not the same as being predestined to salvation), but in Ephesians and other books there is a sort of predestination that *is* mentioned. Two analogies may be helpful:
 - (1) Train destination: You board a London train, and the destination is clearly marked "Heathrow Airport." This destination has been decided in advance. Heathrow Airport is its "predestination." As long as you stay on the train, you are fine. If however you choose to leave the train, you forfeit your "predestination." The train still goes to the airport, but you will miss your flight—unless of course you manage to get back on the train. This analogy assumes, unlike Calvinism, that we have free will.
 - (2) Aerial view: From the top of a tall building you are able to view two intersecting streets. Down the first street a speeding sports car approaches the deadly intersection, down the other street zooms a motorcycle. From your vantage point, you can "see" the accident even *before* it happens. But are you responsible for the collision? Foreknowledge does not imply predestination.
 - e. 2 Thessalonians 2:14 clearly teaches that God *does* call us, but the call is not arbitrary, or through strange sensations, but through the gospel. There is an inseparable link between the

gospel and the “sanctifying work of the Spirit.” No one is saved in a vacuum! See also Romans 10:13-17.

- f. Finally, *Unconditional Election* is *unfair!* Imagine the scenario: you are standing before God’s throne, hoping to be saved, and hear the sentence pronounced on you: damned! Moreover, God informs you that the deck was stacked against you from the beginning; there never was any hope of your being saved. Would you or would you not be justified in accusing God of unfairness? Calvinism promotes a distorted, negative concept of God. It’s not going too far to say that in Calvinism, conversion is a mere formality, since people are saved or damned even before they are born.
- Logical link: Since God does nothing in vain, and since only the few “elect” will be saved, Christ must have died only for those who would be saved. Thus the doctrine of *Limited Atonement* flows logically from *Unconditional Election*, or *Predestination*.

3. Limited Atonement

- Doctrine: Christ’s sacrifice on the cross was limited to those who would be saved. In other words, he did not bear the sins of all mankind, only those of the elect.
- Supporting passages: In Matthew 26:28, the blood is said to provide forgiveness of sins for “many,” and in Ephesians 5:25 Christ is said to have given himself up for the church. Acts 20:28 teaches that God bought the church with his blood (not the world at large).
- Biblical emphasis: This doctrine enhances the “success” of the crucifixion, and affirms that God does nothing in vain. So many in our world today have no appreciation of the cross, and like to think that, if there is a God, everybody will be saved anyway.
- Error:
 - a. The Bible teaches that all men are potentially saved through the cross (Romans 5:18). In fact, 1 Timothy 2:4 says that God wants all men to be saved. If this is God’s sovereign will, why did Christ die only for the elect? Thus Calvinism contradicts 1 Timothy 2:4.
 - b. Matthew 26:28: Either the word “many” refers to all mankind, or we can say that while the blood was shed for mankind, the “blood of the (new) covenant” mentioned here implies that salvation is only for those in the covenant, not that the blood was shed for a set number of persons.
 - c. Ephesians 5:25 and Acts 20:28: the idea that God bought the redeemed with his blood is certainly biblical, but that in no way necessitates that he only shed enough blood to redeem those who would be saved. A good illustration is found in 1 Timothy 4:10: “God... is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe.” The Bible teaches that *anyone* willing to believe and repent can be saved.
- Logical link: Since Christ died only for the elect, no grace is “wasted” on non-elect unbelievers. So when God’s grace, through his Spirit, starts to work in an unbeliever’s heart, it cannot be resisted.

4. Irresistible Grace

- Doctrine: The Spirit of God draws men to Christ, and it is utterly impossible to resist God’s grace once this has begun to happen.
- Supporting passages: John 6:44 says that God the Father draws men to Christ. Acts 16:14 discusses Lydia’s conversion, and says that the Lord opened her heart to believe.
- Biblical emphasis: This doctrine certainly emphasizes the Spirit’s power, something we’ve under-emphasized.
- Error:

- a. John 6:44 only says God draws all men to himself, not how or on what basis he draws them. Other passages in John make it clear that the people God chooses to draw are those who will accept God on his own terms (1:12, 8:31, etc.).
- b. It is not denied that the Lord opened Lydia's heart, but *how* did he open her heart? *Through the message* (Acts 16:13). As always, faith comes through hearing the word (Romans 10:17)!
- c. Acts 7:51, Galatians 5:4, Hebrews 10:29-30, Hebrews 12:15 and many other passages teach it is possible for people to resist God's grace. How can grace be "irresistible" if so many people *do* in fact resist it?
- d. Calvinism, through teachings such as *Irresistible Grace*, make humans into robots. Once again, there is no free will.
- Logical link: Since grace is irresistible, it follows that once you are saved, you are always saved. In other words, falling away is impossible.

5. Perseverance of the Saints

- Doctrine: Once a person is saved, it is impossible for that person to become "unsaved." And if someone seems to be saved, but later leaves God, that is proof that he was never saved to begin with. Only the saints persevere to the end.
- Supporting passages: John 10:29 says that no one can snatch the sheep (Christians) out of the hand of the Shepherd (Christ). And Romans 8:38-39 teaches that nothing can separate us from the love of God.
- Biblical emphasis: We need to feel secure in our salvation. So many religions and denominations do not offer their members the security of knowing that they are saved. It will be difficult for us to operate effectively as disciples if we are always doubting our salvation.
- Error:
 - a. John 10:29 says that no one can snatch a Christian away from his secure position, but it never says that a Christian cannot *choose* to walk away from the flock (and the Shepherd). Isaiah 53:6 says that all of us like lost sheep had gone astray. Even the chosen people, the Jews, were able to go astray, and Jesus told his disciples to go first to "the lost sheep of Israel."
 - b. Romans 8:38-39 is certainly a great comfort to real disciples, but Jude 21 shows that we need to do our part to stay in God's love.
 - c. Ironically, far from providing any real security, Calvinistic teaching destroys it; you can never really know you're saved, since if you give up that means you never were in the elect to begin with! The Bible, on the other hand, says that you absolutely *can* know that you are saved (1 John 5:13—see 1 John 2:3-6).
 - d. James 5:19-20 (see 1:15) shows that a Christian can wander from the truth.
 - e. The Bible repeatedly says that we will be saved "if" we obey God or persevere: John 15:6, Hebrews 12:25, 1 Corinthians 15:2, 2 Peter 1:10. Salvation is unconditional in the sense that there is nothing we can do to *earn* it, but it is *not* unconditional in the sense that we *can* lose it.
 - f. It is often (correctly) said that we are saved by faith. If this is true, what happens when we give up our faith? Will God force us to be saved? Again, where is free will?
 - g. 2 Peter 2:20 makes it abundantly clear that a Christian can fall away, as do many other passages. (See discussion in Supplementary Study, below.)
 - h. Moreover, *Perseverance of the Saints* is contrary to experience! There are many men and women who became Christians, were doing well spiritually, bearing fruit and growing in the Lord, but who allowed their hearts to stray and harden. They are not with us today—but that

- does not mean that they were never saved initially! They most certainly *were* saved, but they have wandered away!
- i. Perhaps the gravest error of this doctrine is that Perseverance of the Saints, or Once Saved, Always Saved,” is a great disincentive to evangelism and commitment in general:
 - (1) Although a noble heart should be eager to do good, discipleship is in fact secondary, or irrelevancy, since our salvation was decided in heaven long before we were born. Not surprisingly, most Calvinists are lukewarm in their commitment.
 - (2) Why evangelize the “lost” when there’s nothing you can do to save them? If they’re damned (not of the elect), no amount of evangelism can help them. And if they are in the elect, sooner or later God will make that plain to hem, but in the meantime your evangelizing them really doesn’t matter, since they will be saved anyway! Sadly, but consistently with their system, very few Calvinists try to seek and save the lost.
 - Logical link: By now you can see that Calvinism, although it contradicts the Bible over and over, is internally a highly consistent system.

Concluding Thoughts and Strategy

We have studied the five petals of the Calvinistic tulip, and have seen that they do not fit with what the Bible teaches. This is obviously a complex subject, and many non-Christians would be unable to grasp the study as it stands. A helpful alternative is to go through the supplementary study below, which focuses on the fifth petal of the tulip, *Perseverance of the Saints*. Then, refer to the main study *as necessary*. This is probably the best strategy for helping someone to see the error of Calvinism.

On the positive side, we have seen that Calvinism is correct to emphasize the:

- Sinfulness of man
- Sovereignty of God
- Success of the Crucifixion
- Spirit’s Power
- Security of grace

However, on the negative side, we saw that there were many faults with Calvinism:

- Too negative a view of man
- The denial of free will
- No salvation “by faith”
- Little incentive for evangelism
- Creation of an unjust God
- Contrary to experience
- Breeds lukewarm commitment
- Refuted by hundreds of verses

Once Saved, Always Saved



Anyone who believes in the 'once saved, always saved' doctrine

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: False doctrines

Purpose: To refute the doctrine of once saved, always saved

Introduction

There are literally hundreds of scriptures which demolish the position of those who claim it is impossible, once one has come to know Jesus Christ, to lose salvation.

Main Study

- Hebrews 10:26-31
- Hebrews 6:4-8
- John 10:28
- Romans 8:39
- 2 Peter 2:20-22

 **Hebrews 10:26-31**—Deliberate sin can cause us to lose our salvation. This is clear, yet some insist this passage applies only to non-Christians, or unsaved churchgoers. But verses 29 (“the blood of the covenant that sanctified him”) and 30 (“The Lord will judge his people”) show that the writer has in mind the covenant people—who are already saved.

 **Hebrews 6:4-8**—It is impossible to bring certain people back to repentance. Where the “point of no return” is God only knows.³² “Crucifying the Son of God all over again” implies they have already shared in Jesus’ death and resurrection. (Hebrews 6:7-8 continues the thought.) This is the strongest passage in Hebrews refuting “Once Saved, Always Saved” (see also 3:12-14, 4:1, 4:11, 6:11-12, 10:36, 12:14-15, 13:4). And yet there are hundreds of other verses in the New Testament, which disprove this false doctrine—not even to consider the Old Testament.

 **John 10:28**—This verse is often cited as proof of the impossibility of apostasy. However, it does not state that it is impossible for someone to turn his back on God (Luke 9:62) and walk away, only that it is impossible for external powers to drag away a disciple against his will.

 **Romans 8:39**—Nothing can separate us from the love of God, but it’s our responsibility to “keep ourselves in God’s love” (Jude 21). Again, there is free will. Most advocates of “once saved, always saved” (“perseverance of the saints,” “eternal security”), at some point, deny free will.

³² The Bible seems to distinguish between those who have “wandered away” (James 5:19) and those who have “fallen away (Hebrews 6:4). For those in the first category there is hope; for those in the second, none. Incidentally, when Jesus predicts that his apostles will, on the night of his arrest “all fall away,” this is a different verb to that normally used for “falling” or “falling away.” (To illustrate, the verb in connection with these predictions is consistently translated “be offended” in the KJV.) Hence we must distinguish between stumbling and falling.

 **2 Peter 2:20-22**—This verse clinches the argument. These people have “escaped the corruption of the world,” which is possible only through participating in the divine nature (see 1:4). The corruption of the world is vividly symbolized by vomit and mud. It is tortuous to argue that the “washing” applies to a non-Christian. Finally, if they give up on God, they are worse off at the end than they were if they had never become Christians. Clearly it is possible for a Christian to lose his salvation!

Conclusion

Although at first *Once Saved, Always Saved* appears to take on an academic point, in fact it strikes directly at the heart of the issue: one’s willingness to follow Christ. Properly done, it’s quite a challenging study, and makes a good Pilot Study (next section).

Pilot Studies



Possible first study
with non-Christian
friend

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Brief assessment studies

Purpose: To help determine whether an individual is really ‘open’

Introduction

How many of us have experienced heartache after heartache because we judged people we were studying with to be open, even to be progressing, yet in the home stretch they started rationalizing, refusing to see the light? How many people have you studied with who have turned away at the last moment?

The heartache can be largely avoided if we develop the perception and wisdom not to share the *whole* counsel of God with those who really aren’t open. The *pilot study* concept is a way to estimate *ahead of time* whether an individual is really “open.”

The Theory

Many men and women are *receptive* to the Bible, church services, and so forth, but they are not really *open*. They are happy to come along and mix with the crowd, yet they do not have a deep love for God and the truth. On the other hand, a truly open person will see his need for God and want to become a disciple. It will benefit your personal ministry greatly if you keep in your mind the distinction between *receptive* and *open*. (For more on this, see the pertinent sections in chapter 10 of this book.)

A “pilot study” is undertaken to determine whether someone is open to the gospel or not. The theory is that if someone is unwilling to change his mind on something with relatively minor implications, he is even less likely to change it on a more challenging matter. Thus one’s response to a pilot study is a fairly good indicator of one’s openness to becoming a Christian. The pilot study should be done early on in your relationship with the non-Christian—sometimes as a first study.

The idea is to avoid wasting time with people who are not serious about following Christ. This includes those who are receptive to some extent but are not really open. This is a practical implementation of the Matthew 7:6 principle. Jesus encouraged us to focus on the most open people (Matthew 10:11), in order to win as many as possible. Pilot studies are useful with people about whose sincerity we have doubts; there is less need for such a study in a more straightforward situation.

Finally, an important caveat. Pilot studies are not intended to “push” people towards a decision for Christ. The vast majority of people you study with will need many weeks, often many months, to come to faith and repentance. Let God prepare people’s hearts for change, and do not prematurely attempt to bring them to a decision. Jesus encourages us to seek the seeker, and yet often he gave people time, space, and grace to come to him as their hearts were pruned, transformed, and confirmed.

Main Study

- “Pilot study”
- Matthew 7:6
- Matthew 10:11

1. Pilot studies should be straightforward.

It is not fair to lead an involved and complicated study, confuse your non-Christian friend, and then accuse him of being “closed” when, at the end of the study, he cannot agree with you! Choose straightforward topics. Avoid topics like *How could all the animals fit into the ark?*, *Must baptism be done by immersion?* or *Do pets go to heaven?* Good topics include:

- Seeking God (Basic Guard the Gospel series)
- Faith (Intermediate Series)
- Once Saved, Always Saved (above)
- Hot-Cold-Lukewarm (presented below)
- Or make up your own!

2. Pilot studies should be brief.

There is no need to rush studies, and if the man or woman is open you may want to extend the discussion into a full-length study, but you’d be amazed how much you can cover in twenty minutes! This is especially true when you’re studying with a proud religious person. Jesus’ approach with these people was usually very direct. He did not mince words or waste time.

3. Pilot studies are not short cuts!

A pilot study is not a twenty-minute exercise to decide whether to continue reaching out to someone or to write him off for eternity. All the study shows is whether at the *present* time the person is open to changing his mind about spiritual things. Often, through God’s working in their lives (challenging situations, friendship with Christians, or as a result of your prayers), someone closed today may be open a year from now, so never “write anyone off.” Pilot studies are intended to streamline our evangelism, not offer a short-cuts to evangelistic “fruitfulness.”

4. Pilot studies should conclude with a challenge.

It should be either a challenge to be committed (as in the Hot-Cold-Lukewarm study), or a challenge to change a way of thinking (as with a more doctrinal study). People’s willingness to look at things God’s way or to do things God’s way will become obvious.

Hot-Cold-Lukewarm



Anyone who is lukewarm in their relationship with God

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Three degrees of commitment to God

Purpose: To convince a lukewarm person that he must not stay that way

Main Study

 **Revelation 3:14-16** is the single passage in the basic study.³³ Here are the main points to cover:

- Jesus knows our hearts and deeds. Deeds do matter!
- There are three degrees of commitment: hot, cold and lukewarm.
 - a. As in any area of life, for example, sports, a hot person is characterized by fervent commitment. A “hot” person will be characterized by Bible study, prayer, evangelistic zeal, devotion to the church, desire to repent of sin, etc.
 - b. Cold people are either apathetic or negative. They have no desire to perform the deeds the hot person performs, and probably have no interest in coming to church, reading the Bible, etc.
 - c. Ask your friend whether he thinks he is hot. Almost certainly (if he’s open or honest) he will say no. Then ask him whether he is cold. Again, a yes answer is unlikely, so tell him there is only one other category: lukewarm. Don’t allow your friend to plead that he is “lukewarm-hot” or “sometimes hot, sometimes lukewarm.” Jesus spoke of only three degrees of commitment; there are no half-categories. Make sure he agrees that he is lukewarm.
- Ask him which temperature is most pleasing to God. The answer, of course, is “hot.” Then ask him which temperature comes next. The answer, for most people surprisingly, is “cold.” And, yes, “lukewarm” is the worst temperature possible.
- Since he has already agreed that he is lukewarm, drive the implications home: his salvation is in jeopardy, if he ever was truly saved. Jesus prefers that we be either hot or cold, but not lukewarm. That makes Jesus sick to his stomach. In the passage, Jesus is about to spit his lukewarm followers out of his mouth. (Do not try to drive home the implications too early, or you will find your friend doing exegetical gymnastics, redefining “hot,” telling you “That’s just your interpretation,” etc.)
- Now that your friend knows where he stands, ask him what he’s going to do about it. Set up a study. Get a commitment to come to church, or to accept the “three-week challenge” to attend all the meetings for three weeks. Encourage him or her to start evangelizing. Also commend him for his honesty in admitting where he stands.
- If the non-Christian puts up a big fight, and refuses to be pinned down, you know that he/she isn’t open at this point. Move on, and find a more open person to study the Bible with.

³³ Note: the root cause of the Laodiceans’ lukewarmness, in the context of the passage (Revelation 3:14-22), is *materialism*. Lukewarmness is a symptom of misplaced priorities, not a root sin in itself. The same holds with the lives of true disciples. Urging them to “get fired up” when there are significant root problems (relationship strains, major disappointments, unconfessed sins, unanswered [serious] doctrinal questions, marriage problems, and so forth), is bound to backfire, even to encourage the habit of feigning zeal. Deal with the heart (the internals), not just the externals.

Old Covenant, New Covenant



Those who believe in upholding the Sabbath

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: What in the old covenant is still required under the new covenant

Purpose: Investigating ‘Sabbath keepers’

Introduction

The Sabbath

Many in the religious world today insist that Christians must observe the Sabbath. Most interpret this to mean that on Sundays Christians should have a day of rest. But what does the Bible say? For one, the Sabbath is the seventh day of the week, not the first. But Saturdays aren’t the only Sabbath days, according to the Old Testament. Sabbatical and Jubilee years (Leviticus 25) count too, and thus in a fifty-year span a typical Jew would have observed over 5,000 Sabbath days, as compared to only 2600 for the modern “Sabbath keeper.” Moreover, on the Sabbath the people of God had to stay at home (Exodus 16:29). No sports, no visiting friends, and (strictly speaking) no attending church services! Nor may any cooking be done—all food must be prepared in advance (Exodus 16:23-29). All work is prohibited. Finally, the OT teaches that failure to observe the Sabbath is punishable by *death!* (See Numbers 15:35.) Who really observes the Sabbath today? No one!

Obviously, there are parts of the OT that have not carried over into the NT (e.g. sacrificing lambs and pigeons). Are we bound by the Sabbath? Or other holy days (“holi-days”)? Is there a priesthood today, a clergy-laity system? Is the church building really the “house of God”? In short, exactly what *is* the relationship between the Old and New Covenant?

The following study may be done as a group Bible discussion or as a personal study. It is invaluable for those from a ritualistic and traditional background, and even for those from other world religions. Old Covenant, New Covenant highlights the uniqueness of New Testament Christianity, and explains much of the confusion in Christendom today.

Main Study

- Colossians 2:16
- John 4:24
- Ephesians 1:1
- 1 Timothy 2:5
- Colossians 2:17

Two Covenants

- Hebrews 9:15-17 shows that the new covenant (will, testament) superseded the old covenant. Just as two wills cannot be in effect at the same time, neither can two testaments.
- Although the heart of the law carries over into the NT (see Galatians 5:14, Matthew 22:37-40), the law and its specific commandments were nailed to the cross, invalidated (Colossians 2:13-14).
- Thus Christians are not bound to observe the regulations of the OT.

Double Standards

- If some days are *holy*, the others must be *unholy*.
- In practice this means that people try harder to please God on the special, or holy, days than at other times. *Two* standards of commitment have thus emerged.
- But Christianity is meant to be a daily lifestyle (Luke 9:23, Romans 12:1), not a weekly observance. All *time* is holy!
- These double standards are seen in a variety of areas:
 - a. holy time
 - b. holy space
 - c. holy people
 - d. holy things
- Since the OT distinction between holy and unholy has been invalidated, or transformed, now *all* days are holy, *all* space is holy, *all* people are holy.

Holy Time

- Christians are not bound by Sabbath observance (as in the fourth commandment, Exodus 20). This is made explicit in Colossians 2:16.
- Attempts to be justified by observing special days, seasons, etc. will lead to condemnation (Galatians 4:8-11).
- It is true that the early church often met on Sundays (Acts 20:7, Revelation 1:10), partly in commemoration of Christ's resurrection (Matthew 28:1), which took place on a Sunday, but Sunday is nowhere called a "Sabbath."
- The lesson for us: we should be on our best behavior, striving to be disciples, *all the time*. It is not a *sin* to observe a special day (Romans 14:6), but it is a sin to try to make others do so.

Holy Space

- God cannot be confined to "holy" space (Acts 7:48-49, John 4:24).
- The OT subdivided space, physically restricting access to God (Hebrews 9:1-8—see Matthew 27:51), but the NT does not limit access to God in this way (Ephesians 2:18).
- We worship God wherever we are; our whole lives are our worship (Romans 12:1).
- Although the church is called the "household of God" (Ephesians 2:19, the *church building* is no more a "holy place" than any other building.
- The lesson for us: we should strive to do our best for God *wherever we are*.

Holy People

- There are no "saints," in the traditional sense of the word. All Christians are holy, or "saints" (Ephesians 1:1).
- There is no priesthood today except that of Jesus himself (Hebrews 7:23-28). It is true that all disciples form a "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9), yet no one needs to go through another person in order to reach God, and there is no need for the presentation of sacrifice, as Christ has been sacrificed once for all.
- There is only one mediator between God and man, and that is Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:5). Thus praying to the saints and Mary is wrong.
- There is no "clergy" (Matthew 23:9). All Christians are to be equally committed. Christians have different gifts and functions, but *all* disciples are expected to obey *all* the commands *all* the time. All disciples are called into the full-time ministry.

- The lesson for us: nothing could be further from the spirit of Jesus Christ than the clergy-laity system, which upholds a double standard of commitment.

Holy Cow!

- Miscellaneous
 - a. Holy foods (1 Timothy 4:3, Hebrews 13:9, Mark 7:19)
 - b. Holy altars (Hebrews 7:27, 13:10)
 - c. Images and icons (Exodus 20:4, 1 John 5:21)
 - d. Vestments, water, censers, medals, relics, languages, formulae, crosses...
 - e. The importing of OT categories into the NT simply will not do!

Conclusion

From Shadows to light

Colossians 2:17 teaches that the Law was only a shadow of the reality—or that which creates the shadow—which is found in Christ. Yes, there are many parallels between OT “shadows” and NT realities, but the two covenants are distinct. Today the Old Testament is obsolete (Hebrews 8:13), and yet most of modern Christianity resembles OT Judaism more than the original NT faith! Let’s leave the shadows of the Old Covenant and come into the light! That’s where real freedom is.³⁴

³⁴ The abolition of the various OT categories does not mean that we should downplay our “priestly” responsibility to bring others to God, or to behave irreverently when gathered for worship. Sometimes in the name of “freedom” we can lose our sense of “reverence and awe” (Hebrews 10:28) – which was *not* nullified at Calvary!

Premillennialism

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby



Someone with questions about the rapture, the tribulation and the last days

Theme: Rapture, Tribulation and more

Purpose: To accurately understand the ‘last days’

Introduction

“Premillennialism” is hard enough to pronounce, let alone to understand. It is a system of doctrines taught by many denominations today, including most evangelical groups.³⁵ The first major millenarian group, condemned by the church for taking Revelation literally, dates to about 130 AD. Since premillennial teaching is so prevalent in religious circles, the fully equipped Christian worker must grasp the teachings and gain competence in refuting it.

Whereas the doctrines of *Calvinism* appeal to the mind, the teachings of *Premillennialism* appeal more to the emotions. The basic notion is that we are living in the “last days,” under the haunting specter of the second coming of Christ; doomsday is on the way! But for the faithful, it is claimed, great blessings and riches are in store. Since the kingdom of God has not yet arrived (we are said to be living in the “church age”), when Jesus returns he will establish a physical, political, earthly kingdom on this earth. This will come to pass after the “rapture” snatches the saved up to heaven, sparing them the agonies of the painful “tribulation” period which will punish the unbelievers of the earth. Support for these speculations comes from an assortment of Old Testament passages (out of context), Matthew 24 and its parallel passages, and especially Revelation (the favorite book of premillennialists).

Below is the basic Premillennialism study. We will examine five tenets of premillennialism. Afterwards follows a study you can teach on The Coming of the Kingdom.

Main Study

- “Premillennialism”
- Matthew 24:34/Revelation 1:3
- Acts 2:16
- Revelation 13:17
- Luke 17:20/1 Thessalonians 5:1
- Colossians 1:13/John 18:36

The prophesied end of the world

- The Old Testament is said to prophesy modern political events (Amos 3:7, etc.)
- To support this view, many passages (especially prophecies) are claimed to have “double meanings.”

³⁵ Strictly speaking, the term applies to an interpretation of Revelation which holds that Christ’s second coming will come before the establishment of his thousand-year reign on earth. Postmillennialists assert the second coming follows the millennial reign. Millennialists believe through our words and actions the people of God will bring about the “kingdom” on earth. Amillennialists deny that there is any such “millennium.”

- Matthew 24 (paralleled by Mark 13 and Luke 21) is said to apply to our time, despite the fact that it describes first century Jewish history and Jesus said that all of it would be fulfilled in his generation (Matthew 24:34).
- Revelation is said to describe the awesome events immediately preceding and following the Second Coming, despite the fact that Revelation claims immediate fulfillment (Revelation 1:3).
 - a. Daniel had a vision around 550 BC (Daniel 8:1) that was to be fulfilled around 165 BC, nearly 400 years later. The vision was to be fulfilled “in the distant future.”
 - b. Surely Revelation 1:3, which states that the prophecy of Revelation will be fulfilled in the “near” future, cannot be any further away in fulfillment than Daniel’s vision! How then can premillennialists claim it applies (mainly) to events around the year 2000?

The last days

- Although a look at the Scriptures clearly shows that the “last days” began with Christ’s first coming (see Acts 2:16, Hebrews 1:2, James 5:3, 2 Peter 3:3), premillennialists believe that the last days began quite recently.³⁶
- Premillennialists historically have proposed various dates for the start of the last days. In the 20th century, some popular years guesses were 1901, 1914, 1967, 1987, and 2000.
- Although God’s word commands every generation to live in anticipation of the end of the world—be ready!—it simply isn’t possible to pinpoint the “end times” of earth’s history.

Literalistic interpretation

- When premillennialists say that they take the Bible “literally,” they mean that they try to take literally the book of Revelation and other similar parts of the Bible.
- Definition of terms:
 - a. *literal*: straightforward, not symbolic at all: Luke 8:26: “They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes.” The word “sailed” means they traveled by boat, a sail being filled and pushed by the wind. It does not mean (figuratively) that they sailed across the sky, sailed in their minds, or that their friends hallucinated their transit.
 - b. *figurative*: symbolic, metaphorical, not literal: Psalm 91:4: “He (God) will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge.” Here God’s “wings” symbolize his concern, care and shelter for his people. God doesn’t *literally* have wings (or an arm, ear, mouth, etc.), but that doesn’t mean the passage is “incorrect.” Figurative passages are normal in Biblical poetry and prophecy.
 - c. *literalistic*: taking figurative passages literally. In the previous passage, God would have real feathers; either physical, birdlike feathers or spiritual feathers. This is clearly nonsense!
 - d. *face value*: the natural sense of a passage. We are to take literal passages literally and figurative passages figuratively. Taking the Bible “at face value” avoids the confusion of the literalistic approach.
- Thus believing that the Bible is *literally* the word of God doesn’t mean that every passage must be taken *literally*.
- The literalistic approach leads to many abuses, particularly with the book of Revelation:
 - a. The plagues against the ungodly (which symbolize God’s judgment against the sinful world, and particularly against the Roman Empire, who are persecuting the Christians) are taken

³⁶ It is my opinion that the Last Days are the last days of Judaism, particularly the forty-year period between 30 AD (Pentecost, as Peter declares in Acts 2) and 70 (the Destruction of Jerusalem).

- literally. (Hal Lindsay writes that the torturing locusts of Revelation 9:7-10 are actually Cobra helicopters!)
- b. The pictures of the victorious church (and the glimpse of heaven) at the end of Revelation are literalized (streets of gold, pearly gates, very wealthy Christians!).
 - c. Premillennialists expect a literal battle of “Armageddon” (Revelation 16:16).
 - d. Endless speculations on the meaning of “666” in Revelation 13:18. (Premillennialists love to play with numbers.)
 - e. A typical example is Revelation 13:17, which is construed to mean that every man and woman who does not follow God will have a mark (silicon implant) under the skin of the hand (or forehead) with the number “666,” without which they will have no credit. It is a sort of international credit card.

Timetable predictions

- The basic premillennial view of the flow of time divides history into seven 1000-year periods:
 - a. about 4000 years before the coming of Christ
 - b. about 2000 years from then until about now
 - c. and a final 1000 years (Latin *millennium*), predicted in Revelation 20, of the triumphant rule of Christ on earth.
- Yet it is clear from Scripture that “1000” is often a symbolic number (Psalm 50:10, Deuteronomy 7:9, Psalm 90:4, 2 Peter 3:8), and it’s certainly a symbolic number in Revelation.
- Premillennialists find in the Bible “predictions” of persons, dates, times, events. They try to use prophecy as a sort of “timetable.” But 1 Thessalonians 5:1 clearly discourages any predictions of the times and dates surrounding the final years of earth’s history.
- There is a common pattern to premillennial predictions:
 - a. *prediction*: a scripture is taken out of context to “predict” a historical event—usually the end of the world.
 - b. *postponement*: the predicted event fails to happen . At first this is rationalized, but soon it becomes an embarrassment.
 - c. *depression*: disappointment sets in, morale in the movement drops, confidence in the current leadership is lost.
 - d. *recalculation*: the date is refigured. The prediction is seldom dropped; after the initial depression has lifted, followers are willing to assume that the predictors made a mistake in calculation, or made wrong initial assumptions. One premillennial group, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, has calculated the end of the world over and over and over: 1874, 1914, 1918, 1925, 1941, 1954, 1975...

Physical, political, earthly kingdom

- Premillennialists wait for the Second Coming of Christ to usher in a physical, political, earthly kingdom. It is to be based in Jerusalem, and Christians will become “top nation,” so to speak. The faithful expect all kinds of thrills and rewards, and it is obvious that wrong motivations abound where the nature of the kingdom is misunderstood. In the first century, Jews took the prophecies literally and expected an earthly kingdom ruled by a conquering warrior Messiah. But Jesus discouraged these would-be “premillennialists” (John 6:15); they completely misunderstood the nature of his Messiahship and mission.
- Jesus stated emphatically that his kingdom is “not of this world” (John 18:36).
- Premillennialists take several different approaches:
 - a. Jesus meant to establish the kingdom, but had to delay it due to opposition.

- b. The kingdom is only partially here. The Bible does speak of heaven as the “heavenly kingdom” (2 Timothy 4:18), but premillennialists are looking for an intermediate state between the church and heaven: the millennial reign of Christ.
- c. Some think that the church will convert the entire world, and thus the kingdom will be ushered in through evangelism (total saturation) and (Christian) political legislation. This position is really “millennialism.”
- All these approaches fail to deal with the fact that the church is the kingdom of God on earth (Colossians 1:13).

Major weaknesses of the premillennial approach

- Passages are taken out of context; Bible study tends to become one-track and superficial.
- Disproportionate emphasis is placed on Biblical prophecy.
- Evangelism suffers as many believers are made to feel that the end of the world is the most important thing.
- The Christian message loses credibility in the eyes of non-believers as predictions are shown to be wrong.

Recommended reading:

- Clouse, Robert G., Robert N. Hosack and Richard V. Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual: A Once and Future Guide* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999).
- Ferguson, Gordon, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory* (Woburn, Mass.: Discipleship Publications International, 1996). (888) DPI-BOOK.
- McGuiggan, Jim, *Revelation* (Fort Worth: Star Bible Publications, 1976). (800) 481-7809.
- Wright, N. T., *The Millennium Myth: Hope for a Postmodern World* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999).

Coming of the Kingdom



Non-Christian
friend or new
convert

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Kingdom of God

Purpose: To teach about the coming and nature of God's kingdom

Introduction

This study is a good companion to – and somewhat less complicated than – the Premillennialism study. In some cases you may wish to use this study as an alternate to the basic Church study.

Many OT passages discuss the kingdom, which is described as present but also as future.³⁷ See Daniel 2:31-45 (c. 600 BC).

Main Study

<i>Kingdom</i>	<i>Substance</i>	<i>Dates</i>
Babylonian	gold	605-539 BC
Medo-Persian	silver	539-333 BC
Greek	bronze	333-63 BC
Roman	iron + clay	63 BC
Church	mountain of stone which fills earth	30 AD

Approach of kingdom in first century AD

- John the Baptist's message—Matthew 3:2, see Malachi 3:1, 4:5 (Matthew 11:11-14). This marks the start of the “forceful advancing” (Matthew 11:12).
- Jesus' teaching—Matthew 4:17
- Jesus' disciples' teaching—Matthew 10:7
- Luke 24:49, Acts 1:3-8
- Peter to hold keys to kingdom (church)—Matthew 16:19

Nature of the kingdom

- Not political—John 6:15, 18:36
- Not visible—Luke 17:20-21
- Entered spiritually—John 3:3, 5, 7
- Grows!—Matthew 13:31-33

Day of Pentecost (Acts 2)—Coming of the kingdom: all the loose ends are tied up on that day. (All the prophecies are fulfilled. Very convincing.) **Perspective of the NT:** The kingdom is now established on earth in the church (Acts 2:30, Colossians 1:12-13, Revelation 1:5-6, 5:10). Yet we may pray for it to continue to “come” (Matthew 6:9), and we eagerly anticipate the kingdom in heaven, as our citizenship is already there (Philippians 3:20). **Seek it first!**—Matthew 13:44-46, 6:33: Put God first, live right, spread the word, come to church!

³⁷ For more material on the kingdom, see Jim McGuiggan's *The Kingdom* and *The Kingdom of God and the Planet Earth* (Fort Worth: Star Bible Publications...) or order on (800) 433-7507). dj does not have biblio in aus.....

The Holy Spirit II



Anyone with
questions about
the Holy Spirit

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Holy Spirit

Purpose: To answer common questions about the Holy Spirit

Introduction

The format of this unit is, as with the Word II, a question and answer forum.

Main Study

- Matthew 7:22
- Luke 16:31
- John 7:39
- Acts 14:3
- 2 Timothy 1:6

Q Can God heal today?

- Few have actually seen “healings.” Beware of second-hand information.
- Most “healings” are frivolous (e.g. colds, short legs).
- Many “healings” are psychosomatic. Positive attitudes or “vibrations” speed up the healing process.
- Nevertheless, God does heal through *prayer*, even though there is no supernatural *gift* of healing today.

Q Don’t miracles prove one’s salvation?

- Deuteronomy 13:1-5. Even if someone performs a miracle, if he isn’t preaching the Word, he isn’t right with God. Do not go after him; God may be testing you.
- 1 Samuel 19:18-21. God enables Saul and others to prophesy. Doesn’t prove they were saved. (They were opposing God, and by this point Saul has fallen away.)
- Revelation 13:13, 2 Thessalonians 2:9. Some “miracles” are of the devil.
- Acts 19:13. *Jews* are casting out demons.
- Mark 13:22. False Messiahs.
- Matthew 7:22. Perhaps the most useful passage. Doing the will of God, not miracles, leads to salvation.

Q Doesn’t the Spirit lead us today?

- Yes, but what does that mean?
- It is not “reading your feelings”: Proverbs 14:12, Jeremiah 17:9.
- Galatians 5:16-26, Romans 8:1-16. Putting the flesh to death; becoming more like Jesus.
- Psalm 143:10. Being taught by God to do his will—through the precepts of the Word. Ezekiel 36:27. This is a learning process, a matter of discipline. No short-cuts!

Q **Didn't people have the Holy Spirit in the OT?**

- No, not in the *indwelling* sense. John 7:39, Romans 8:9. Strictly speaking, there were no Christians before Pentecost, neither in the OT nor in the gospels. And yet many in the OT are spoken of as having the Spirit, or having the Spirit fall on them: Balaam (Numbers 24:2), Othniel (Judges 3:10), Jephthah (Judges 11:29), Saul (1 Samuel 19:18), David (1 Samuel 16:13), Amasai (1 Chronicles 12:18).

Q **Can we nail down the idea that miraculous gifts were passed on only by the apostles?**

- Basic verses: Acts 6:6, 8; 8:6, 17-18.
- Also 2 Timothy 1:6, Romans 1:11, 1 Corinthians 1:4-7.
- Paul was in Corinth 18 months, in Ephesus 3 years—a considerable time. They had miraculous gifts because Paul had been there.

Q **What about Holy Spirit Baptism?**

- There is only one baptism (Ephesians 4:5), and the “rules” are unchanging (Acts 2:39).
- John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptize us with the Spirit (Mark 1:8).
- This baptism is the alternative to damnation (“baptism” with fire).
- Christian baptism involves two elements: water and Spirit (John 3:5, 1 Corinthians 12:12-13). Both are crucial, and we were all baptized with/in/by the one Spirit.
- No supernatural abilities are conferred through this baptism.
- In other words, baptism in the Spirit is simply another way of describing Christian conversion.
- *For more on this subject, see chapter 24 of my book The Spirit (DPI).*

Q **Don't we need to be filled with the Spirit?**

- Absolutely, but what does it mean?
- Acts 6: apostles laid hands on men already filled with the Spirit (v3). “Spirit-filled” has no connection with ability to perform miracles.
- John the Baptist was Spirit-filled from birth (Luke 1:15), but he never performed miracles (John 10:41).
- Ephesians 5:17-20, Colossians 3:16. Counseling one another, singing to one another, putting the Word into our lives. It's a progressive thing, not just one-time. We should strive to be filled with the Spirit every moment of the day.
- Being “filled with the spirit” means being spiritual.

Q **Doesn't the Spirit do things for us beyond what the Word enables us to do?**

- The Spirit convicts of sin, for example (John 16:8), but *not* apart from the Word (Romans 10:17).
- The Spirit operates through the Word. For example, it
 - a. Quickens us (Psalm 119:50)
 - b. Strengthens us (Psalm 119:28)
 - c. Sanctifies us (John 17:17)
 - d. Gives us wisdom (2 Timothy 3:14-15)
 - e. Enlightens us (Psalm 119:130)
 - f. Allows us to participate in the divine nature...(2 Peter 1:4)

- All these things are normally attributed to the power of the Spirit, and rightly so. But notice that in these passages it is the Word of God that provides all these blessings.

Q Are there any miracles outside Christianity?

- Montanism (2nd century AD heretical charismatic sect).
- Sufis (charismatic Islamic sect).
- God may answer the prayer of a non-Christian and heal him, for example, just to drive him onward in his search for God.
- But 99.99% of “miracles” outside Christianity are fraudulent, psychosomatic or exaggerated.

Q Don't we still need miracles today?

- The historical purpose of the miracles was to confirm the spoken word (Exodus 4:5, 1 Kings 17:24, Mark 16:20, Acts 14:3, Hebrews 2:4). There is no record of confirmation given for the written word (scripture).
- Luke 16:19-31. If they don't listen to the Word, they won't believe even if someone rises from the dead. The Word is sufficient for anyone with a pure heart (John 20:30).

Further reading

Please see *The Spirit* (Woburn, Mass.: Discipleship Publications International, 1998). This book contains an extensive bibliography for further reading.³⁸

³⁸ In addition, you may enjoy the tape series *The Spirit: The Work of the Spirit in the Life of the Disciple* (Woburn, Mass.: Discipleship Publications International, 1998).

Feelings



Most charismatic
or Pentecostal
friends

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Feelings are not a good way to determine the will of God

Purpose: To help direct people to the word of God to answer questions about the will of God

Introduction

For a neo-pentecostal, this study is a good prelude to the study of *The Word of God*, although in some cases it may be wise to study *The Word* first. *The Feelings* study presents material you will want to cover with almost all Charismatics.

Main Study

 **Proverbs 3:5**—Trust in God, not your own feelings.

 **Proverbs 14:12**—We'll pay the ultimate penalty if we follow our own feelings.

 **Proverbs 28:26**—It is foolish to follow perceptions, hunches, feelings, intuitions...

 **Jeremiah 17:9**—The human heart is deceitful.

 **1 Kings 13:1-26**—The story of the young prophet and the old prophet. Particularly useful because it deals with the issue of ultimate authority.

 **Galatians 1:6-9**—Even if you were convinced that you had received an angelic visitation, or a revelation from an apostle, no one has the right to change the gospel message.

 **Jeremiah 23:16, 21-22, 25-32, 35-36**—False prophets of OT times:

- Claim to speak from God (verse 16).
- Their messages are purely psychological, not from God (verse 16).
- They water down the word of God (verse 22).
- Their dreams (see Numbers 12:6) are delusions, merely psychological (verses 25-26), and lessen the commitment of the people by imparting false hope (verse 27).
- Although they fancy God to be speaking his word through them, he is not; their messages have absolutely nothing to do with the word of God (verses 28-29).
- They borrow “messages” from one another; they exchange “oracles” (verse 30).
- They do not benefit the people (verses 31-32).
- They do sincerely expect the Lord to speak to them (verse 35).
- They suffer terrible theological confusion as God’s Word and their word are completely confused (verse 36).
- The end result: they distort God’s word (verse 36).

 **Jude 19**—These men confuse natural instincts with the Spirit.

 **Luke 9:23**—Discipleship means denying your selfish feelings, not following them.

- Deny feelings, follow Christ.
- Follow feelings, deny Christ.



Matthew 7:21-23—“Charismatics” and judgment day

- Many will be surprised on Judgment Day.
- God expects obedience.
- True spirituality is obeying God, not just feeling him.
- Are you sure you know the Lord? (1 Corinthians 8:3.)

The Judgment

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby



Someone who is lagging or lazy in repenting or making a decision for God

Theme: Judgment and hell

Purpose: To bring someone more quickly to a decision for God and Jesus Christ

Introduction

This study is intended to convict, to awaken, to bring a man or woman more quickly to a decision for God and Jesus Christ. The points are very straightforward, and the thrust of the message is clear. Preaching about “the judgment to come” is both powerful and biblical (Acts 24:25, Matthew 3:10, 10:28).

Main Study

- Revelation 20:15
- Hebrews 10:27
- Luke 12:47
- Luke 16:26
- 2 Thessalonians 1:8

Judgment is universal.

- There are three inescapable facts for all mankind: life, death and judgment.
- Regardless of position, knowledge, race or nation, all mankind will stand before the throne of God. Anyone who has not lived according to God’s word will be condemned (Revelation 20:15).

Hell is dreadful.

- It is terrible and to be feared (Hebrews 10:27).
- It’s foolish to laugh at fear as an illegitimate motive; it’s healthy to have a fear of dark alleys, high voltage, coming too close to the edge of a tall building, etc. How much more should we fear hell!

Punishment is proportional to knowledge.

- God is not an ogre: he wants everyone to be saved (Romans 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9).
- Nevertheless, there will be punishment for everyone who sins (Romans 3:9-20).³⁹
- The severity of punishment after death will vary individual to individual, depending on knowledge (Luke 12:47).
- (This is not to say that anyone who has never understood the gospel can be saved—John 3:18.)
- One thing is sure: if we reject the gospel (understanding it), our judgment will be the most severe!

³⁹ The Bible teaches that punishment for the lost commences after death. However, this is not the same as hell (the lake of fire), which follows the Last Judgment. The two possible sequences of events after death, then, are:

- For the lost: Sin—Death—Hades—2nd coming—Resurrection—Judgment—Hell
- For the saved: Salvation—Death—Paradise—2nd coming—Resurrection—Judgment—Heaven

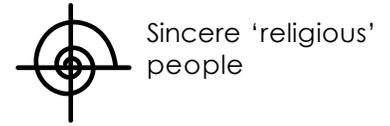
Hell is irreversible.

- In life, some choices have irreversible consequences: suicide, arson, murder, etc. Hell, too, is a choice (we choose to go there by persisting in living by our own standards instead of God's) which cannot be reversed.
- Once we have died, there is no purgatory, no "upgrading," no second chance (Luke 16:26).
- Since the decision to obey God is so crucial, and the consequences are irreversible, we must choose to put God first as soon as possible—before it's too late.

The only hope is the Gospel.

- There is hope, but only those who obey the gospel will be saved (2 Thessalonians 1:8).
- Jesus died in our place; he bore our sins (1 Peter 2:24). Sin must be judged and punished, but Jesus has already borne the penalty.
- Paradoxically (since no self-righteous person can go to heaven—Luke 18:14), in order to go to heaven we must believe that we deserve to go to hell.
- Worried that God will let someone slip through the crack? Anyone who seeks God's kingdom with all his heart can be saved (Matthew 6:33). But we must take the good news to them! If they listen and obey—even though they don't deserve it—they will be saved. (But if they do not obey the gospel, whether or not they have heard the Word, they will be forever lost—also what they "deserve.")
- Sin is that serious! Sin is so horrible, and God is so loving, that he gave his Son to die for our sins.

Is Sincerity Enough?



Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Sincerity and zeal do not equal salvation

Purpose: To address the question ‘What about the destiny of the sincere religious person?’

Introduction

This little study (15-20 minutes long) is helpful for disciples and future disciples alike. It addresses the questions, “What about the sincere religious person?” It also applies, on another level, to those who have never heard the Word in any form.

There are only three passages, though feel free to “flesh it out” according to the needs of your friend.

Main Study

- 1 Corinthians 4:4
- Romans 10:1-2
- Romans 9:1-3

 **1 Corinthians 4:4**—Sincerity is not enough. A clear conscience does not mean you are in the clear. Analogy: *fuel gauge*. You may not be aware that your gasoline/petrol gauge indicates you are on empty, but that does not change the fact of the matter. Someone who has not heard the gospel, or someone who has been mis-taught, is not saved if sincere. Ignorance is not bliss.

 **Romans 10:1-2**—Sincerity and commitment in religious people are not sufficient for salvation. Paul’s fellow Jews were very “zealous.” Yet, as Paul says, they are lost (“that they may be saved”).

 **Romans 9:1-3**—Paul was deeply disturbed by the lostness of the religious person. Yet for him this wasn’t just an academic question, or a matter of doctrinal irritation. He was willing to contemplate trading places with these people, for, like Moses (Exodus 32:32), he loved them.

Conclusion

Ask, “If you became convinced that your religious friends/those how have never heard/all the people in the world were lost, would you be *willing* to go and take them the message?” If the answer is no, your friend’s objections are not entirely sincere. If yes, then challenge him to embrace the teaching of the Bible, regardless of how painful personally it may be.

For sincerity is not enough.

Follow Up Studies



Prayer: Speaking to God



Follow-up study
for new convert
or someone who
wants to know
more about
prayer

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Prayer

Purpose: To teach someone the importance of praying to God

Introduction

What could be more natural between two people who love each other than to communicate? Surely one would expect to see an enormous amount of communication between a man and the God he loves with all his heart, soul, mind and strength. And yet this is far from what we observe! Communication of this sort is not natural; it must be learned. There are many hindrances—all of which Satan will gladly use in his campaign to keep us off our knees. Yet they can all be overcome, if we are willing to rely on God and give prayer the priority it deserves.

Main Study

1. Priority

- Mark 1:35—Jesus, a *busy* man, finds time to pray.
- He finds a *place* free from distraction.
- He finds a *time* free from distraction.
- Suggested: Psalm 42:1, 63:1, Luke 6:12, Hebrews 5:7

2. Learning process

- Luke 11:1-13—It's *not natural* (even Jesus' apostles had to be taught).
- Develop *structure* in your prayer life.

3. Hindrances

- 1 Peter 4:7—Lack of concentration. May wish to pray aloud.
- Psalm 66:18—Lack of personal righteousness.
- Luke 18:1-8—Lack of persistence.
- 1 John 5:14—Prayer contrary to God's will.
- Mark 11:24—Lack of faith.
- Suggested: Matthew 6:5, John 9:31, 14:13-14, Ephesians 6:18, Colossians 4:2-4, James 5:16-17

4. Practicals

- Set a time and length to pray every day.
- Write out a prayer list.
- Fasting—Often associated with prayer in the Bible.
- Matthew 6:17-18—shows that this is expected of Christians

Conclusion

- Philippians 4:6-7—Cast your worries upon God.
- Jeremiah 20:21b—God is looking for people who will devote themselves to be close to him. Take up the challenge!
- Psalm 5:3—Have a *daily* prayer time.
- Suggested—1 Thessalonians 5:17, 1 Peter 5:7, 1 John 5:14, Nehemiah 1:4, Isaiah 58, Joel 2:12

Bible Study: Listening to God



Follow up study
for new convert

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Bible Study

Purpose: To assist a young Christian in becoming rooted in the Word of God

Introduction

Assisting young Christians to become rooted in consistent and productive personal Bible study is one of the top priorities of those discipling them to Christ. Only in this way will we be able to take our stand against Satan and his schemes, wielding “the sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:18). Abiding in the Word of Christ as individuals and as churches is the surest safeguard for the unity of the movement. While not fostering independence of spirit, let us carefully call each man and woman in Christ to an independent and discerning study of the Word of God. Let us listen to God’s voice.

- **Matthew 4:4**—“Every word.” Comparable to physical bread, therefore essential. If you don’t stay in the word, you won’t stay in the faith.

Main Study

Work at your Bible study



2 Peter 3:15-16—Possible to distort scriptures to own destruction. Tremendous responsibility on us personally to stick with the truth.

- Yes, some passages are difficult to understand—but not impossible! (2 Corinthians 1:13). Strive to comprehend them yourself first, before asking others what they mean.



2 Timothy 2:15—Becoming a well-equipped workman (3:17), not being ashamed, developing competence in studying with people.



1 Peter 3:15—Equipped for evangelism: not just Bible knowledge, but being able to answer questions, helping others, maintaining gentleness and respect.



James 1:22-25—Useless to study the Bible without making the applications to our lives.

- Suggested: Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1:2-3, 119 (entire), Ezra 7:10, Isaiah 66:2b, Matthew 24:35, Romans 15:4, 1 Corinthians 10:11, Colossians 3:16, 2 Timothy 2:7

Conclusion

Practicals

- Have a set time to study your Bible daily. Read daily (Acts 17:11, Deuteronomy 17:18-20).
- Write down the convicting points and pray about them.
- Do well in church classes and teaching programs.
- If you are reading the Bible for the first time, don’t try to read straight through. Focus on the NT until you are quite familiar with it, then venture out into OT.

Faith, Works and Grace: The Balance



Follow up study
for the new
convert

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Balancing our work with God's work

Purpose: To help those who struggle with salvation by works and challenge those who use grace as an excuse for lukewarmness

Introduction

One of the greatest travesties in the church today is that new Christians are taught to depend on self, to struggle up the road of salvation by works. This attitude may be created before he/she is baptized, in the Bible study setting. But more often this is an acquired deficiency, learned through observation of “older” Christians. Such an orientation undoes the work of the cross. Equally sad, however, is the school of thought that prides itself on having arrived at a true understanding of grace, only to condone and even encourage lukewarm commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ. Clearly we must strike the balance—hence this study.

Main Study

1. FAITH

 **Hebrews 11:6**—We need faith to please God, but what is faith?

 **James 2:14-16**—Faith is more than intellectual belief— it results in action. Compare verses 20-24 with Genesis 22. Note the interrelationship between faith and obedience.

2. WORKS

 **Ephesians 2:8-10**—The Bible clearly teaches that we are not saved by our own effort, but this doesn't mean that God doesn't expect anything from us. It is an unearned gift, but it is conditional on obedience (2 Kings 5:1-15).

3. GRACE

 **Titus 3:5**—We're saved not because of our righteous deeds, but by his mercy.

- Grace is unmerited favor or mercy. But the fact that we do not earn or deserve it does not mean that we can do as we like (Jude 4).

 **1 Corinthians 15:10**—Grace will have its effect.

 **Titus 2:11-14**—It is because of grace that we strive to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives.

Relationships in the Church



Follow up study
for the new
convert

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: The need for relationships to help us stay faithful

Purpose: To tie in the new convert to his new church family

Introduction

When one enters the community of the redeemed, relationships are radically transformed! Instead of having ourselves as the centre of our focus, we are to “consider others better than ourselves” (Philippians 2:3). However, implementation of these biblical principles will never occur as long as we retain a denominational concept of fellowship and the body. Church is not something we attend; it is an opportunity to tend to needs. And there are many needs to be tended to! If young Christians are not grafted into the body in a functional way, they will most likely be reclaimed by the world. And if that is what is happening in our ministries, we are failing (1 Corinthians 2:12-15). The most crucial time for integrating the young convert into the local congregation is the first few weeks—and even days.

Main Study



Why different from the world’s relationships?



John 13:34-35—Jesus commands us to love each other as he has loved us. This quality of love is what makes us distinct as Christians.



Mark 3:35—We are Jesus’ brothers and sisters if we do God’s will. Because of this common purpose, Christian relationships transcend even blood relations.



How are they different?



1 Peter 1:22—Our love for each other must be sincere and from the heart.



1 John 3:16—Jesus is our example. Our love for others can be measured by how much we are willing to sacrifice for them.



What does this mean in practice?



1 Thessalonians 5:12—Different people have different needs.



1 John 3:17—Look after each other’s material needs.



Colossians 1:28—Let’s be concerned about each other’s spiritual well-being.

Conclusion



Ephesians 4:29—Be edifying.



Ephesians 5:21—Be submissive not only to leaders (Hebrews 13:17) but also to each other.

- Suggested: Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35, Romans 12:5, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Hebrews 10:24-25, 13:1-2, James 1:19, 3 John 5.

Practicals

- Make it a point to phone other disciples.
- Spend time with other Christians in order to build relationships (Hebrews 3:12-14).
- Pray for each other daily.
- Introduce yourself to at least one new person in each service for next month.
- Write notes and cards to your brothers and sisters. Write also to leaders in your congregation to encourage them.

The New Testament Church: Three Aspects



Follow up study
for the new
convert

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Communion, Contribution, Confession

Purpose: To help the young convert understand three important NT practices

Introduction

We demand book, chapter and verse for all our doctrines and practices—and rightly so. Hearing our Restoration pleas, how does a young Christian respond when he sees many practices he may never before have seen in his life? He is not used to *weekly* communion, and certainly not to *sacrificial* contributing. And what about the strange custom of “going forward”? This study provides scriptural explanation for these three practices in the New Testament Church.

Main Study

1. Communion (*Lord’s Supper, Eucharist*)

📖 **Matthew 26:26-29**—Passover supper (Jewish background). Bread is the body of Christ, wine is blood.

📖 **1 Corinthians 11:23ff**—Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper. It is a proclamation of the Lord’s death until he comes. Examine yourself before eating.

📖 **Acts 20:7**—Christians came together in order to break bread.

- It appears from the evidence of the NT and that of early church history that the Christians broke bread together at least once a week.
- Suggested: Exodus 12 (historical background), Mark 12:12-26, Luke 22:7-20, John 6:48-58, Acts 2:42.

2. Contribution (*for needs of the church*)

📖 **Matthew 6:21**—Your treasure is where your heart is.

📖 **Matthew 6:24**—Cannot serve both God and money, so make sure that God is first.

📖 **Proverbs 3:9-10**—Are you honoring God with your money? Give him “firstfruits” of your income. Be responsible when you are away; leave your contribution behind (church needs it)

📖 **1 Corinthians 16:1-2**—Taking up a collection to meet the needs of the poor is biblical.

📖 **2 Corinthians 8:1-15**—Advance planning.

📖 **2 Corinthians 9:6ff**—Good material on sacrificial giving...

- Suggested: Exodus 36:6-7, Mark 12:41-44, Luke 6:38, 1 Timothy 6:5-10, 17.

3. Confession of sin (*e.g. coming forward*)

📖 **James 5:16**—Public confession. No private “confessional” in the Bible. Ask spiritual people to pray for you. Their prayers will be effective.

📖 **Proverbs 28:13**—You will not prosper if you keep sins inside.

Being Disciplined: God's Plan



Follow up study
for the new
convert

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Discipling

Purpose: To teach God's plan of discipling

Introduction

Although you will not find a doctrine of “discipling partners” explicitly spelled out in the NT, it is indisputable that the scriptures teach the necessity of discipling. The importance of ongoing discipleship should be clear to someone before baptism. This study aims to cultivate an attitude of openness on the part of the young Christian to discipling, as well as to remind him that, in the final analysis, it is the responsibility of the one who has confessed Jesus as Lord to persevere in his Christian growth.

Discipleship is not a human expedient; it is a command of God (Matthew 28:19).

Main Study

1. Levels of discipling

-  **Hebrews 3:12**—Others disciple us.
-  **Hebrews 4:12**—The Word disciplines us.
-  **Hebrews 5:12**—We disciple ourselves.
-  **Hebrews 6:12**—The Lord (through circumstances requiring patience) disciplines us, too.

2. Being disciplined

-  **2 Timothy 2:2**—Discipling process: a chain reaction.
-  **Colossians 1:28-2:1**—The goal is maturity/completeness/perfection. There will be difficulties in any discipling relationship, but try to realize that the challenges you receive are made in love. Discipling is hard work.
-  **1 Corinthians 11:1**—Follow the good example of the one discipling you. He/she is not perfect, so follow only insofar as he/she is following Christ.
-  **Proverbs 10:17**—Attitude of openness to correction. If you have the wrong attitude, you will lead others astray.
-  **Proverbs 11:14**—Ask for advice.
-  **Proverbs 12:15 and 15:12**—Cherish challenge and initiate with the one discipling you.
-  **Luke 6:39-40**—End result: becoming like your teacher, making his good points part of your own life and character.

3. Discipling yourself

-  **Hebrews 5:11-14**—Don't be slow to learn. By constant use (habit), train yourself. Ultimately, you're the one responsible for how you do spiritually. You can't blame your failings on others.

4. Practicals

- Arrange a regular time to meet together each week.
- Strive for daily contact.
- Read Gordon Ferguson's *Discipling: God's Plan to Train and Transform his People* (Woburn, Mass.: Discipleship Publications International, 1996).

Hindrances to Becoming Like Christ: The Heart



Follow up study
for the new
convert

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Hindrances to becoming like Christ

Purpose: To help someone 'guard his or her heart'

Introduction

The Bible speaks of the heart as the governing center of the whole man—intellectual, physical, and psychological, and thus a man's heart makes him what he is and gives rise to all his thoughts and actions. It is imperative that a young disciple be taught to guard his heart, to keep it sensitive and open to God's word.

 **1 Samuel 16:7**—God looks at the heart.

Main Study

1. Problems of the heart

 **Jeremiah 17:9**—Deceitfulness: in the sense of feelings and impulses. Deceitful with regard to discerning the truth, or what is best.

 **Mark 7:21**—Sinfulness: the heart is the source of sin, as well as evil desires.

 **Hebrews 3:12**—Hardening: hearts can become hard, become unbelieving (doubt) and turn away from God.

2. The remedy

 **Jeremiah 29:13**—*Seek* God with all our heart. This verse is not just for non-Christians!

 **Psalms 51:17**—Cultivate a penitent, *contrite heart*, which responds quickly to God's Word.

 **Psalms 119:11**—Hide *God's Word* in our hearts.

 **Proverbs 3:5-6**—*Trust* in the Lord with all our hearts.

3. Practicals

- Pray for a pure heart.
- Confess sin; be humble.
- Write out Bible verses which pertain to your heart.

Conclusion

 **Proverbs 4:23**—Above all else, guard your heart! It's the source of our spiritual life.

- Suggested: Genesis 6:5, 2 Chronicles 16:9, Psalm 51:10, Proverbs 14:12, 28:26, Ezek 18:31, 1 Jn 3:20

hindrances to Becoming Like Christ: laziness, idleness, Discipline



Follow up study
for the new
convert

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Hindrances to becoming like Christ

Purpose: To help a new convert become disciplined

Introduction

How many of us have had great dreams for how God was going to use us—how he would mold us into what he wanted us to be—and just when the going got rough, and the process became painful, we resisted, and perhaps even took a couple of steps backwards! Few of us are naturally disciplined; discipline must be learned. And yet without it, how do we suppose that we will take the gospel into all the world? Surely that is fantasy! Discipline, therefore, must be built into our Christian lives from the earliest possible moment.

 **1 Timothy 4:7**—Train yourself to be godly. Physical training (sports) is of limited value, but spiritual training is immeasurably valuable. The Christian life is a process of training in righteousness.

Main Study

1. Laziness

 **Hebrews 6:12**—Don't become lazy. Laziness is a constant threat to the life of every Christian, young or old. Imitate those who are patient, faithful and disciplined. Look for good examples; learn from them. Realize laziness is a sin!

- Suggested: Proverbs 12:1, 24:30-34, 26:13-16.

2. Idleness

 **1 Thessalonians 4:11ff**—Be constructive members of society and of the church. Hard-working people win the respect of others. Try not to be dependent on anybody (do not go into/remain in debt).

 **2 Thessalonians 3:3ff**—Follow the example of disciplined people. Don't be a “busy-body”—appearing busy but not really achieving anything.

3. Discipline

 **Heb 12:11-12**—No discipline pleasant, but it yields a more satisfying life. Make your life count!

- Suggested: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, 2 Timothy 2:4-6, Hebrews 5:14.

Practicals

- Make a timetable of how you use your time. Get some suggestions.
- Set some goals.
- Spend time with a disciplined person and learn from him or her.
- If you are not a punctual person, make an effort to be early.

- Suggested: *The Disciplined Life* by Richard Taylor and *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey.

Evangelism, Boldness, Tact



Follow up study
for the new
convert

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Boldness and tact in evangelism

Purpose: To help the new disciple overcome fear in evangelizing

Introduction

When it comes to evangelism, few young Christians possess both boldness and tact. People usually go to one extreme or the other: so tactful that they say little, if anything, or so bold that tact is thrown to the wind. Boldness comes via prayer, and tact is developed through observation of those who are diplomatic. In view of the crippling effect of fear on new Christians—and old—and considering the number of tactical errors that are made by all, why we need a separate lesson on this important subject.

Main Study

1. Evangelism

-  **2 Corinthians 5:10-21**—Because we know and fear God, we try to persuade others. We are Christ's ambassadors and God has given to us the ministry of reconciliation. It is not an option.
-  **Acts 8:1, 4**—The early Christians were evangelistic—not just the leaders!

2. Boldness

-  **Romans 1:16-17**—The gospel is nothing to be ashamed of because it has the power to save.
-  **Luke 9:23-26**—If we are ashamed of Jesus and his words, he will be ashamed of us.
-  **Acts 4:29-31**—Pray for boldness! God will answer your prayer.

3. Tact

-  **Matthew 10:16**—Need to be wise/shrewd in our evangelism.
- *Negatives:*
 -  **Proverbs 12:18**—Reckless words.
 -  **Proverbs 25:17**—Too frequent contact.
 -  **Proverbs 27:14**—Coming on too strong.
- *Positives:*
 -  **1 Corinthians 9:20-23**—Accommodate yourself to your hearer.
 -  **Titus 2:10**—Make the gospel attractive.
 -  **1 Peter 3:15-16**—Show gentleness and respect.
- Suggested: Matthew 7:6, 2 Timothy 2:23-26.

Practicals

- Push yourself to be friendly and start conversations wherever you go. The Lord will use this.
- Set a personal goal for guests at an upcoming service.
- Work on improving one area of your life in order to make the gospel more attractive.
- Go evangelizing with someone.

Service with a Smile



Follow up study
for the new
convert

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Serving is God's way to greatness

Purpose: To teach that the road up is the road down

Introduction

When Jesus came to the earth, he came as a servant (Mark 10:45). And he is still a servant, since he always lives to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25). In following the Master, this is one area that we dare not play down, no matter how unglamorous it may seem. For, as Jesus taught us, the road up is the road down.

Main Study

- 📖 **Matthew 20:26-28**—The way up is the way of service, opposite the way of the world. Jesus came to serve, not to be served.
- 📖 **Philippians 2:3-8**—Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Consider others better than yourselves—then you'll look to see others' needs met. For Jesus to come to earth was the supreme act of self-humiliation. We need to imitate this selfless example in our everyday lives.
- 📖 **Luke 17:7-10**—When we have served, our attitude should be that we have only done our duty. No complaining (Philippians 2:14); no expectation of reward.
- 📖 **Colossians 3:23-24**—Serve with all your heart! Realize that you are serving the Lord Christ, not men.
- Suggested: Psalm 100:2, Proverbs 3:27-28, John 13:1-17, Galatians 6:2, 10, Ephesians 6:7-8, Philippians 4:4-5

Practicals

- Learn to serve without being asked. Look for needs.
- When asked to help in a particular way, *be responsible!* For example, duties such as children's ministry, ushering, communion, teaching, clean-up, office duty, and food preparation.

Academics: Obstacle or Opportunity?



Follow up study
for the new
convert

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Making an excellent effort at school, college, and university

Purpose: Our academics is a God-given responsibility

Introduction

God certainly expects excellence of Christian students: if not excellent results, at least excellent effort. Too often (undisciplined) students become Christians and then use evangelism or “the church” as an excuse for mediocre performance. We must help our students to see that academics are a God-given responsibility. There is nothing “unspiritual” about studies. The unspiritual course to take is to neglect academics. Without perseverance the student suffers great loss in character, discipline, confidence, and credibility—not to mention future prospects.

Main Study

1. Clear commission

 **1 Corinthians 7:25**—God called us to be Christians as students for a reason! We have a responsibility to glorify God in academics and evangelism.

 **Colossians 3:22-23**—*Attitude* is more important than *aptitude*. Academics are a vital part of your “spiritual” life. To have consistent motivation, work for God, not for self.

2. Evangelistic example

 **1 Thessalonians 4:11**—A consistent example has an impact! Classmates will be drawn to those who can help others.

 **Mark 7:37**—People were amazed by Jesus’ all-around excellence. You will amaze family and friends if you excel in all areas. “Ministry *through* academics, not *in spite of* academics.”

3. Powerful preparation

 **James 1:2-4**—Persevering with academics leads to spiritual maturity: discipline, focus, faith

- Suggested: Proverbs 6:6, 18:9, Philippians 2:14-16, 1 Timothy 3:7, 4:15-16

Practicals

- Seek discipling in your academics.
- Get input from professors, lecturers, classmates.
- Attend every lecture. This is important for your example.
- Take good notes, and catch up on missed lectures.
- Go through homework within a day of receiving it and plan how you will get it done.
- Keep current at all times! For conscience’s sake, as well as for practical reasons.
- Aim to sleep reasonably, especially during exams.

Christian Marriage: Cord of Three Strands



Follow up study
for the new
convert

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Christian marriage

Purpose: Having a great marriage

Introduction

God's Word and power provide us with everything we need for happy, godly, fulfilling lives in every area (2 Timothy 3:17, 2 Peter 1:3, John 10:10). The area of marriage is crucial, and if marriage is not going well, serious spiritual problems will also be present. Marriage is a vital area for discipling. Indeed, Christian marriage is one arena in which disciples will dramatically outshine the many worldly examples surrounding them. A great marriage draws others to Jesus!

Main Study

1. God's plan

- Marriage meets our deepest needs (Genesis 2:24, Proverbs 18:22). Your husband or wife should be your closest friend!
- Marry a Christian! (1 Corinthians 7:39).
- Marriage is for life (Matthew 19:9).
- Take advice! (Proverbs 15:22)

2. Worldly v. spiritual marriages

- Communication
 1. Time together (meals, discipling, unscheduled time)
 2. Listening (especially needful for husbands)
 3. Express, don't suppress feelings
 4. No festering resentments (Colossians 3:13)
 5. Co-ordinate schedules; don't leave each other in the dark about the other's plans!
 6. Communication may intensify conflict; expect it, don't avoid it!
- Selfishness
 1. Harsh husbands? (Colossians 3:19) Husbands must serve their wives, being considerate (1 Peter 3:7). Husbands should do their share of the housework, cleaning, taking care of children...
 2. Bossy/nagging wives (Proverbs 21:19, 25:24, 27:15). Wives must learn submission (Colossians 3:18, 1 Peter 3:5-6).
 3. Weak husbands? (henpecked) The man must be spiritual leader in the relationship (Eph 5:22-33).
- Hospitality
 1. Is homelife centered only around each other, life in a cozy, selfish, private world?
 2. Hospitality is God's will! (1 Peter 4:9) open your home to others.
 3. Use hospitality in evangelism.
 4. This is the husband's responsibility even more than the wife's (1 Timothy 3:4)!
 5. An untidy home isn't inviting! (Proverbs 24:30-34)

- Spirituality
 1. Talk about spiritual things when together.
 2. Pray with spouse daily.
 3. Don't "protect" each other when there is lukewarmness or compromise (Acts 5:1-11); speak the truth in love! (Ephesians 4:15).
- Romance
 1. Don't deprive one another (1 Corinthians 7:5).
 2. Remember the special touches! (Cards, flowers, presents, surprises...)
- Input
 1. Are you (two) closed to input? Festering problems?
 2. Every marriage needs counseling! no one is above it!
 3. Marriages need discipling. "Four-way openness": husbands & wives having permission from each other to speak to the other's discipler if there are unresolved problems. (Good test of sincerity.)

Practicals

- Pray together every day!
- Share your faith together.
- Share Quiet Times from time to time.
- Work on the church classes together. Expect the best of each other!
- Spend an evening a week alone together, showing your love for each other and really communicating.
- Read and discuss 1 Corinthians 13.
- Read Song of Songs to one another! (Lover and Beloved parts)
- Pray daily that you will be able to study with one couple together.
- Have frequent double dates.
- Discuss your schedules together.
- Plan an overnight trip together (without the children).
- Read Sam and Geri Laing's *Friends and Lovers* (DPI).

The Christian Family: Parents and Children



Follow up study
for the new
convert

Courtesy of Douglas Jacoby

Theme: Building a Christ-centered family

Purpose: To create a family that is distinct from what the world is offering

Introduction

The family is the basic social unit, and to understand the desperate plight our society is in, you need only to look at the desperate straits the average family is in! In stark contrast to families in the world, with their narrow outlook, poor communication, brewing resentments, undisciplined children, and decaying marriages, the Christ-centered family is a breath of fresh air and a ray of hope.

The family following God's Word is a happy, communicative, warm, loving, committed and fruitful family. Just as Christian marriage is God's wise plan for men and women to love and live together, so the Christian family is both God's answer to the ungodliness and selfishness of society and his plan for character development in his most precious gift to parents: their children.

Main Study

Spiritual focus

- Chain of command (Christ—husband—wife—children)
- If you want a great family life, you need discipling!
- Aim to have an evangelistically fruitful family!

Bringing up children

- Basic need for security and happiness:
 - Time - you'll need to re-order your priorities!
 - Affection - without it, they will become insecure, cold, introverted, awkward around strangers.
 - Spiritual examples (parents) - Ephesians 6:4, Deuteronomy 6:7
- Discipline - it's unloving not to give it (Proverbs 23:13-14). Discipline is training.
 - Encouragement is necessary (Colossians 3:21)
 - Discipline is essential
 - God commands it (Proverbs 22:15, 29:15, 17, 19, 21)
 - The husband is the chief discipler.
 - Wife and husband should agree on the "rules," lest the children pick and choose whom to obey!
 - Areas of training (Proverbs 22:6)
 - Respect toward authority
 - Speech and openness
 - Affection
 - Manners

- Tidiness
- Moodiness
- Regular discipling times with each child!

Other Important Matters

- Regular, consistent family devotionals.
- Be on time to church. Allow extra time, particularly considering the children. Plan to come early!
- Pray with the children before they go to bed
- Have a weekly family time
- If you have Christian children, work with the pre-teen or teen ministry. Embrace feedback. Don't be defensive.

Practicals

- Create a simple system of allowances and incentives for the children.
- Take the whole family out evangelizing. Reach out to other families as a family.
- Ask Christians you respect to recommend helpful books.

Follow-up Studies: Closing Considerations

We recommend that the 13 follow-up studies be covered at the rate of about one to two per week for a span of two to three months. Depending on the needs, they may be used in any order. In addition to the studies presented in this chapter, it may be helpful to use some of the Basic, Intermediate, or Advanced studies not covered in your personal study with the young Christian.