

BRUDERHAND-MEDIEN

Basic Bible Course

NEW LIFE WITH JESUS

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Bruderhand-Media
Wienhausen, Germany

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STUDY GUIDELINES

This Bible course can be used alone as a personal Bible study or in a group setting.

I. Personal Bible Study

The course can be undertaken completely on your own. To do this, it is best to read each lesson and the suggested Bible verses thoroughly. Base your answers to the discussion questions on what the Bible says and write them down.

II. Group Work

Each lesson consists of a detailed and an abridged version. The course can be worked through using either option.

A. Using the Detailed Version

The detailed version provides a clear outline of the topic, along with many Bible passages and discussion questions.

There is often not enough time to cover the entire lesson in one session. Therefore, the group leader should prepare beforehand to decide which points and questions to focus on. To cover each topic thoroughly, two meetings may be needed.

The group leader may read parts of the lesson aloud or ask others to read to the group. They should explain which Bible passages will be read and discussed, ask questions of the group, and lead the group discussion.

B. Using the Abridged Version

The abridged version is suitable when there is less time for group work. It includes the main points from each lesson, some scriptures and occasionally some questions that can be discussed as a group. The group leader can also supplement the Bible study with the detailed version.



You make known to me the path of life;
 you will fill me with joy in your presence.
 Psalm 16:11

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

For as long as the Bible has existed, people have received strength, encouragement, and comfort from it. Because it is God's Word, it is the trustworthy foundation that we can build our faith and lives on. We should not only read and study the Bible, but also put into practice what it says.

I. What Is the Bible?

The Bible is a collection of 66 individual books written over a period of approximately 1,500 years by over 40 different authors. It is inspired by the Holy Spirit and conveys God's message to us with divine authority. The Bible is authoritative for our relationship with God and for our lives as Christians.

The books used in worship by the early Greek-speaking Christians were called *biblia* (= books). The English word *Bible* was derived from *biblia* and put in the singular. Thus, the word *Bible* points to the unity of the Word of God.

II. The Structure of the Bible

The Bible consists of two parts with a total of 66 different books:

- Old Testament (OT): 39 books
- New Testament (NT): 27 books

Both the Old and New Testaments can be divided into:

- Historical books
- Teaching books
- Prophetic books

The current chapter divisions were decided upon by Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury (1227 AD), and the verse divisions by Robert E. Stephanus, a French printer (1551 AD).

Did you know...

- the Bible has 1,189 chapters?
- it takes 80–100 hours to read through the Bible once?
- you can get through the Bible in a year if you read four chapters a day?

THE BIBLE					
The Old Testament			The New Testament		
Historical Books	Teaching Books	Prophetic Books	Historical Books	Teaching Books	Prophetic Books
Genesis	Job	Isaiah	Matthew	Romans	Revelation
Exodus	Psalms	Jeremiah	Mark	1 Corinthians	
Leviticus	Proverbs	Lamentations	Luke	2 Corinthians	
Numbers	Ecclesiastes	Ezekiel	John	Galatians	
Deuteronomy	Song of Songs	Daniel	Acts	Ephesians	
Joshua		Hosea		Philippians	
Judges		Joel		Colossians	
Ruth		Amos		1 Thessalonians	
1 Samuel		Obadiah		2 Thessalonians	
2 Samuel		Jonah		1 Timothy	
1 Kings		Micah		2 Timothy	
2 Kings		Nahum		Titus	
1 Chronicles		Habakkuk		Philemon	
2 Chronicles		Zephaniah		Hebrews	
Ezra		Haggai		James	
Nehemiah		Zechariah		1 Peter	
Esther		Malachi		2 Peter	
				1 John	
				2 John	
				3 John	
				Jude	

III. How Did the Bible Come into Existence?

A. Authors

The Bible is unique in its origin. It was written by at least 40 authors, including kings, government officials, scholars, poets, shepherds, and fishermen. They wrote in different places, such as in prisons, in palaces, and on journeys. The authors wrote on three different continents (Africa, Asia, Europe), came from different walks of life, and wrote in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek) over a period of approximately 1,500 years.

Although many people contributed to the Bible, it reads as one perfect, finished book.

B. Inspiration

It is crucial to acknowledge that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. It was written by people under the guidance (inspiration) of the Holy Spirit. However, their own personalities were not disregarded, resulting in a perfect and errorless message from God to us.

The Bible itself claims to be God's Word. It is therefore reliable, trustworthy, and true.

Psalms 119:160

All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.

2 Peter 1:20–21

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2 Timothy 3:16

In 3,808 places in the Old Testament there are statements such as “*The LORD says...*”. This underlines the fact that the Old Testament is God's message to us.

In the New Testament we see that the apostles knew they were proclaiming God's message.

2 Corinthians 2:17

Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.

C. Reliability

Until the invention of the printing press, the Bible was handed down through the generations as handwritten copies. It was copied with greater care than any other book. There are at least 15,000 comparative manuscripts of the Bible which can be used to check for copying errors. Today, no text of antiquity can be proven with such certainty as the Bible.

IV. How Can We Study the Bible Profitably?

We should not be satisfied with reading the Bible haphazardly. Instead, we can discover its riches by praying before we read it, considering the context, and memorising Bible verses.

A. Praying Then Reading

Psalm 119:18

Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

Because the Bible speaks about spiritual things, we must also use spiritual means to understand it properly. God wants to enlighten our understanding so that we can better understand him and his will. Therefore, we should pray before reading the Bible and then read with a willingness to be changed by it.

B. Considering the Context

To correctly understand the Bible, we need to consider the context in which it was written, since Bible passages that are taken out of context may lose their meaning.

- To interpret the Bible we should keep in mind that it was written in a different time and cultural setting.
- Figurative language must be recognised and interpreted as such.
- When trying to understand a difficult verse it is helpful to look up other appropriate Bible passages. Reference books such as a lexicon or commentary on the Bible can also be useful.

C. Memorising Bible Verses

Proverbs 7:2–3

Keep my commands and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart.

God wants us to know the Bible. When we memorise Bible verses, we can think about them at any time and apply them in any situation. In difficult times the memorised Word of God comforts us. Memorised Bible verses also help us when we share the gospel with others.



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It is difficult to explain,
but something new arose in me:
true, eternal life.

CONVERSION

AND THE BEGINNING OF A NEW LIFE

Herbert Henggi was a Swiss ice hockey national goalie who later became a Christian gospel singer and evangelist. In the following article he recounts how Jesus radically changed his life.

I was young and had no time to waste; often I was too busy. My education should have been priority number one, but for me it was a secondary duty. What really kept me busy were my hobbies.

As a goalkeeper for an ice hockey team I had to train hard in order not to be outplayed by the substitute goalkeeper. After all, we belonged to the first amateur league and I had ambitions to make the junior national team.

During the summer break I played football with equal enthusiasm. I had to stay fit. Because of my condition, I became a defender. But I was not satisfied!

I embarked on a third, very decisive and defining passion: music. As lead guitarist I put everything into it. In our band, the *Black Angels*, we were anything but angels. We enjoyed being in the limelight and being admired, especially by women.

Despite all the success, I felt deep emptiness. I felt lonely and empty, rushed and restless.

During this time I was made aware of other values, first through my landlady. She described herself as a Christian and she was actively involved in a church. Yes, I accepted this Jesus she was always talking about, but beyond that I had nothing to do with him. My thoughts increasingly revolved around the question of the meaning of life and what death means.

One day my landlady had a visit from a young Christian man. Because I was not available during the day, this man actually had the audacity to wake me up in the middle of the night! He sat down at my bedside and started talking about Jesus and my life. He claimed to have found the meaning of life in Jesus Christ. Jesus had totally changed his life. And then he explained that

my guilt separates me from God and what I lacked was a personal relationship with God. I needed forgiveness for my sins and the assurance of salvation through Jesus Christ.

I reflected: I had enough ideals and idols. But the security and freedom that this man had, I did not know. There he was, sitting in front of me, claiming that he knew the answer to my questioning and searching: Jesus Christ! I hesitated. Should I throw him out or accept his words?

As a sportsman and musician I was used to taking risks. There was nothing to lose – except my mask. And so I was ready to try it with this Jesus. We said a prayer together that went something like this:

“Lord Jesus, I open the door to my life to you. Forgive my sins, my unbelief, all my guilt. I now receive you as my Saviour and Lord. Take dominion over my life. Change me into what you want me to be. Thank you that you also died on the cross for my guilt. Thank you for forgiving me now and coming into my life. Amen.”

God answered this simple prayer. It is difficult to explain, but something new arose in me: true, eternal life. I became a new person. Through this prayer, Jesus moved into my life. That night I realised for the first time that Jesus takes me seriously. I realised that God has a plan for my life.

Now I am no longer aimless and restless. I have found the meaning of life. Above all, I know that God has forgiven my sins.

The Bible says in 1 John 1:9, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

And John 1:12 says, *“Yet to all who did receive him [Jesus], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”*

Many think it is a risk to accept Jesus. I can say that it was the most important decision of my life.

I wrote this report because I know that you can have the same experience with Jesus Christ if you entrust yourself to him. And that is what I wish for you!

This article by Herbert Henggi was published as a pamphlet *Living at the Limit* (Order No. 2-0) by Missionswerk Bruderhand, Germany.

I. WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?

People answer the question “*Who is a Christian?*” in many different ways.

► **Activity 1:** Which of the following statements do you think are correct?

A Christian is someone who...

- ☐ lives in a Christian country.
- ☐ was baptised as a child.
- ☐ leads an orderly life.
- ☐ belongs to a Christian church.
- ☐ has made a decision for Jesus.
- ☐ reads the Bible regularly.
- ☐ has been brought up in a Christian way.
- ☐ takes their religion seriously.

To find the correct meaning of the word *Christian*, let us look at the Bible where this word first appears.

Acts 11:26b

The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

► **Activity 2:** What word was originally used to describe the Christians in Antioch (*Acts 11:26*)?

► **Activity 3:** How did the people in Antioch become Christians (*Acts 11:20–21*)?

From the account of the first Christians in Antioch, we see that a Christian is someone who has decided to put their faith in Jesus and to follow him as their Lord and Saviour.

What are *Nominal Christians*?

Nominal Christians are people who call themselves Christians even though they have no personal relationship with Jesus. Jesus sharply criticised those who only observe religious acts without opening their hearts to God.

Mark 7:6–7

He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: ‘These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.’”

- **Activity 4:** To what extent does a new label change the contents of a package?
In what way can the label *Christian* change a person's heart?

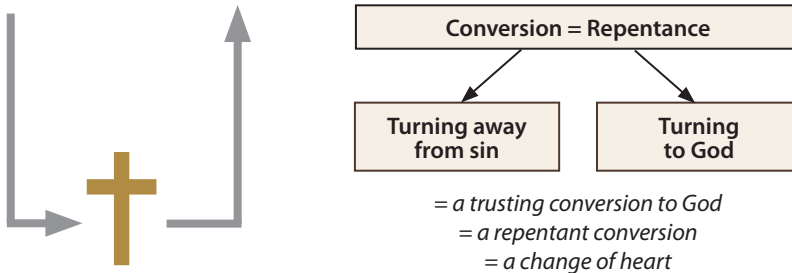
II. WHAT DOES CONVERSION MEAN?

Acts 26:17–18

[Jesus:] I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

A. Definition

Conversion is the radical, one-time turning of a person to God through Jesus Christ in response to his call.



Conversion is the only way to receive forgiveness of sins and to escape the judgement of God.

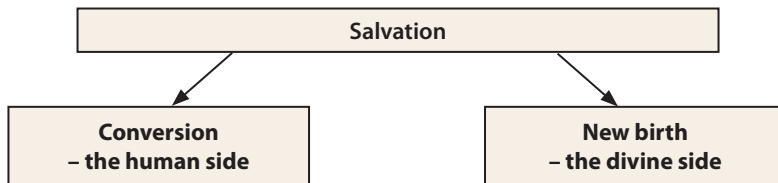
1 Thessalonians 1:9

...for they themselves [people from surrounding places] report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.

- **Activity 5:** What misconceptions do many people have about conversion?

B. Conversion Is the Human Side of Salvation

Just as a coin has two sides, salvation has two sides: a human side and a divine side.



1. The Human Side

Conversion is what a person must do to be saved: they must make the decision to repent and follow Jesus. Conversion is therefore the human side of salvation (*Acts 14:15*).

2. The Divine Side

The new birth is what God does. Through the new birth he gives us a totally new life. Therefore, the new birth is God's part in salvation (*John 3:3*).

Conversion – the human side	New Birth – the divine side
– an individual's responsibility – an individual must make a decision to repent	– the task of God – God gives a new life: the individual is born again

► **Activity 6:** Is a true conversion followed by the new birth (*John 1:12; 1 John 5:1*)?

C. Bible Verses About Conversion

In the **Old Testament** the words *turn/convert* occur approximately 1,050 times. They are often used in the general sense of *turn back*, *turn around*, or *go back*. In about 120 other places they are used for *returning* to the living God.

Here are several examples of Old Testament Bible verses about conversion.

1 Samuel 7:3

*So Samuel said to all the Israelites, "If you are **returning to the Lord** with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."*

Isaiah 59:20

Ezekiel 18:23

Ezekiel 33:11

In the **New Testament** the Greek words for *conversion* are sometimes used with the general meaning of *returning/turning (on a path)*. In about 70 other places they are used for *turning back to the living God*.

In the New Testament there are two Greek words which are translated into the English word *conversion*. The first is

epistrophē/epistréphō

= conversion, to turn around, to turn back, to come back.

Acts 11:21

*The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and **turned to the Lord**.*

Acts 26:20

*First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should **repent and turn to God** and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds.*

Matthew 18:3; Luke 1:16, 22:32; Acts 3:19, 11:21, 14:15, 26:18; 1 Thessalonians 1:9–10; 1 Peter 2:25.

The second word in Greek is ***metánoia***

= conversion, repentance, change of mind.

Matthew 4:17

*From that time on Jesus began to preach, "**Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."*

Matthew 11:20; Mark 1:15; Luke 5:32, 13:3, 15:7, 24:47; Acts 2:38, 11:18, 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9.

► **Activity 7:** The terms *repentance*, *conversion*, *receiving Jesus*, and *faith* have a lot to do with each other. What do they mean? What are the differences?

III. WHY IS CONVERSION NECESSARY?

A. Because God Commands It

God sees people going their own way and not asking for him. He wants them to change their minds and turn to him (*Matthew 4:17*).

Acts 3:19

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

- **Activity 8:** What will people experience when they obey the will of God (*John 7:16–17*)?

B. Because We Are Sinners

The Bible teaches that every human is a sinner. Each of us has rebelled against God and broken his commandments.

Romans 3:22b–23

There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Psalms 51:5

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

- **Activity 9:** What do *Isaiah 53:6* and *1 Corinthians 6:9–10* teach us about sin and its consequences?
- **Activity 10:** What does sin do to our relationship with God (*Isaiah 59:1–2*)?
- **Activity 11:** What awaits those who die without Jesus (*Romans 6:23; Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 21:8*)?

C. Because Jesus Is the Only Saviour

John 14:6

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Is Jesus the only Saviour? Yes, because Jesus alone was without sin. Every other person sins and cannot save themselves or others from the punishment that must be paid for sinning. Jesus did not sin even once and therefore did not need anyone to pay for his debt.

2 Corinthians 5:21

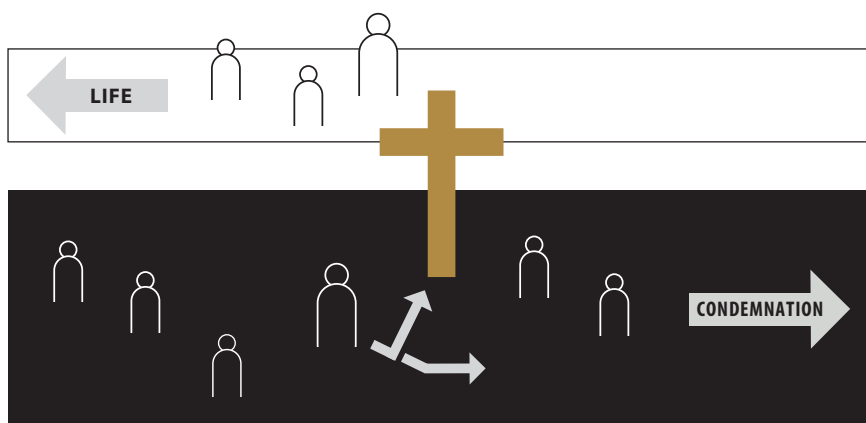
His sinlessness enabled him to take our sins onto himself. Because of his great love for us he died for our sins willingly on the cross of Calvary (*Hebrews 12:2*). Salvation is found in no one else – only in Jesus (*Acts 4:12*)!

► **Activity 12:** Is it possible to find peace with God through a decent lifestyle, good works, or being religious (*Romans 4:4–5; Ephesians 2:8–9*)?

D. Because We Need to Be Saved

People who live without Jesus are on the path that leads to being eternally separated from God. They need salvation through Jesus Christ.

According to *Matthew 7:13–14*, all humanity can be divided into two groups. Everyone is journeying either on the broad or narrow way (*see sketch below*).



The Broad and the Narrow Way

► **Activity 13:** Read *Matthew 7:13–14* and answer the following questions.

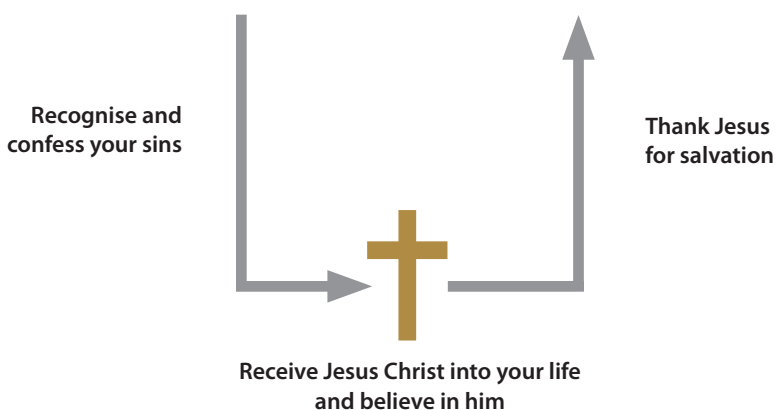
- Where does the broad way lead?
- Where does the narrow way lead?
- What must a person do to change from the broad to the narrow way (*John 10:9*)?

To change from the broad to the narrow way, a person must come to Jesus. They must bring their sins to Jesus in prayer and accept him as Lord of their life (= *conversion*). God then gives them a new life (= *new birth*). They become a child of God who is now on the narrow path that leads to heaven.

Which path are you on?

Either	Or	Bible Passages
– on the broad way – lost – eternal condemnation – life in darkness	– on the narrow way – saved – eternal life – life in the light	<i>Matthew 7:13–14</i> <i>John 3:16</i> <i>2 Thessalonians 1:9</i> <i>Acts 26:18</i>

IV. HOW DOES CONVERSION HAPPEN?



A. Recognise and Confess Your Sins

Before someone asks Jesus to forgive their sins they must first recognise that they are guilty before God. If they come to Jesus with their guilt, then Jesus will gladly take it away.

Luke 18:13

But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

Luke 15:21

1 John 1:9

B. Receive Jesus Christ into Your Life and Believe in Him

To experience true conversion, we must receive Jesus by asking him to come into our lives and to become our Lord.

John 1:12

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...

Revelation 3:20

To be saved, we must put our trust completely in Jesus Christ and the finished work of the cross. Genuine faith is not vaguely hoping that God's promises are true. Instead, it is trusting him and his promises completely.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:36

Hebrews 11:6

1 John 5:13

C. Thank Jesus for Salvation

Salvation is God's wonderful gift to us and it brings great joy! We should always express our thankfulness for our salvation to Jesus.

1 Peter 1:3

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Ephesians 5:20

...always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Psalms 103:1-3

Luke 17:15-16

D. Practical Steps

Romans 10:13

...for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Anyone who wants to convert must turn to Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only way to God the Father and he has promised to answer our prayers (*John 14:13-14*).

Tell Jesus that you...

- want to come to him now.
- have realised that he is the only way to the Father.
- have lived without him until now.
- are guilty before God.
- are sorry for your sins.
- want to accept Jesus into your life now.
- renounce the devil and no longer want to serve him.
- believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Saviour of the World.
- want to belong to him and follow him.
- are thankful for your salvation.

► **Activity 14:** How can we be sure that our salvation through Jesus is certain (*Matthew 24:35*)?

CONVERSION

- Which statements are true?

A Christian is someone who...

- ☐ lives in a Christian country.
- ☐ was baptised as a child.
- ☐ leads an orderly life.
- ☐ belongs to a Christian church.
- ☐ has made a decision for Jesus.
- ☐ reads the Bible regularly.
- ☐ has been brought up in a Christian way.
- ☐ takes their religion seriously.

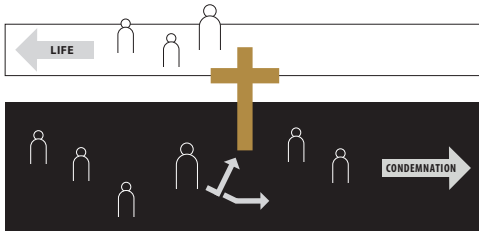
From the account of the first Christians in Antioch, we see that a Christian is someone who has decided to put their faith in Jesus and to follow him as their Lord and Saviour.

- What word was originally used to describe the Christians in Antioch (*Acts 11:26*)?
- How did the people in Antioch become Christians (*Acts 11:20–21*)?



What does conversion mean?

1. **Turning away from sin**
Acts 26:17–18
2. **Turning to God**
1 Thessalonians 1:9–10
3. **The human side of salvation**
Acts 14:15



Why conversion?

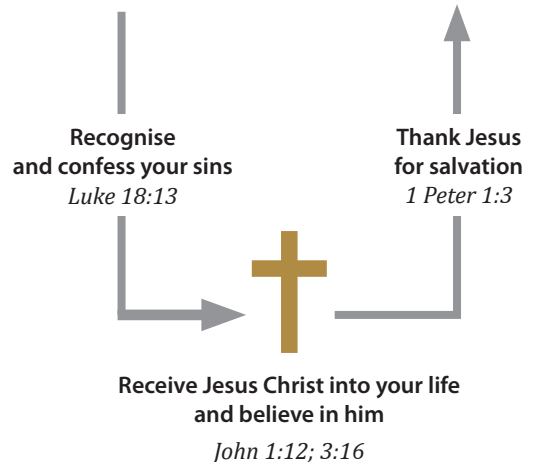
1. **Because God commands it**
Acts 3:19
2. **Because we are sinners**
Romans 3:22b–23
3. **Because Jesus is the only Saviour**
2 Corinthians 5:21
4. **Because we need to be saved**
Acts 4:12

The Broad and the Narrow Way

Matthew 7:13–14

- Where does the broad way lead?
Where does the narrow way lead?
- Is it possible to find peace with God through a decent life, good works, or religiosity (*Romans 4:4–5; Ephesians 2:8–9*)?
- What must a person do to change from the broad to the narrow way (*John 10:9*)?

How does conversion happen?



IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *Acts 3:19*.
2. How did the people in Antioch become Christians?
3. What does conversion mean?
4. Name three Bible passages about repenting or turning back to God.
5. Why is conversion so urgent?
6. Into which two groups can all of humanity be divided?
7. What does sin do to our relationship with God?
8. Who is able to deliver us from sin and from eternal punishment? Justify your answer with a Bible passage.
9. How would you respond to someone who believes that God is happy with everyone who lives a decent life?
10. How does conversion actually happen?



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When we are born again
we are born into the family of God
through the Holy Spirit.

NEW BIRTH

AND THE BEGINNING OF A NEW LIFE

Every human has a birthday, the day they were born into this world. The Bible speaks of the fact that a person can be born a second time. In this process, Almighty God is the Father and through the Holy Spirit we can be born into his divine family. This is the *new birth* or being *born again*.

Leni Furrer, a Swiss woman, experienced her personal conversion and new birth. Here, she tells about it:

I attended an evangelistic meeting and was confronted with the fact that I needed to make a personal decision for Jesus. At first I did not believe it. Me? Me, who had been brought up by Christian parents, who had been baptised and confirmed?

As a child I occasionally had a longing for God. But then I grew up and I was happy and content in my various responsibilities at a driving school. And now I was being told so clearly, *"Leni, you need to turn to Jesus; otherwise you will be lost."*

I wanted to turn to Jesus. But how? I didn't want to become religious. I was young and wanted to live! I went through four days of intense struggling. I felt like I was caught in a tug-of-war with both sides pulling at the same time.

But finally I surrendered to God. With many tears I gave up all the rebellion I had against God. I brought all my guilt to him. I laid my whole life, my entire being and everything that I loved before him and said, *"Lord Jesus, here I am. Make me into what you want me to be. I want to belong to you."*

Then suddenly something unexpected happened. My heart filled with peace, joy, and thankfulness. Suddenly I knew that God had accepted me. The separation between God and me is gone! I belong to him! Jesus is now my personal Saviour! With wonder I experienced his love and at the same time relief, as if someone had lifted a heavy burden from my shoulders.

This hour was the beginning of a new life; the beginning of many new experiences with God. Now Jesus is my personal friend, teacher, and guide with whom I can discuss everything.

With ravenous hunger I began to read the Bible and attend a church fellowship with other born-again Christians. I sensed a new love and responsibility for those around me. Since then I have had much joy in belonging to a group of people who know and show that it pays to walk with Jesus.

Now you understand why I can celebrate my two birthdays: on January 8 when I was born as a human child, and on April 29, when I became God's child.

The text was taken from Leni Furrer's Tract No. 6, *Born 2x*, published by Missionswerk Bruderhand, Germany.

- **Activity 1:** If you are born again, how did you experience your personal new birth?

I. WHAT IS THE NEW BIRTH OR BEING BORN AGAIN?

John 3:3

*Jesus replied, 'Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are **born again**.'*

1 Peter 1:3

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us **new birth** into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

- **Activity 2:** What misunderstandings can arise when we use *born again* in conversation?

A. Definition

In the New Testament the phrases *new birth* or *being born again* refer to the process by which God makes a person spiritually alive and makes them his child, when they accept Jesus Christ.

- **Activity 3:** How did Jesus explain the need for being born again to Nicodemus the Pharisee? What did Nicodemus misunderstand at first (*John 3:1–7*)?

Bible Verses about the New Birth

John 1:12–13 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

John 3:1–7; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3, 1:23; 1 John 2:29, 3:9, 4:7, 5:1, 5:4, 5:18; James 1:18

In the New Testament, there are several words in the original Greek text that speak of the process of being born again:

- *anagennán:* to give birth to again (1 Peter 1:3, 1:23).
- *gennásthai ánothen:* to be born from above or of the Spirit (John 3:3–7).
- *palingenesia:* to be born again (Titus 3:5).

B. The Gift of a New Life

We cannot bring about the new birth ourselves; we cannot work for it nor can we earn it. It is the gift of new life from God (*Ephesians 2:8–9*).

- Through being born again, we become children of God (*John 1:12–13*). We are born into the family of God and become partakers of the divine nature.

2 Peter 1:3–4 His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

- As children of God, we are also heirs of God (*Galatians 4:7*).
- All a person has to do is come to Jesus with their old, sinful life and entrust themselves completely to him (*Ephesians 2:8–9*).

Conversion	New Birth
A person must be converted = the human side of salvation	God gives the new birth = the divine side of salvation

- **Activity 4:** How does someone who has received a gift usually respond to the giver (*1 Peter 1:3*)?

II. WHY IS THE NEW BIRTH NECESSARY?

A. To Enter the Kingdom of God

John 3:5

Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit."

It is not possible to enter the kingdom of God without being born again (*John 3:3–5*).

- Only through natural birth can we become citizens of this world.
- Only by being born again can we become citizens of heaven.

► **Activity 5:** Who cannot enter the kingdom of God, and what characterises our new life with Jesus (*1 Corinthians 6:9–11*)?

B. To Receive a New Life from God

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

Someone who lives without Jesus Christ is dead in their sins; they follow the evil passions and temptations of their sinful nature and are given over to the wrath of God (*Ephesians 2:1–3*). They do not belong to God's people and live without hope and without God (*Ephesians 2:12*).

► **Activity 6:** According to *Ephesians 2:4–6*, what has God given us, and how is our new status through Jesus described?

C. To Belong to God's Family

Galatians 4:6–7

Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

By being born again we become children of God (*John 1:12–13*).

Therefore we are ...

- members of his family (*Hebrews 2:11*).
- part of his body, the church (*1 Corinthians 12:27*).
- fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household (*Ephesians 2:19*).
- a royal priesthood and a holy nation (*1 Peter 2:9*).

► **Activity 7:** What does it mean for us practically to be members of the body of Christ (*1 Corinthians 12:26*)?

III. HOW DOES THE NEW BIRTH HAPPEN?

A. God Calls Us to Change

John 6:44

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.

2 Corinthians 5:20

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Because of his great love for us, God sent his Son into this world and wants everyone to come to faith in him (*1 Timothy 2:4*). Because God loves everyone, he calls every person to change and repent.

God usually uses the Bible and people to call the lost to repent. Sometimes he also uses books, radio broadcasts, videos, special circumstances, etc. to do this.

► **Activity 8:** How did God call the people of Jerusalem to repentance (*Acts 2:38–40*)?

B. We Decide to Change

Acts 2:41

Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

When God calls us to change (to repent), we must respond to his call. This means we must decide to repent, be converted, and turn to God (*Acts 26:17–18*).

► **Activity 9:** What decision did many in Antioch make when they heard the good news of Jesus Christ (*Acts 11:20–21*)?

C. God Gives the New Birth as a Gift

Being spiritually born again is God's gift to us. *Ephesians 2:8–9* explains: *"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."*

The new birth happens through the will of God, the Holy Spirit, and the Bible.

1. Through the Will of God

John 1:13 ...children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

God gives us a new life because he chooses to (*John 6:40; James 1:18*).

2. Through the Holy Spirit

John 3:5–6 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."

The Holy Spirit is involved in our new birth. Without him no one can be born again.

3. Through the Bible

1 Peter 1:23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

The Word of God is absolutely reliable. God uses it to bring about the new birth (*James 1:18*).

► **Activity 10:** In *John 17:17*, what does Jesus say about God's word?

IV. THE NEW LIFE

From the moment we are born again, we begin a new life. Some changes are immediately noticeable, while others only become apparent after some time.

A. Desire for God's Word

1 Peter 2:2

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation...

The Word of God is food for our spiritual life. Therefore, we should always have an inner desire to read and apply the Bible to our lives.

► **Activity 11:** To truly live, what *bread* do we need (*Matthew 4:4*)?

B. Desire to Live Righteously

1 John 2:29

If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.

Because God is righteous, we too should live righteously. It should be the desire of every Christian to live a righteous life.

► **Activity 12:** Where do we get the strength to gain the victory over everything that opposes God in this world (*1 John 5:4–5*)?

C. Love for Others

1 John 4:7

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

Love is the most important characteristic of a Christian. Because God is love, we should also love one another (*1 John 5:1*).

► **Activity 13:** According to *1 John 5:1*, what is the relationship between our love for God and our neighbours?

NEW BIRTH

WHAT DOES "NEW BIRTH" MEAN?

Definition

John 3:1-7

In the New Testament the phrases *new birth* or *being born again* refer to the process by which God makes a person spiritually alive and makes them his child when they accept Jesus Christ.

- What misunderstandings can arise when we use *born again* in conversation?

The gift of a new life

- How does someone who has received a gift usually respond to the giver (*1 Peter 1:3*)?
- Why can we be sure that we receive a new life when we receive Jesus (*John 1:12-13*)?

WHY IS NEW BIRTH NECESSARY?

To enter the kingdom of God

John 3:5

To receive a new life from God

2 Corinthians 5:17

To belong to God's family

Ephesians 2:19

HOW DOES THE NEW BIRTH HAPPEN?

A. God calls us to change

John 6:44

B. We decide to change

Acts 2:41

C. God gives the new birth as a gift

Ephesians 2:8-9

1. Through the will of God
John 1:13
2. Through the Holy Spirit
John 3:5-6
3. Through the Word of God
1 Peter 1:23

THE NEW LIFE

A. Desire for God's Word

1 Peter 2:2

B. Desire to live righteously

1 John 2:29

- Where do we get the strength to gain victory over everything that opposes God in this world (*1 John 5:4*)?

C. Love for others

1 John 4:7

- According to *1 John 5:1*, what is the relationship between our love for God and our neighbours?

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *John 3:3*.
2. What does being born again mean?
3. How does being born again differ from conversion?
4. Name three important Bible passages about being born again.
5. Why is being born again an urgent need?
6. Suppose someone believes they do not need to be born again in order to be saved. How would you respond?
7. What must someone do to be born again?
8. How does God bring about the new birth?
9. What happens in us when we are born again?
10. What changes can you expect in your life after being born again?



Photo by Efe Kumazon on Unsplash

Only those who have experienced conversion
and being born again can be certain that they are saved.

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

There is nothing more wonderful than living with Jesus Christ. But we can only live a joyful and liberated life of faith when we know, without a shadow of a doubt, that our relationship with God is in order. If we only presume or hope to be God's children, we cannot be free from fear, anxiety, or insecurity.

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. – 1 John 5:13

I. THE ASSURANCE OF OUR SALVATION

A. What Does This Mean?

For Christians, *salvation* means that a person is saved from being eternally separated from God. They have been delivered (redeemed) from sin and its consequences because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Your *assurance of salvation* is a firm, inner confidence and certainty that you are a child of God, your sins are forgiven, and you will be with Jesus for eternity.

► **Activity 1:** Suppose someone said, “*I think it is presumptuous to say that we can be assured of our salvation.*” How would you respond?

B. Important Bible Verses

Although the Bible does not use the phrase *assurance of salvation*, there are many Bible verses that assure us of our salvation.

John 3:36

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

Romans 8:16

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

- **Activity 2:** What certainty and conviction did the apostle Paul have about his salvation (*2 Timothy 1:12*)?

C. Assurance for Now and Eternity

The salvation that Jesus offers us has significance not only for now, but also for eternity.

We have not yet experienced salvation in all its fullness. We are still tempted to sin, and we struggle with the weaknesses of our bodies. When we are with Jesus in heaven, we will be freed from these difficulties.

SALVATION	
Present: Salvation I already have now	Future: Salvation after death
John 1:12: <i>Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God</i> 1 John 3:14: <i>We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death.</i> 1 John 5:13: <i>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.</i>	John 3:36: <i>Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.</i> Romans 8:23–24: <i>...we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved.</i> Philippians 3:21: <i>[Jesus] will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.</i>

- **Activity 3:** What changes can we expect when we are with Jesus and experience salvation in all its fullness (*Revelation 21:3–4*)?

II. WHO CAN BE CERTAIN THEY ARE SAVED?

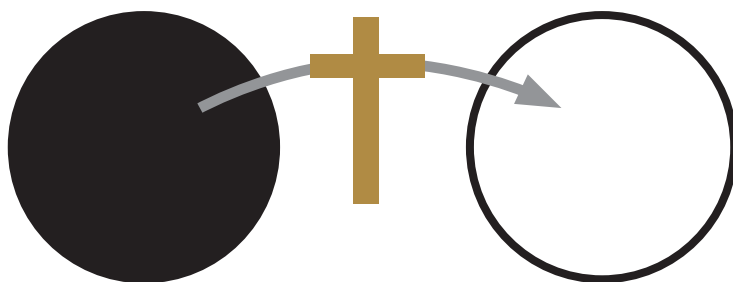
Only those who have experienced conversion and the new birth can be assured of their salvation.

The Bible divides all people into two groups. To be assured of our salvation we must know which group we belong to.

Colossians 1:13

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.

Two different groups of people:



These two circles represent the dominion of darkness and the kingdom of Jesus. A born-again Christian has been delivered from the dominion of darkness and placed in the kingdom where Jesus reigns.

► **Activity 4:** What are these two groups called in *Acts 26:18*?

Where do I stand before God?

EITHER	OR	
Am I lost?	Am I saved?	<i>John 3:16</i>
Am I on the broad way that leads to destruction?	Am I on the narrow way that leads to life?	<i>Matthew 7:13–14</i>
Do I live in the dominion of darkness?	Have I been brought into the kingdom of Jesus?	<i>Colossians 1:13</i>
Eternal loss	Eternal life	

Ask yourself:

To which group do you belong?

Which circle represents your life?

If the circle on the right (the kingdom of Jesus) represents your life, you can be sure that your sins are forgiven, you are a child of God, and have eternal life.

III. WHERE DOES OUR CERTAINTY COME FROM?

When we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour, we are saved and given a new life. Our salvation is confirmed in our hearts through faith, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit.

A. Faith

Faith in God and his promises is absolutely necessary to have assurance of salvation. Without faith it is impossible to please God (*Hebrews 11:6*).

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

► **Activity 5:** How long does God expect us to live by faith (*Galatians 2:20*)?

B. The Word of God

The Word of God is absolute truth because the writers of the Bible were guided by God's Spirit (*2 Peter 1:21*). When we trust what the Bible says and apply it to our lives, we will stand firm, knowing that we are saved.

1 Peter 1:23

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

Matthew 24:35

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

► **Activity 6:** On which Bible verse do you base your personal assurance of salvation?

We must not build our assurance of salvation on false foundations such as special experiences and feelings. If someone relies only on their feelings, their assurance of salvation will quickly falter.

- **Activity 7:** According to *Matthew 7:26–27*, what happens if our assurance is built on the wrong foundation?

1. The Power of God's Word

God's Word is living and powerful. Therefore, we should base our assurance of salvation on it.

- It convicts us of sin.
Acts 2:37
- It brings about the new birth.
1 Peter 1:23
- It produces faith.
Romans 10:17
- It gives us joy.
Psalms 119:162
- It transforms our lives.
John 17:17

2. The Promises of God's Word

God's Word gives us clear promises about eternal life, the forgiveness of sins, and being God's children. Read some of them.

- We Have Eternal Life

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:36

- Our Sins Are Forgiveness

Matthew 26:28 This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 2:13–14

- We Are God's Children

John 1:12

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...

- ▶ **Activity 8:** What are we told in *Galatians 4:4–7* about the status we have in Jesus Christ?

C. The Holy Spirit

When we are saved, the Holy Spirit gives us a deep inner peace and joy, and the assurance that we are God's children.

Romans 8:16

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Ephesians 1:13

- ▶ **Activity 9:** What does the Holy Spirit use to assure us of our salvation (*Ephesians 6:17*)?

V. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE ARE CERTAIN OF OUR SALVATION?

When we are certain of our salvation through Jesus Christ, we can enjoy the wonderful changes that salvation brings to our lives.

A. A New Relationship with God

As non-Christians, we had no relationship with God. But Jesus opened the way for us to come into God's presence and have a new relationship with him.

When Jesus died for our sins, the *curtain* that separated us from the Most Holy Place was torn apart (*Exodus 26:33; 1 Kings 8:6; Mark 15:38*). Now we can confidently come to God in prayer and know that he hears us.

Hebrews 10:19–20

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body.

- **Activity 10:** With what attitude should we come to God (*Hebrews 10:22*)?

A person in whom Jesus Christ lives is no longer controlled by sinful desires (*Romans 6:12*). However, this does not mean that a Christian will never sin again.

- **Activity 11:** What happens when a Christian sins? What do they need to do to be forgiven (*1 John 1:9*)?

B. A New Relationship with Other Believers

Our love for other Christians is possible because we have personally experienced God's love. We are united in faith with other believers through Jesus.

1 John 3:14

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death.

- **Activity 12:** Why is loving one another so important for believers (*John 13:34–35*)?

C. A New Relationship with the World

We have a new relationship with the world because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (*Romans 5:5*).

- We are to love everyone, even our enemies (*Matthew 5:43–44, 22:39*).
- We should not love the ungodly system of this world (*1 John 2:15–17*) because we now belong to Jesus (*John 15:19*).

Romans 5:5

And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

- **Activity 13:** In *Acts 4:18–20*, how do we know that Peter and John belong to Jesus rather than the ungodly system of this world?

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

THE ASSURANCE OF OUR SALVATION

Present implications

Your assurance of salvation is a firm, inner confidence and certainty that you are a child of God, your sins are forgiven, and you will be with Jesus for eternity.

John 3:36

Romans 8:16

Romans 8:38–39

Future implications

The salvation that Jesus Christ offers us also has implications for the future.

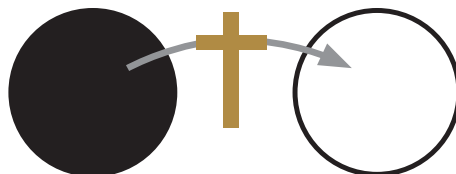
John 3:36

Romans 8:23–25

- What changes can we expect when we are with Jesus in heaven and experience salvation in all its fullness (*Revelation 21:3–4*)?

WHO CAN BE CERTAIN THEY ARE SAVED?

- Into what two groups can all people be divided (*Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:13*)?
- On what do we base our assurance of salvation (*Matthew 24:35*)?



WHERE DOES OUR CERTAINTY COME FROM?

Faith

Hebrews 11:1

The Word of God

1 Peter 1:23

The Holy Spirit

Romans 8:16

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE ARE CERTAIN OF OUR SALVATION?

A new relationship with God

Hebrews 10:19–20

A new relationship with believers

1 John 3:14

A new relationship with the world

Romans 5:5

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *1 John 5:12–13*.
2. What does assurance of salvation mean?
3. Who can have assurance of salvation?
4. Into which two groups does the Bible divide all people?
5. List three things God uses to assure his children of their salvation.
6. Suppose someone says, *“I have experienced answers to prayers, so I think I will go to heaven.”* How would you respond?
7. What is the right basis for true assurance of salvation?
8. Name a Bible passage about the promise of eternal life, forgiveness of sins, or being a child of God.
9. What happens when you are assured of your salvation?
10. What has changed in your life because of your assurance of salvation?



Photo by Aaron Burden on Unsplash

The Word of God is our spiritual food.
We need it for our faith to grow and be healthy.

QUIET TIME

READING GOD'S WORD AND TALKING TO GOD

All people who have been used by God in a special way were people who had a close relationship with him. Quiet time helps to deepen our relationship with God.

Quiet time means having a specific, dedicated time to spend with God. Although we do not find the term *quiet time* in the Bible, we do have many Bible passages that point us to the importance of the Word of God and prayer in our lives.

In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly. – Psalm 5:3

I. WHY IS QUIET TIME IMPORTANT?

A. It Is Vital for Spiritual Growth

For an infant to grow and develop well, it is vital that it eats healthy food. If it is not growing there is good reason to be concerned.

- **Activity 1:** What does a newborn baby crave? What should we crave (1 Peter 2:2)?

God wants us to grow spiritually!

Ephesians 4:15

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

- **Activity 2:** What results can we expect as we grow in our spiritual lives (Ephesians 4:14–15)?

Jesus often referred to his followers as disciples (*Luke 6:17*). The Greek word for disciple means *student* or *apprentice*. A student or apprentice learns and practises new things that their teacher has shown them.

When we are born again, we become Jesus' disciples, who want to learn from him. Having a regular quiet time helps us to hear and learn from Jesus.

B. It Is Vital for Spiritual Health

We need spiritual food, not only for our spiritual growth, but also for our spiritual health. Spiritual nourishment takes place in our quiet time.

Matthew 4:4

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

In our physical lives, we have daily routines and our outward appearance usually reflects whether we care for our physical body or not.

We can also have daily routines for our spiritual life because our *inner person* also needs care. Our spiritual health reflects whether we care for our inner person or not.

► **Activity 3:** What happens when we no longer take care of ourselves and eat unhealthy food? What happens to a Christian who neglects regularly eating *spiritual food* (*Hebrews 5:12–13*)?

C. It Is an Expression of Our Love for God

Our relationship with God can be described as a relationship of love. God has already declared and demonstrated his great love for us and he continuously shows us his unconditional love (*John 3:16; 1 John 4:19*).

Just like any loving relationship, our love for God needs to be nurtured.

How can we do this?

- Conversation is necessary for every healthy relationship and this also applies to our relationship with God. Communicating with God (prayer) is the key to nurturing our relationship with our Heavenly Father.
- It is important to thank and praise the Lord, and tell him that we love him.

- Pausing to talk to God throughout the day can become a natural and regular part of our lifestyle.
 - From the Bible we learn what God wants from us. Therefore, we should take time to regularly read the Bible and apply it to our lives.
- **Activity 4:** According to *John 14:15*, how can we tell if we really love God (*1 John 5:3*)?

II. WHEN SHOULD WE HAVE QUIET TIME?

A. The Problems with Quiet Time

Quiet time often brings two challenges.

- First, it may be difficult to find time for it. What is the solution? We simply have to set aside time for it. Our lifestyles tempt us to push quiet time to the margins of the day. We should intentionally schedule quiet time into our daily routine to reflect on just how vital it really is.
- Secondly, many of us are accustomed to a hectic lifestyle. Learning to stop, to be quiet and listen to God may be more challenging than setting aside time with God. If we want to hear what God is saying, we need to be quiet and listen.

Psalms 37:7a

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him.

Psalms 46:10

Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.

- **Activity 5:** What could be the underlying reason if we do not find time to read the Bible and pray?
- **Activity 6:** What promise has God made to those who are quiet and still before him and trust him (*Isaiah 30:15*)?

B. Quiet Time in the Morning

Many Christians have found that morning is the best time to be quiet before God. For our conversation with the King of Kings, we should choose the best time to meet with him.

Psalms 88:13

But I cry to you for help, Lord; in the morning my prayer comes before you.

Psalms 119:147

I rise before dawn and cry for help; I have put my hope in your word.

Isaiah 50:4

Jesus also rose early in the morning to spend time with his Heavenly Father.

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.

Watchman Nee (1903–1972) was a Chinese preacher who served 20 years in prison for his faith. He attached great importance to a time of silence in the morning. He emphasised the need to get up early every day. The words of a missionary, Miss Groves, were a great motivation for him:

“The first choice that gives evidence of how dear I am to my Lord is the choice between my bed and the Lord. He who chooses to love the bed more will sleep longer; he who chooses to love the Lord more will rise a little earlier.”

To have a quiet time in the morning where you feel refreshed and rested requires having enough sleep during the night. Quiet time in the morning should therefore be planned the evening before.

► **Activity 7:** What are some specific benefits of quiet time in the morning?

► **Activity 8:** What time of day is best for you to have quiet time with God?



C. Other Quiet Times

In addition to intentionally meeting with the Lord in the morning, there are other times that are also well suited to being still before God.

1. Quiet Times During the Day

Daniel 6:10 *Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.*

Throughout the day we can have fellowship with God. For example, we may think of him often, pray quietly in our hearts, sing a song of praise, or take a prayer walk.

► **Activity 9:** In *1 Thessalonians 5:17* we are told to pray unceasingly. What can this look like in practice (*Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:2*)?

2. A Quiet Evening

Psalms 63:6 *On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night.*

In the evening we can reflect on God's blessing upon the day and thank him. If this is your preferred time to meet with the Lord, make sure that you also commit the next day to him and seek his guidance for it.

Why not set aside a special evening with the Lord sometimes, to fellowship with him in a special way?

► **Activity 10:** How could a quiet evening be organised?

3. A Quiet Day

It is also possible to have a quiet day that is especially dedicated to spending extra time with God. For this we need to choose a place where we can be quiet and uninterrupted.

► **Activity 11:** How could a quiet day be arranged and structured?

III. WHERE TO HAVE QUIET TIME?

The location of your quiet time is important. In order to hear what God is saying through his Word, choose a place where you can focus your attention on him.

What places are suitable for quiet time?

Matthew 6:6

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Daniel 6:11

Mark 1:35

Try to find

- a quiet place that is free from interruptions.
- a place where you can concentrate.

If no such place is available, try to focus on God and reading the Bible, even if there are distractions around you.

► **Activity 12:** What is your preferred place for quiet time?

IV. HOW LONG IS QUIET TIME?

There is no one answer to this question. The length of your quiet time depends on many factors such as how much time is available and how deep your desire is to spend time with the Lord.

Jeremiah 15:16

When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, Lord God Almighty.

The feeding of the Israelites with manna in the wilderness is a helpful image for our spiritual food (*Exodus 16:1–18*). To help you decide how long your quiet time will be, remember that God's Word is your spiritual food (*1 Peter 2:2*).

► **Activity 13:** How much manna did the Israelites gather each day (*Exodus 16:4, 16:16*)?

- **Activity 14:** How much natural food do we need daily? How much spiritual food do we need daily?

V. ORGANISING QUIET TIME

There is no fixed pattern for spending time with the Lord. However, the following components are suggested.

A. Opening Prayer

Psalms 119:18

Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

It is advisable to start the quiet time with prayer. Thank God that you can come to him and ask him to speak to you through the Bible passage that you are about to read. Remember that the mysteries of God's Word are hidden from many people and we need the Holy Spirit to give us understanding (*1 Corinthians 2:14; 2 Corinthians 3:14*).

- **Activity 15:** With what expectations should you begin your quiet time (*1 Samuel 3:10*)?

B. Bible Reading

Acts 17:11

Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Joshua 1:8

After praying, read the Bible. We should read the whole Bible (not only our favourite passages) throughout the year. Using a plan for reading the Bible from cover to cover may be helpful. For new Christians it is a good idea to read the New Testament first using a version that is pleasant to read.

- **Activity 16:** How do you choose which Bible passage to read during your quiet time?

C. Reflection

After reading the Bible passage, we should consider what it says and ask what God is saying to us through it. This is like searching for hidden treasure in God's Word.

Proverbs 2:1–5

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding – indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

- **Activity 17:** What are we asked to do in *Proverbs 2:1–5*? What results can we expect?

It is helpful to ask some questions about the Bible passage and record your thoughts in a notebook.

We can use the following questions:

- Is there a sin I should turn from?
- Is there a promise that I should claim?
- Is there an example I should follow?
- Is there a warning I should heed?
- Is there a new understanding about God?
- Is there something to do or put right?

At this point memorising Bible verses is recommended so that God's Word can be recalled and applied throughout the day and into the future. You could, for example, memorise a verse from your quiet time each day (*Deuteronomy 6:6–7*).

Psalms 119:11

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

- **Activity 18:** Why is it useful to take time to reflect on the day's Bible reading (*Psalms 1:1–3*)?

D. Prayer Time

We can start our prayer time by worshipping God. Then we can continue with confessing sins, giving thanks, making requests, and interceding for others.

1 Timothy 2:1-2

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

Consider keeping a prayer list to help you remember what to pray for, and to record how God answered your prayers.

Date	Prayer Request	Answer

- In the first column write the date you first prayed for a particular request.
- In the second column briefly describe the prayer request.
- In the third column enter the date the prayer was answered.
- It is also possible to have an additional column for comments (unanswered prayers or prayers that were answered in unexpected ways).

You will find it encouraging to look back on the record of answered prayers.

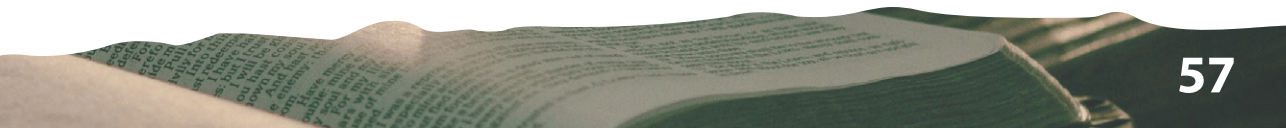
E. Application

When God speaks to us, we should do what he says. It is not enough to only know the Word of God, we must also put it into practice. We should not only be hearers of God’s words but also doers (*James 1:22*).

John 13:17

[Jesus:] Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

- **Activity 19:** To whom does Jesus compare the person who not only hears his words but also puts them into practice (*Luke 6:47-48*)?



QUIET TIME

WHY IS QUIET TIME IMPORTANT?

It is vital
for spiritual growth

Ephesians 4:15

It is vital
for spiritual health

Matthew 4:4

It is an expression
of our love for God

John 14:15

WHEN SHOULD WE HAVE QUIET TIME?

A. Problems with quiet time

To hear what God wants to say to us we
need to be quiet before him.

Psalm 37:7a

B. Quiet time in the morning

Psalm 88:13

Mark 1:35

C. Other quiet times

Daniel 6:10

Psalm 63:6

- What are the specific benefits of quiet
time in the morning (*Isaiah 50:4*)?

WHERE DO WE HAVE QUIET TIME?

A quiet place

Matthew 6:6

Mark 1:35

HOW LONG IS QUIET TIME?

The Word of God is our spiritual food
(*1 Peter 2:2*).

Jeremiah 15:16

- How much manna did the Israelites
gather daily (*Exodus 16:4, 16:16*)? How
much spiritual food do we need daily?

A. Opening prayer

Psalm 119:18

B. Bible reading

Acts 17:11

C. Reflection

Proverbs 2:1–5

D. Prayer time

1 Timothy 2:1–2

E. Application

John 13:17

ORGANISING QUIET TIME

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *Matthew 6:6*.
2. What does quiet time mean?
3. Why is quiet time so important?
4. What promise has God made to those who are quiet before him, who keep quiet and trust in him (*Isaiah 30:15*)?
5. What time of day is especially good for quiet time with God?
6. How long should the quiet time last?
7. How can the problem of *too little time for a quiet time* be solved?
8. Which place is particularly suitable for your quiet time?
9. Suppose someone says, "*I don't know what to do in my quiet time.*" What would you suggest?
10. What results can we expect if we keep a regular quiet time with the Lord?



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God uses the church as his
instrument for evangelising the world.

LESSON 5

CHURCH

When someone becomes a Christian, they often make many new friends as they experience the warmth and joy of meeting with other believers.

The New Testament uses the words *church* or *assembly* or *congregation* to describe when Christians meet together. The New Testament church is the special group of people whom Jesus Christ has redeemed and who now belong to him, as described in *Titus 2:14*:

[Jesus Christ] ... gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

I. WHAT DOES CHURCH MEAN?

The Greek word for church is *ekklesia* (ek = out, kaleo = to call) and means the *called out ones*.

The word *ekklesia* occurs 114 times in the New Testament and is usually translated as *church*, *assembly*, or *congregation*. It can also be used in a broader sense to refer to a gathering.

Matthew 16:18

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church [ekklesia], and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

The first Christians saw themselves as the *ekklesia*: the *called out ones*.

► **Activity 1:** By whom were Jesus' disciples called and for what purpose (*Matthew 11:28; Romans 1:6–7*)?

- In the Old Testament, the terms *assembly* and *congregation* often refer to the people of Israel (e.g., *Exodus 12:3; Psalm 35:18*).
- In the New Testament, the terms *assembly* and *church* often refer to the gathered believers.

The only people who truly belong to Christ's Church are those who are:

- converted (*Acts 26:18*)
- born again (*1 Peter 1:3*)
and thus saved by Jesus Christ (*Acts 2:47*).

We can distinguish between:

- the worldwide church
- the local church.

A. The Worldwide Church

The worldwide church can also be called the *universal church*. This encompasses all believers through all generations. The Bible speaks of the worldwide church in several places.

Colossians 1:18

And he [Jesus] 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.

Ephesians 5:25

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Everyone who is born again belongs to the worldwide church of Jesus Christ. It should therefore be natural for every believer to join a local church.

- **Activity 2:** Why is it that Christians from different churches and countries can quickly build warm relationships even if they did not know each other previously (*Ephesians 2:19–20*)?

B. The Local Church

The local church is an organised group of believers in one place.

1 Corinthians 1:2a

To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people...

2 Corinthians 11:28

Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

Every local church is part of the worldwide church of Jesus Christ. It is the place where believers come together to worship God, to fellowship with one another, to read the Bible, to listen to Bible-based teachings, and to pray and encourage one another.

- **Activity 3:** What characterised the lives of the first Christians in Jerusalem? What can we learn from their example (*Acts 2:42–47*)?

II. IMAGES OF THE CHURCH

In the Bible, the church is also called the *Flock*, the *Bride of Christ*, the *Body of Christ*, and the *House of God*. These images help us to understand the importance of the church.

A. The Flock

In *Acts 20:28* the church of Jesus is compared to a flock that Jesus purchased with his own blood.

The leaders of the church care for their flock and the Chief Shepherd of the church is Jesus Christ (*Psalms 23; 1 Peter 5:4*).

1 Peter 5:2

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve...

► **Activity 4:** What does Jesus, the good shepherd, do for his sheep (*John 10:11, 10:15, 10:28*)?

► **Activity 5:** How do the sheep behave towards Jesus the shepherd (*John 10:4, 10:27*)?

B. The Bride of Christ

Revelation 19:7

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

The relationship that Christ has with his church can be compared to a love relationship. At the *wedding of the Lamb* the union of the church (*bride*) with Jesus Christ (*bridegroom*) takes place (*1 Thessalonians 4:17*). The time until this wonderful event takes place is a time of preparation for the church.

► **Activity 6:** What did Jesus, the bridegroom, do for his church-bride (*Ephesians 5:25–27*)?

C. The Body of Christ

In *1 Corinthians 12*, the body is used as an image to represent the relationship between Christ and the church and the individual members of the church.

Romans 12:5

...so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

- The church is the body of Christ (*1 Corinthians 12:27*).
- Christ is the head of the body (*Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18*).

Similar to a body, each part of the church (each person) has different gifts and tasks.

1 Corinthians 12:18

But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

Each part of the body, although different, comes together to form a wonderful unit.

1 Corinthians 12:13

For we were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

- **Activity 7:** In *1 Corinthians 12:26–27*, what happens when individual parts of the body of Christ suffer or experience joy? How can they support one another?

D. The House of God

1 Timothy 3:15

...if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

In this *house* Jesus Christ is the *cornerstone* (*Ephesians 2:19–22*).

We are the living stones built on this cornerstone. Each believer has a special role to fulfil (*Ephesians 2:10*), and as each person contributes, the House of God is built.

- **Activity 8:** What is our task as *living stones* in this spiritual house (*1 Peter 2:4–5*)?

III. WHY DO WE NEED THE CHURCH?

Research shows that when a bee is isolated from its colony, it soon dies. Much like a bee, a Christian needs other Christians to thrive: believers need the church.

A. To Be Equipped for Ministry

Ephesians 4:11–12

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

Christians need one another to be equipped for ministry. God's design is that when we share our giftings, we become equipped for service. God has good works that he has planned in advance for us to do (*Ephesians 2:10*). Furthermore, we mature as Christians when we share our God-given gifts with one another (*1 Corinthians 14:26*).

- **Activity 9:** What is the purpose of equipping the church (*Ephesians 4:12–14*)?

B. To Have a Powerful Witness in the World

God uses the church as his instrument for evangelising the world (*Acts 13:1–5*). The love which God has poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit is a powerful witness for Christ to the world (*Romans 5:5*).

- **Activity 10:** How do our interactions with other Christians affect our witness to the world (*John 13:35; Acts 2:47*)?

C. To Care for One Another

We belong together and need each other because we are members of one body.

Romans 12:5

...so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

- **Activity 11:** What should we encourage one another to do (*Hebrews 10:24–25*)?
- **Activity 12:** What did Barnabas encourage the believers in Antioch to do (*Acts 11:23*)?

The Greek word for fellowship is *koinonia* and it literally means *sharing together*. In the church we can share our needs and also our joys with one another (*Romans 12:13–15*).

D. To Fellowship with One Another

The central meeting place for Christians is the worship service. In early Christianity the believers met for worship on the first day of the week (Sunday) because Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week.

Acts 20:7

On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.

► **Activity 13:** What did the church do when they met together (*Acts 2:42, 14:27; Colossians 3:16*)?

IV. THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The mission of the church is threefold. It is directed:

- upwards: to glorify God.
- inwards: to build the church.
- outwards: to evangelise the world.



A. To Glorify God

Throughout the Bible we are instructed to glorify God.

1 Chronicles 16:28–29

Ascribe to the Lord, all you families of nations, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him. Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness.

Ephesians 3:21

... to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

- **Activity 14:** With what inner attitude should we worship God (*John 4:24; Romans 15:5–6*)?

B. To Build the Church

1 Peter 2:5

You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

In the church (our spiritual household), Jesus is the cornerstone (*Ephesians 2:19–22*), the foundation (*1 Corinthians 3:11*) and also the master builder (*Matthew 16:18*). Furthermore, Jesus has many co-workers involved in this building (*1 Corinthians 3:9*).

- **Activity 15:** What can we do to help everyone in the church find a spiritual home (*Romans 15:7; Galatians 6:2*)?

C. To Evangelise the World

Jesus has given us, his disciples, the vital task of evangelising the world.

Matthew 28:18–20

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising 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 am with you always, to the very end of the age."

- **Activity 16:** What was the apostle Paul's only aim (*Acts 20:24*)? How can we contribute towards fulfilling the task of world evangelism?

V. WHO LEADS THE CHURCH?

In the church – the body of Christ – every person has their place and task. Special demands are placed on those who take on leadership roles.

A. Jesus Christ Is the Head of the Church

The church is God's property and Jesus is the head of the church. Therefore, Jesus carries the main responsibility for growing and leading the church. He alone has reconciled us to God through his blood and made peace with God possible for us.

Colossians 1:18–20

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. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

From the Bible we learn how to conduct ourselves properly in the church.

1 Timothy 3:15

If I [Paul] am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

► **Activity 17:** How should the fact that Jesus is the head of the church influence our interactions with the church?

B. Elders

Acts 20:28

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

The church of Jesus is led by elders (*1 Peter 5:1–3*). They are also called overseers, bishops (*1 Timothy 3:1*) or shepherds (*1 Peter 5:2*). They are under Jesus, the Chief Shepherd (*1 Peter 5:4*).

The term *elders* does not mean those who are older in the church. Instead, it refers to men who are spiritually mature for leadership and who are appointed to this ministry.

The elders lead and teach the congregation, and by their lifestyle they are to be good examples to the flock (*1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Peter 5:1–4*).

The elders are not supposed to be specialists who do all the work alone. Instead, they are to equip the believers for the work of ministry.

► **Activity 18:** List some of the qualifications an elder should meet (*1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9*).

C. Deacons

Philippians 1:1

This letter is from Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus. I am writing to all of God's holy people in Philippi who belong to Christ Jesus, including the church leaders and deacons. (New Living Translation)

The term *deacon* means *servant*.

- The life of Jesus was a life of service (*Mark 10:45*).
- The life of every Christian should also be one of service (*1 Peter 4:10–11*).

Why are there deacons?

- Elders are responsible for the spiritual concerns of the church (*1 Peter 5:1–4*).
- Deacons are responsible for the practical concerns of the church. However, they are also involved in spiritual ministries, like Philip was (*Acts 8:5*).

Because deacons carry many responsibilities, high demands are also placed on their lifestyle and character (*1 Timothy 3:8–12*).

► **Activity 19:** What tasks did the deacons perform in *Acts 6:1–7*?

D. Co-Workers

Ephesians 4:11 lists five special gifts that are given by Jesus, to be used among the believers.

Ephesians 4:11

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers.

1. Apostles

Apostle means *ambassador* (literally *one who is sent off*). We usually understand this to mean a missionary who is sent into an unreached area to tell others about Jesus. Planting and leading a church, or establishing a new work for the Lord, are often the tasks of apostles.

2. Prophets

A prophet is someone who receives the Word of God and passes it on. They are therefore a preacher of the gospel and not necessarily someone who foretells the future. A prophet is able to speak the Word of God correctly into particular situations in the church.

3. Evangelists

An evangelist is someone who has the ability to explain the gospel to unbelievers in an understandable way and lead them to a decision for Jesus.

4. Shepherds (Pastors)

A shepherd (pastor) in the church has special concern for the welfare of individual church members, and they are able to exhort, encourage, and guide them in their journey with Jesus.

5. Teachers

A teacher is someone who has a special ability to present biblical truths in ways that help others to learn. They should also ensure that sound doctrine is taught in the church.

E. Individual Church Members

The Bible shows us that the church should not be led only by a few specialists. Instead, each believer should faithfully use their God-given gifts.

1 Peter 4:10

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

In the church there are many tasks that need to be done. For example, praying, visiting others, cleaning, driving, evangelising, singing, childcare, teaching children, and preaching.

- **Activity 20:** Which ministries are mentioned in *Romans 12:6–8*?

As believers serve, they will soon discover their place in the church.

- **Activity 21:** An important requirement for church involvement is mentioned in *1 Corinthians 4:2*: “Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.” Discuss what this means.

VI. CHOOSING A CHURCH

In some cities there are many different churches. This raises the question, “Which church should I join?”

Avoid

- Looking for a *perfect* church.
- Constantly moving from church to church.
- Being guided by outward appearances, e.g. attractive decor.

What should you look for when choosing a church?

- Pray that God will show you the right place.
- Be prepared to be actively involved.
- Ask yourself:
 - Is the whole Bible accepted as the Word of God?
 - Is the gospel clearly proclaimed?
 - Is it a missionary church?

- **Activity 22:** What criteria do you consider most important when choosing a church?

Get involved where you feel it is the place where God wants you to be. Even shortcomings can be an incentive to pray and work together.

CHURCH

WHAT DOES CHURCH MEAN?

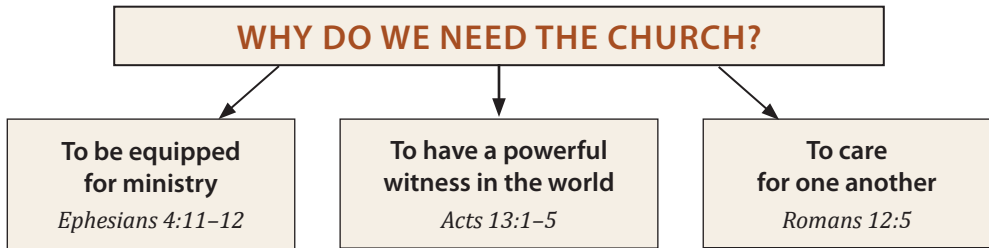
The Greek word for church is *ekklesia* (ek = out, kaleo = to call) means *the called out ones* (Matthew 16:18).

- A. **The worldwide church**
Colossians 1:18
- B. **The local church**
1 Corinthians 1:2a
 - What characterised the lives of the first Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 2:42–47)?

IMAGES OF THE CHURCH

- A. **The flock** *1 Peter 5:2*
- B. **The bride of Christ** *Revelation 19:7*
- C. **The body of Christ** *1 Corinthians 12:18*
- D. **The house of God** *1 Timothy 3:15*
 - What is our task as *living stones* in this spiritual house (1 Peter 2:4–5)?

WHY DO WE NEED THE CHURCH?



WHO LEADS THE CHURCH?

- A. **Jesus Christ** *Colossians 1:18–20*
- B. **Elders** *1 Peter 5:1–3*
- C. **Deacons** *1 Timothy 3:8–12*
- D. **Co-workers** *Ephesians 4:11*
- E. **Individual church members** *1 Peter 4:10*

CHOOSING A CHURCH

- Pray for the right place.
- Be willing to be actively involved.
- Ask yourself:
 - Is the whole Bible accepted as the Word of God?
 - Is the gospel clearly proclaimed?
 - Is it a missionary church?

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *Acts 2:41–42*.
2. What is meant by *the local church*?
3. Who belongs to Christ's church?
4. Suppose someone says, "*Every Christian belongs to Christ's church, therefore I don't need to join a local church.*" What would you say to them?
5. Where do Christians fellowship with each other?
6. What is the purpose of Christian fellowship?
7. The Bible includes different images (symbols) for the church. Name three of them. Where are they found in the Bible?
8. We can say that the church of Jesus has a threefold task (mission). What is it?
9. Who leads the *worldwide church*?
10. Every member of the church is responsible for its development. How do you see yourself getting involved in your local church?



Photo by Jose Aragones on Unsplash

In prayer, I can talk about everything with God.
I can tell him my innermost feelings and
express the joy of my salvation.

LESSON 6

PRAYER

Prayer should be one of our favourite activities as Christians. In prayer we meet with the Lord, we deepen our communion with him and our faith is strengthened.

Jesus was asked by one of his disciples (*Luke 11:1*):
“Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

- **Activity 1:** How important is prayer to you now compared to when you were an unbeliever?

I. WHAT DOES PRAYER MEAN?

Philippians 4:6

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

Prayer is talking to God and listening to him. In prayer we can discuss everything with God. We can express our innermost feelings and the joy of our salvation. We can express gratitude, and talk to God about our worries and responsibilities. Prayer is not about formulating perfect sentences. Rather, it is about having an open heart to share with the Lord and to listen to him.

II. WHY DO WE PRAY?

We will only be committed to having a devoted, expectant, and persistent prayer life when we are convinced of the necessity of prayer.

Why do we pray, and why is it so important?

A. Our Relationship with God Is Deepened

God created us to have a relationship with him and he longs to fellowship with us. When we pray, our relationship with him is deepened as we communicate with him and he with us. Prayer helps to satisfy our deep longing for God.

Psalm 42:2–3

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, “Where is your God?”

► **Activity 2:** How can our inner longing for God be satisfied (*Psalm 63:1–5*)?

B. We Entrust Our Problems to Jesus

1 Peter 5:7

Cast all your anxiety on him [Jesus] because he cares for you.

Every Christian should reflect an inner peace and anxiety-free approach towards life that a non-Christian does not know.

► **Activity 3:** How can we properly handle worries as Christians (*Matthew 7:7–8, 11:28–30*)? What can we expect when we deal with worries the way Jesus asks us to (*Matthew 6:31–34*)?

C. Our Joy Is Made Complete

John 16:24

Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

Christians should be joyful people. God always wants to give us complete joy by answering our prayers and meeting our needs (*Matthew 7:9–11*).

Imagine a child who has a loving father. This father will gladly grant his child's requests, provided they are in the child's best interests, and the child can rest in the assurance that their loving father only wants the best for them. Furthermore, joy is available in all situations because the child knows that their father's decision-making is always based on his great love for them.

► **Activity 4:** Have you experienced joy because God answered your prayers?

D. We Help Others

We can help others by praying for them. For example, after Peter was thrown into prison, the church responded by praying for him. In *Acts 12:1–18* we can read about how God miraculously released Peter from prison. Praying for others can change their lives!

Acts 12:5

So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

► **Activity 5:** What results did the prayers of the church have (*Acts 12:7–10*)?

► **Activity 6:** What kind of support did Paul particularly value in his ministry (*Ephesians 6:18–19*)?

E. We Receive Strength

Acts 4:31

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

To live a victorious life, we need to be equipped with the power of the Holy Spirit. When we spend time with God in prayer, we can receive strength that is beyond our natural abilities. *Isaiah 40:28–31* gives a beautiful picture of how God strengthens the weary and increases the power of the weak.

Psalms 18:29–32

Habakkuk 3:19

► **Activity 7:** What happened when the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus (*Acts 10:37–38*), Saul (*Acts 9:17–22*), and the believers (*Acts 4:31–33*)?

III. HOW CAN WE PRAY?

While there are no *rules* on how to structure our prayers, we can look to the Bible and see important components of prayer, which we can learn and apply to our prayer lives.

A. Worship

Genesis 24:26–27

Then the man bowed down and worshiped the Lord, saying, "Praise be to the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master..."

Worship is the highest, most important, and wonderful type of prayer. Worship is praising God for who he is, for his greatness, goodness, love,

grace, mercy, and faithfulness. He is the only one worthy to be worshipped (*Matthew 4:10*).

► **Activity 8:** In *Psalms 145:1–21*, what is David praising God for?

B. Confession of Sins

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

When God shows us what is wrong in our lives, we should put the matter right as soon as possible and also ask Jesus for forgiveness. He faithfully forgives us (*Psalms 103:12; 1 John 1:9*).

► **Activity 9:** What promises has God made to those who confess their sins (*Proverbs 28:13; 2 Chronicles 7:14*)?

C. Thanksgiving

Ephesians 5:19b–20 *Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Because we have received so many good things from God, we should give him thanks. Even when we are going through tough times, we can choose to be thankful and rejoice in the Lord (*Habakkuk 3:17–18*).

► **Activity 10:** Think about what you can give thanks for every day (*1 Thessalonians 5:16–18*).

D. Requests

Psalms 55:22 *Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; He will never let the righteous be shaken.*

Besides worship, confessing sins, and giving thanks, we may also bring our desires, requests, and needs to the Lord. He will gladly respond because he cares for us (*1 Peter 5:7*).

Philippians 4:6

► **Activity 11:** What are some of the reasons why God does not always give us what we want (*James 4:1–3*)?

E. Intercession

1 Timothy 2:1–2

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

Intercession means *praying for others*. We bring not only our own requests before God's throne, but also the requests of others. Interceding for others in prayer is a powerful way to see lives and situations changed (*Ephesians 6:18–19*).

- **Activity 12:** What prayers of intercession do we find in *Matthew 9:38*; *Ephesians 3:16*; *Colossians 4:3*; *2 Thessalonians 3:1–2*; *James 5:16*? What examples of intercession do you have?

IV. WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?

A. In Times of Need

Psalms 50:15

Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honour me.

God has given us many special promises. We can trust and claim them, particularly in difficult times. We do not have to face our problems alone (*Psalms 107:19–22*).

- **Activity 13:** What does Jesus ask us to do when we are weighed down with problems, and what will he give us in return (*Matthew 11:28–30*)?

B. In Personal Quiet Times

Matthew 6:6

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

It is good to have a quiet time with God every day (*Daniel 6:11*), during which we read the Bible and God can speak to us through it. In the quiet time we bring our heartfelt desires and needs to Jesus through prayer.

- **Activity 14:** How is Jesus an example to us of intentionally setting aside time to pray (*Mark 1:35*)?

C. In Community

Matthew 18:19

[Jesus:] "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven."

God has made a special promise to fulfil the prayers of Christians who pray in agreement with one another.

When someone prays aloud in a prayer meeting, others may pray silently with them in their hearts. It is possible to conclude the prayer with "Amen", which means "So be it". By doing so, everyone confirms the prayer and thus makes it their own prayer too. Examples of praying together can be found in *Psalms 133:1; Acts 1:14, 12:5*.

- ▶ **Activity 15:** In *Acts 4:23–31* we read about Peter and John being released from custody and gathering with other believers to pray. How did they pray together (*Acts 4:23–30*) and what were the results of their prayers (*Acts 4:31*)?

D. Before Meals

Mark 6:41

[Jesus feeds the 5,000] Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all.

It is good to give thanks to God, the giver of all good gifts (*James 1:17*), before eating.

1 Corinthians 10:31

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

The people of Israel were told to give thanks to the Lord after eating (*Deuteronomy 8:10*). There are many examples of Jesus giving thanks before eating (*Matthew 14:19, 15:36; Mark 8:6; Luke 24:30; John 6:11*). Paul also gave thanks before eating (*Acts 27:35*). For the early Christians, praying before meals was common (*Romans 14:6; 1 Timothy 4:3–5*). However, we should not view praying before a meal as a duty or a *must*. We also find examples in the Bible where no prayer of thanksgiving is mentioned before the meal (*Luke 24:42–43; John 21:13*).

- ▶ **Activity 16:** With what attitude should we receive our food (*1 Timothy 4:3–4*)?

E. Continually

1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray continually...

2 Thessalonians 1:11 With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith.

The Bible teaches us to *pray continually*. This is possible because we are connected to God at all times and in all places: we can talk to him in our hearts at any time, about anything. Prayer is an attitude that should influence every area of our lives.

► **Activity 17:** How can we realistically practise a constant prayer life (*Ephesians 6:18*)?

V. BIBLICAL PRAYER PRINCIPLES

The Bible gives many examples of things we can do to help us have a powerful and effective prayer life. Some essential components are addressed here.

A. Pray Specifically

Mark 10:51 "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."

If someone thinks that God does not hear their prayers, they should first check whether they specifically told the Lord what they want. Perhaps some Christians lead a poor Christian life because they only pray in very general terms. God wants us to be very specific about our requests (*Mark 10:51–52; Luke 18:40–42; James 4:2*).

► **Activity 18:** What did Elijah pray for specifically? What did he experience as a result of his prayer (*James 5:17–18*)?

B. Pray in Faith

Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

God wants us to put our trust in him so that he may give us what we request (*Mark 11:22–24*). If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us, and we will have what we asked of him (*1 John 5:14–15*). If you have faith “as small as a mustard seed”, nothing will be impossible for you (*Matthew 17:20*).

- ▶ **Activity 19:** What did the Canaanite woman in *Matthew 15:28* experience when she put her faith in Jesus?
- ▶ **Activity 20:** What is genuine faith based on (*Matthew 24:35; 1 John 5:14–15*)?

C. Pray in Jesus' Name

John 14:13–14

And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

Praying in Jesus' name is powerful. It means that we have the right to come to God our Father, through Jesus Christ our mediator (*John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 10:19–22*). His name is above every other name and all things must submit to him (*Acts 3:16, 16:18; Philippians 2:9–11*).

We not only ask God the Father, but we also thank him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (*Ephesians 5:20*).

- ▶ **Activity 21:** What results can we expect when we pray in Jesus' name (*John 15:16, 16:23–24*)?

D. Persevere

Colossians 4:2

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

Ephesians 6:18

God does not always give us what we ask for immediately. When we pray with perseverance, we prove that we are really serious about the request. Jesus told us in the Parable of the Persistent Widow that we should pray always and not give up (*Luke 18:1–8*).

- ▶ **Activity 22:** Why do we sometimes stop praying before we receive an answer? What can encourage us to persevere in prayer?

E. Live in a Way That Pleases God

1 John 3:22

And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. (New King James)

When we pray, we should be willing to do what pleases God. We should listen to Jesus and do what he says.

John 10:27

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

- **Activity 23:** What happens to our relationship with God when we obey his commands (*John 15:10*)?

VI. PRAYER BLOCKERS

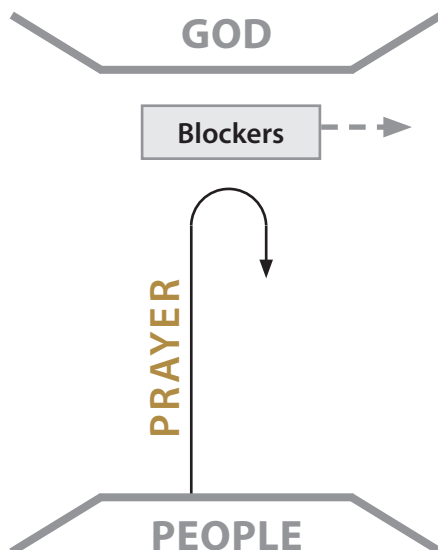
If God does not answer our prayers, it is important to consider whether there is something in our lives that may be hindering them. The Bible mentions several *prayer blockers* that we should all be aware of.

A. Unbelief

James 1:6–7: But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

Faith is necessary for our relationship with God. This also applies to prayer. When we pray, we must believe and not doubt. Let us always remember that our faith should be based on the Word of God, which is trustworthy and unchanging, not on our feelings.

- **Activity 24:** How can we become firm in our faith (*Ephesians 4:11–14; Hebrews 10:23–24*)?



B. Disobedience

Proverbs 28:9

If anyone turns a deaf ear to my instruction, even their prayers are detestable.

Obedience is pleasing to God. When we disobey the Lord, our prayers are no longer pleasing to him. Zechariah said that the Lord did not listen to the people when they called for help because they had hardened their hearts and would not listen to God's law or words (*Zechariah 7:12–13*).

- ▶ **Activity 25:** Read *1 Samuel 15:20–23*. What was the result of Saul's disobedience? What does Samuel say concerning sacrifices and obedience?

C. Sin

Isaiah 59:2

But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

Sin grieves God and destroys our relationship with him. If we pray to God with unconfessed sins, he will not listen (*Isaiah 1:15*).

- ▶ **Activity 26:** How can sin be cleansed (*Isaiah 1:16; 1 John 1:9*)?

D. Conflict

Mark 11:25

And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.

When we ask God to forgive us, but refuse to forgive others, our prayers will be blocked (*Matthew 6:14*). Husbands are given a special instruction to be considerate towards their wives, otherwise their prayers will be blocked (*1 Peter 3:7*).

- ▶ **Activity 27:** What promise has Jesus given to those who pray in unity (*Matthew 18:19*)?

E. Selfish Motives

James 4:3

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Selfish motives are found in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The younger son had his inheritance paid out. He left his father, travelled to a distant land and squandered his wealth in wild living (*Luke 15:13*).

What about us? Do we experience battles with our selfish desires (*James 4:1*)?

► **Activity 28:** How can we resist selfish temptations (*James 4:6–7*)?

VII. THE RESULTS OF PRAYER

Psalm 145:19

He fulfils the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.

We can be sure that God always hears us when we sincerely turn to him in prayer (*Matthew 7:7; Mark 11:24; 1 Peter 3:12*). Yet God does not always answer our prayers in the way we expect.

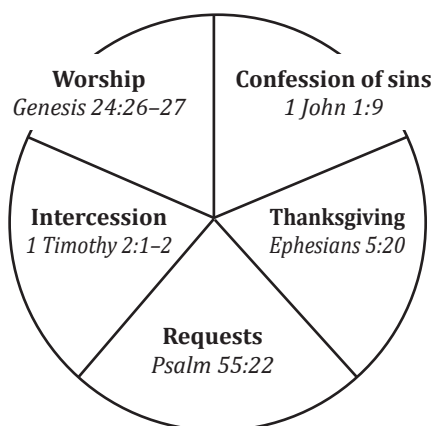
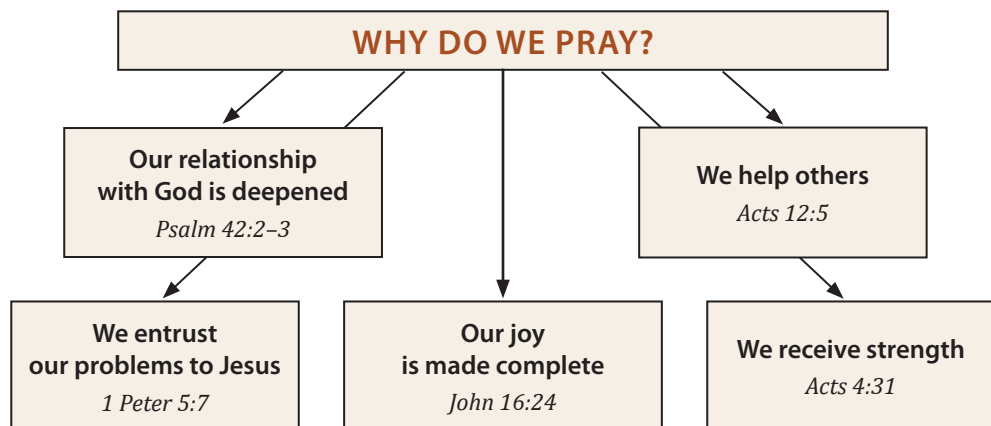
- Moses pleaded with God to be allowed to cross the Jordan river (*Deuteronomy 3:23–27*). God did not grant his request, but he allowed him to see the land from a distance.
- Jesus prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me; yet not as I will, but as you will” (*Matthew 26:39*). God did not grant this request, because the death of Jesus on the cross was the only way for the salvation of mankind.
- Paul prayed three times that God would take away the *thorn in his flesh*. God did not grant this request either, because he wanted to demonstrate his power in Paul’s weakness (*2 Corinthians 12:7–9*).

When a loving father does not grant a request to his child, the reason is usually simple: the father sees more than the child and knows what is best for them. In the same way, we can trust our heavenly Father, even when we do not understand his guidance.

How does prayer affect our lives?

- When we **pray**, we have fellowship with God, and our relationship with him deepens.
- When we **worship** God, we honour him and become more like him.
- When we **thank** God, we express our joy over his gifts.
- When we **bring our requests** to God, we can help others in their needs and experience how God works in our lives.

PRAYER



WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?

- **In times of need**
Psalm 50:15
- **In personal quiet times**
Matthew 6:6
- **In community**
Matthew 18:19
- **Before meals**
Mark 6:41
- **Continually**
1 Thessalonians 5:17

PRAY TO BE HEARD

How to Pray

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| A. Pray specifically | <i>Mark 10:51</i> |
| B. Pray in faith | <i>Hebrews 11:6</i> |
| C. Pray in Jesus' name | <i>John 14:13-14</i> |
| D. Persevere | <i>Colossians 4:2</i> |
| E. Live in a way that pleases God | <i>1 John 3:22</i> |

Prayer Blockers

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| A. Unbelief | <i>James 1:6-7</i> |
| B. Disobedience | <i>Proverbs 28:9</i> |
| C. Sin | <i>Isaiah 59:2</i> |
| D. Conflict | <i>Mark 11:25</i> |
| E. Selfish motives | <i>James 4:3</i> |

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *1 Timothy 2:1-2*.
2. What does prayer mean?
3. Why is it so important to pray?
4. What does worship mean?
5. To help structure your prayer life, what are some components that you could include?
6. Why is it important to pray with other Christians?
7. What does the word *Amen* mean?
8. How should we pray to receive what we have asked for?
9. What could hinder your prayers?
10. What results can we expect from praying?



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Those who love Jesus
follow him and keep his commandments.

OBEDIENCE

True obedience to God comes from loving him and willingly choosing to follow him. Anyone who chooses to obey God will find that this is the most purposeful way to live.

*And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.
– 2 Corinthians 5:15*

► **Activity 1:** Why is it that we sometimes resist being obedient?

I. WHAT IS OBEDIENCE?

A. Submitting to Authority

Obedience is the submission of one's will to the will of another. It is seen when someone obeys a command or prohibition. The word obedience comes from *to listen* or *to hear*. For someone to be obedient, there must be an authority that they listen to, submit to, and obey.

Hebrews 11:8

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

James 4:7

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Jesus set the perfect example of obeying God and submitting completely to his Heavenly Father's will (*Luke 22:42*).

B. A Voluntary Decision

Obedience that pleases God comes voluntarily, from the heart.

Romans 6:17

But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance.

- ▶ **Activity 2:** How is the Thessalonians' relationship with God described in *1 Thessalonians 1:9*?
- ▶ **Activity 3:** Jesus does not call us *servants* but *friends* (*John 15:14–15*). Why does Paul call himself a *servant of Jesus Christ* (*Romans 1:1*), when he knows that Jesus no longer calls us *servants*?

C. An Inner Attitude

Psalms 40:8

I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart.

Every Christian has been given a new inner desire by God to do his will (*Hebrews 10:16*).

- ▶ **Activity 4:** What does Jesus promise to those who keep his commandments (*John 15:10–11*)?
- ▶ **Activity 5:** God does not force us to be obedient. What does *2 Timothy 2:26* say about how the devil influences people?

II. WHY SHOULD WE OBEY GOD?

A. God Expects Obedience

In the Old Testament, the people of God were repeatedly told to keep God's commandments.

- ▶ **Activity 6:** What were the people of Israel specifically asked to do in *Deuteronomy 10:12–13*? What attitude does God expect from his people?

Although the New Testament explains that born-again Christians no longer live under the Mosaic Law (*Romans 10:4*), they are still expected to obey God. The New Testament explains that it is not enough to only hear the Word of God: we must also put it into practice (*Romans 1:5; James 1:22*).

Romans 16:19a

Everyone has heard about your obedience...

B. Obedience Is an Expression of Our Love for God

Because God dearly loves us (*1 John 3:1*), he only commands what is good and forbids what is bad for us. As children of God, we can trust our Heavenly Father without reserve.

2 John 6

And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

Our love for God should be our most important reason for obeying him. Genuine love shows itself in concrete deeds, especially in obedience. When we disobey Jesus, our actions indicate that we do not love him (*John 14:24*).

- ▶ **Activity 7:** According to *1 John 5:2–3*, how can we express our love for God?

- ▶ **Activity 8:** In *John 14:21–23*, what promises did Jesus make to those who keep his commands and love him?

C. Obedience Is the Only Meaningful Way to Live

In our own strength we are unable to live the purposeful life that God planned for us. He created us to live with him and to do the works he has prepared for us. If we do not obey him, we miss the purpose of life.

Ephesians 2:10

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

- ▶ **Activity 9:** What consequences should we expect if we disobey God's instructions (*Ephesians 5:6*)?

D. God Blesses Obedience

The negative results of disobedience are far-reaching. On the other hand, there are many promises from God for those who are obedient; promises that make life rich, joyful, and purposeful (*Matthew 6:33, 11:28–30*).

- **Activity 10:** What did God promise to do for the people of Judah if they obeyed him (*Jeremiah 7:23*)?

III. LIVING OBEDIENTLY

The aim of Jesus' teaching his disciples was not to just impart theoretical knowledge. Instead, he wanted them to put his teachings into practice.

In the Great Commission, Jesus took this a step further by telling his disciples to go and teach others *to obey everything I have commanded you* (*Matthew 28:18–20*). Thus, for every born-again Christian, living obediently means putting God's Word into practice.

- **Activity 11:** List some of the commandments that Jesus gave to his disciples. Are these commandments also for us?

A. Put Jesus' Teachings into Practice

In the Gospels we find many instructions from Jesus. What does he tell us to do?

1. Repent

For an unbeliever, the most important step of obedience to God is to repent of their sins and to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Obeying Jesus' command to repent is essential to being born again (*Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3*).

In fact, God commands all people from everywhere to repent and be saved (*Acts 17:29–31; 1 Timothy 2:3–4*).

Matthew 4:17 *From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."*

Mark 2:17

- **Activity 12:** What commandments do we find in *1 John 3:23*?

2. Love God with All Your Heart

Matthew 22:37–38 Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment.”

Anyone who loves God with all their heart does not tolerate other *gods* in their life (*Exodus 20:3*). In the Old Testament, God says that he is the *First and the Last* (*Isaiah 44:6, 48:12*). Jesus also referred to himself in this way (*Revelation 1:11, 2:8*).

Revelation 22:13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

Jesus, who was the first to rise from the dead, should always have the first place in our lives (*Colossians 1:18*).

► **Activity 13:** How does *Psalm 27:8* encourage us to seek God first in our daily lives?

3. Love Your Neighbour as Yourself

Matthew 22:39 And the second [command] is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

Our love for our neighbours should be practical (*Luke 10:30–37; John 13:4–5*).

► **Activity 14:** We should not grow weary in doing good works. According to *Galatians 6:10*, which people should we especially help?

4. Celebrate the Lord's Supper

Jesus instructs us to meet with other believers, to break bread, and to drink together, in remembrance of him (*Matthew 26:26–28*).

1 Cor. 11:23–25 The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

► **Activity 15:** What is the significance of the Lord's Supper? What do the bread and the cup remind us of (*1 Corinthians 11:24–26*)?

5. Pray Expectantly

Matthew 7:7–8 *Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.*

1 Thessalonians 5:17–18

Prayer is the most important task of a Christian. Not a day should go by when we have not intentionally set aside time to pray.

► **Activity 16:** According to *1 Timothy 2:1*, what should we be praying for?

6. Give

Matthew 5:42 *Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.*

2 Corinthians 9:7 *Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

If our whole life belongs to God, our money, our time, and our strength also belong to him. It should not be difficult for us to give our possessions to the Lord's work.

► **Activity 17:** What reward can the one who gives gladly expect (*Mark 9:41; Luke 6:38*)?

7. Share the Gospel

Mark 16:15–16 *He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."*

Jesus commands us to go into all the world and preach the gospel. Sharing the gospel can begin with our closest friends and family. Each one of us is called to do this.

► **Activity 18:** In *Mark 1:17*, what did Jesus ask his disciples to do? Does this command also apply to our lives?

8. Put the Kingdom of God First

Matthew 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom of God (*Luke 8:1*). He was passionate that people enter this kingdom (*Luke 13:23–24*) and he often spoke in parables to illustrate the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

► **Activity 19:** What should our eyes be fixed on (*2 Corinthians 4:18*)? What can you do to put the kingdom of God first in your life?

B. Know Your Bible and Put It into Practice

Living obediently to God also means applying biblical principles to our lives. We should, for example:

1. Live by the Word of God

Colossians 3:16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

Living obediently to God involves knowing the Bible and applying it to our lives (*Matthew 7:24–27; Hebrews 4:12*).

► **Activity 20:** What can we learn from *Joshua 1:8* and *Matthew 4:4* about God's Word?

2. Meet with Other Believers

Hebrews 10:24–25 And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

God wants his children to gather together, to have fellowship, and to serve one another. We are not made to live solitary Christian lives (*1 Corinthians 12:12–14; 1 Peter 4:10*).

► **Activity 21:** In *Acts 2:42*, what are we called to do?

3. Work Diligently

Ephesians 4:28 *Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.*

The first humans had meaningful tasks: they were supposed to cultivate and care for the Garden of Eden (*Genesis 2:15*). Each of us also has meaningful tasks to do. In fact, the Bible explains that God has good works that he has planned in advance for each of us to do (*Ephesians 2:10*).

While we are to be faithful in our daily work, we are also commanded to have one day per week as a day of rest (*Exodus 23:12*).

► **Activity 22:** What attitude should we have when we work, and why (*Colossians 3:23–24*)?

4. Take Care of Your Body

It is biblical to take care of your body and to use it to serve and glorify God (*Ephesians 5:29*).

Romans 12:1 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*

► **Activity 23:** Why is disciplined use of our bodies important (*1 Corinthians 9:27*)?

5. Choose a Born-Again Partner

2 Corinthians 6:14 *Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?*

The Bible warns us not to be “yoked together with unbelievers.” Since marriage unites two people very closely, a shared foundation in faith is essential. If this foundation is missing, it can lead to tension, suffering, and pain. For Christians, this means they should not marry someone who does not share their faith in Jesus.

It is important to seek God’s will when choosing a husband or a wife. God is well and truly able to show you who your husband or wife should be (*Genesis 24*).

► **Activity 24:** List some other areas where God expects our obedience.

IV. PRACTICAL STEPS TO OBEDIENCE

Living a life of obedience to God can be summarised by three essential principles.

A. Know God's Instructions

Psalm 119:11

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Through the Bible we learn the will of God for our lives. God's Word is like a lamp in the night that illuminates our path (*Psalm 119:105*). We need to read the Bible to learn and discern God's instructions. We also need to pay attention to the daily, personal instructions of the Holy Spirit.

B. Love Jesus

John 4:34

"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work..."

A key to loving Jesus is to always remember that he first loved us (*1 John 4:19*).

Love for Jesus is the inner attitude that's needed for us to be obedient to God. Those who love Jesus will obey his teachings (*John 14:23*).

We should make it our life's mission to completely and gladly fulfil God's will for our lives.

C. Die to Self and Depend on Jesus

John 15:5

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing..."

In our own strength we cannot consistently obey God (*Romans 7:21–24*). But if we remain close to Jesus, his power will work in us and enable us to live a sanctified and obedient life.

OBEDIENCE

WHAT IS OBEDIENCE?

- A. **Submitting to authority**
Hebrews 11:8
James 4:7
- B. **A voluntary decision**
Romans 6:17
- C. **An inner attitude**
Psalms 40:8
 - What does Jesus promise to those who keep his commandments (*John 15:10-11*)?

WHY SHOULD WE OBEY GOD?

- A. **God expects obedience**
Romans 1:5; 16:19a
- B. **Obedience is an expression of our love for God**
2 John 6
- C. **Obedience is the only meaningful way to live**
Ephesians 2:10
- D. **God blesses obedience**
Jeremiah 7:23

LIVING OBEDIENTLY

Put Jesus' teachings into practice

1. **Repent** – *Matthew 4:17*
2. **Love God with all your heart**
Matthew 22:37-38
3. **Love your neighbour as yourself**
Matthew 22:39
4. **Celebrate the Lord's Supper**
1 Corinthians 11:23-25
5. **Pray expectantly** – *Matthew 7:7-8*
6. **Give** – *Matthew 5:42*
7. **Share the gospel** – *Mark 16:15-16*
8. **Put the kingdom of God first**
Matthew 6:33

Know your Bible and put it into practice

1. **Live by the Word of God**
Colossians 3:16
2. **Meet with other believers**
Hebrews 10:24-25
3. **Work diligently**
Ephesians 4:28
4. **Take care of your body**
Romans 12:1
5. **Choose a born-again partner**
2 Corinthians 6:14

PRACTICAL STEPS TO OBEDIENCE

Know God's instructions

Psalms 119:11

Love Jesus

John 4:34

Die to self and depend on Jesus

John 15:5

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *John 14:21*.
2. What does obedience mean?
3. What attitude towards obedience should we have?
4. Why do you want to obey God?
5. What problems does disobedience bring?
6. Name one blessing that God has promised to those who are obedient to him.
7. What is the greatest and most important commandment of all (*Matthew 22:37-38*)?
8. In what areas of life does God expect us to be obedient?
9. What does it mean to seek first the kingdom of God (*Matthew 6:33*)?
10. What do we need so that we can consistently obey God?



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Although God allows temptations in our lives,
he never allows more than we can bear.

LESSON 8

TEMPTATION

Every Christian is confronted with temptations and can get into great trouble as a result. To live a victorious Christian life, we must learn how to handle being tempted. God wants to protect us from temptations that are greater than our own strength and to give us power to face them victoriously.

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

– 1 Corinthians 10:13

I. WHAT IS TEMPTATION?

The Greek word for *temptation* is *peirazo* and it has two meanings:

A. To Provoke Someone to Deviate from a Given Standard

Temptation is the attempt to lead someone away from a given standard. When we are tempted, we feel an urge to sin.

James 1:14–15

Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

It is important to recognise that temptation itself is not sin, but it can lead to sin.

► **Activity 1:** What does temptation try to lead us away from (2 Thessalonians 2:15)?

B. To Put Someone or Something to the Test

Sometimes the Greek word *peirazo* is used in the Bible for *test* or *put to the test*. Some examples are:

John 6:6

He [Jesus] asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

2 Corinthians 13:5

Revelation 2:2

► **Activity 2:** How was Abraham tested (*Genesis 22:1–2; Hebrews 11:17*)?

II. AREAS OF TEMPTATION

Satan tempts us to stumble and fall into sin. To help resist temptation, it is wise to consider our lives and know where we are especially vulnerable.

1 John 2:16

For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.

The three areas that are listed in *1 John 2:16* (the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life) are used by Satan again and again to tempt us to sin. Jesus was also tempted in each of these areas.

► **Activity 3:** Read *Luke 4:1–13* and find out specifically what temptations Jesus faced and how he resisted them..

- Lust of the flesh (*Luke 4:1–4*):
- Lust of the eyes (*Luke 4:5–8*):
- Pride (*Luke 4:9–13*):

► **Activity 4:** Read *Genesis 3:6* and find out if these three areas of temptation are found there. If so, describe each temptation.

- Lust of the flesh:
- Lust of the eyes:
- Pride:

A. Lust of the Flesh

The lust of the flesh can lead to the acts of the flesh listed in *Galatians 5:19–21*.

At this point we should note the following:

- Eating and drinking are gifts from God to enjoy, but we also need to be on guard so they do not degenerate into excessiveness (*Proverbs 23:19–21; Romans 13:13*).
- Rest and recreation are desired by God and that is why he has set aside the seventh day as a day of rest. Being lazy, on the other hand, is not God's way or desire (*2 Thessalonians 3:10; Hebrews 6:12*).
- The only right place for sex is within marriage (*1 Corinthians 7:2–3; Hebrews 13:4*). Sex outside of marriage is sinful and not pleasing to God (*1 Corinthians 6:9–12; Galatians 5:19; Colossians 3:5–6*).

B. Lust of the Eyes (Covetousness and Greed)

Lust of the eyes includes covetousness and greed. In the Ten Commandments we are forbidden to covet our neighbour's house, wife, servants, oxen or donkey, or anything else that belongs to them (*Exodus 20:17*).

In *Luke 12:15* Jesus also warned us against greed.

Luke 12:15 Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

In the Bible we find examples of covetous acts and their consequences. For example, Achan's covetous and greedy act brought God's judgement, which led to the deaths of 36 men and ultimately to his own death (*Joshua 7:20–21*).

God gives us possessions to use and enjoy. At the same time, we need to be watchful that we do not become greedy or covetous for things we do not have.

▶ **Activity 5:** What attitude should we have towards our material possessions (*1 Timothy 6:8*)?

Looking at someone lustfully is also sin (*Matthew 5:28*). In *Job 31:1* we read that Job made a covenant with his eyes that he would not look lustfully at a young woman.

C. Pride

Pride is closely associated with arrogance and vanity.

Proverbs 16:5

The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.

2 Timothy 3:2–5

We all like to strive for recognition and power. Jesus, on the other hand, did not come to be served, but to serve (*Mark 10:45*), and he teaches us to do likewise (*John 13:12–17*).

D. Other Temptations

Sometimes we are tempted to sin when we are faced with:

- the mockery of unbelievers (*Luke 9:26*).
- our own thoughts (*Matthew 5:19*).
- false doctrines or false philosophies (*Colossians 2:8*).
- persecution, suffering, or sickness (*Romans 8:35*).

Satan knows about our particular weaknesses and he likes to target them to tempt us to sin. Therefore, we must be on our guard and we should not be surprised when temptations come.

III. THE PURPOSE OF TEMPTATION

When we face temptation, our faith can be strengthened, refined, and tested. Although resisting temptation is difficult and can feel awful, our refined faith will ultimately bring praise, glory, and honour to Jesus (*1 Peter 1:6–7*).

Even though it is not easy, the Bible tells us to rejoice in temptations. Through temptations our faith is strengthened and we can share in the sufferings of Christ.

1 Peter 4:12–13

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

- **Activity 6:** What are the results of trials and temptations, if we pass the test (*James 1:2–4, 1:12*)?

IV. WHERE DOES TEMPTATION COME FROM?

Does temptation come from God?

James 1:13

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.

God does not tempt us to do evil, but he can allow temptations to test our faithfulness. For example, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness where he was tempted by the devil (*Luke 4:1–2*).

Where do temptations that try to lead us away from God come from?

A. Satan

Throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, we see that Satan is constantly trying to tempt people to sin. That is why he is called *the tempter* (*Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5*). Every Christian, regardless of how long they have believed in Jesus, needs to be aware of Satan's attacks. Even mature Christians are not spared from them.

1 Peter 5:8

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

► **Activity 7:** What do we learn about Satan in *John 8:44*?

B. The Flesh

In the Bible, the flesh usually refers to our human, sinful nature.

The term *flesh* is sometimes translated as human nature, human selfishness, sinful desires, acts of the flesh, or evil desires.

Galatians 5:17

For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

1 Peter 2:11

James 1:14

► **Activity 8:** What are the acts of the flesh (*Galatians 5:19–21*)?

- **Activity 9:** What happens if you live according to the flesh (*Romans 8:13*)?

As Christians, we are to live with our minds set on what the Holy Spirit desires, not on what the flesh desires (*Romans 8:5–9*).

C. The World

John 15:19 *If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.*

1 John 2:15 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.*

In the Bible, the world does not always mean the Earth. Rather, it refers to people who do not know God, or to the ungodly systems of the world.

The world attempts to draw Christians back into sinful and worldly habits. *James 4:4* explains that choosing friendship with the world means making oneself an enemy of God rather than submitting to him as Lord.

- **Activity 10:** What kind of relationship should a Christian have with the world (*Romans 12:2*; *1 John 5:4*)?

V. RECEIVING FORGIVENESS

Although Christians should lead victorious lives, we often yield to temptation and fall into sin.

1 John 1:8 *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

James 3:2

Therefore, we need to know how to properly deal with temptation and how to receive forgiveness when we sin.

Practical steps for the forgiveness of sins are:

A. Recognise Your Sin

Psalm 32:3–4

When I [David] kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me, my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

David recognised his own sin and he suffered from it. He knew he had sinned and he felt like God's hand was heavy on him.

When you have sinned, admit that what you have done is sinful.

B. Confess Your Sin

Psalm 32:5

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Prayerfully ask Jesus to forgive your sin and consciously choose to turn away from it.

► **Activity 11:** What will we experience if we confess our sins to Jesus (1 John 1:9)?

C. Believe You Are Forgiven

After asking Jesus to forgive your sins, believe and accept that he has forgiven you (*Romans 5:1–2*).

Romans 3:22

We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. (New Living Translation)

- In this situation it is often helpful to recite a promise from the Bible (e.g. 1 John 1:9). By doing so, you can be reassured that your sins are forgiven, especially if your feelings tell you otherwise.
- Thank God immediately for the forgiveness he has now given you through Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:18).
- What about sins that we have unknowingly committed: how can we confess them? There is no need to be anxious about this, as Jesus died for all of our sins. As long as we are in fellowship with Jesus, all of our sins are forgiven (1 John 1:7). We can let the Psalmist's prayer be ours too: "Who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults." (Psalm 19:12).

D. Further Steps

- If you have treated someone unjustly or offended them, apologise.
- If you have hurt someone, repair the hurt.
- If you are not at peace about the matter, seek Christian counselling.
- When you know you have done the wrong thing, put it right as soon as possible. Do not carry a burden for a long time.
- Continue to do the tasks that God has given to you, with courage.

VI. VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION

Although God allows temptation in our lives, he never allows more than we can bear (*1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Peter 2:9*).

- **Activity 12:** Jesus was tempted like we are, but he did not sin. How does Jesus' victory over temptation help us when we are tempted (*Hebrews 2:18, 4:15–16*)?

A. Use the Word of God as Your Weapon

The Bible gives clear instructions about how we should deal with temptation: we should respond to temptation with the Word of God.

Psalms 119:11

I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

- **Activity 13:** What did Jesus use to resist the temptations of the devil (*Matthew 4:4*)?

B. Watch for Temptation

1 Peter 5:8

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

1 Corinthians 16:13

Being tempted to sin is part of the Christian journey. We need to expect temptations, watch out for them, and be prepared to face them when they come.

- **Activity 14:** In *Matthew 26:40–41*, what advice did Jesus give to his disciples?

C. Avoid Temptation

We must be on guard to avoid sources of temptation, such as unbiblical opinions and beliefs, lest we fall into sin (*2 Peter 3:17*).

Proverbs 4:14–15

Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evildoers. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way.

Proverbs 1:10

- **Activity 15:** What can we do to avoid facing certain temptations (*Psalms 1:1; 2 Timothy 2:22*)?

D. Pray for Victory

Matthew 26:41

Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Prayer is crucial when it comes to having victory over temptation. We should pray for our own victory and also for other believers.

- **Activity 16:** What prayer request did Paul have for the believers in Ephesus (*Ephesians 3:16*)?

E. Resist the Devil

James 4:7

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

When we recognise Satan's attacks, we must consciously and immediately resist him. In times of strong temptation, we should stand firm in the name of Jesus Christ, resist the enemy, and trust that he will flee (*Matthew 16:23; Acts 16:18*).

- **Activity 17:** What can we use to ward off Satan's fiery darts (*Ephesians 6:16*)?

TEMPTATION

WHAT IS TEMPTATION?

The Greek word *peirazo* for *temptation* has two meanings:

- To provoke someone to deviate from a given standard
James 1:14–15
- To put something or someone to the test
John 6:6

AREAS OF TEMPTATION

1 John 2:16

- Lust of the flesh
- Lust of the eyes
- Pride
- Other temptations:
 - Mockery (*Luke 9:26*)
 - Our own thoughts (*Matthew 5:19*)
 - False doctrines (*Colossians 2:8*)
 - Persecution, suffering, or sickness (*Romans 8:35*)

WHERE DOES TEMPTATION COME FROM?

Satan
1 Peter 5:8

The flesh
Galatians 5:17

The world
John 15:19

RECEIVING FORGIVENESS

Recognise your sin
Psalms 32:3–4

Confess your sin
Psalms 32:5

Believe you are forgiven
Romans 3:22

1. Use the Word of God as your weapon
Psalms 119:11

2. Watch for temptation
1 Peter 5:8

5. Resist the devil
James 4:7

3. Avoid temptation
Proverbs 4:14–15

4. Pray for victory
Matthew 26:41

**VICTORY OVER
TEMPTATION**

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *1 Corinthians 10:13*.
2. What does temptation mean?
3. In which areas of life are there temptations?
4. What temptations are mentioned in *1 John 2:16*?
5. Where does temptation come from?
6. Why is Satan so eager to lead us into sin?
7. Can trials and temptations also have a positive outcome? If so, what is it?
8. What should we do when we have fallen into sin through temptation?
9. How can we face temptations victoriously?
10. What Bible passage could be of particular help to you in times of temptation?



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By the works of God, especially creation,
everyone can see that there is an Almighty God.

KNOWING AND LOVING GOD

Among the basic questions of life are questions about God: *Who is he? How do I get to know him? What should my relationship with him be like? How can I know what God is really like?*

Whoever tries to answer these questions scientifically will not get beyond some basic insights. Instead, whoever studies the Bible can come to know what God is really like.

I. WHO IS GOD?

We can know God because he has revealed himself to us. If we try to know God only through reflection, philosophy, reasoning, or feelings, we will end up on wrong paths.

► **Activity 1:** What would we know about God if we did not have the Bible?

If we want to know God as he really is, we can see in the Bible how he is described and what he has done. What does the Bible tell us about who God is?

A. God Is the Creator

God is unique. He is the creator of everything.

Exodus 20:11

For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Psalms 102:25

In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.

In the Psalms, God is often described as the Creator, the Exalted One, and as the Ruler to whom all honour and worship are due (*Psalm 8:1–5; Psalm 19:1–7*).

► **Activity 2:** How is the fact that God is our creator significant to our faith?

B. God Is the Highest One

God is enthroned as the Most High above all self-made idols, above all prominent personalities, and above all powers in the spiritual realm. No one is higher than him and no one is equal to him.

Genesis 14:18–20

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

Psalm 50:14

Psalm 91:1

► **Activity 3:** What should we recognise, according to *Psalm 46:10*?

C. God Is Yahweh

There are several hundred names for God in the Bible, such as *Most High* and *Almighty*. The most important name for God is *Yahweh*. Out of reverence, the Jews did not speak this name but used *Adonai* (*my LORD*) instead.

We find the explanation for the name *Yahweh* in *Exodus 3:14*.

Exodus 3:14

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

The phrase "*I AM WHO I AM*" (or "*I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE*") points to God's eternal existence. He is the everlasting, eternal One. He is without beginning and without end.

- **Activity 4:** Jesus also introduced himself with “I am ...”. Name some of the “I am” descriptions that Jesus used (*John 6:35, 8:12, 10:9, 10:11, 14:6, 15:1*).

D. Characteristics of God

God’s characteristics show us what the living God is really like. Some of his characteristics are:

1. God Is Eternal

Psalm 90:2

Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

1 Timothy 6:16

2. God Is All-Knowing

- He sees everything, everywhere (*Proverbs 15:3*).
- He knows everything about himself (*1 Corinthians 2:10–11*).
- He knows everything about us (*Matthew 10:29–31*).
- He knows what might have been (*Matthew 11:21–24*).
- He knows the past, present, and future (*Isaiah 42:9, 46:9–10; Acts 15:17–18*).
- He knows all thoughts, words, and deeds (*Psalm 139:2–4*).

- **Activity 5:** How is it comforting to know that God sees you and is familiar with all of your ways?

3. God Is Omnipresent

Psalm 139:5–7

You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

Jeremiah 23:24

4. God Is Almighty (God Has Unlimited Power)

Psalm 115:3 Our God is in heaven; He does whatever pleases him.

Romans 4:20–21

5. God Is Holy

Psalm 22:3 Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the one Israel praises.

Isaiah 6:3

6. God Is Love

1 John 4:16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

1 John 4:10–11

► **Activity 6:** What other characteristics of God do we find in the Bible?

II. HOW HAS GOD REVEALED HIMSELF TO US?

Everyone has some knowledge of God because God reveals himself to us. How does he do this?

A. Through the Bible

God reveals himself through the Bible. The Bible is God's written Word. Some say it is like a love letter to us. It is *God-breathed* because God directed its authors to write exactly what he wanted.

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...

As we explore the Bible, we come to know God as he really is (*Hebrews 1:1–2*).

► **Activity 7:** To whom does the Bible point (*John 5:39*)?

B. Through Creation

Romans 1:19–20

They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God. (New Living Translation)

We can recognise that there is an Almighty God by his works, especially when we marvel at the beauty and splendour of creation.

- **Activity 8:** What message is given to us when we look up at the sky (*Psalms 19:1–4*)?

C. Through Jesus Christ

Colossians 2:9

For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. (New Living Translation)

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived on earth as a sinless man. His life and teachings show us what God the Father is really like.

John 14:9

Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father...”

Jesus not only preached the truth; he is the truth (*John 14:6*).

- **Activity 9:** In *Matthew 14:28–33*, how did everyone in the boat know that Jesus is the Son of God?

D. Through Intuition

Everyone has an inner awareness of God’s existence. This *knowing* is placed in us by God and can be called *intuition*.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no-one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

Romans 1:21

The Bible does not attempt to prove God's existence; it always assumes his existence and announces punishment for those who deny or despise God.

Romans 1:21

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

- **Activity 10:** How does the inner awareness of God (intuition) in people become darkened (*Romans 1:21, 1:28*)?

E. Through Fulfilled Prophecies

God reveals himself through fulfilled prophecies. When we look at biblical prophecies and world history, we see God's words coming to pass. Thus, we see that he is indeed Almighty God whose words are true and always fulfil their purposes (*Numbers 23:19; Isaiah 55:11*).

Did you know, for example, that Jesus' birthplace was prophesied approximately 700 years before his birth (*Micah 5:2*)?

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

God has repeatedly intervened powerfully in history. *Exodus 9:16* teaches that he sovereignly used the events of the Exodus to reveal his power, so that his name would be proclaimed in all the earth.

- **Activity 11:** How does God intervene in the course of history (*Acts 17:26*)?

F. Through Miracles

1 Kings 18:24

[Elijah said:] Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord. The god who answers by fire—he is God." Then all the people said, "What you say is good."

1 Kings 18:36–39

In the Bible, signs and wonders often served as mighty demonstrations of God's power. Miracles happened in Old Testament times, in Jesus' time, in the apostles' time, and they still happen today.

- **Activity 12:** What was the purpose of Jesus' miracles (*John 20:30–31*)?

G. Through Personal Experiences

Everyone who has received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour has had a personal experience with him (*John 8:36, 14:27*).

Welcoming Jesus as your Lord and Saviour is the most important experience of all. After that, you can experience him every day of your life and into eternity.

- **Activity 13:** Name a personal experience where the presence or love of God has become particularly clear to you.

III. THE TRINITY OF GOD

The Bible teaches us that there is only one God.

Exodus 20:2–3

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods besides me...”

Deuteronomy 6:4

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Isaiah 43:11

A. What Is the Trinity of God?

Although there is only one God, he reveals himself to us in a threefold way. We come to know God as...

- God the Father,
- God the Son,
- God the Holy Spirit.

All three – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – form the only one, unified, Eternal God.

The word *Trinity* does not appear in the Bible. The doctrine of the Trinity (*Latin: trinitas*) was coined at the beginning of the third century by the church writer Tertullian (150–220 AD) and also by the famous Church Father Augustine (354–430 AD).

The Trinity of God is a great divine mystery. The Reformer Martin Luther said, “*Our mathematical, physical and logical laws don’t apply to God.*”



B. Important Bible Passages About the Trinity of God

The mystery of the Trinity is gradually revealed to us in the Old Testament, whereas the New Testament clearly speaks of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

These Bible passages refer to all three *persons* in the Trinity:

1. The Baptism of Jesus

In *Matthew 3:13–17* we read about the baptism of Jesus.

- Who was baptised by John in the Jordan river?
- Who descended on Jesus in the form of a dove?
- Who said from heaven: *“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”*?

2. The Great Commission

Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the **Father** and of the **Son** and of the **Holy Spirit**.

3. Blessings

2 Corinthians 13:14 May the grace of the **Lord Jesus Christ**, and the love of **God**, and the fellowship of the **Holy Spirit** be with you all.

4. The Coming of the Holy Spirit

John 14:16 And I [**Jesus**] will ask the **Father**, and he will give you another **advocate [the Holy Spirit]** to help you and be with you forever.

5. The Creation of the World

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning **God** created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the **Spirit of God** was hovering over the waters.

Colossians 1:16 For in him [**Jesus**] all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

6. The Redemption of Mankind

John 3:16 For **God** so loved the world that he gave his one and only **Son**, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the **Spirit**."

John 10:17 The reason my **Father** loves me [**Jesus**] is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again.

7. The Sanctification of Believers

John 17:17 [**Jesus**:] Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

1 Corinthians 6:11b But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the **Lord Jesus Christ** and by **the Spirit of our God**.

8. Further Reading

Romans 14:17–18, 15:16, 15:30

1 Corinthians 12:4–6

2 Corinthians 1:21–22

Ephesians 2:19–22, 3:5–7, 3:14–17

Titus 3:4–6

Jude 20–21

► **Activity 14:** What did Jesus say about his relationship with God the Father (*John 8:19, 12:44–45, 14:9–11*)?

► **Activity 15:** What do we know about the connection between God and the Holy Spirit (*2 Corinthians 3:17*)?

IV. GOD IS OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

A father is literally someone who has fathered children. Normally, he is also a nurturer and provider for his children.

In a broader sense, *father* can be applied to people who have taken on fatherly duties, such as:

- a provider for the poor, widows, and orphans (*Job 29:16; Psalm 68:5*)
- a ruler (*1 Samuel 24:12*)
- a priest (*Judges 17:10*)
- a prophet (*2 Kings 13:14*)

In the New Testament, those who led others to faith in Jesus were called *spiritual fathers* (*1 Corinthians 4:15; Philippians 2:22; Philemon 10*).

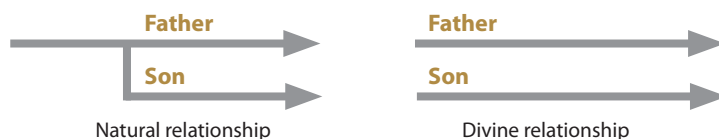
A. Who Can Call God “Father”?

1. God Is the Father of Jesus Christ

Ephesians 1:3 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*

Jesus often spoke of God as his Father (*John 5:17–18, 6:44, 10:25, 10:29, 14:2*).

The relationship between God the Father and Jesus is not a natural one by birth. Jesus did not become the Son of God when he was born in Bethlehem. He has existed as the Son of God for all eternity.



► **Activity 16:** Where was Jesus before the world was created (*John 17:5*)?

2. God Is the Father of Israel

Exodus 4:22 Then say to Pharaoh, "This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son..."

Jeremiah 31:9 [The LORD says:] They will come with weeping; they will pray as I bring them back. I will lead them beside streams of water on a level path where they will not stumble, because I am Israel's father, and Ephraim is my firstborn son.

Although God is Israel's Father, the people were not always aware of it, and only some called him "Father" (*Isaiah 63:16*).

► **Activity 17:** What did God expect from his people? What should they call him (*Jeremiah 3:19*)?

3. God Is the Father of All Believers

Although God has created everyone, only those who are born again can know God as their Heavenly Father.

Because of the Fall, everyone's relationship with God is broken (*Romans 3:23*). It takes a new spiritual birth to become a child of God (*John 1:12–13, 3:3*).

1 John 3:1 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

► **Activity 18:** What amazing privilege comes with being a child of God (*Galatians 4:7*)?

B. What Does the Fatherhood of God Mean for Us?

Our own thoughts and ideas of a father may not always match what the Bible reveals about God the Father. How does the Bible describe the relationship of our Heavenly Father to us?

1. Our Father Loves Us

John 16:27 No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

Psalms 103:11

► **Activity 19:** What does God's love mean to us (*Romans 5:8; 1 John 3:1*)?

2. Our Father Gives Us Gifts and Rewards

Matthew 7:11 *If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him.*

Matthew 6:1

Ephesians 6:8

► **Activity 20:** According to *James 1:5*, what will God generously give to you, if you ask him?

3. Our Father Cares for Us

Matthew 6:26 *Look 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?*

► **Activity 21:** What should we not worry about (*Matthew 6:25, 10:19*)?

4. Our Father Forgives Sins

Matthew 6:12 *And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

Matthew 6:14

5. Our Father Answers Prayers

Matthew 18:19 *Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.*

Matthew 6:6

6. Our Father Is Merciful

Luke 6:36 *Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*

7. Our Father Disciplines Us

Hebrews 12:5b-7 *"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he*

accepts as his son." Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?

C. Our Relationship with God the Father

1 John 1:3b

And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

Once we know God as our wonderful Heavenly Father, it is only natural that we want to respond to his love for us.

- **Activity 22:** Describe the relationship between a child of God and their Heavenly Father (*Romans 8:15–17; Galatians 4:6–7*).

The Bible shows us that our Heavenly Father wants us to:

– worship him

John 4:23–24

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.

Ephesians 3:14

– give him the glory

Philippians 2:10–11

...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 4:20

– give thanks to him

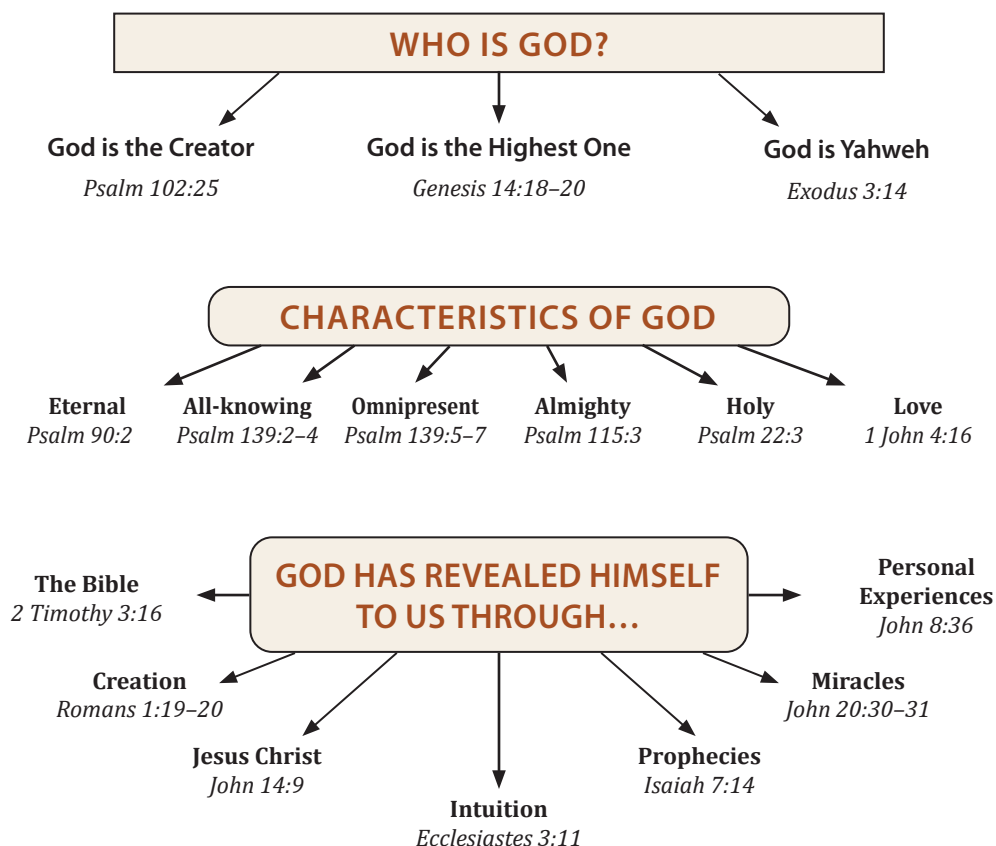
Ephesians 5:19b–20

Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:12

Colossians 3:17

KNOWING AND LOVING GOD



THE TRINITY OF GOD

What is the Trinity of God?

We come to know God as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

There is only one God:
Exodus 20:2-3; Deuteronomy 6:4

Bible passages

- The Baptism of Jesus *Matthew 3:13-17*
- The Great Commission *Matthew 28:19*
- Blessings *2 Corinthians 13:14*

GOD IS OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

Who can call God "Father"?

- Jesus Christ *Ephesians 1:3*
- Israel *Exodus 4:22*
- All believers *1 John 3:1*

The Fatherhood of God

- Our Father loves us *John 16:27*
- Our Father cares for us *Matthew 6:26*
- Our Father disciplines us *Hebrews 12:5b-7*

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *1 John 3:1*.
2. Which way of trying to get to know God is unsuccessful?
3. If a six-year-old asks you, "*Who is God?*" what would you say?
4. What characteristics of God do we know from the Bible?
5. Everyone can, if they want to, be aware that God exists. How has God revealed himself to us?
6. What does the *Trinity of God* mean?
7. Name two Bible passages that support the teaching of the Trinity of God.
8. Who can call God "*Father*"?
9. What significance does the fatherhood of God have for us?
10. How can our relationship with God the Father be deepened?



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By shedding his blood and dying on the cross,
Jesus paid the price for everyone's sins to be forgiven.

JESUS CHRIST

OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR

Jesus Christ isn't just the most famous personality in history; he's also the most significant because a person's eternal destination hinges on their decision to accept or deny him as their personal Lord and Saviour. We read in *John 3:36*:

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

That is why it is so important to have clear answers to the following questions: *Who is Jesus Christ? What has he done for us? How can we have a personal relationship with him?*

I. WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

Jesus asked his disciples, *"Who do you think I am?"* Peter's answer was short and to the point:

Matthew 16:16

You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

► **Activity 1:** Who do your family, friends, or work colleagues say Jesus is?

A. Jesus Is the Son of God

In the Bible, Jesus is often referred to as the *Son of God* (*Matthew 4:3, 8:29, 14:33, 26:63*).

Jesus claimed to be God's Son and spoke of God as his Father.

John 1:18

No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

- **Activity 2:** List some incidents from Jesus' life that confirm he really is the Son of God (*Mark 2:5; Luke 6:8; 1 Peter 2:22*).

The power in Jesus' life is a sign that he really is the Son of God.

- *Matthew 4:1–11* Jesus resisted sin.
He has power over temptations.
- *Matthew 8:23–27* Jesus calmed the storm.
He has power over the forces of nature.
- *Mark 5:1–20* Jesus healed a possessed man.
He has power over demons.
- *Luke 5:12–14* Jesus healed a man with leprosy.
He has power over diseases.
- *Luke 7:11–15* Jesus raised the young man of Nain from the dead.
He has power over death.

Jesus' life was unique. This is another sign that he is the Son of God.

- His birth was unique.
- His ministry was unique.
- His death was unique.
- His resurrection was unique.
- His ascension was unique.

B. Jesus Is the Son of Man

Jesus often referred to himself as the *Son of Man* (*Matthew 8:20, 9:6, 10:23, 11:19, 12:8, 12:32, 12:40, 13:37, 13:41, 16:13*).

Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

The title *Son of Man* indicates that Jesus really became human. He left the glory of his Heavenly Father to become like us, without giving up his position as the Son of God.

- **Activity 3:** What did Jesus give up when he came to earth as a man (*Philippians 2:6–7*)?

The following events confirm that Jesus was truly human:

- *Luke 2:7* Jesus was born.
- *Luke 2:51* Jesus submitted to his parents.
- *Mark 6:3* Jesus learnt the trade of carpentry.
- *John 11:35* Jesus wept.
- *Matthew 8:24* Jesus slept.
- *Mark 11:12* Jesus was hungry.
- *John 19:28* Jesus was thirsty.
- *John 19:30* Jesus died.

C. Jesus Is Eternal God

Hebrews 1:8 says of Jesus:

“Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever...”

The Bible teaches that Jesus is eternal: he existed before he was born in Bethlehem, and he will continue to exist forevermore (*Hebrews 1:1–4, 1:8; John 8:55*).

Although John the Baptist was six months older than Jesus (*Luke 1:26*), he acknowledged that Jesus existed before he did.

John 1:15 *This is the one I spoke about when I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’*

► **Activity 4:** How did the Jews react when Jesus told them, “*Before Abraham was born, I am!*” (*John 8:57–59*)?

The following passages also show that Jesus is eternal:

- *John 1:1* Jesus is described as the Word and as God.
- *Colossians 1:15–17* Jesus is before all things and holds everything together.
- *Revelation 22:13* Jesus calls himself the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last.

Jesus said that he and the Father are one (*John 10:30*), and that when we know Jesus, we therefore know God the Father too (*John 14:7-9*).

John 5:18

For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Jesus is also called God:

- *Romans 9:5* ...the Messiah, who is God over all...
- *Titus 2:13* ...our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.
- *2 Peter 1:1* ...through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ...
- *1 John 5:20* Jesus Christ is the true God and eternal life.

Because Jesus is God, worship is due to him and we may also come to him with our requests (*John 14:14; Philippians 2:10; Hebrews 1:6*).

Matthew 14:33

Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

► **Activity 5:** How should we honour the Son of God (*John 5:23*)?

D. Jesus Is the Only Saviour

The word *Saviour* means *Redeemer*. Jesus became our Saviour by dying for our sins on the cross of Calvary.

1 John 4:14

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world.

Acts 5:30-31

The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins.

By shedding his blood and dying on the cross, Jesus paid the price for everyone's sins to be forgiven. God accepted Jesus' sacrifice and raised him from the dead.

Now Jesus forgives the sins of everyone who comes to him by faith and accepts him as their personal Saviour. Jesus redeems them and they become a child of God.

► **Activity 6:** Is there anyone other than Jesus who can save us (*Acts 4:10-12*)?

E. He Is the Lord Jesus Christ

Romans 1:7

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. He Is Lord

Acts 10:36

You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

Lord can be used for an owner, a master, and for one to whom reverence is due. Jesus is our Lord!

► **Activity 7:** According to *Philippians 2:9–11*, will only believers in Jesus bow to him and acknowledge that he is Lord?

2. He Is Jesus

Matthew 1:21

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

Jesus is the name of the incarnate Son of God. It is the name above all names (*Philippians 2:9–11*).

Jesus means *Saviour*, or *the Lord is salvation*, or *Yahweh is salvation*.

► **Activity 8:** What mighty power does the name of Jesus have (*John 14:13–14*; *Acts 4:12*; *Romans 10:13*)?

3. He Is the Christ

John 1:41

The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ).

Acts 9:22

Christ is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *Mashiach* (*Messiah*) and means *Anointed One*.

- *Jesus* is the humble name for the Son of God.
- *Christ* is his sovereign title.

► **Activity 9:** What other titles are used for Jesus in the Bible? What do they mean for us, as Christians?

II. STAGES IN JESUS' LIFE

A. Before Jesus Was Born as a Baby

In the Old Testament, the coming of Jesus is announced in several places. The first is a somewhat hidden reference:

Genesis 3:14–15

So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

► **Activity 10:** Where and how does *Genesis 3:14–15* refer to Jesus?

Other references to Jesus in the Old Testament include:

- He will be a descendant of David (*2 Samuel 7:12–16*).
- He will be born in Bethlehem (*Micah 5:1*).
- He will suffer and die for our sins (*Isaiah 53:3–9*).
- The Passover lamb is a picture of the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ (*Exodus 12:5; Hebrews 9:14*).

► **Activity 11:** What else do we know about Jesus before he came to earth as a human (*John 1:3, 8:58, 17:24*)?

B. Jesus' Birth

Jesus was conceived through the Holy Spirit (*Matthew 1:18–20*) and born of Mary, in Bethlehem, in approximately 4 BC (*Matthew 2:1*).

At the time, Augustus was emperor of the Roman Empire (27 BC – 14 AD) and Herod was king in Judea.

► **Activity 12:** Why did Jesus Christ become human (*1 John 3:5, 3:8; Hebrews 2:17*)?

C. Jesus' Youth

The Bible contains little information about Jesus' infancy and youth. Joseph and Mary took him to Egypt soon after his birth (*Matthew 2:13–15*) and upon their return to Israel (*Matthew 2:19–23*) he was presented to the Lord at the temple in Jerusalem (*Luke 2:22–24*). He grew and he became strong; he was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him (*Luke 2:40*).

When he was 12 years old, Jesus visited the temple courts in Jerusalem (*Luke 2:40–52*) and everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers (*Luke 2:47*). We know that he was obedient to his parents (*Luke 2:51*) and he had brothers and sisters (*Matthew 13:55–56*).

► **Activity 13:** What can we learn from Jesus' relationship with his parents (*Luke 2:51*)?

D. Jesus' Public Ministry

Jesus was about 30 years old when he began his public ministry (*Luke 3:23*), which lasted for close to three years. We know of three successive annual Passover feasts that Jesus experienced during his ministry:

- 1st feast: *John 2:13*
- 2nd feast: *John 6:4*
- 3rd feast: *John 11:55, 12:1, 13:1*

► **Activity 14:** List some highlights from Jesus' public ministry (such as his teachings about the kingdom of God, instructing his disciples, and performing miracles).

E. Jesus' Suffering and Death

No other events from the life of Jesus are reported in such detail as his suffering, death, and resurrection (*Matthew 26–28*).

The death of Jesus differed in many ways from the death of other people.

What was unique about Jesus' death?

- He announced his death and resurrection in advance (*Matthew 16:21*).
- He gave his life willingly (*John 10:17–18*).
- The Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah's death were fulfilled when Jesus died (*Psalms 22:16, 22:18, 41:9, 69:21; Isaiah 53:12; Zechariah 11:12*).

- His death on the cross is proof of God's love for us (*1 John 4:10*).
- When Jesus died, unique signs occurred. Darkness came over the whole land, the curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth shook, rocks split, and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life (*Matthew 27:50–53; Luke 23:44–46*).

Why was Jesus' death necessary?

- Because God is holy and just, our sins must be judged and punished (*Romans 2:3, 2:12*).
 - Through the shedding of his blood and by his death, Jesus bore the punishment for our sins (*Romans 5:9–10*). When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, we will not be punished for our sins because Jesus took the punishment for us (*Romans 3:25*).
 - Jesus cried out on the cross, "It is finished!" (*John 19:30*), because he paid the price, in full, for our sins. We no longer need to sacrifice animals to make atonement for our sins (*Hebrews 9:22, 9:25–28*).
- **Activity 15:** What is the significance of Jesus' suffering and death for those who believe in him (*Romans 5:8–9; Ephesians 1:7*)?

F. Jesus' Resurrection

We are told of Jesus' resurrection in all four gospels (*Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20*). Jesus rose from the dead and appeared first to his disciples, then to more than 500 people, and later (after his ascension) to Paul the Apostle (*1 Corinthians 15:1–8*). After his resurrection, Jesus' disciples saw him, spoke with him, touched him, and ate with him (*Luke 24:38–43*).

Even though the resurrection is doubted by many opponents of the Christian faith, there is a great deal of evidence that Jesus Christ really did rise from the dead. For example, in *1 Corinthians 15* we find evidence based on:

- Personal experiences: *verses 1–2*
- The Scriptures: *verses 3–4*
- Eyewitness accounts: *verses 5–8*

Jesus' resurrection from the dead is proof that God accepted Jesus' sacrifice for our sins (*Romans 4:25*).

- **Activity 16:** Why did Jesus rise from the dead (*Luke 24:46; 1 Peter 1:3*)?

- **Activity 17:** What would be the consequences for us if Jesus had not risen from the dead (*1 Corinthians 15:14–19*)?

G. Jesus' Ascension

40 days after Jesus' resurrection, Jesus ascended to heaven (*Mark 16:19–20; Luke 24:50–53; Acts 1:4–11*).

Acts 1:9 *After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.*

Jesus' ascension was necessary to send the Holy Spirit to us (*John 16:5–7*).

- **Activity 18:** What has Jesus been doing since his ascension (*Mark 16:19; Hebrews 9:24*)?

H. Jesus' Exaltation

After Jesus ascended to heaven, God the Father exalted him, and he sat at the right hand of God (*Mark 16:19*) and was given the name that is above every name.

Philippians 2:9–11 *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Acts 5:31

Although Jesus is in heaven, he is also with his followers here on earth (*Matthew 18:20, 28:20*); he dwells in them through the Holy Spirit (*Romans 8:9–11*).

- **Activity 19:** What is Jesus' position now (*Ephesians 1:22–23*)?
- **Activity 20:** What has Jesus been doing for us since his ascension (*John 14:1–3; Hebrews 7:25*)?

I. Jesus' Second Coming

Jesus Christ is coming again. After he returned to heaven, the angels declared:

Acts 1:11

"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

- This world will come to an end when Jesus returns (*Matthew 24:3*) and judgement will follow (*Revelation 20:11–15*).
- God will create a new heaven and a new earth (*Revelation 21:1–22:5*).
- Those who already believe in Jesus will live with God in eternal glory. For those whose names are not written in the book of life, eternal torment in the lake of fire awaits (*Revelation 20:15*).

► **Activity 21:** How will Jesus return (*Revelation 1:7*)?

III. JESUS CHRIST IS OUR HIGH PRIEST

Hebrews 8:1–2

Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being.

The position of the High Priest in the Old Testament points symbolically to Jesus Christ.

One of the High Priest's responsibilities was to bring a sin offering for his own sins (*Leviticus 4:3–12*) as well as for the sins of the people (*Leviticus 4:13–35*). Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, he was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle with the blood of the sin offering to make atonement for the sins of all the people (*Leviticus 16:1–34*).

Jesus Christ is our High Priest. He did not offer a bull or a sheep as a sin offering, like an earthly High Priest would. Instead, he gave himself as a sacrifice for us (*Hebrews 9:27–28*). This sacrifice is valid for all time; it does not need to be repeated every year (*Hebrews 9:25–26*).

Jesus, as a human, faced the same temptations as we do, but without falling into sin. *Hebrews 4:15–16* explains that Jesus can therefore understand our weaknesses and sympathise with us, and we can approach God’s throne with confidence to receive mercy and grace.

Because Jesus Christ is our High Priest, he is our reconciler, mediator, and advocate.

A. Reconciler

The word *priest* also means *one who brings near*. By bringing sacrifices for the people, the High Priest helped to reconcile people to God.

Jesus is our High Priest and reconciler, who offered himself as a sin offering so that we can now come near to God.

Ephesians 2:13

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

B. Mediator

Only Jesus could restore the connection between God and mankind. He accomplished this reconciliation by dying for our sins. Now he is the mediator between God and us.

1 Timothy 2:5–6a

For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.

Hebrews 9:15

C. Advocate

Even though we are God’s children, we can fall into sin. That is why we need Jesus as our advocate with God the Father. We can come to Jesus with our sins, confess them to him, and receive his forgiveness.

1 John 2:1

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

Hebrews 7:25

► **Activity 22:** Where and when does Jesus intercede for us (*Hebrews 9:24*)?

JESUS CHRIST

WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

A. Jesus is the Son of God

John 1:18

B. Jesus is the Son of Man

Mark 10:45

C. Jesus is Eternal God

Colossians 1:15–17

D. Jesus is the only Saviour

1 John 4:14

- List some incidents from Jesus' life that confirm he really is the Son of God (*Mark 2:5; Luke 6:8; 1 Peter 2:22*).
- What did Jesus give up when he came to earth as a man (*Philippians 2:6–7*)?

E. He is the Lord Jesus Christ

Romans 1:7

1. He is Lord

Acts 10:36

Lord can be used for the one to whom reverence is due.

2. He is Jesus

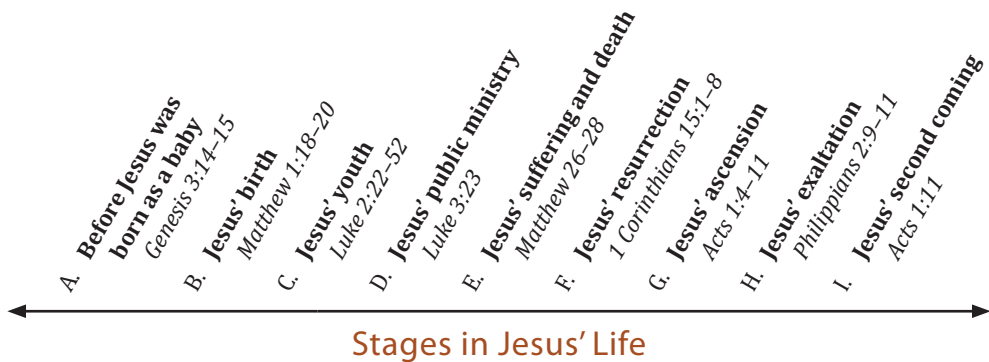
Matthew 1:21

Jesus means *Saviour*, or *the Lord is salvation*, or *Yahweh is salvation*.

3. He is the Christ

Acts 9:22

Christ is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *Mashiach* (*Messiah*) and means "Anointed One".



JESUS CHRIST IS OUR HIGH PRIEST

Reconciler

Hebrews 8:1–2
Ephesians 2:13

Mediator

1 Timothy 2:5–6a

Advocate

1 John 2:1

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *Mark 10:45*.
2. Name two Bible passages that show that Jesus really is God.
3. What does the name *Jesus Christ* mean?
4. Although Jesus is truly God, he became human. How can we tell that Jesus was fully human?
5. The coming of Jesus into the world was already announced in the Old Testament. Name two references to Jesus Christ from the Old Testament.
6. When and where was Jesus born?
7. What is the significance of Jesus' suffering and death for all who believe in him?
8. How do we know for sure that Jesus rose from the dead?
9. Where has Jesus been since his ascension?
10. What task does Jesus fulfil for us as High Priest?



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Our lives are refreshed and revived
by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

HIS CHARACTERISTICS AND HIS WORK

We live in the age of the Holy Spirit. Since Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has been working in a very special way on this earth. He is the one who gives us power to live victorious and fulfilled lives.

*Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father'.
– Galatians 4:6*

- **Activity 1:** What is the significance of the Holy Spirit for you personally? How does his presence affect your everyday life?

I. WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force, a vague shadow, or an indefinable *something*. He is God!

A. The Holy Spirit Is God

How do we know that the Holy Spirit is God? His names and also his attributes point to his deity.

1. His Names Point to His Deity

The different names for the Holy Spirit tell us a lot about who he is, what qualities he possesses, and what tasks he performs.

► **Activity 2:** Read the following Bible passages and underline the names for the Holy Spirit that indicate his deity.

- Genesis 6:3 Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years."*
- 2 Chronicles 15:1 The Spirit of God came on Azariah son of Oded.*
- Job 33:4 The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.*
- Isaiah 11:2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him— the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD —*
- Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor...*
- Zechariah 12:10a "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication..."*
- Matthew 10:19–20 But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*
- John 14:16–17 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.*
- Romans 8:9 You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.*
- Galatians 4:6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."*
- Ephesians 1:17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.*

► **Activity 3:** What other names does the Holy Spirit have?

Romans 8:15

2 Corinthians 4:13

2 Timothy 1:7

Hebrews 10:29

1 Peter 4:14

2. His Attributes Point to His Deity

Because the Holy Spirit is God, all the attributes of God also apply to the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is also...

- omnipresent *Psalms 139:7*
- omnipotent *Zachariah 4:6*
- omniscient *1 Corinthians 2:10*
- eternal *Hebrews 9:14*

► **Activity 4:** What special quality of the Holy Spirit is mentioned in *Romans 15:30*?

B. The Holy Spirit Is a "Person"

The Holy Spirit is not a general term for the power of God. In fact, the Holy Spirit can be called a person.

1. The Holy Spirit Has the Characteristics of a Person

A person can think, feel, speak, hear, and make decisions. So too can the Holy Spirit.

Think:

1 Corinthians 2:11 *For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.*

Feel:

Ephesians 4:30 *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

Speak:

1 Timothy 4:1

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

Hear:

John 16:13

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

Decide:

1 Corinthians 12:11

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

► **Activity 5:** The work of the Holy Spirit also points to him being like a person. What examples of the Holy Spirit's work do we find in *John 14:26* and *Acts 8:29*?

2. The Holy Spirit Can Be Hurt Like a Person

The Holy Spirit can be...

- blasphemed *Matthew 12:31*
- lied to *Acts 5:3*
- grieved *Ephesians 4:30*
- insulted *Hebrews 10:29*

II. SYMBOLS FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT

The following symbols for the Holy Spirit can help us learn more about who he is and what he is like.

A. Dove

Matthew 3:16

As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.

John 1:32

The dove reminds us of the gentleness and purity of the Holy Spirit.

- **Activity 6:** What characteristic is a dove especially known for (*Matthew 10:16*)?

B. Living Water

John 7:38–39

[Jesus:] “Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Our lives are refreshed and revived by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus explained to the Samaritan woman that whoever drinks of the water he gives will never thirst again (*John 4:14*).

- **Activity 7:** Read *Isaiah 44:3* and consider what happens when water is poured out on dry land. How is this picture similar to what happens when the Holy Spirit is poured out on us?

C. Oil

In Old Testament times, oil was used to anoint kings, priests, and prophets, to sanctify them, and to install them in their position of authority (*Leviticus 8:12*).

1 Samuel 16:13

So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.

All those who believe in Jesus have also been anointed with the Holy Spirit (*2 Corinthians 1:21–22*).

- **Activity 8:** Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit (*Luke 4:18*). What was the significance of this anointing for Jesus’ ministry (*Acts 10:38*)?
- **Activity 9:** What is the significance for us, as Christians, of being anointed with the Holy Spirit (*1 John 2:20, 2:27*)?

D. Fire

Luke 3:16

John answered them all, "I baptise you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

In *Acts 2:1–4*, the Holy Spirit is described as being like tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost and the disciples saw what appeared to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. Fire is also used to symbolise God. In *Hebrews 12:29*, God is described as a consuming fire.

- **Activity 10:** What does Jesus say in *Luke 12:49*? What does this mean for us?

E. Seal and Deposit

2 Corinthians 1:21–22

Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

In the Old Testament times, the Jews used a seal to make a contract. A bill of sale was sealed for example, to confirm that the buyer was the rightful owner (*Jeremiah 32:9–11*). For us, the seal of the Holy Spirit validates and assures us of our salvation (*Ephesians 4:30*).

- **Activity 11:** When were we sealed with the Holy Spirit (*Ephesians 1:13*)?

The Holy Spirit is also described as a deposit. When we make a monetary deposit, we are guaranteed to receive the goods later. So it is with the Holy Spirit: God has placed his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing that we will receive what he has promised.

- **Activity 12:** What are we guaranteed by receiving the Holy Spirit (*Ephesians 1:13–14*)?

III. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN HISTORY

A. In the Old Testament

The Holy Spirit is first mentioned in the first chapter of the Bible (*Genesis 1:2*). In *Job 33:4*, we read that the Holy Spirit took part in creation.

In the Old Testament period, the Holy Spirit was given to specific individuals to enable them to do a specific task.

► **Activity 13:** In the following verses, underline what the Holy Spirit did, or what happened as a result of his work.

Exodus 31:3 ... and I [the LORD] have filled him [Bezalel] with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills.

Numbers 14:24 But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it.

Judges 3:10 The Spirit of the LORD came on him, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war. The LORD gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram into the hands of Othniel, who overpowered him.

1 Samuel 11:6 When Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came powerfully upon him, and he burned with anger.

In the Old Testament period, the Holy Spirit could be given to a person, and he could also be taken away (*Psalms 51:10–11*).

1 Samuel 16:14 Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him.

Before Pentecost, the Holy Spirit worked mightily through selected individuals. Jesus promised that his disciples would receive the Holy Spirit after he was glorified (*John 7:37–39, 14:16, 16:23, 16:31*).

Jesus was glorified when he completed the work of redemption and returned to his Heavenly Father. After this, at Pentecost, a new era began, where the promised Holy Spirit was given to all those who believe in Jesus (*Acts 1:4–5, 2:1–41*).

B. In the Gospels

1. The Work of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' Life, Death and Resurrection

Where do we find the Holy Spirit working in Jesus' life?

- Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit (*Luke 1:35*).
- Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit and thus equipped for ministry (*Luke 4:18*).
- Jesus ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit (*Luke 4:14*).
- Jesus taught with the power of the Holy Spirit (*John 6:63*).
- Jesus was resurrected by the Holy Spirit (*Romans 8:11*).

2. The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Lives of Jesus' Disciples

Before Pentecost, the disciples' relationship with the Holy Spirit was comparable to that in the time of the Old Testament.

The disciples of Jesus experienced the transition from the old covenant to the new covenant. Jesus was born under the law (*Galatians 4:4*). It was still in effect, and the sacrificial system was still in place. Through his death, he established the new covenant. Jesus said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (*Luke 22:20; Hebrews 9:15*). The Holy Spirit was poured out only at Pentecost. From that point on, the new covenant came fully into effect.

- John the Baptist prophesied that Jesus would baptise his disciples with the Holy Spirit (*John 1:33*).
- Jesus gave his twelve disciples authority before they were sent out to do ministry (*Matthew 10:1*).
- Jesus comforted his disciples by promising to send the Holy Spirit after his resurrection (*John 15:26; 20:21-23*).

C. After Pentecost

The time since Pentecost is also called the *Age of the Holy Spirit*.

- This age began with the powerful Pentecost (*Acts 2:1-13*). As promised in the Old Testament, and also by Jesus, God sent his Holy Spirit to dwell within his children.
- Since Pentecost, the Holy Spirit lives in every born-again person (*Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16*). This is the crucial difference between the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments.

- **Activity 14:** Where does the Holy Spirit dwell now? What is this place called (*1 Corinthians 3:16*)?

IV. HOW DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT WORK NOW?

A. He Glorifies Jesus

John 16:13–14

[Jesus:] But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.

The Holy Spirit does not make himself the centre of attention; he always points to Jesus (*John 14:26; Acts 2:32–36*).

- **Activity 15:** How did the Holy Spirit appear at Jesus' baptism (*Matthew 3:16*)?

B. He Enables Us to Witness

Acts 1:8

[Jesus:] But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

We can count on the Holy Spirit to give us power, courage, and the right words when we tell others about Jesus (*Matthew 10:20*).

- **Activity 16:** In *Acts 4:33*, what did the apostles continue to testify to? How did they do this?

C. He Convicts Sinners

John 16:8–9

[Jesus:] When he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me...

The Holy Spirit opens people's *inner eyes* so that they can see their sin. Being convicted of sin is an important step towards being saved.

- **Activity 17:** What did Peter's listeners experience when they heard his sermon on the day of Pentecost (*Acts 2:37*)?

D. He Accomplishes the New Birth

John 3:5–6

Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."

The Holy Spirit brings about the new birth (*Titus 3:5*), and we become spiritually alive with Christ (*Ephesians 2:5*).

► **Activity 18:** What must a person do to be born again (*John 1:12–13*)?

E. He Assures Us of Our Salvation

The assurance of our salvation is based on three essential pillars:

- the Word of God (*1 John 5:13–14*).
- faith (*John 3:16*).
- the Holy Spirit (*Romans 8:16*).

► **Activity 19:** How does the Holy Spirit testify to us that we are God's children? What does he use to do this (*Ephesians 6:17*; *Philippians 4:7*)?

F. He Gives Victory

Galatians 5:16

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

We cannot live the Christian life in our own strength. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers us to live in a way that is pleasing to God.

► **Activity 20:** What can someone who lives to please the Holy Spirit expect (*Galatians 6:8*)?

G. He Bears Spiritual Fruit in Us

Galatians 5:22–23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

The fruit of the Spirit characterises the life of a Christian. It should be our desire to have an abundance of this fruit in our lives.

- **Activity 21:** How must we live so that our lives bear fruit (*John 15:5*)?

H. He Gives Gifts

Spiritual gifts are specific abilities that we need for service in the kingdom of God (*Romans 12:4–8*). No Christian has all of the gifts, as the Holy Spirit gives to each one as he chooses (*1 Corinthians 12:7–11*).

- **Activity 22:** According to *1 Corinthians 14:12*, what spiritual gifts should we try to excel in?

I. He Helps Us to Pray

Ephesians 2:17–18

He [Jesus] came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Galatians 4:6

Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”

The Holy Spirit helps us to pray. As *Romans 8:26* explains, sometimes we do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Holy Spirit himself helps us by interceding for us. When we pray, we have access to God the Father by the Holy Spirit (*Ephesians 2:18*).

- **Activity 23:** Have you experienced the Holy Spirit prompting you to pray for a particular person or situation?

J. He Guides, Teaches, and Reminds Us

John 16:13

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

The Holy Spirit guides us to know Jesus better (*1 John 2:20*) and he wants to specifically guide us in our decision making (*Acts 13:4, 16:6*). He also teaches us and reminds us of Jesus’ words (*John 14:26*).

- **Activity 24:** What does the Holy Spirit use to guide us (*Ephesians 6:17*)?

THE HOLY SPIRIT

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The Holy Spirit is God

1. **His names point to his deity**
Isaiah 61:1
Romans 8:9
2. **His attributes point to his deity**
Psalms 139:7
1 Corinthians 2:10
Hebrews 9:14

The Holy Spirit is a "person"

- Think: *1 Corinthians 2:11*
- Feel: *Ephesians 4:30*
- Speak: *1 Timothy 4:1*
- Hear: *John 16:13*
- Decide: *1 Corinthians 12:11*

Symbols for the Holy Spirit

1. **Dove**
Matthew 3:16
2. **Living water**
John 7:38-39
3. **Oil**
1 Samuel 16:13
1 John 2:20, 2:27
4. **Fire**
Luke 3:16
5. **Seal and deposit**
2 Corinthians 1:22
 - What are we guaranteed by receiving the Holy Spirit (*Ephesians 1:13-14*)?

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN HISTORY

The Old Testament
Genesis 1:1-2; Exodus 31:3; Judges 3:10

The Gospels
Luke 4:14, 4:18

After Pentecost
Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16

HOW DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT WORK NOW?

- | | |
|--|--|
| A. He glorifies Jesus
<i>John 16:13-14</i> | F. He gives victory
<i>Galatians 5:16</i> |
| B. He enables us to witness
<i>Acts 1:8</i> | G. He bears spiritual fruit in us
<i>Galatians 5:22-23</i> |
| C. He convicts sinners
<i>John 16:8-9</i> | H. He gives gifts
<i>Romans 12:4-8</i> |
| D. He accomplishes the new birth
<i>John 3:5-6</i> | I. He helps us to pray
<i>Galatians 4:6</i> |
| E. He assures us of our salvation
<i>Romans 8:16</i> | J. He guides, teaches, and reminds us
<i>John 16:13</i> |

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *Isaiah 11:2*.
2. What are some of the names that are used in the Bible for the Holy Spirit?
3. What are the characteristics of the Holy Spirit?
4. How do we know that the Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force, but rather the third *person* of the divine Trinity?
5. What does Jesus mean by the “*rivers of living water*” in *John 7:38–39*?
6. What is the significance of having the Holy Spirit as our seal and deposit?
7. What is the difference between the work of the Holy Spirit in Old Testament times and in our lives now?
8. What do we know about the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus?
9. How does the Holy Spirit work in the life of an unbeliever?
10. How does the Holy Spirit work in the life of a born-again Christian?



Photo by Annie Spratt on Unsplash

The Holy Spirit gives us power to experience victory over sin,
to carry out our daily tasks, and to share about Jesus.

THE VICTORIOUS LIFE

LIFE IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

It should be the desire of every Christian to live a joyful and fulfilled life with Jesus Christ. This, however, is not possible in our own strength. When we allow the Holy Spirit to work with his power in our lives, we can live the victorious life that God has planned for us!

But thanks be to God!

He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

– 1 Corinthians 15:57

I. WHAT IS A VICTORIOUS LIFE?

Being a Christian should not be characterised by setbacks and defeats, because God has given us many promises in the Bible for living life to the fullest.

► **Activity 1:** What characteristics do you think should mark a Christian's life?

A. It's Abundant

John 10:10

[Jesus:] The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus is concerned about us, his *sheep*. He knows the dangers that face us and wants to protect us from them. He leads and feeds us. He also knows what we need and wants to generously provide for us.

► **Activity 2:** What is available to us when we give our lives to Jesus and obey him (*Matthew 7:7; John 14:27*)?

B. It's Victorious

As children of God, we are no longer slaves to sin (*John 8:34–36*).

Romans 6:12

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

Romans 6:14

For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

When the Spirit of God is allowed to rule our lives, he gives us power to resist the sinful desires within us (*Galatians 5:16*).

We will, however, sometimes fall into sin again. Therefore, we must know how to claim forgiveness again and again.

► **Activity 3:** When we sin, how can we experience forgiveness through the blood of Jesus again and again (*1 John 1:7–9*)?

► **Activity 4:** According to *2 Timothy 2:22*, how can we resist the temptation to sin?

C. It's Powerful

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

The power of the Holy Spirit is essential for...

- having victory over sin
- sharing the gospel with power and conviction
(*1 Thessalonians 1:4–5*)
- the fruit of the Spirit to become visible and active in our lives

► **Activity 5:** According to *Romans 15:13* and *Ephesians 3:16*, what does the power of the Holy Spirit bring into our lives?

D. It's Christ-Centred

Galatians 2:20

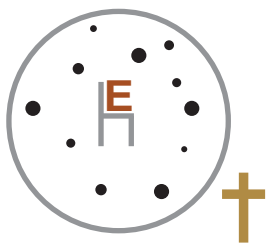
I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Colossians 1:27

Since our new birth, Jesus lives in us. Because of this, the victorious life should be a daily experience for us. The key to living victoriously is to place Jesus on the throne of our lives every day.

The following three circles represent three different ways of life.

- † The **cross** represents Christ.
- The **dots** represent different areas of life (e.g., work, family).
- E** **E** represents Ego; one's sense of self-esteem and importance
- h** This represents the *throne of your life*.
Whoever sits on the throne rules your life.



The unconverted person

Christ is outside of their life.



The converted person

Their life is submitted to Jesus; it is no longer their own.



The carnal (worldly) Christian

Their ego tries to displace Christ from his position as Lord of their life.

Which of the three circles represents your life?

II. HOW TO HAVE A VICTORIOUS LIFE

To live a life in the power of the Holy Spirit, we must...

- receive the Holy Spirit
- and
- be filled with the Holy Spirit.

A. Receive the Holy Spirit

1. At Conversion

Spiritual rebirth takes place through the Holy Spirit. When a person is born again, they are cleansed from all their sins, and the Holy Spirit takes up residence in them. Thus, they receive a totally new life.

John 3:5 *Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit..."*

Titus 3:4–5 *But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit...*

The New Testament confirms that the Holy Spirit dwells in every believing, born-again person.

Romans 8:9 *You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.*

1 Corinthians 3:16 *Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?*

Other Scriptures that confirm this are: *John 7:38–39, 14:16–17; Romans 8:10–11, 8:14–15; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 1:21–22; Ephesians 1:13–14.*

The Book of Acts includes many examples of people receiving the Holy Spirit: *Acts 2:1–3, 2:38–41, 8:14–17, 10:43–45, 11:15, 15:8–9, 19:1–6.*

► **Activity 6:** What must a person experience in order to receive the Holy Spirit (*John 3:5*)?

2. As a Gift from God

When we were born again, we received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Just as the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and our heavenly inheritance are gifts, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is also a gift to us. We have not earned any of these gifts.

Acts 2:38

Peter replied: "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit..."

Acts 8:20

Acts 10:45

- **Activity 7:** When did the Christians in Caesarea receive the Holy Spirit (*Acts 11:15–17*)?

3. The Holy Spirit Before and After Pentecost

In Old Testament times, the Holy Spirit came upon certain people to empower them for certain tasks (*e.g. 1 Samuel 16:13*).

Since Pentecost, the Holy Spirit dwells in every born-again Christian (*Romans 8:9, 8:15*). Someone who is converted is sealed with the Holy Spirit (*2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13, 4:30*).

4. Receiving the Holy Spirit and Baptism of the Holy Spirit

The Bible uses the expressions "receive the Holy Spirit" (*John 20:22; Acts 2:38*) and "be baptised with the Holy Spirit."

Matthew 3:11

[John the Baptist:] I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

The word *baptise* means to *immerse* or to *submerge*. Whoever Jesus baptises with the Holy Spirit is equipped with the power of the Holy Spirit (*Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33*).

The outpouring and baptism of the Holy Spirit that occurred on Pentecost was foretold by Jesus.

Luke 24:49

I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.

John 15:26

When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me.

Acts 1:5

For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.

Since Pentecost, every person who has accepted Jesus as their Lord and Saviour has received the promised Holy Spirit, at the moment they accepted Jesus into their life.

Acts 11:15–16

[Peter:] As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.'

- **Activity 8:** According to *1 Corinthians 12:12–13*, what happens when we are baptised by the Holy Spirit?

B. Be Filled with the Holy Spirit

To live a life in the power of the Holy Spirit, we must receive the Holy Spirit (at conversion) and also be filled with the Spirit.

1. This Is God's Will

It is God's will that every Christian should be filled with the Holy Spirit again and again.

Ephesians 5:18

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

In the Book of Acts, we read in eight different places about people who were filled with the Holy Spirit (*Acts 2:4, 4:31, 6:5, 7:55, 9:17, 11:24, 13:9, 13:52*).

- **Activity 9:** In *Acts 4:31* the Christians in Jerusalem were filled with the Holy Spirit. What had they been doing before this happened? How can we apply this principle to our lives?

- **Activity 10:** The disciples in Antioch were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. What preceded it (*Acts 13:50–52*)?

2. How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit

Since the Bible does not give a specific step-by-step method to be filled with the Holy Spirit, some basic principles for a healthy spiritual life are detailed here.

a) Surrender Your Life to Christ

Romans 6:13 Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.

Although every Christian has already given their life to Christ, they are also faced with the daily question, “Am I willing to surrender my life to Jesus today?”

Surrendering your life to Jesus on a daily basis is essential to remaining spiritually healthy and living the life that he has planned for you (*John 15:4*).

► **Activity 11:** According to *Romans 12:1*, what should we offer Jesus Christ?

b) Be Cleansed from Sin

Isaiah 52:11 Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure, you who carry the articles of the LORD's house.

God wants to use clean vessels in his service. We must turn from all known sins and be cleansed from them (*1 John 1:9*).

God expects purity in every area of our lives:

- Pure thoughts *Philippians 4:8*
- Pure speech *Ephesians 4:25*
- Pure actions *1 Thessalonians 2:10*

c) Be Committed to Prayer

We are told many times in the Bible to pray. God wants us to talk to him, to commit everything to him and to take the power of prayer seriously!

Luke 22:40 On reaching the place, he [Jesus] said to them, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.”

Acts 4:31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

There are many examples in church history of people who lived victorious lives in the power of the Holy Spirit. These were people who made prayer a priority in their lives.

d) Be Obedient

1 John 2:5-6 But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

Our willingness to obey God is an important condition for being filled with the Holy Spirit. Our obedience is also a reflection of our love for God.

e) Trust God's Word

Through faith in Jesus, we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. In the same way, we also receive the filling of the Holy Spirit by faith.

John 7:38-39 [Jesus:] "Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

By trusting in Jesus and his Word, we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives.

III. WHAT DOES A SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE LOOK LIKE?

The Holy Spirit wants to produce the fruit of the Spirit in our lives (*Galatians 5:22-23*) and give us divine power to build the kingdom of God (*1 Corinthians 4:20*).

In *2 Timothy 1:7* we read that the Holy Spirit gives us power, love, and the ability to be self-disciplined.

2 Timothy 1:7

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

A. Power

The Holy Spirit gives us power to experience victory over sin, to carry out our daily tasks, and to share about Jesus (*2 Timothy 1:7*).

2 Corinthians 10:4

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

- **Activity 12:** What can we learn about power from *Acts 4:33*? How can we apply this example to our lives?

B. Love

Love is a fruit of the Spirit (*Galatians 5:22*) and the most important characteristic of a Christian (*1 John 4:7*).

John 13:35

A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

The Holy Spirit is a spirit of love (*2 Timothy 1:7*); he enables us to love one another (*Romans 5:5*).

C. Self-Discipline

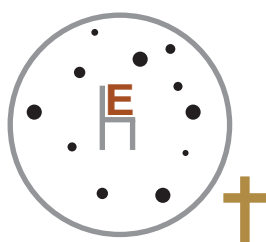
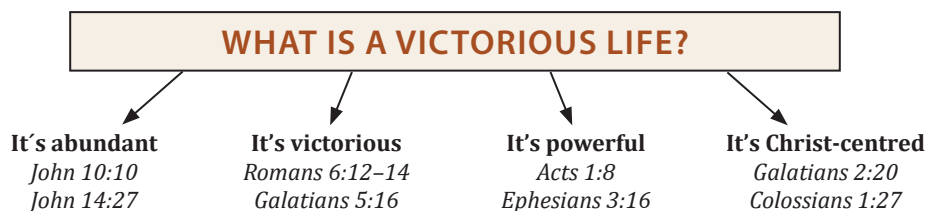
The word for *self-discipline* used in *2 Timothy 1:7* can also be translated as *self-control*. We need to be self-disciplined and self-controlled to manage our lives and to do the will of God. Self-control is also a fruit of the Spirit (*Galatians 5:22*).

1 Corinthians 9:26–27

Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

- **Activity 13:** According to *1 Corinthians 9:26–27*, how and why did Paul discipline his body?

THE VICTORIOUS LIFE



The unconverted person

Christ is outside of their life.



The converted person

Their life is submitted to Jesus; it is no longer their own.



The carnal (worldly) Christian

Their ego tries to displace Christ from his position as Lord of their life.

HOW TO HAVE A VICTORIOUS LIFE

Receive the Holy Spirit

1. At conversion
John 3:5
Romans 8:9
2. As a gift from God
Acts 2:38
Acts 11:15–17

Be filled with the Holy Spirit

- It is God's will *Ephesians 5:18*
- Surrender *Romans 6:13*
- Be cleansed *Isaiah 52:11*
- Pray *Luke 22:40*
- Obey *1 John 2:5–6*
- Trust God's Word *John 7:38–39*

WHAT DOES A SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE LOOK LIKE?

Power
2 Timothy 1:7
2 Corinthians 10:4

Love
John 13:35
Romans 5:5

Self-discipline
2 Timothy 1:7
1 Corinthians 9:26–27

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *John 7:38–39*.
2. Name two characteristics of a victorious life.
3. Life in the power of the Holy Spirit is characterised by victory over sin. However, we will still sin. What is the right way to respond when we sin?
4. Who can have a victorious life?
5. Without the Holy Spirit it is impossible to live victoriously. When does someone receive the Holy Spirit?
6. Everyone who has received the Holy Spirit should also be filled with the Holy Spirit. Which Bible passages support this?
7. In *Acts 4:31* we read about people who were filled with the Holy Spirit. What were they doing together before they received the Spirit? What can we learn from this example?
8. What can we do to be filled with the Holy Spirit regularly?
9. What could be the reason if a Christian is not filled with the Holy Spirit?
10. What are the results of being filled with the Holy Spirit?



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We are created in the image of God,
who knows and loves us.

BEING HUMAN AS GOD INTENDED

We live in an age of enormous technological advancements, where space exploration, air travel, and instant international communications are possible.

The rate at which our world is progressing is difficult to comprehend. In 1927, Charles A. Lindbergh made the first solo nonstop transatlantic flight in his small monoplane, at an altitude of 1,200 metres and speeds of up to 160 km/h. Nowadays, it is considered normal to fly across the Atlantic Ocean at an altitude ten times higher than Lindbergh's first flight, at very high speed and with several hundred passengers on board.

But has our progress benefited us? What does our society look like today? Many families are drifting apart and depression, immorality, and violence are increasing. This is not what God wants for us.

It seems that unless we can address the *big questions of life*, we struggle to find long-term contentment. These fundamental questions have been asked throughout the ages and are still just as relevant today:

- *How did humans come into existence?*
- *What is the purpose of life?*
- *What happens when we die?*

Wouldn't it be wonderful if there was an instruction manual for life, similar to one that comes with a new appliance? Every appliance is manufactured for a specific purpose and the manufacturer knows how and why it was designed, along with the best way for it to be operated. If the appliance is handled incorrectly, a malfunction or failure must be expected.

The good news is that we do have an instruction manual for life: the Bible!

If we want to know why we were created and how to live the best life possible, we need to know what the Bible teaches us about being human.

I. WE ARE CREATED BY GOD

The Bible answers our questions about how the first humans came into existence: God created them.

Genesis 1:27

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God created humans because it was (and is) his desire that we should exist.

We are created in the image of God, who knows and loves us (*Psalm 103:11, 139:13–17; Matthew 10:26–31*). In the first two chapters of the Bible we discover that this is a special privilege that only applies to humans. We are uniquely created with attributes similar to God's, unlike any other living thing.

► **Activity 1:** What does *Psalm 139:13–17* teach us about God, his attentiveness towards us and his plan for every person's life?

A. Creation

God created the heavens and the earth in six days. *Genesis 1* describes the creation process:

Day 1 (<i>verses 3–5</i>):	Light, day, and night
Day 2 (<i>verses 6–8</i>):	Sky: Separation of water above and below the firmament
Day 3 (<i>verses 9–13</i>):	Seas, solid land, vegetation
Day 4 (<i>verses 14–19</i>):	Sun, moon, and stars
Day 5 (<i>verses 20–23</i>):	Sea creatures, fish, and birds
Day 6 (<i>verses 24–31</i>):	Land-dwelling animals and the first humans

B. The Creator

As a wise and loving Creator, God created the universe, the earth, and everything in it according to his marvellous plan. The origin of this world, including humans, was not left to chance.

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

God created the first humans supernaturally. When he breathed the "breath of life", the very spirit of life, into Adam, he became a living being (*Genesis 2:7; ; Job 27:3*).

- **Activity 2:** Why should Christians find it easy to believe in the supernatural creation of the heavens and the earth (*Psalm 115:3; Romans 1:20*)?

All things were created not only by God the Father but also by Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Our God is a triune God (*Genesis 1:1–2, 1:26*).

- **Activity 3:** What does *Colossians 1:16* and *Hebrews 1:2* teach us about Jesus' involvement in creating all things?

C. Creation's Duration

Exodus 20:11

For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day.

Genesis 1:31

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day.

The Bible teaches that God took six days to create the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them. For some people this raises the question, “*Was each day longer than a normal 24-hour day?*”

The following facts emphasise that these were ordinary days, rather than long periods of time:

1. In *Genesis 1*, the word *yom* is used in the original Hebrew transcripts. The literal meaning of *yom* is day, not extended period.
2. The phrase “*And there was evening, and there was morning...*” is used six times in *Genesis 1*, to describe the six days of creation. Elsewhere in the Bible when a reference to *evening* plus *morning* is made, it is describing a normal 24-hour day.
3. If the days were lengthy, so too would be the nights. What would happen to the plants during lengthy periods of darkness? This logic suggests that the days and nights were normal days.
4. The Sabbath is the last day in the Creation Story (*Genesis 2:2–3*). In *Exodus 20:8–11* we are commanded to remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. This only makes sense if the word *day* is taken literally. We are commanded to rest for one day per week, not for lengthy periods of time.
5. Creation demonstrates God's eternal power (*Romans 1:20*) and that he does not need a lot of time to work miracles. In fact, there are many biblical examples of God performing miracles instantaneously! Thus, there is no biblical reason why God could not create all things in six days.

Examples of God performing miracles instantaneously include:

- The standstill of the sun and moon when Joshua prayed (*Joshua 10:12–13*).
- Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding in Cana (*John 2:1–11*).
- The multiplication of the loaves and fishes, feeding 5,000 people (*Matthew 14:13–21*).
- Jesus rebuked the wind and the waves and they immediately abated (*Mark 4:39*).
- A lame man was instantly healed when Peter spoke healing to him in Jesus' name (*Acts 3:2–8*).

If we believe that God has unlimited power, we should have no reason to doubt God's ability to create the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, in six 24-hour days.

Psalms 33:9

For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.

Romans 1:20

D. The Theory of Evolution

In stark contrast to the biblical creation account, the theory of evolution does not involve a supreme being or a planned creation event. According to its teachings, the living creatures that we see today evolved with the help of chance, selection, and time, resulting in increasingly complex and advanced life forms.

When compared to many scientific research results, it is clear that this theory is untenable. For example, Earth's magnetic field decays too quickly for it to be as old as the theory of evolution requires, and the amount of nickel that flows through the rivers into the oceans shows that it must be a young planet.

Evolution leaves many crucial questions unanswered:

- *Where does the original mass-energy potential come from?*
- *Where does the first living cell come from?*
- *Where does the information in DNA come from?*
- *How can unguided development produce the highly complex order of life?*
- *Why are the clear transitional forms expected by the theory of evolution missing?*
- *Where does human moral awareness come from?*

II. OUR LIVES HAVE PURPOSE

When someone believes only in the theory of evolution as the explanation for their existence, they miss out not only on acknowledging God but also on knowing the purpose of life.

Why did God create us? What is the purpose of life? We find the answers to these questions in the first two chapters of the Bible.

A. To Fellowship with God

Genesis 1:27

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

In *Genesis 1:27* we find the answer to the meaning of life: We are created in the image of our Creator, to be in relationship and fellowship with him.

It is only when we are in relationship with God that we truly know that we are deeply, unconditionally loved. God is love (*1 John 4:8*) and his love for us is immeasurably great (*Psalms 36:5–7, 103:11; Ephesians 3:18–19*)!

We have been created through and for Jesus (*Colossians 1:15–16*), to be his children (*Ephesians 1:4–5*) and to glorify him (*Romans 11:36; Ephesians 1:11–12*).

Romans 11:36

For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

► **Activity 4:** According to *Isaiah 43:7*, why did God create us?

B. To Fellowship with One Another

Humans have been created to share their lives with one another. In *Genesis 2* we see that God established the marriage relationship as the building block from which all other relationships in our society stem.

Genesis 2:18

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

It is not good for us to live isolated, solitary lives. We are created to fellowship with one another. There are many opportunities for fellowshiping with one another, as Christians. Meeting regularly with one another, encouraging and supporting one another, seeking counsel, praying for one another, lovingly rebuking, correcting, helping, and forgiving one another are all biblical principles to live by.

► **Activity 5:** On what basis is true fellowship with one another possible (*1 John 1:7*)?

► **Activity 6:** When we feel lonely, what biblical truths can we hold onto (*Deuteronomy 31:8; Psalm 68:6; Matthew 28:20b*)?

C. To Rule

Genesis 1:28

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

In *Genesis 1:28*, we see that we have been created to rule over the earth. Although we should rule the earth, we have become the ones who are ruled by our sinful natures. Drugs, greed, selfishness, and lust are just a few examples of what can rule us, resulting in immeasurable damage to ourselves, one another, and the environment. Every person needs to be freed from their sinful nature; this is the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ (*Galatians 5:13; Romans 8:1–4*).

► **Activity 7:** What were we ruled by before we were born again (*Romans 6:6, 12*)?

D. To Work and Serve

Genesis 2:15

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

The first man was given the task of cultivating and caring for the Garden of Eden. Interestingly, this job also involved naming the animals (*Genesis 2:19–20*). Yet he was not the only one given work to do. Everyone (including you and me) has been created to do good works.

Ephesians 2:10

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Jesus is our role model for serving others. He lived his life on earth serving others (*Mark 10:45; John 13:14–17*) and he faithfully completed the work that God assigned to him (*John 19:30*).

- **Activity 8:** According to *Colossians 3:23–24*, what attitude should we have towards work? Why?

E. To Have Eternal Life

Genesis 2:17 ...but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.

God created us to live forever. Our purpose is not to die but to have eternal life. The first humans did not know death. It was only through the Fall that death entered this world (*Romans 5:12*).

Because of Jesus' sacrifice for our sins, we have no reason to fear death, and eternal life is promised to us when we believe in him (*1 Corinthians 15:56–57; Romans 6:23; John 3:36*).

- **Activity 9:** Where do we get our inner knowledge that eternal life is available to us (*Ecclesiastes 3:11*)?

III. THE FALL

The Fall (or the Fall of Man) refers to the events in *Genesis 3*, where humans disobeyed God for the first time. It is the greatest catastrophe in human history, as every person is affected by the negative consequences of the Fall.

A. Before the Fall

Before the Fall, Adam and Eve lived in a perfect world with everything they needed:

- They were “very good”, without sin, sickness, or defect. *Genesis 1:31*
- They lived in a perfect environment. *Genesis 2:15*
- They had a meaningful task. *Genesis 2:15*
- They had fellowship with God. *Genesis 2:15–16*
- They were warned by God in advance and knew that disobeying him meant death. *Genesis 2:16–17*

- **Activity 10:** Before the Fall, what was the only way to sin (*Genesis 2:17*)?

B. Temptation and the Fall

Satan's tactic is always to try to drive a wedge between God and people. Because his methods are still the same, we should learn from Adam and Eve's choices and avoid making the same mistakes.

The temptation that led to the Fall happened in three stages (*Genesis 3:1–6*):

- a) *Genesis 3:1* _____
- b) *Genesis 3:4–5* _____
- c) *Genesis 3:6* _____

► **Activity 11:** How should we respond in times of temptation (*2 Timothy 2:22; James 4:7*)?

C. Consequences of the Fall

The consequences of the Fall are detailed in *Genesis 3:7–24*:

- Their eyes were opened *Genesis 3:7*
- The relationship between God and humanity was broken *Genesis 3:9–10*
- Fear and anxiety entered the world *Genesis 3:10*
- Humans are now destined to die *Genesis 3:19*
- Humans were banished from the Garden of Eden *Genesis 3:22–24*
and barred from accessing the Tree of Life

► **Activity 12:** What does *Romans 5:12* teach us about the Fall, sin, death, and humanity?

IV. OUR SIN AND GOD'S SOLUTION

The Fall not only destroyed humanity's relationship with God but also brought a fundamental change: Every person is born with a sinful nature (*Psalms 51:5*).

A. What Is Sin?

In the New Testament the most common Greek word for sin is *hamartia*. It literally means *missing the mark*, like an archer missing his target. Sinning means failing to live up to God's standards.

We sin when we do not keep God's laws. The Bible gives many examples of sinful behaviours (e.g. 1 Corinthians 6:9–10; Galatians 5:19–21), all of which stem from our sinful natures.

Mark 7:21–22

For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come – sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.

The Bible uses many images to describe sin. These include:

- Fetters: Sin binds and traps a person (*Proverbs 5:22*).
- Sickness: Sin is like wounds and sores (*Isaiah 1:4–6*).
- Self-Exaltation: Sin seeks to exalt itself above God (*Isaiah 14:13–14*).
- Rebellion: Sin is like sheep going astray (*Isaiah 53:6*).
- Transgression: Sin is turning away from God's law (*Romans 3:10–12*).
- Enmity: Sin makes us enemies of God (*Romans 5:10*).

► **Activity 13:** What sin is described in *John 16:9*?

B. Who Is a Sinner?

Romans 3:23

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 5:12

The Bible teaches that all descendants of Adam (including you and me) are born with a sinful nature (*Psalms 51:5*). Through Adam sin entered the world and through sin, death (*Romans 5:12*).

Furthermore, every person who is not born again is spiritually dead and lives under the power of sin (*Ephesians 2:1, 2:4–5; Colossians 2:13*).

► **Activity 14:** What did Paul know about his sinful nature and his efforts to control it (*Romans 7:18*)?

► **Activity 15:** Why is it important for a person to recognise their sinfulness (*Proverbs 28:13; Romans 6:23*)?

C. God's Precious Gift Is Our Solution

How can anyone who is truly sorry for their sinful ways, for their selfishness, for their rebellion against God, for their absolute inability to keep God's laws, and for all of the hurt they've caused, be helped?

Jesus Christ is our solution! In fact, Jesus is the **ONLY** solution to humanity's greatest problem: sin. Only with Jesus are we able to live the kind of life that God wants us to live.

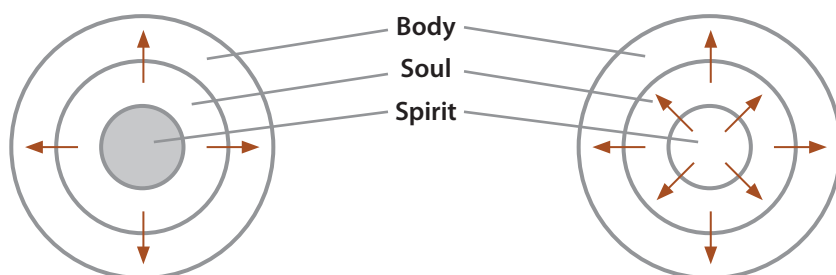
John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Jesus Christ came to redeem us from our sins. He gives new life to everyone who accepts him and places their trust in him (*John 1:12, 1:29; Ephesians 1:7*). He frees them from their sinful nature and gives the promised Holy Spirit to dwell within them (*John 14:16–17*).

► **Activity 16:** What did God do to make our relationship with him right again (*2 Corinthians 5:21*)?

V. BEING HUMAN: BODY, SOUL, AND SPIRIT



The unsaved person

Their spirit is not born again; it is dead and thus unable to have a relationship with the living God (*Ephesians 2:1, 2:5*).

The saved person

Their spirit is born again; it is alive and able to have a relationship with the living God (*Ephesians 2:5–6*).

Every human has a body, soul, and spirit, where:

- The body enables: world-consciousness.
- The soul enables: self-awareness.
- The spirit enables: God-consciousness.

Although we can distinguish between the body, soul, and spirit, they are difficult to define because they are linked to one another and also interact with one another. In fact, the words *spirit* and *soul* can sometimes be used interchangeably.

A. The Body

Through our five senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch) we perceive our surroundings. Thus, our body makes us aware of the physical world.

The words *body* and *flesh* are both used in the Bible for the human body.

1. Body

In the Bible, *body* usually refers to our physical self: our head, arms, legs, and so on (e.g. *Matthew 6:25; Mark 16:1; 1 Corinthians 9:27*).

The human body is also described as a “*jar of clay*”:

2 Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

The body of every born-again Christian is the “*temple of the Holy Spirit*” (*1 Corinthians 6:19–20*), which is made available to serve God.

► **Activity 17:** How should being born again change your perspective towards your body (*Romans 12:1*)?

2. Flesh

Although *flesh* sometimes refers to the human body (e.g. *Genesis 2:23; John 1:14*), it often refers to our sinful natures, which “*wage war against our souls*” (*1 Peter 2:11*).

Galatians 5:17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh.

► **Activity 18:** What acts of the flesh are listed in *Galatians 5:19–21*, and what will happen to those who do these things?

► **Activity 19:** What do we need so that we no longer gratify the desires of the flesh (*Galatians 5:16–17, 5:22*)?

B. The Soul

*Genesis 2:7 And the Lord God formed man of the **dust of the ground**, and breathed into his nostrils the **breath of life**; and man became a **living soul**. (King James Version)*

The *soul* is the link between a person's body and spirit. It was created when God formed the first human from the *dust of the ground* and breathed the *breath of life* into him

It is only because God has given us a living soul that our body has life.

- **Activity 20:** *Leviticus 17:11* mentions something that is absolutely necessary for our bodies to stay alive. What is it?

In the Bible, *soul* is used in different ways:

1. The Soul Can Refer to the Whole Person

Sometimes in the Bible, the word *souls* can be interchanged with people. For example:

Acts 2:41 *Then those who gladly received his word were baptised; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. (New King James Version)*

2. The Soul Is Our Inner Self

Soul is usually used in the Bible for our inner self.

Deuteronomy 6:5 *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*

Matthew 16:26 *What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?*

Heart is also sometimes used in the Bible for the centre of our inner self:

1 Samuel 16:7 *But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."*

- **Activity 21:** What is the relationship between the soul and conscience (*1 Samuel 24:5; Hebrews 9:14*)?

3. The Soul Includes Mind, Will, and Emotions

Our mind, will, and emotions are linked to our soul. When we make unhealthy lifestyle choices or have negative experiences, our soul can be wounded. Soul wounds negatively impact our mind, will, and emotions.

Conversely, living a healthy spiritual life brings healing to the soul and thus to our whole being.

There are several Bible verses that point to the soul interacting with the mind, will, and emotions.

- Your Mind: *Proverbs 24:14; Psalm 103:1–2*
- Your Will: *Job 6:7; Luke 1:46*
- Your Emotions: *Matthew 26:38; Psalm 42:6a*

► **Activity 22:** What connection do you find between the body and soul in *Psalm 84:2*?

C. The Spirit

The spirit is the God-given part of our being that gives life and enables us to relate to God.

*1 Thessalonians 5:23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole **spirit, soul and body** be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1. Similarities Between the Spirit and the Soul

The terms “spirit” and “soul” are closely related and are sometimes used in similar ways in the Bible. Scripture associates functions such as thinking, willing, and feeling with both the soul and the spirit.

Biblical examples:

- Mind: *Daniel 7:15; 1 Corinthians 2:11*
- Will: *Ezra 1:5; Matthew 26:41*
- Emotions: *Psalm 142:3; 1 Corinthians 16:18*

2. Sustains Life

James 2:26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

The spirit sustains life. Without the spirit, the body is dead. Although everyone's body will die at some point, the spirit continues to exist (*Ecclesiastes 12:6–7; Acts 7:59*).

► **Activity 23:** What happened to Jesus' spirit when he died on the cross (*Luke 23:43–46*)?

3. Connects Us to God

A person without Jesus has no living relationship with God and is ruled by powers of darkness. Unless they choose to be spiritually born again, they will remain spiritually dead (*Luke 15:24; Colossians 2:13*).

When we put our faith in Jesus, we are born again and become spiritually alive. The powers of darkness must give way, and the Holy Spirit lives in us (*John 3:5–7; Romans 8:9*).

Romans 8: 15b–16 The Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Functions of the human spirit:

- Our spirit can be moved by God *Ezra 1:5; Haggai 1:14*
- Our spirit knows what is within us *1 Corinthians 2:11–12*
- Our spirit can discern spiritual things *1 Corinthians 2:14–15*
- Our spirit is necessary for worshipping God *John 4:24*
- Our spirit is connected with God's Spirit *Romans 8:16*

► **Activity 24:** How is a born-again Christian different from someone who hasn't put their faith in Jesus (*Ephesians 2:1, 2:4–5; 2 Timothy 4:22*)?

4. Leading a Healthy Spiritual Life

A healthy spiritual life positively impacts both the body and the soul. Conversely, an unhealthy spiritual life is detrimental not only to the spirit, but also to the body and the soul.

Therefore, it is critical that our spiritual life is in order. It is only when the Holy Spirit lives in us that we are spiritually alive. Then we can have fellowship with God and the assurance of eternal life with Jesus.

- **Activity 25:** According to *Ephesians 5:17–20*, what can we do to live a spiritually healthy life?

VI. OUR FUTURE

What happens when we die is clearly explained in the Bible.

A. The Future without Jesus

Whoever has not received Jesus lives in spiritual darkness under the power of Satan (*Acts 26:18*). Furthermore, God's wrath remains on them and they will not receive eternal life.

John 3:36

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

- **Activity 26:** What punishment is described in *2 Thessalonians 1:8–9* and who is it for?

B. The Future with Jesus

Everyone who belongs to Jesus can expect the blessings of God in their life and eternal life after death (*Matthew 7:9–11; John 3:16*). They can look forward to heaven and being with Jesus forevermore (*Philippians 1:23*).

John 14:2–3

My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

1 Corinthians 2:9

- **Activity 27:** *Revelation 21:4* gives a beautiful description of heaven. What can we learn from this passage?

BEING HUMAN AS GOD INTENDED

WE ARE CREATED BY GOD

A. Creation

Genesis 1:3–31

B. The Creator

Genesis 2:7, 2:21–22

- What does *Colossians 1:16* and *Hebrews 1:2* teach us about Jesus' involvement in creating all things?

C. Creation's duration

Exodus 20:11

SIN AND GOD'S SOLUTION

A. What is sin?

Mark 7:21–22; 1 Corinthians 6:9–10

- What sin is described in *John 16:9*?

B. Who is a sinner?

Romans 3:23; 5:12

C. God's precious gift is our solution

2 Corinthians 5:21

THE FALL

Before the Fall

Genesis 1:31, 2:15–17

- Before the Fall, what was the only way to sin (*Genesis 2:17*)?

Temptation and the Fall

Genesis 3:1–6

- How should we respond in times of temptation (*2 Timothy 2:22; James 4:7*)?

Consequences of the Fall

Genesis 3:7–24

- What does *Romans 5:12* teach us about the Fall, sin, death and humanity?

OUR LIVES HAVE PURPOSE

A. To fellowship with God

Genesis 1:27

Romans 11:36

Ephesians 1:11–12

B. To fellowship with one another

Genesis 2:18

- On what basis is true fellowship with one another possible (*1 John 1:7*)?

C. To rule

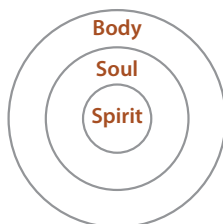
Genesis 1:28

D. To work and serve

Genesis 2:15

E. To have eternal life

Genesis 2:17



BEING HUMAN

A. The body

The body is our physical self
(*2 Corinthians 4:7*)

B. The soul

1. The soul can refer to the whole person (*Acts 2:41*)
2. The soul is our inner self (*Deuteronomy 6:5*).
3. The soul includes mind, will, and emotions

C. The spirit

1. Gives us life (*James 2:26*)
2. Connects us to God (*Romans 8:16*)

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *Genesis 1:27*.
2. What are some of the *big questions of life* that many people grapple with?
3. Where do we discover the truth about how humans came into existence?
4. What is the purpose of life?
5. What tactics did Satan use to tempt Adam and Eve to sin?
6. How would you explain what sin is to someone who has had little to do with the Christian faith?
7. The Bible differentiates between the human body, soul, and spirit. What is the function of the spirit?
8. What is the soul?
9. What can we do so that we do not gratify the desires of the flesh (*Romans 8:12; Galatians 5:16–17*)?
10. The Bible teaches us about what happens when we die. What joyful future, after death, awaits those who belong to Jesus?



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Be a witness and share your testimony
so that others may be saved.

WITNESSING AND SHARING YOUR TESTIMONY

From the moment we are born again, we have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, our Lord, and Saviour. We also receive the promised Holy Spirit, peace with God, and the promise of eternal life.

It is our heart's desire that others also come to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. A wonderful way to share the gospel is to talk about your own personal experiences with Jesus. Be a witness and share your testimony so that others may be saved!

I. BE A WITNESS AND SHARE YOUR TESTIMONY

A. When Solving Disputes

When trying to settle a dispute or determining whether someone has broken the law, a witness is a person who sees an event and testifies about what they saw.

► **Activity 1:** Have you ever been a witness? If so, what was the situation?

There are many examples in the Bible of a witness (or witnesses) being required (*e.g. Matthew 26:65; Acts 6:13*).

Matthew 18:16

But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'

1 Timothy 5:19

Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.

A testimony is a written or spoken statement, based on facts or experiences. The Bible has several examples of a testimony being required or shared (e.g. *Matthew 26:62; John 5:39*).

Exodus 23:2

Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd.

John 8:17

In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true.

B. When Evangelising

A witness for Jesus is someone who has come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour and they tell others about him. When Christians are witnessing, they are telling others about Jesus.

Acts 28:23b

He [Paul] witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about the kingdom of God, and from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus.

► **Activity 2:** Where did Jesus send his followers (*Acts 1:8*)?

► **Activity 3:** What facts could we use from these Bible passages when witnessing?

Acts 10:42–43

Acts 18:5

Acts 20:21

Acts 20:24

► **Activity 4:** What fact are we to witness to again and again (*1 Timothy 2:5–6*)?

► **Activity 5:** In *Acts 22:14–15* and *26:16* Jesus told Paul to be his witness. What was Paul appointed to do?

When evangelising, a testimony is someone's personal account of their experiences with Jesus Christ. It is their personal *God Story*, which no one can deny.

Watch your language!

Sometimes Christians use *Christian language* that others do not understand (e.g. the lost, redemption, gone astray). When evangelising, make a special effort to use everyday language that everyone understands.

- **Activity 6:** Suppose someone says, “*I’d like to share my testimony; do you have a few minutes to spare?*” Do you think this question is easy to understand? What is a better way to begin an evangelistic conversation?

II. WHY SHOULD WE WITNESS FOR JESUS?

There are many biblical reasons to tell others about Jesus, the Saviour of the World.

A. Jesus Commands Us

Jesus told his disciples (that includes us) to teach others about him. Therefore, when we share the gospel, we are obeying Jesus.

Luke 24:46–48

He [Jesus] told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

Jesus explicitly commands us to tell others about him. Many Christians refer to these instructions as the *Great Commission* (*Matthew 28:18–20; Mark 16:15–16; Luke 24:46–48; John 20:21*).

- **Activity 7:** Where do you have opportunities to witness for Jesus?

B. People Are Lost without Jesus

Anyone who does not know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour is lost: their sins are not forgiven, they have not received the Holy Spirit and they cannot have a personal relationship with Jesus nor the promise of heaven.

1 Corinthians 1:18

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

- **Activity 8:** According to *Matthew 13:41–42*, what will happen to the lost?

C. Christ's Love Compels Us

2 Corinthians 5:14

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

Because of his great love for us, God our Heavenly Father sent Jesus to live among us and to die for our sins (*John 3:16*). God's great love for everyone motivates us to share the gospel.

- ▶ **Activity 9:** How did Jesus feel when he saw the crowds who were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (*Matthew 9:36*)?
- ▶ **Activity 10:** How did Paul feel about the Israelites who had not yet recognised Jesus as their Lord and Saviour (*Romans 9:1–5*)?

D. The Holy Spirit Empowers Us

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

- ▶ **Activity 11:** How does the Holy Spirit help us to share the gospel (*Matthew 10:18–20; Acts 4:8–13*)?

E. A Glorious Reward Awaits Us

The eternal glory that awaits us motivates us to put all our energy into spreading the message of the kingdom of God. Paul was certain that the “*crown of righteousness*” was waiting for him. For this reason, he was willing to accept suffering and hardship for the sake of Jesus.

2 Timothy 4:7–8

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

John 12:24–25

- ▶ **Activity 12:** What motivates you most to share the gospel of Jesus?

III. WHO IS QUALIFIED TO WITNESS?

Everyone who is converted and born again is qualified to tell others about their personal experience of coming to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. There are, however, three things we can do to help our evangelising efforts bear fruit.

A. Know God's Word

Ephesians 6:17

Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Hebrews 4:12

When evangelising we need to know God's Word and how to apply it. It is helpful to memorise important Bible verses with references so they can be shared at any time regardless of whether you have a Bible with you or not.

- **Activity 13:** Which Bible passages do you think are particularly useful when evangelising?

B. Be Cleansed from Sin

For evangelism to be effective we need to be cleansed from sin, so we can be filled with the Holy Spirit and evangelise with boldness (*Acts 4:31*).

It is helpful to ask yourself, "*Is there sin in my life that needs to be confessed?*" If the answer is "*yes*", confess the sin to Jesus, repent, and claim forgiveness on the basis of *1 John 1:9*.

- **Activity 14:** What does the Psalmist ask the Lord for in *Psalms 139:23–24*? How could you apply this Bible passage to your life?

C. Pray

Jesus teaches us that apart from him we can do nothing. It is only when we remain in him that our evangelism will bear fruit (*John 15:4–5*). Thus, prayer is essential for evangelism to bear good fruit. When we pray, we can ask the Lord to enable us to evangelise with great boldness.

Acts 4:29

Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.

- **Activity 15:** What did the church in Jerusalem experience as a result of their fervent prayers (*Acts 4:31, 4:33*)?

IV. HOW TO PREPARE YOUR TESTIMONY

When preparing your personal testimony, it is important to remember that the ultimate goal of evangelism is conversion. Therefore, your testimony should have a special emphasis on how you were converted and born again, and how others may experience this too. Of course, any testimony about God is wonderful. But don't end your testimony there; always take it one step further by sharing the gospel.

A. Paul's Testimony in Acts 22:1–22

Before writing your own personal testimony, consider how the apostle Paul structured his account in *Acts 22:1–22*. For a full account of Paul's testimony, also read *Acts 9:1–19* and *26:1–23*.

1. Introduction, Verses 1–3

- How does Paul address his listeners?
- How does he introduce himself?

2. Paul's Old Life, Verses 3–5

- What does Paul say about his past?
- What do we know about his goals and passions?

3. Paul's Conversion, Verses 6–16

- Where, when and how did Paul have an encounter with Jesus?
- What did Jesus say to him and how did Paul react?
- Who did he meet in Damascus?
- What instructions did he receive in Damascus?

4. Paul's New Life, Verses 17–21

- Where did Paul go after his conversion?
- What do we know about his new relationship with God?
- What instructions did he receive shortly after his conversion in Jerusalem?

5. Response, Verse 22

- How did the listeners respond to Paul's testimony?

- **Activity 16:** Decide which ideas from Paul's testimony you would like to include in your own personal testimony.

B. Your Testimony

You can model your own personal testimony on Paul's. Even if you say your testimony a little differently each time, it is always helpful to think through the main points before sharing it and, if possible, write them down.

The following guidelines should help.

1. Introduction

- It can be helpful to give your testimony a specific theme (e.g. struggling with addiction, depression, loneliness).
- Write an interesting introduction to capture your listeners' attention, so they realise that your message is important and it may change their lives!

2. Your Old Life

- Your desires or goals before being saved.
- What did your life look like?
- Was there a particular problem that you could not overcome?
- How did God begin to work on you?

3. Your Conversion

- How did you come to the point of deciding to make Jesus your personal Lord and Saviour?
- How did your conversion happen?
- When and where were you converted?

4. Your New Life

- What has changed in your life since being born again?
- Have your underlying problems been solved?
- How do you deal with problems now?
- What desires, dreams, and goals do you have now?

5. Response

Consider how your audience is responding to your testimony. Are they like Paul's listeners, who became angry? Does it appear that they want to know more about Jesus? Are they ready to give their lives to him right now?

How you respond will vary depending on their response. You could offer to lead them through a prayer of repentance and salvation. Alternatively, you could ask whether they have prayer needs and offer to pray for them. You may want to issue a challenge or simply wish them all the best.

C. Practical Preparation Tips

1. First, determine your target group: Who do you want to share your testimony with?
2. Write an interesting introduction.
3. Clearly explain exactly what happened at your conversion. You want your listeners to know how they can experience conversion too.
4. Do not use terms that your listeners may misunderstand. Words such as lost, salvation, sin, and assurance of salvation may need to be explained, or expressed in a different way.
5. When possible, use Bible verses.
6. Be sure that your life matches your message.
7. Write your testimony out in detail.
8. Try to say your testimony within three minutes and then condense it to one minute.
9. Take care that your testimony is not a sermon, but rather a personal recount of your journey with God.
10. Conclude your testimony with an invitation or a challenge to accept Jesus Christ.

V. WHERE CAN WE BE A WITNESS FOR JESUS?

A. In Everyday Conversations

There are many everyday situations and conversations where sharing your personal testimony is appropriate. Often people are very open to hearing a short account of how someone has experienced God personally.

- ▶ **Activity 17:** Who did Philip share his personal testimony with (*John 1:45*)?
- ▶ **Activity 18:** Who did the woman tell about her experience with Jesus (*John 4:28*)?
- ▶ **Activity 19:** When a blind man was healed by Jesus, who did he tell (*John 9:13*)?

B. At Planned Events

Sometimes evangelistic events are planned in which people are asked in advance to prepare their personal testimony. Good preparation helps you share your testimony in a clear and understandable way that points people to Jesus. Examples of planned evangelism include evangelistic meetings, Christian youth camps, and live-streamed ministry events.

- ▶ **Activity 20:** If you could share your testimony at an event, what kind of event would you choose?

C. Everywhere!

You can share your testimony everywhere! Even when you are in a situation where you cannot verbally share your testimony, you can always show God's love through your actions. Your good deeds, forgiveness, compassion, loving choices, and lifestyle can help show the love of God to non-believers (*Colossians 3:17*).

1. Your Words Should Point to Jesus

Acts 4:20

As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.

2. Your Actions Should Point to Jesus

1 Peter 2:12

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

- ▶ **Activity 21:** Your whole life should be a testimony for Jesus! How can a non-Christian recognise Jesus in your life?

WITNESSING AND SHARING YOUR TESTIMONY

BE A WITNESS

A. When solving disputes

A witness is a person who sees an event and testifies truthfully about what they saw (*Matthew 18:16*).

B. When evangelising

A witness for Jesus is someone who has come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour and they tell others about him (*Acts 28:23b*).

- What fact are we to witness to again and again (*1 Timothy 2:5–6*)?

WHY SHOULD WE WITNESS?

A. Jesus commands us

Luke 24:46–48

B. People are lost without Jesus

1 Corinthians 1:18

C. Christ's love compels us

2 Corinthians 5:14

- How did Jesus feel when he saw the crowds (*Matthew 9:36*)?

D. The Holy Spirit empowers us

Acts 1:8

E. A glorious reward awaits us

2 Timothy 4:7–8

WHO IS QUALIFIED TO WITNESS?

A. Know God's Word

Ephesians 6:17

B. Be cleansed from sin

Psalms 139:23–24

C. Pray

Acts 4:29

PREPARING YOUR TESTIMONY

Acts 22:1–22

1. Introduction

- Give your testimony a theme.
- Write an interesting introduction.

2. Your old life

- Your desires or goals before being saved.
- How did God begin to work on you?

3. Your conversion

- When and where were you converted?
- How did you come to the point of decision?

4. Your new life

- What has changed in your life since being born again?

5. Response

- A challenge or an invitation to respond.
- Pray.

WHERE CAN WE BE A WITNESS?

A. In everyday conversations

- Who did Philip share his personal testimony with (*John 1:45*)?
- Who did the woman tell about her experience with Jesus (*John 4:28*)?

B. At planned events

- Evangelistic meetings
- Youth camps, street ministry, etc.

C. Everywhere

1. Your words should point to Jesus.
Acts 4:20
2. Your actions should point to Jesus.
1 Peter 2:12

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *Acts 1:8*.
2. What truth about Jesus did the apostles continue to testify to (*Acts 4:33*)?
3. When evangelising, what is a personal testimony?
4. Why should you tell other people about Jesus?
5. Who is qualified to witness for Jesus?
6. Which main points should your personal testimony include?
7. When telling someone about Jesus, what should you bear in mind, and what pitfalls should you avoid?
8. Why is it important to clearly explain how you were converted?
9. How would you conclude your testimony if the person you are talking to is open to the gospel?
10. Where can you share your testimony?



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"Come, follow me," Jesus said,
"and I will send you out to fish for people."
Matthew 4:19

SHARING THE GOSPEL THROUGH CONVERSATION

Personally sharing the gospel is a task that is unfortunately often neglected. Anyone who has helped lead someone to Christ can tell you about the great joy that comes when someone hears and responds to the wonderful news of the gospel.

The renowned British preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892), said:

“Even if I were utterly selfish, and had no care for anything but my own happiness, I would choose, if I might, under God, to be a soul-winner, for never did I know perfect, overflowing, unutterable happiness of the purest and most ennobling order, till I first heard of one who had sought and found a Saviour through my means. I recollect the thrill of joy which went through me!”

Spurgeon, C.H. (1903) *The Soul Winner*. Passmore & Alabaster.

I. CONVERSATIONAL EVANGELISM IS BIBLICAL

In the Bible we find many examples of Jesus and the first Christians sharing the gospel through conversation. They are our role models for personal evangelism.

- **Activity 1:** In these Bible passages Jesus had a personal conversation with someone about the kingdom of God or he specifically asked someone to follow him. With whom did he speak?

John 1:43

John 1:47–51

John 8:3–11

John 9:35–38

- **Activity 2:** In these Bible passages the first Christians shared their faith in Jesus during a personal conversation. With whom did they speak?

Acts 8:26–35

Acts 16:27–34

Acts 26:24–29

II. LEARN HOW TO SHARE THE GOSPEL

Being able to share the gospel accurately and succinctly takes preparation. Here are some practical ideas to help you share the gospel during a conversation.

A. Four Essential Questions and Answers

Sharing the gospel can be structured around four essential questions and answers:

1. What is everyone's greatest need?

We are lost without Jesus.

2. Who can help us?

Jesus Christ is the Saviour.

3. What must we do?

Accept Jesus as our personal Saviour.

4. What will happen?

We will be born again; our new life with Jesus begins.

Discussing these may require several conversations!

- **Activity 3:** Prepare yourself for sharing the gospel by finding a suitable Bible passage for each of the four essential questions and answers.

B. Restored Relationship with God: A Visual Aid

The sketch **Restored Relationship With God** can be used to help present the gospel clearly. It is good to start with a blank piece of paper and draw as you speak. You can begin by asking,

"Would you like to know how someone can have a relationship with God? I would like to draw a little sketch to help explain this."

Use the following script to continue the conversation.

At the top of the page I write GOD.

In the Bible we read that God is love. He loves everyone; there is no person whom he does not love. He is also the creator of the world and everything in it. He is eternal, invisible to us, holy, and just.

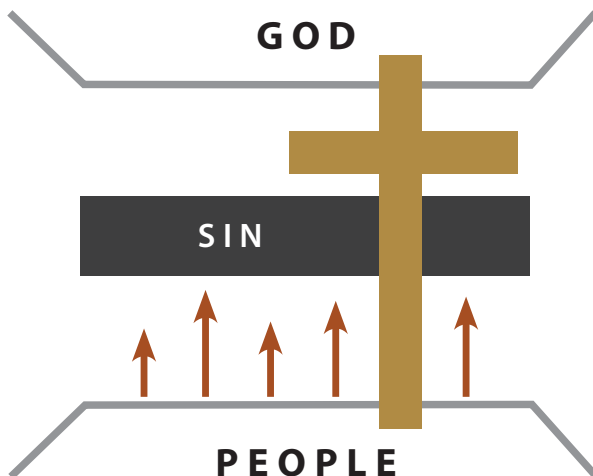
Below I write PEOPLE.

God created the first people with a wonderful purpose. In fact, he has a wonderful purpose for each one of us and wants to be in a close relationship with everyone. He has good thoughts and plans for our lives.

We read in the Bible that the first people sinned and turned away from God. They wanted to live according to their own will. As a result, their relationship with God was completely broken. Because God is holy and righteous, he cannot tolerate sin.

*Sin became a barrier between God and all people (**add SIN to the diagram**). Every person is sinful, and despite their best efforts, no one is able to live a sinless life. No one can truthfully say that they have never lied, been selfish, lashed out in anger, or disrespected their parents, for example. Sinners can never have a relationship with God; his judgement awaits them and the punishment for sin is eternal separation from God.*

*People sense this and know that their relationship with God is not in order. Many try to restore their relationship with God through good deeds, good morals, or religion. But no matter how hard they try, their efforts cannot overcome their separation from God (**draw arrows from PEOPLE to the SIN BARRIER**).*



*God wants everyone to be in a restored relationship with him. Because of his great love for us, God gave his one and only Son, Jesus Christ, to live among us (**draw the cross connecting GOD to PEOPLE**). Jesus taught about the kingdom of God and performed many miracles.*

The main reason, however, why Jesus came to earth was to make the one and only way by which our relationship with God can be restored. When he died on the cross, he bore the punishment for our sins and guilt. God accepted this sacrifice and raised Jesus from the dead three days later.

Now Jesus is alive in heaven. He can forgive our sins, break the barrier between God and us, and give us peace with God. When we accept Jesus' sacrifice for our sins, our sins are forgiven, we have a restored relationship with God and the promise of eternal life in heaven with him.

In John 3:16, we read, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Do you want peace with God and eternal life?

John 1:12 says, "Yet to all who did receive him [Jesus], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

Here we see what a person must do to become a child of God: They must receive Jesus and believe in him. Do you want to receive Jesus as your Saviour? This means you'll receive a restored, loving relationship with God, the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. Are you ready to believe in Jesus?

III. TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED

Anyone who wants to share the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ with others should be well prepared.

A. Be Convinced

To be able to share the gospel with integrity and passion, we must be absolutely certain that the gospel is true.

2 Corinthians 5:14

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

Do you really believe that everyone who lives without Jesus is lost? If so, you will also have a passion and desire to devote your time and energy to bringing the gospel to lost people. Do you have the love of Christ for other people? The love of Christ will empower you to show love and compassion and to share the gospel.

B. Pray

In *Acts 4:29*, Peter, John, and the other believers asked the Lord to enable them to share the gospel with great boldness.

Acts 4:29

Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.

To evangelise successfully, we too should ask the Lord to make us bold, courageous, and fearless. He can do this!

- **Activity 4:** What is Paul's prayer request in *Colossians 4:3–4* and how can you apply this scripture to your life?

C. Memorise Bible Verses

When we've memorised Bible verses, we can use them again and again when sharing the gospel, regardless of whether we have access to a Bible or not. Memorising parts of the Bible takes effort, but it's worth it.

Ephesians 6:17

Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The word of God:

- is the basis of our message (*Matthew 24:35*).
- produces faith (*Romans 10:17*).
- brings about rebirth (*1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18*).

1 Peter 1:23

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

- **Activity 5:** What can you do to make memorising Bible verses easier? What tools or tips can be helpful?

D. Prepare for Gospel Conversations

Although every gospel-sharing conversation will differ, we should always be ready to explain the gospel correctly and succinctly, whenever an opportunity arises. This preparation is needed so that we can:

- know what the Bible teaches about the way to salvation.
- predict what questions may be asked, and prepare appropriate answers.
- learn illustrations and techniques that help explain the gospel clearly and appropriately.

It is also helpful to read or listen to evangelistic material to get new, engaging ideas on how to share the gospel (*1 Peter 3:15*).

E. Put Theory into Practice

What we've learnt about sharing the gospel remains theoretical if we don't actually evangelise! No one becomes a proficient piano player without practising, nor becomes a prayer intercessor without praying. Likewise, no one shares the gospel skilfully unless they actually have conversations about Jesus with non-believers.

► **Activity 6:** What can help you when you're feeling discouraged about sharing your faith (*1 Corinthians 15:58*)?

IV. ADVANTAGES OF CONVERSATIONAL EVANGELISM

Sharing the gospel during a conversation is a very effective way to share the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. Indeed, it is so effective that it's often also used hand-in-hand with other evangelising methods (e.g. after a sermon, those who want to know more about Jesus may be invited to talk with the preacher or be invited to someone's home for a meal and conversation).

Conversational evangelism has many advantages.

A. It Is Personalised

In a personal conversation, we can focus our time and energy on one person, get to know them, and respond to their specific questions and problems.

Someone aptly said, *"The difference between preaching and personally sharing the gospel is like a doctor who gives a panacea to every patient, compared to one who makes a home-visit, gives a thorough examination, makes a diagnosis, and cures the problem."*

When we meet with someone multiple times, our lifestyle, character, choices, and deeds can also be a witness for Christ.

► **Activity 7:** Why is listening very important when having an evangelistic conversation?

B. It Is Flexible

While many forms of evangelism are limited to a specific time and location, conversational evangelism is much more flexible. It can happen at any time of the day or night, at any location. All that is needed is someone who is willing to share the gospel and someone who is willing to listen (*Mark 16:15*).

- **Activity 8:** There are some people who have little chance of hearing the gospel unless Christians go to them personally. Who do you think falls into this category?

C. It Is Achievable

Unlike some other forms of evangelism where specialised equipment or skills are needed (e.g. video editing skills), conversational evangelism only requires engaging in conversation and knowing how to share the gospel.

Thus, sharing the gospel through a personal conversation is very achievable. Every Christian can do this!

V. JESUS' EXAMPLE

Jesus had a personal, evangelistic conversation with a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. When we study this conversation (*John 4:5–29, 4:39–42*), we can gain insights into how we could share about Jesus in conversation.

- **Activity 9:** Read *John 4:5–29, 4:39–42* and answer the following questions.

A. Initiate Contact: John 4:5–9

- How did Jesus start the conversation?
- Why was the Samaritan woman surprised?
- How can we make contact?

B. Arouse Interest and Build Trust: John 4:10–12

- How did Jesus arouse her interest?
- Was a trusting and open dialogue already established?
- How can we arouse interest and build trust?

C. Shift to Spiritual Themes: John 4:13–15

- What did Jesus offer the Samaritan woman?
- How did Jesus redirect the general conversation to a spiritual one?
- How can we steer a general conversation towards spiritual themes?

D. Address the “Sin Problem”: John 4:16–18

- How did Jesus know about her private life?
- Why did Jesus raise the marriage issue?
- What is the underlying problem for everyone who isn’t born again?

E. Help Them to Get to Know Jesus: John 4:19–29, 4:39–42

- What did the woman know (*John 4:19, 4:25*)?
- How did Jesus react to her remarks?
- Did the Samaritan woman come to believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah?

► **Activity 10:** What effect did the Samaritan woman’s testimony have on her listeners (*John 4:39–42*)?

VI. MAIN STEPS IN A GOSPEL-SHARING CONVERSATION

Although every gospel-sharing conversation will differ, there are some logical steps that each conversation should, if possible, follow. Since it is often not possible to go through every step in one conversation, we should try to address them in subsequent conversations. These steps are similar to those that Jesus used when conversing with the Samaritan woman.

A. Initiate Contact

Sometimes we find it difficult to initiate a conversation, particularly with someone we’ve never met before. We just don’t know what to say!

Over time, you’ll develop your own conversation-starter style and feel much more comfortable initiating conversations. Regardless of how you choose to start a conversation, always pray for wisdom and proceed with tact.

Here are some practical suggestions on how to do this.

1. Spontaneous Conversations

Sometimes there's a spontaneous opportunity to initiate a gospel-sharing conversation. Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman is a good example of this (*John 4:5–26*). When this happens, make the most of the opportunity!

When you spontaneously initiate a conversation, use normal, everyday language. Be friendly, listen carefully, and respond to their needs by steering the conversation towards the only one who can truly bring hope and restoration into their lives: Jesus.

► **Activity 11:** How did Jesus turn the spontaneous conversation with the Samaritan woman from an everyday topic to a spiritual one (*John 4:7–10*)?

2. Planned Conversation Starters

Sometimes it's easier to initiate a gospel-sharing conversation when you've pre-planned an opening question. Asking a question can be a great way to initiate a conversation. A good conversation can often develop from a simple question such as:

- What gives you hope when life gets really hard?
- Who do you think Jesus Christ is?
- How long have you been a Christian?
- What do you think about God; do you believe in God?
- What does the Bible mean to you?
- What do you think the purpose of life is?
- What do you think about life after death?
- Do you know where you will spend eternity?
- What does it mean to be a Christian?
- What must someone do to receive eternal life?
- Have you ever had a moment that changed your life?
For me, it was when I realised Jesus really loves me...
- May I give you a brief outline of the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian?

► **Activity 12:** Which question would you choose as a conversation-starter? Have you used any of these questions to initiate a conversation? If so, explain how the conversation went.

3. Do Someone a Favour

Doing someone a favour can be a great way to open up a conversation and ultimately share the gospel. Your willingness to help may soften their resistance and prepare them to listen.

Romans 12:20

On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Matthew 5:16

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Sometimes doing a favour can help someone on their journey towards salvation. For example, a parent might attend Bible study if someone babysits their children.

► **Activity 13:** What opportunities have you had to do someone a favour?

4. Ask for a Favour

Asking for a favour can be a great way to build relationships and create opportunities to talk about Jesus. When you ask someone for a favour, they feel honoured and trusted. Jesus began the conversation at Jacob's well by asking for a favour (*John 4:7*).

Giving a thank-you gift afterwards can also be a great way to share the gospel. For example, give a card with a Bible verse or a Christian book to express your thanks.

► **Activity 14:** Do you have any friendships that began by asking for a favour? What other ways are there to initiate contact?

B. Build Trust

Most people will only be open to hearing the gospel when they trust the person who is sharing it. Everything we do should show that we're trustworthy.

To build a trusting relationship, ask yourself:

- Do I love them with the love of God?
- Do they sense that I want to help them? If so, are they comfortable with that?
- What do I want to portray (e.g. love, comfort, compassion, security, joy, friendship)? Are my words and actions doing this?

- **Activity 15:** What are some practical things you could do to build trust with a new acquaintance?

C. Share Your Personal Testimony

Your own personal testimony about how you came to know Jesus and how he has transformed your life is a powerful tool. Even if someone denies what the Bible says about Jesus, they cannot deny your personal experiences with him. Sharing your testimony will provide them with important food for thought.

Make sure that you address these questions when sharing your testimony:

1. What was my life like before conversion?
2. How did my conversion happen?
3. What is my life like now?

- **Activity 16:** If you had only one minute to explain how Jesus has changed your life, what would you say?

D. Answer Questions

There are often intellectual barriers that prevent people from coming to faith in Jesus. When these barriers are removed, it may be easier for them to welcome Jesus into their life as their Lord and Saviour. Thus, it's important that we are willing and able to answer their spiritual questions.

If we can not answer their questions, we should make a commitment to find answers or provide them with other resources, such as a book, website, evangelistic event, or another Christian.

We need wisdom to decide when to answer questions and when to step away. Sometimes people ask questions because they are genuinely searching for the truth, while others just want to argue or prove their point.

- **Activity 17:** What challenging questions have you already encountered when sharing your faith?

E. Explain the Gospel

If the other person seems ready to hear the gospel, explain the way of salvation. This includes addressing the problem of sin, humanity's separation from God, what Jesus has done for us and how we can be saved. If appropriate, use a small sketch and some Bible passages. As you do so, keep asking questions to check they understand. If they are ready to accept Jesus, help them to say a prayer of surrender.

- **Activity 18:** Do you sometimes find it difficult to invite people to follow Jesus? If so, why?

F. Pray

Regardless of how the conversation went, in many cases it is appropriate to offer to pray at the end of the conversation.

- If the other person agrees, pray for them, thank the Lord for the conversation and ask him to bless them.
- If they have accepted Jesus as their Saviour, you can give thanks together for their salvation and ask the Lord for his blessings upon their future.

- **Activity 19:** What experiences have you had with praying for someone after sharing the gospel?

G. Follow-Up

Conclude the conversation warmly, encouraging them to continue reflecting on Jesus Christ, and offer to meet again if appropriate.

1. Seekers

When someone is searching for spiritual truth, try to meet with them again soon. Make it a priority to pray for their salvation and ask others to also pray.

Pass on helpful resources (e.g. a New Testament, a Christian tract, a Christian book, a link to an excellent evangelical message), and invite them to Christian gatherings (e.g. church, Bible study, a Christian event), to support them in their spiritual search.

- **Activity 20:** What have you done to follow up with and support someone who is searching for spiritual truth?

2. New Believers

When someone gives their life to Jesus, their journey as a Jesus-follower begins.

It is important that you meet with them again, to help them learn the basic spiritual principles that will enable them to live a victorious Christian life and how to share their faith. Thus, the task of discipleship training begins. This involves Bible study, Christian fellowship, and prayer.

a) Bible Study

To ensure that new Christians are not confused by unbiblical opinions, they need to start learning what the Bible teaches about being born again, forgiveness, the church, prayer, God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, etc.

We therefore have a responsibility to meet with them to study the Bible. Sometimes we can also use books, such as this one, to help new believers learn what the Bible teaches. Meeting for Bible study also provides an opportunity to fellowship and pray with other believers.

b) Fellowship

All Christians, including new believers, need the friendships, encouragement, prayer support, and spiritual input that meeting with other Christians can bring. Thus, following-up new Christians involves including them in Christian gatherings, such as a weekly home group.

As someone once said, *"Words teach, but examples inspire!"* When new Christians have the chance to see how other believers trust God through the ups and downs of life, they too can be inspired to keep following Jesus during their own joys and struggles.

c) Prayer

When you are committed to following up with a new Christian, you must also be committed to praying for them. Prayer is the key which unlocks fruitful spiritual growth. The apostle Paul's commitment to praying for new believers is an excellent example for us to aspire to (*Philippians 1:3–5; 2 Thessalonians 1:11–12*).

SHARING THE GOSPEL THROUGH CONVERSATION

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

In the Bible we find many examples of Jesus and the first Christians sharing the gospel through conversation.

A. Jesus is our role model

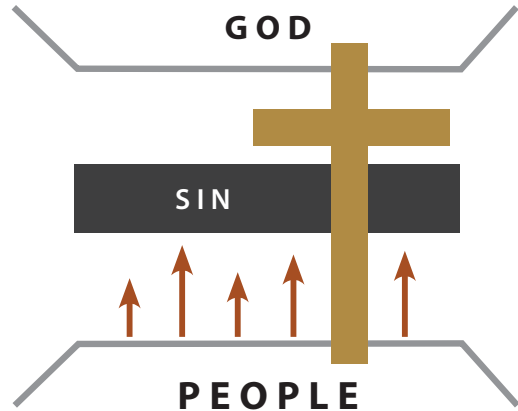
John 1:43

John 1:47–51

B. The first Christians

Acts 8:26–35

Acts 16:27–34



FOUR ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What is everyone's greatest need?

We are lost without Jesus.

Who can help us?

Jesus Christ is the Saviour.

What must we do?

Accept Jesus as our personal Saviour.

What will happen?

We will be born again; our new life with Jesus begins.

JESUS' EXAMPLE

John 4:5–29, 39–42

A. Initiate contact – *John 4:5–9*

- How did Jesus start the conversation?

B. Arouse interest and build trust – *John 4:10–12*

- How did Jesus arouse her interest?

C. Shift to spiritual themes – *John 4:13–15*

- How did Jesus redirect the general conversation to a spiritual one?

D. Address the “sin problem” – *John 4:16–18*

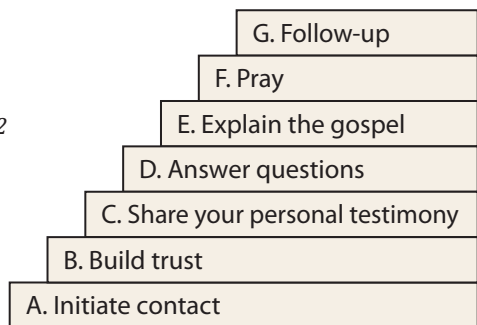
- Why did Jesus raise the marriage issue?

E. Help them to get to know Jesus

John 4:19–29, 4:39–42

- What did the woman know (*John 4:19, 4:25*)?
- Did she believe that Jesus is the Messiah?

MAIN STEPS



- Which question would you choose as a conversation starter?
- What can we do to build trust with a new acquaintance?
- What questions have you encountered when sharing your faith?

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *Acts 4:12*.
2. In the Bible there are several examples of Jesus and the first Christians explaining the gospel personally to others. Give one example.
3. There are four essential questions and answers that can be used to summarise the gospel message. What are they?
4. Why is it important to memorise Bible verses?
5. What tips would you give to someone who wants to share the gospel in a conversation?
6. What are the advantages of conversational evangelism, compared to other evangelising methods?
7. Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well is a good example of an evangelistic conversation. What can we learn from it?
8. It can be difficult to initiate a gospel-sharing conversation. What are some good conversation starters?
9. During an evangelistic conversation it is important to build trust. How can we do this?
10. After sharing the gospel with someone, you would like to encourage them to continue to think about Jesus. What resources are suitable to pass on to them?



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Sharing the good news of salvation through
Jesus Christ is every Christian's responsibility.

LEADING PEOPLE TO JESUS CHRIST

Although the aim of sharing the gospel is to lead people to Christ, it is not always easy to ask someone specifically, *“Would you like to receive Jesus as your personal Saviour?”* or to know what to say if their answer is *“Yes!”*

Some Christians do not ask anyone whether they want to receive Jesus because they are afraid of saying the wrong thing.

But if Jesus’ command to *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15)* is to be fulfilled, many Christians who are willing and able to lead others to Christ are needed.

I. WHY DO WE LEAD PEOPLE TO CHRIST?

Leading someone to Christ involves sharing the gospel with someone, explaining how they can receive Jesus as their personal Lord and Saviour, and helping them experience conversion and spiritual rebirth.

Why should we lead people to Christ? What Biblical reasons should motivate us?

A. Because Everyone Needs to Be Spiritually Born Again

John 3:7

Do not be surprised that I [Jesus] said to you, “You must be born again.”

Everyone must be born again if they are to experience the forgiveness of sins, restored relationship with God, and the promise of eternal life.

In the Bible we see that Jesus challenged people to:

- believe that he is the Saviour of the world
- repent from their sins
- follow him

► **Activity 1:** What does God command all people to do (*Acts 17:30*)?

B. Because Jesus Is Our Role Model

Because Jesus repeatedly asked people to repent and follow him, we should too.

Matthew 4:17

From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

Matthew 4:19

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."

Matthew 9:9

► **Activity 2:** Who does Jesus ask to repent (*Luke 5:32*)?

C. Because the First Christians Are Our Role Models

Many of the first Christians were zealous missionaries who led many people to faith in Jesus Christ (*Acts 3:19, 14:15, 26:18*). We too should be zealous for the gospel and lead people to Jesus!

Acts 11:21

The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

► **Activity 3:** What did Peter ask his listeners to do (*Acts 2:38*)?

D. Because We Are Christ's Ambassadors

All Christians have been given the privileged task of being ambassadors for Christ, to implore others to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:20

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

► **Activity 4:** Every Christian is an ambassador for Christ. What does this mean to you, personally?

► **Activity 5:** Is it our task to just share the gospel, or should we also try to persuade and warn others to believe in Jesus (*Acts 20:31, 26:28–29; 2 Corinthians 5:11*)?

II. HELPFUL TOOLS FOR LEADING PEOPLE TO JESUS CHRIST

Several practical tools to lead people to Christ are described here. Each is designed to help the listener understand exactly what conversion means, so they can make an informed decision whether or not to repent and follow Jesus.

A. The Wordless Booklet

One technique to help children understand the gospel is ***The Wordless Booklet***. You could make it yourself using coloured paper. The front cover is green and every page is a different colour.

During a storytelling time or conversation, the meaning of each colour is explained according to the instructions below. Bible verses can also be added to the narrative.

Golden page:



Gold represents God (his love, holiness, and purity) and heaven (the place where God's presence, joy, and glory dwell).

Black page:



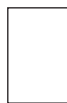
Black represents sin (lying, stealing, hatred, unkindness, unbelief etc.). There is no sin, pain, or sickness in heaven.

Red page:



Red represents Jesus, in particular his death on the cross for our sins (Jesus' blood), and his resurrection. Jesus bore the punishment for our guilt on the cross.

White page:



White represents the forgiveness of sins. When we accept Jesus into our lives, he cleanses us from all sin and guilt. (At this point, you may want to invite the children to accept Jesus.)

Green cover:



Green represents our new life with Jesus and growing in faith. Like a plant that grows and flourishes, our faith in Jesus will grow when we love him.

B. Evangelistic Illustrations

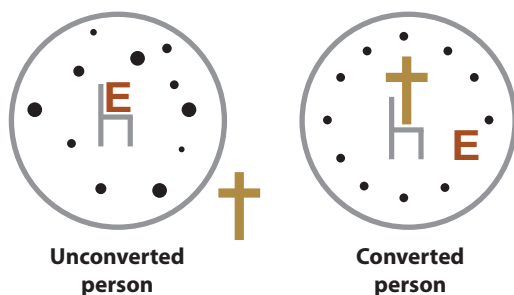
We can use evangelistic illustrations to explain the way to Jesus. Three different illustrations are detailed below.

The Throne of Your Life

For the unconverted person their ego (represented here by “E”) is on the throne, and Jesus Christ is outside their life.

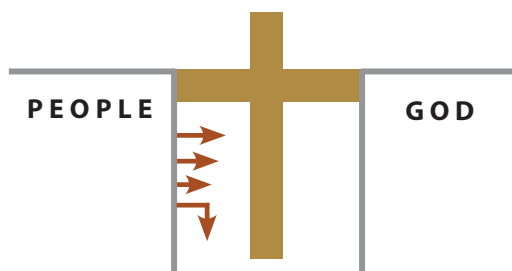
For the converted person Christ is at the centre of their life, and all areas of their life are committed to him.

This leads to the question:
“Which circle represents your life?”



The Bridge to God

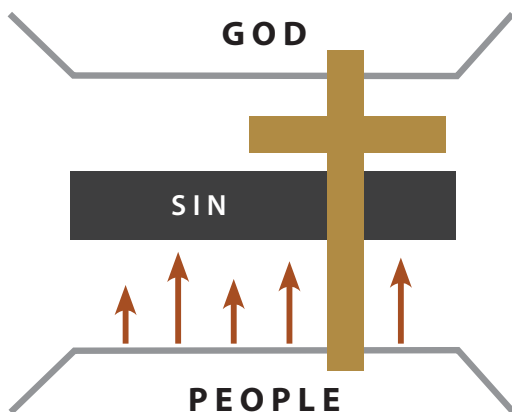
On one side are sinful people, and on the other side is the holy God. Sin is like a gulf that separates humanity from God. The arrows represent our attempts to save ourselves, but all these attempts are in vain, including our good works.



Jesus bridges the gap between us and God. He is the only way to God. When we put our faith in him, he forgives our sins, and we are no longer separated from God.

Restored Relationship With God

In this illustration our relationship with God is separated by a barrier of sin. The arrows point to our own futile attempts to save ourselves. Salvation is only possible through Jesus, who came into this world to save us. Anyone who accepts Jesus in faith is saved and becomes a child of God.



- **Activity 6:** Do you use another method to explain the gospel? If so, what is it?

C. Using Only the Bible

Some “fishers for people” (*Matthew 4:19*) prefer to explain the gospel using only the Bible. This method involves sharing pre-selected scriptures that are read directly from the Bible.

When leading someone to Christ, be careful not to use too many Bible verses; two or three are usually enough to make a point without being overwhelming. Because it can be confusing when we jump from one book in the Bible to another, some people prefer to use just one book when sharing the gospel, such as the Gospel of John or Romans.

Some suitable Bible verses for explaining the gospel include:

- God’s love for us.
John 3:16
- We are all sinners and therefore cannot stand before God.
Romans 3:23
- Jesus took the punishment for our guilt upon himself.
Isaiah 53:4–6
- We must receive Jesus in order to become God’s children.
John 1:12
- We can thank God for salvation.
Psalms 50:23

- **Activity 7:** Find suitable Bible verses from the Gospel of John and Romans to explain the way to salvation.

III. LEADING SOMEONE TO JESUS CHRIST: A THREE-STEP PROCESS

The process of leading someone to Jesus Christ can be divided into three practical steps:

1. Explain the way to salvation
2. The prayer of surrender
3. Follow-up

These steps have been incorporated into a gospel-sharing method that involves sketching and discussing the broad and narrow roads (*Matthew 7:13–14*).

This sketch was developed by the German evangelist, Wilhelm Pahls. It is detailed below with a suggested narrative and accompanying Bible verses.

Step 1: Explain the Way to Salvation

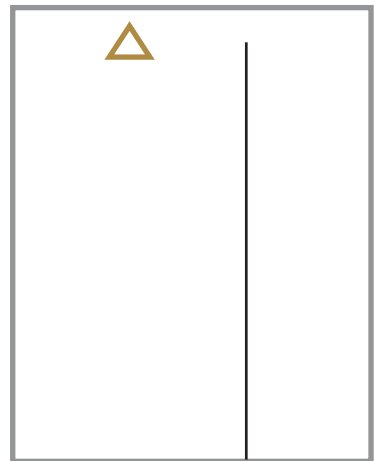
1. Read Matthew 7:13–14

Matthew 7:13–14 describes what a person must do to be saved. Shall we read it together? It says:

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

2. There Are Only Two Roads

*The Bible teaches us that there are only two roads that a person's life can follow. **I would like to represent this with a vertical line** that divides the page into two parts. Jesus said that one road is broad and the other road is narrow. People can therefore be divided into two groups: Someone is either on the broad road or they are on the narrow road.*



3. Who Is God?

***Now I would like to add a triangle to this sketch.** This triangle symbolises God. We can't see God, so we can't draw him. The triangle indicates that God is a triune God. We know him as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

In the Bible we get to know God as he really is.

- *There is only one God*

1 Timothy 2:5

For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus.

- *God is the highest*

Psalms 91:1

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

- *God is holy*

Isaiah 6:3b

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.

- *God is just*

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

2 Timothy 4:8

- *God is love*

1 John 4:16

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

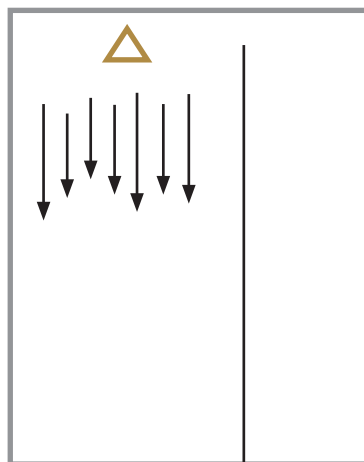
John 3:16

4. Who Are We?

*God created us and he wants to live in harmony and in close communion with us. But we have turned away from him. **These arrows represent people.** They are going their own way and are getting further and further away from God. The Bible says in Isaiah 53:6:*

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Every person is a sinner because they have turned away from God. There is no exception. These arrows represent everyone from every nation, throughout history and into the future.



- *Every person is a sinner*

Psalms 51:5

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Romans 3:10–18

Romans 3:23

5. Sin Causes Separation from God

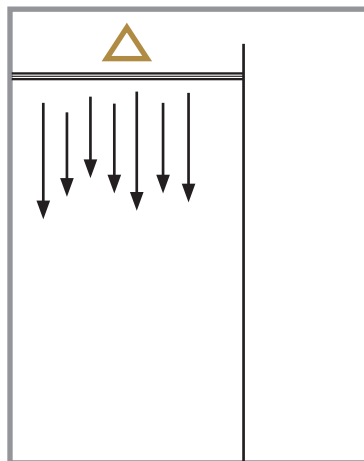
*Because of sin, people are separated from God. **This is indicated by this thick line that stands between God and us.***

Isaiah 59:1–2: Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

John 8:24

Romans 6:23

1 Corinthians 6:9–10



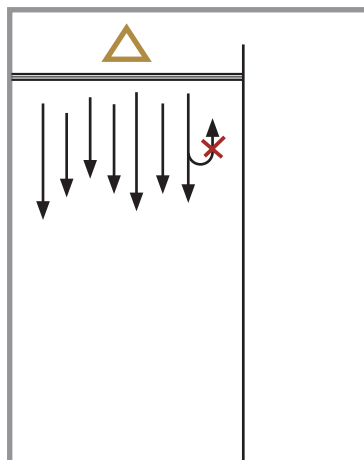
6. Our Own Attempts Always Fail

*All our attempts to turn back to God fail. We cannot overcome the barrier that separates us from God through a moral lifestyle, good works, or religion. **This is indicated by the arrow pointing upwards.***

a) A Moral Lifestyle

Isaiah 64:6: All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

Luke 18:9–14



b) Good Works

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.

Romans 4:4–5

John 6:29

c) A Religious Life

Matthew 19:16–22

John 3:1–3

Philippians 3:7–9

d) Can I Come to God without Jesus?

John 14:6

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

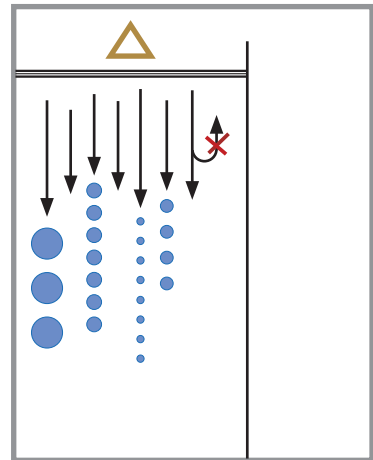
Acts 4:12

Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.

7. The Road to Destruction

The different-sized dots indicate sins people have committed.

The Bible says that many are on the broad road. People go their own way and move further and further away from God. Some people have not committed big sins, while others have sinned greatly. Some people have sinned often and other people not so often. Nevertheless, everyone has sinned and everyone is on the path that leads to destruction.



Genesis 8:21b

Every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood.

Psalms 14:1–3

Galatians 5:19–21

8. After Death Comes Judgement

Now I am adding a line to the sketch which represents death.

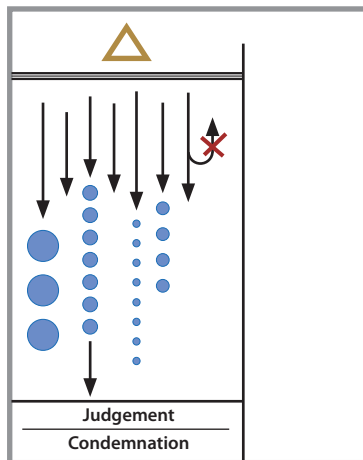
When a person crosses the line of death, judgement follows. This is a terrible fact for everyone who has not experienced reconciliation with God. According to Matthew 7:13, eternal destruction awaits those who are on the broad road.

Revelation 20:15: And if anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Matthew 25:31-46

2 Thessalonians 1:8-9

Hebrews 9:27



9. God Sent His Son into This World to Be Our Saviour

God does not want us to be separated from him. That is why he sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into this world to save us. Jesus took our sins upon himself on the cross at Golgotha. God the Father accepted this sacrifice and raised him from the dead. Now Jesus is the mediator between God and us.

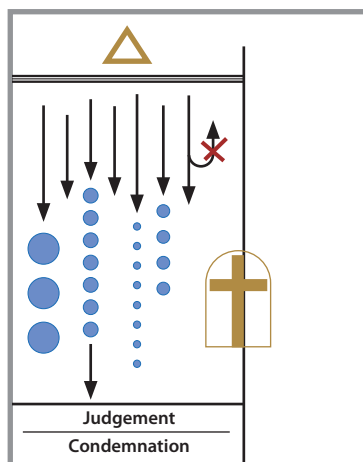
Jesus said: "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture." (John 10:9).

Here I have drawn a cross within an arched gateway. Jesus is the "gate" to salvation for us.

Matthew 1:21

She [Mary] will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

Luke 19:10



a) Jesus Died to Take Our Punishment upon Himself

Colossians 1:22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.

Romans 5:10

1 Corinthians 15:3

1 John 1:7

b) Jesus Rose from the Dead

1 Corinthians 15:20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Acts 17:3

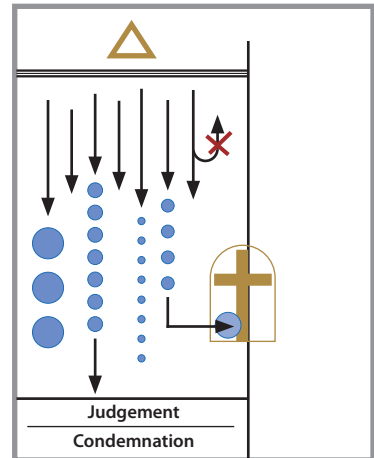
c) Jesus Is Now the Mediator Between God and Us

1 Timothy 2:5-6 For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.

10. Whoever Wants to Be Saved Must Repent

Conversion is represented by the arrow leading to the cross. The dot on the cross symbolises someone who is asking Jesus to forgive their sins.

Jesus has done everything for us so that we can be saved. However, we are not saved unless we choose to accept his sacrifice for our sins, repent, and accept God's forgiveness. It is our task to turn to Jesus Christ from the heart. God's task is to give salvation and a new life to everyone who repents.



Acts 3:19

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

a) Acknowledge You're Lost and Sinful

Psalm 51:5 Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Luke 15:18

b) Confess Your Sins and Repent

Psalm 32:5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord. And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Proverbs 28:13

c) Believe in Jesus and Welcome Him into Your Life

John 1:12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Acts 11:21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

John 3:36

Revelation 3:20

d) Thank God for the Gift of Salvation

Ephesians 5:19b-20 Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:3

11. Whoever Accepts Jesus Is Born Again

John 1:12-13 Yet to all who did receive him [Jesus], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

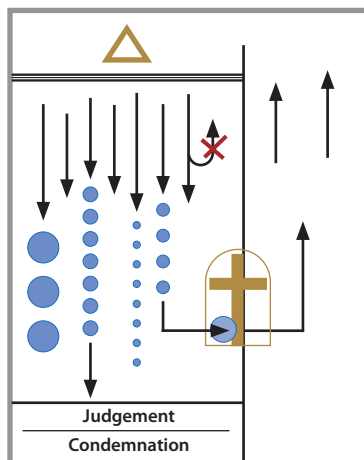
John 3:3-5

If you have recognised that you are a sinner and that you are on the broad road that leads to destruction, you can pray to Jesus, confess your sins, and welcome him into your life.

He will forgive all of your sins and welcome you as a child of God. He promises this in the Bible.

You will receive a new life from God. The Bible describes this process as the “rebirth” or as being “born again”.

The arrow on the narrow road symbolises someone who has passed through the narrow gate and is now on the road that leads to heaven. There are already other people on this road who also believe in Jesus (**two arrows**).



2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

1 Peter 1:23

Step 2: The Prayer of Surrender

After you have explained the way of salvation, it may be time to move on to the prayer of surrender.

Romans 10:13

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Matthew 21:22

If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

It is important that you make sure that the other person understands what conversion means. You can do this by asking a few questions, such as:

- *Did you understand this sketch?*
- *Where on this sketch do you find yourself right now?*
- *What must you do to get onto the narrow road?*
- *Do you want to belong to Jesus and make him Lord of your life?*

If they are ready to receive Jesus, explain how this can be done:

You can now come to Jesus in prayer. Prayer means 'talking to God'. Jesus is here with us and he hears everything that we say. Talk to him. You may want to tell him that you:

- ... want to come to him now in prayer*
- ... acknowledge that he is the only way to God the Father*
- ... have lived without him until now*
- ... are guilty before God*
- ... are sorry for your sins*
- ... want to accept Jesus into your life now*
- ... renounce the devil and want to stop serving him*
- ... believe Jesus is God's Son, who has paid the price for your sins*
- ... want to belong to Jesus and follow him*
- ... are thankful for your salvation.*

Perhaps you have never prayed before and don't know how to do it. I would like to help you. I will now pray as if I am accepting Jesus into my life. You can simply repeat after me, sentence by sentence, if you want to. If you would prefer to pray alone, that is, of course, possible. What would you prefer?

Those who want to accept Jesus often do not know how to begin. It can be really helpful when we model the prayer of surrender using short, simple sentences. Pause after each sentence, to give them a chance to repeat it. If someone prefers to say their own prayer, be ready to help them if necessary.

After they've given their life to Jesus:

- Check that they understand what has just happened: Jesus has forgiven all of their sins and accepted them as a child of God! They are now spiritually reborn and have the promise of eternal life with Jesus!
- Encourage them to thank the Lord right now, in their own words, for what he has done.
- Pray and thank God for giving them the gift of salvation.

Step 3: Follow-Up

If someone has just accepted Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, they are at the very beginning of their new life as a believer. There are a few things that they should be made aware of now, to help them take their first steps as a follower of Jesus.

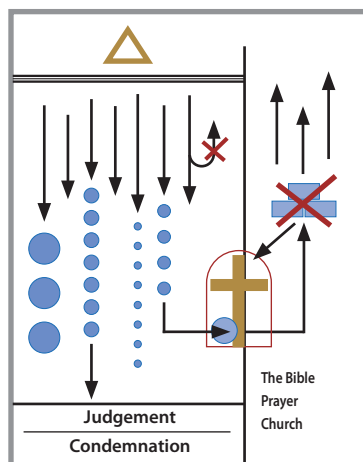
1. Everyone Sins Again

It is wrong to think that a Christian can no longer sin. Although we are born again, we live in a sinful world and are confronted with sin. At some point, everyone sins again.

I will draw a brick wall to represent this.
This sin barrier hinders us in our relationship with God, and we cannot grow in our faith as we should.

1 John 1:8: If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

James 3:2



2. We Can Be Forgiven Again

*We can receive forgiveness again. If we acknowledge our sin and confess it to Jesus, he forgives us (**draw an arrow from the wall to Jesus**). The sin barrier is then removed (**cross out the brick wall on the sketch**), and we can continue our journey with Jesus with joy in our hearts.*

1 John 1:7

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

1 John 1:9

3. Three Pillars for Spiritual Growth

*There are three important principles that a Christian should observe, to grow in faith. These are the 'Three Pillars' for spiritual growth: the Bible, prayer, and Christian community (church). (**Add these to the sketch.**)*

Acts 2:42

*They devoted themselves to the **apostles' teaching** and to **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and to **prayer**.*

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| ● Bible | <i>Acts 17:11</i> |
| ● Prayer | <i>John 14:13</i> |
| ● Christian community (church) | <i>Hebrews 10:25</i> |

LEADING PEOPLE TO JESUS CHRIST

WHY DO WE LEAD PEOPLE TO CHRIST?

A. Because everyone needs to be spiritually born again

John 3:7

- What does God command all people to do (*Acts 17:30*)?

B. Because Jesus is our role model

Matthew 4:17

C. The first Christians are our role models

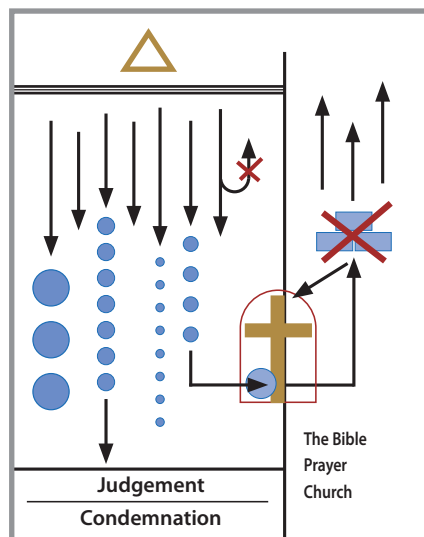
Acts 11:21

- What did Peter ask his listeners to do (*Acts 2:38*)?

D. Because we are Christ's ambassadors

2 Corinthians 5:20

THE BROAD AND THE NARROW ROAD



LEADING SOMEONE TO JESUS CHRIST

Step 1: Explain the way to salvation

1. Read *Matthew 7:13-14*
2. There are only two roads
3. Who is God? – *1 Timothy 2:5*
4. Who are we? – *Isaiah 53:6*
5. Sin causes separation from God
Isaiah 59:1-2
6. Our own attempts always fail
Isaiah 64:6
Ephesians 2:8-9
7. The road to destruction
Galatians 5:19-21
8. After death comes judgement
Hebrews 9:27

9. God sent his Son into this world to be our Saviour – *Luke 19:10*
10. Whoever wants to be saved must repent – *Acts 3:19*
11. Whoever accepts Jesus is born again
John 3:3-5

Step 2: The prayer of surrender

Romans 10:13

Matthew 21:22

Step 3: Follow-up

- The Bible – *Acts 2:42, 17:11*
- Prayer – *John 14:13*
- Christian community (church) – *Hebrews 10:25*

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *Matthew 7:13–14*.
2. What does leading someone to Christ involve?
3. Why should we lead people to Jesus?
4. What method do you like to use to explain the gospel?
5. What Bible passages would you choose if you wanted to explain the way of salvation using only the Bible?
6. The process of leading someone to Jesus can be divided into three practical steps. What are they?
7. How would you explain that all people who are not born again are on the broad road that leads to destruction?
8. Why can we be saved only through Jesus?
9. Explain how someone can receive Jesus as their Saviour.
10. How can you help a new Christian grow in their faith and knowledge of God?



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Jesus' disciples accept not only his teachings
but also him as their Lord and Saviour.

DISCIPLESHIP

Jesus gives us the task of making disciples of all nations. This Great Commission is for all Christians:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising 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 am with you always, to the very end of the age."

– Matthew 28:18–20

If we put this into practice, we will truly be the “salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:13–14).

I. WHO IS A DISCIPLE?

A. Definition

The word disciple means:

learner, apprentice, or student

A disciple of Jesus is someone who has decided to follow Jesus Christ and live in a close relationship with him.

► **Activity 1:** What do you think discipleship is?

B. Disciples in the New Testament

In the New Testament we can read about distinct groups of disciples, especially those who followed Jesus Christ.

1. The Disciples of Moses

John 9:28

Then they [Pharisees] hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses!"

The Pharisees were students of the Mosaic Law who based their spiritual security on being disciples of Moses.

2. The Disciples of John the Baptist

John 1:35

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples.

The disciples of John the Baptist followed and learnt from him (*Luke 11:1*). They confronted people with their convictions (*John 3:25*), remained faithful to John during his time in prison (*Matthew 11:2*) and buried him after his death (*Matthew 14:12*).

► **Activity 2:** What did John's disciples often do (*Luke 5:33*)?

3. The Disciples of the Pharisees

Matthew 22:15–16a

Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him [Jesus] in his words. They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians.

The disciples of the Pharisees focussed on knowing and observing the traditions of their ancestors and those described in the Old Testament.

4. The Disciples of Jesus

Jesus' disciples were those he called to follow him. They accepted not only his teachings but also him as the promised Messiah.

He taught his disciples to love God and people (*Matthew 22:37–39*) and to live for the kingdom of God, rather than for themselves (*Matthew 16:24, 6:33*). It was a radical and unique kind of discipleship.

We can divide the disciples of Jesus into the following groups:

a) The Twelve Disciples

Mark 3:14 He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach.

The twelve disciples were Jesus' first and closest disciples. They were also called *apostles* (*Matthew 10:2*) or *the Twelve* (*Mark 4:10*).

They travelled and shared meals with Jesus, listened and responded to his teachings, had personal conversations with him, and saw him perform many miracles. They were Jesus' inner circle of friends.

All of the twelve disciples, except for Judas Iscariot, remained faithful to Jesus (*John 6:67–71*).

b) The Seventy-Two Disciples

Luke 10:1 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.

The seventy-two disciples belonged to a larger circle of Jesus' followers. When Jesus sent them out, he gave them the same commission (*Luke 10:1–12, 10:17–20*) he had previously given his twelve disciples (*Matthew 10:5–16; Luke 9:1–5*).

c) Large Crowds

Luke 6:17 He [Jesus] went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon.

Large crowds of disciples openly followed Jesus, while others followed him secretly. Joseph of Arimathea, for example, was a secret disciple of Jesus (*John 19:38*).

Not all of Jesus' followers remained faithful to him (*John 6:66*).

► **Activity 3:** Why did many of Jesus' disciples leave him (*John 6:60, 64*)?

d) Disciples in the Book of Acts

In the Book of Acts, everyone who believed in Jesus is referred to as a disciple.

Acts 6:1 *In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained.*

Acts 9:36 *In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor.*

► **Activity 4:** What were the disciples called for the first time at Antioch (*Acts 11:26*)?

In the Bible, *disciple* is only used in the Gospels (268 times) and in the Book of Acts (26 times). After Acts, other words became commonplace to refer to those who follow Jesus.

The word *disciple* always implies that there is a teacher, regardless of whether they are named or not. Hence, a disciple of Jesus is someone who follows Jesus as their teacher and learns from him.

► **Activity 5:** What words did Paul use instead of *disciples* (*Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 2:1, 4:1*)?

II. CONDITIONS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Jesus expects his disciples to follow him consistently. Furthermore, there are conditions that we must adhere to in order to truly be his disciples.

A. Love Jesus More than Anything Else

Matthew 10:37 *Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me...*

This teaching is also found in the Gospel of Luke, where Jesus uses the word *hate*.

Luke 14:26

If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.

Jesus is not teaching us to hate our families in the way we usually understand the word, or to treat them without love. Instead, he's making the point that being his disciple is a serious commitment that needs to take priority over everything else.

Indeed, the importance of loving and caring for our families is emphasised in the Bible again and again (*Ephesians 5:28; 1 Timothy 3:4*) and the commandment to *love your neighbour* shows that we have no right to withhold love from anyone (*Matthew 22:39*).

Some Christians find that the greatest resistance to following Jesus comes from within their own family, and people from within their household may even become their enemies (*Matthew 10:36*).

- **Activity 6:** How can we deal with family members who try to discourage us from following Jesus (*John 17:20–21; 1 Corinthians 13:4–7*)?

B. Take Up Your Cross

Matthew 10:38–39

Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

Matthew 16:24

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

The cross was a means of execution and the one who carried it was usually the one to be crucified. When Jesus was on the way to his place of execution, he had to carry his cross until a man from Cyrene was forced to carry it for him (*Matthew 27:32*).

Jesus humbled himself and chose to obey God's will for his life and death (*Philippians 2:8; Luke 22:42*). We, as Jesus' disciples, are expected to do the same.

- **Activity 7:** What does the invitation to "*take up your cross*" mean to you?

C. Estimate the Cost

Luke 14:28

Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?

Jesus teaches us that anyone who wants to follow him should consider the cost before making a commitment.

When sharing the gospel we must not conceal the truth that following Jesus can come at a very high price, including persecution and death.

► **Activity 8:** What price was Paul willing to pay for the name of the Lord Jesus (*Acts 21:13*)?

► **Activity 9:** What price must we be prepared to pay as Jesus' disciples (*1 Thessalonians 3:4*)?

D. Be Willing to Give Up Everything for Jesus

Luke 14:33

In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

The first disciples left their boats and thus their livelihoods, along with their families and homes, to follow Jesus (*Mark 10:28; Luke 5:10–11*). Levi, the tax collector, left everything and followed Jesus (*Luke 5:27–28*).

We too should be prepared to give up everything to follow Jesus.

This does not mean that Jesus asks everyone to sell their possessions or leave their jobs or families. Only once did Jesus ask a man to sell everything he had because the man was attached to his wealth (*Luke 18:22–23*).

Giving up everything you have (*Luke 14:33*) means doing whatever Jesus asks you to do.

► **Activity 10:** What is a healthy attitude towards possessions and the gathering of treasures on earth (*Matthew 6:19; 1 Timothy 6:8*)?

► **Activity 11:** Before his conversion, what was Paul's self-confidence built on (*Philippians 3:4–6*)? How did he view these things after his conversion (*Philippians 3:7–8*)?

III. CHARACTERISTICS OF A GROWING DISCIPLE OF JESUS

Although every Christian is a disciple, not every Christian is a mature disciple. What are the characteristics of a growing disciple of Jesus?

A. They Want to Lead Others to Jesus

Matthew 4:19

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."

2 Corinthians 5:20

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

- **Activity 12:** Where should we be Jesus' witnesses? In whose power are we to do this (*Acts 1:8*)?

B. They Live in Obedience to Jesus

John 8:31

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples."

John 14:23

Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them."

- **Activity 13:** What kind of obedience does Jesus expect from us (*Romans 6:17*)?

C. They Pray

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."

- **Activity 14:** When should we pray (*Philippians 4:6*)?

D. They Love Others

John 13:34–35

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

1 Thessalonians 3:12

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.

- **Activity 15:** How should we show our love for one another (*Galatians 6:10*)?

E. They Study God's Word

Matthew 11:29

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

2 Timothy 3:16–17

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Acts 17:2

As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures.

- **Activity 16:** What attitude did the Jews of Berea have towards the Scriptures (*Acts 17:11*)?

F. They Are Spirit-Filled

Ephesians 5:18

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

- **Activity 17:** According to *Galatians 5:22–23*, how can a Spirit-filled Christian be recognised?

G. They Teach New Believers

2 Timothy 2:2

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

Paul mentored and taught Timothy. As a result, Timothy became a valuable co-worker who shared the gospel and taught others about Jesus. This is a wonderful example of a mature disciple passing on what they have learnt. We see both Paul and Timothy doing what Jesus instructed all Christians to do (*Matthew 28:18-20*).

New or spiritually immature Christians particularly need careful guidance and instruction from spiritually mature Christians. We have all been commissioned to go, make disciples, and teach them to obey everything Jesus commanded.

- **Activity 18:** Read *2 Timothy 2:2* again. To whom should Timothy pass on what he had learnt from Paul? How can we apply this scripture to our lives?

IV. PROMISES FOR DISCIPLES

Jesus has given many promises to those who follow him. These promises are so precious! When we hold on to them, the cost of following Jesus seems like a small price to pay.

Mark 10:28-30

Then Peter spoke up, "We have left everything to follow you!"

"Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life."

Luke 10:20

However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

- **Activity 19:** Paul willingly accepted the cost of discipleship. What was he looking forward to (*2 Timothy 4:7-8*)?

DISCIPLESHIP

WHO IS A DISCIPLE?

A disciple of Jesus is someone who has decided to follow Jesus Christ and live in a close relationship with him.

a) Disciples of Jesus in the Gospels

Mark 3:14

Luke 10:1

b) Disciples in the Book of Acts

Acts 11:26

PROMISES FOR DISCIPLES

Jesus has given many great and precious promises to those who follow him.

Mark 10:28–30

Luke 10:20

- Paul willingly accepted the cost of discipleship. What was he looking forward to (*2 Timothy 4:7–8*)?

CONDITIONS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Love Jesus more than anything else

Matthew 10:37

How can we deal with family members who try to discourage us from following Jesus (*John 17:20–21; 1 Cor. 13:4–7*)?

Take up your cross

Matthew 10:38–39

What does the invitation to *take up your cross* mean to you? (*Matthew 16:24*)

Estimate the cost

Luke 14:28

What price must we be prepared to pay as Jesus' disciples (*1 Thessalonians 3:4*)?

Be willing to give up everything for Jesus

Luke 14:33

How did Paul's priorities change after his conversion (*Philippians 3:7*)?

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GROWING DISCIPLE

A. They want to lead others to Jesus

Matthew 4:19

- Where should we be Jesus' witnesses? In whose power are we to do this (*Acts 1:8*)?

B. They live in obedience to Jesus

John 8:31

- What kind of obedience does Jesus expect from us (*Romans 6:17*)?

C. They pray

Luke 11:1

- In what situations should we pray (*Philippians 4:6*)?

D. They love others

John 13:34–35

- How should we show our love for one another (*Galatians 6:10*)?

E. They study God's Word

Acts 17:2

- What attitude did the Jews of Berea have towards the Scriptures (*Acts 17:11*)?

F. They are Spirit-filled

Ephesians 5:18

- According to *Galatians 5:22–23*, how can a Spirit-filled Christian be recognised?

G. They teach new believers

2 Timothy 2:2

- How can we apply *2 Timothy 2:2* to our lives?

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *John 8:31–32*.
2. What does *disciple* mean?
3. What did John's disciples often do (*Luke 5:33*)?
4. Who is a disciple in the Book of Acts?
5. Jesus gives several conditions for being his disciple. What are some of them?
6. What is one thing that every disciple of Jesus should do?
7. What are the characteristics of a growing disciple of Jesus?
8. How can a Spirit-filled Christian be recognised?
9. How can we apply *2 Timothy 2:2* to our lives?
10. Being a disciple of Jesus also means that we have many great and precious promises from him. Name some of them.



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Our lives are enriched and others are blessed
when we use the gifts and abilities that God has given to us.

DISCOVERING AND USING YOUR GIFTS

Many different ministries are needed to help build the kingdom of God. Every born-again Christian can contribute because the Holy Spirit has given specific gifts to us. The way we serve in ministry is greatly shaped by our gifts and we are called to use them faithfully.

*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received
to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.*

– 1 Peter 4:10

- **Activity 1:** Imagine the following scenario: A team of committed Christians want to live in a remote village in the Himalayan Mountains to plant a church there. As they prepare to go, they consider what gifts and abilities are needed in their team. What do you suggest?

I. WHAT ARE GIFTS?

The New Testament uses the word *gifts* in different ways. What are these gifts and where can we read about them in the New Testament?

A. Spiritual Gifts

In the Bible, spiritual gifts are referred to as *gifts of the Spirit*, *gifts of grace*, or simply *gifts*.

1. Gifts of the Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:1 Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are special abilities that the Holy Spirit gives to born-again Christians to help build the kingdom of God.

For the gifts of the Spirit, Paul uses the Greek word *pneumatikos* in *1 Corinthians 12:1* and *14:1*. It means *spiritual* or *related to the Spirit*. This shows that these gifts are not merely natural talents, but abilities given by the Holy Spirit to serve others and build up the church.

► **Activity 2:** What does *1 Corinthians 14:1* tell us about our attitude towards spiritual gifts?

2. Gifts of Grace

Romans 12:6a *We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.*

In the Bible, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are most frequently called “*gifts of grace*” or “*gifts*”. In these instances, the Greek word *charisma* is used (derived from *charis*, which means *grace*). Examples of this term include *1 Corinthians 7:7, 12:4; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; 1 Peter 4:10* and *Romans 12:6a*. This term indicates that the various gifts are given by God’s grace.

B. Other Gifts

Sometimes when we read “*gifts*” in the New Testament, it has been translated from the original Greek word *doma*, which simply means *gift*. It is used in *Ephesians 4:8* in a context about ministry skills.

The word *gift* is also used in other contexts that do not refer to special abilities for ministry (*Matthew 7:11; Philippians 4:17*).

C. Natural Gifts / Talents

Everyone is born with natural gifts or talents that come from our Creator God (e.g. singing, writing, painting, etc.).

Psalms 139:14 *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

We should thank God for our natural gifts and use them to help build the kingdom of God.

► **Activity 3:** What natural gifts has God given to you?

D. Counterfeit Gifts

Because Satan can imitate many gifts of the Holy Spirit, we should vigilantly test each gift to be sure it is not counterfeit (*1 Corinthians 14:29*).

Matthew 7:22–23

Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Matthew 24:24

For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

We can apply the following criteria to check the authenticity of the gifts.

The gift-bearer must:

- be born again.
John 3:3–7
- accept and glorify Jesus as Lord.
1 Corinthians 12:3
- preach a message that is consistent with the Bible.
Galatians 1:9
- use their gifts to help build up the church.
1 Corinthians 14:12

II. THE PURPOSE OF GIFTS

A. For the Benefit of All

1 Corinthians 12:7

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

Romans 12:4–5

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

All the gifts that God has given to us are linked to our responsibilities. They have not been given for selfish purposes but rather to serve and bless others (*1 Peter 4:10*).

B. For Building Up the Church

1 Corinthians 14:12

So it is with you. Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church.

1 Corinthians 14:26

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given so that we, as the body of Christ, may be built up in our faith and knowledge of Jesus, and become mature and Christlike. We all have a responsibility to faithfully use our gifts to do so.

Ephesians 4:11–16

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

C. To Bless, Not Divide

1 Corinthians 1:10

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.

Although the church in Corinth was richly endowed with many spiritual gifts (*1 Corinthians 1:7*), there was tension and disunity (*1 Corinthians 1:11–13*).

If spiritual gifts are not welcomed or are used inappropriately within the church, this can lead to tension and division. Our spiritual gifts are for building one another up, not for tearing one another apart!

- **Activity 4:** What can we do to create a safe and encouraging environment where we can discover and use our spiritual gifts?

III. WHO HAS SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

The Holy Spirit dwells in every person who is born again (*Romans 8:11, 8:14–15; 1 Corinthians 3:16*) and he distributes gifts to each one, just as he determines (*1 Corinthians 12:11*).

Every born-again Christian has at least one spiritual gift.

1 Corinthians 12:7

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

1 Corinthians 12:11

All these [gifts of the Holy Spirit] are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

1 Peter 4:10

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

- **Activity 5:** The Holy Spirit has intentionally given you specific spiritual gifts. What are you doing to discover, develop, and use them?

Although every born-again Christian has been given spiritual gifts, knowing which gifts we have is not automatic. Only those who actually start using their gifts for ministry will truly discover what their gifts are, along with how to use and develop them.

- **Activity 6:** What can the Parable of the Talents teach us about gifts and talents? What happens when we use them? What happens when we don't (*Matthew 25:14–30*)?

IV. FRUIT AND GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

The fruit of the Spirit is different from the gifts of the Spirit, and they should not be confused with one another.

Galatians 5:22–23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

- The fruit of the Spirit grows within us, whereas the gifts of the Spirit are given.
- The fruit of the Spirit is the result of healthy spiritual growth and can therefore be seen as a sign of spiritual maturity.
- The gifts of the Spirit are ministry skills and are therefore not necessarily signs of spiritual maturity.

Fruit of the Spirit	Gifts of the Spirit
... is the result of healthy spiritual growth.	... are gifts given by the grace of God.
... shows what a Christian is.	... show what a Christian has received.
... should be visible in every Christian's life.	... should be discovered.
... improves our character.	... improve our service.

- **Activity 7:** What can you do to make the fruit of the Spirit visible in your life (*Ephesians 5:18–20*)?

V. DISCOVERING YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

As a born-again Christian, you can be certain that you have spiritual and natural gifts. But do you know what they are?

The Bible does not give us a specific method for discovering our gifts. Rather, Scripture encourages us to use the gifts God has given us. The following suggestions may help you recognise and use them joyfully to serve the Lord Jesus.

A. Believe God Has Given You Gifts

God has made each person unique with specific gifts and talents. Just as each member of a body has a different function, so it is with the Body of Christ: God has given everyone gifts to use, so that the Body of Christ can function properly.

Believe that God has given you specific gifts (*1 Corinthians 12:11*) and be committed to discovering and using them.

B. Know What the Gifts Are

To discover your gifts, you need to know what the various gifts are. Many gifts are listed in *Romans 12:6–8*; *1 Corinthians 12:8–10, 12:28–31*; *Ephesians 4:11*.

C. Pray to Recognise Your Gifts

You can pray that God will show you what your gifts are. However, be careful that your motives are pure. Do you want to know what your gifts are to make yourself look good, or to glorify God?

D. Get Involved

People usually discover their gifts by deciding to serve. A good idea is to simply start with the opportunities that lie before you. For example, have you been asked to sing on the worship team at church, or to visit someone who's sick? Be willing to get involved in areas that are new to you and pray for more ministry opportunities.

E. Pay Attention

Pay attention to which tasks suit you, which ministries bring you joy, and what God particularly blesses. By doing so, you are more likely to recognise your gifts. It is also helpful to talk to other Christians about what gifts they've observed in you.

► **Activity 8:** What gifts do other Christians see in you? When do they seek your help?

VI. PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR USING YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

A. Connect Gifts with Responsibilities

Spiritual gifts often become visible only when we take on specific responsibilities. Those who want to discover their gifts should therefore be willing to serve practically in the kingdom of God. God often shows us our gifts precisely when we serve, take responsibility, and faithfully do what lies before us.

1 Peter 4:10

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

► **Activity 9:** What ministry responsibilities are you prepared to take on and fulfil?

B. Be Willing to Take on Any Task

Every Christian should be willing to serve wherever help is needed, even in areas where they do not feel particularly gifted. Serving in obedience and faithfulness is always more important than waiting for a task that perfectly matches our gifts. For example:

- Although only some Christians have the gift of evangelism, all Christians should evangelise (*Acts 1:8*).
- Although only some Christians have the gift of mercy, all Christians should show mercy (*Luke 6:36*).

► **Activity 10:** Please add more examples to this list!

Doing what the Lord asks us to do is a step of faith and obedience. It takes courage, particularly when we feel that what he's asking us to do is not easy. Remember, we can do all things through Jesus who gives us strength (*Philippians 4:13*)!

C. Prioritise

As much as possible, say “yes” to ministry opportunities that match your gifts. It is by no mistake that the Holy Spirit has given you particular gifts, so make it a priority to use them.

► **Activity 11:** How does knowing which gifts you have help you to discover God's will for your life?

D. Remember Everyone Is Different

When using your gifts, remember that we are all different. Do not expect everyone to be passionate about the same ministry opportunities that you are passionate about. Do not overburden other Christians or pressure them to share your passions. Instead, look for Christians who have similar gifts, so you can encourage one another, develop your gifts, and serve together.

► **Activity 12:** What are some advantages and disadvantages of comparing your abilities to someone else's?

E. Be Faithful in Small Things

Being faithful in small things is important in every area of ministry and will lead to God giving you even more responsibilities.

Luke 16:10

Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.

► **Activity 13:** According to *1 Corinthians 4:1–2*, what is required when you’ve been entrusted with a task from God?

VII. HOW MANY SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE THERE?

How many spiritual gifts are mentioned in the New Testament? The answer to this question depends on how we interpret certain Bible passages. The nine gifts listed in *1 Corinthians 12:8–10* are definitely *gifts of grace*. Many scholars agree that *gifts of grace* are also found in *Romans 12:6–8*; *1 Corinthians 12:28–31* and *Ephesians 4:11*.

What gifts are in each Bible passage? Write each gift only once to create a list of the various gifts of grace.	
1 Corinthians 12:8–10	
1. _____	12. _____
2. _____	13. _____
3. _____	14. _____
4. _____	15. _____
5. _____	
6. _____	1 Corinthians 12:28–31
7. _____	16. _____
8. _____	17. _____
9. _____	18. _____
Romans 12:6–8	Ephesians 4:11
10. _____	19. _____
11. _____	20. _____

Some Bible commentators say that the following abilities are also *gifts of grace*:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Casting out demons | <i>Mark 16:17–18</i> |
| 2. Remaining unmarried | <i>1 Corinthians 7:7–8</i> |
| 3. Giving up your possessions | <i>1 Corinthians 13:1–3</i> |
| 4. Living with hardships | <i>1 Corinthians 13:1–3</i> |
| 5. Musical skills | <i>1 Corinthians 14:26</i> |
| 6. Missionary service | <i>Ephesians 3:7–8</i> |
| 7. Prayer/intercession | <i>Philippians 1:3–5</i> |
| 8. Hospitality | <i>1 Peter 4:9–10</i> |
| 9. Artistic skills | <i>Exodus 31:1–5</i> |

VIII. A CLOSER LOOK AT THE GIFTS

In the table on page 253, twenty different gifts can be listed. Although we know their names, the Bible does not provide a detailed description of each gift. In an attempt to understand these gifts more, each is listed below with an explanation and Bible verses for your further reading, study, and prayerful consideration.

The gifts have been arranged into three broad categories: Speaking Gifts, Gifts of Service, and Signs and Wonders.

A. Speaking Gifts

The following eight gifts are all related to speaking. These gifts help us use God's living, powerful, and everlasting Word to bless others and build up the kingdom of God (*Matthew 24:35; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; Hebrews 4:12*).

1. Encouragement

The gift of encouragement is the ability to recognise when others need encouragement, and to build them up or bring comfort with words. It often involves sharing promises from the Bible. Encouraging others is closely linked to the task of pastoral care.

Acts 4:36, 14:21–22; Romans 12:8; Colossians 3:16

2. Wisdom

The gift of wisdom is the ability to give the right advice at the right time, based on the Bible and insight that comes from God. It is also the ability to proclaim the Word of God with wisdom.

Acts 6:3; Acts 6:10; 1 Corinthians 1:22–25, 12:8; James 1:5, 3:13

3. Message of Knowledge

Having a message of knowledge (or “*word of knowledge*”) is the ability to recognise biblical truths and pass them on, to guide others.

Acts 15:13–18; 1 Corinthians 1:5, 12:8, 13:2, 13:8; Colossians 1:9

4. Apostleship, Apostle

The word *apostle* means messenger or envoy. Apostles can establish new churches or new ministries for the kingdom of God, and lead them with authority.

Acts 13:1–3; Romans 15:18–20; 1 Corinthians 12:28–29; Ephesians 4:11

5. Prophecy, Prophet

The gift of prophecy is the ability to accurately proclaim the “*mysteries of God*” in specific situations (e.g. *Daniel 2:29; 1 Corinthians 13:2*). Prophetic words are to strengthen, encourage, and comfort others.

Exodus 7:1–2; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 14:3, 14:29; Ephesians 2:19–20, 3:4–5, 4:11

6. Evangelism, Evangelist

The evangelist’s gift is the ability to proclaim the gospel to non-Christians in such a way that they can understand it, come to faith in Jesus Christ, and become responsible members of the Body of Christ.

Acts 8:4, 14:7, 21:8; Ephesians 4:11; 2 Timothy 4:5

7. Pastoring, Pastor

The gift of pastoral ministry is the ability to assume responsibility for a group of believers or a congregation, to lead, teach, and serve them pastorally. A pastor is like a shepherd who takes care of his flock.

Psalms 23:1–3; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 5:1–4

8. Teaching, Teacher

The gift of teaching is the ability to understand biblical truths and to clearly communicate them so that others can understand and apply them.

Matthew 28:20; Acts 4:2, 5:21, 15:35; Ephesians 4:11

B. Gifts of Service

The following six gifts focus on serving others with love and the power of God.

1. Serving

The gift of service is the ability to recognise and meet the practical needs of others. Serving others can be within a church, with other groups of believers, and within the community.

The title *deacon* is sometimes given to a Christian who is designated to serve (*Romans 16:1; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8, 3:12*).

Mark 10:45; Acts 6:1–7; Romans 12:7, 16:1–2

2. Giving

The gift of giving is the ability to use or share one's own possessions joyfully and generously for the kingdom of God.

Luke 6:38; Acts 20:35; Romans 12:8; Philippians 4:14–16

3. Leadership

The gift of leadership is the ability to understand the tasks and goals of a church (or other ministry) and to communicate these in such a way that others can work together, in harmony, to achieve these goals.

Romans 12:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 3:5; 5:17

4. Showing Mercy

The gift of showing mercy is the ability to care for the needs of others with compassion and love, especially those who are overlooked by many.

Matthew 5:7; Luke 6:36, 10:29–37; Romans 12:8

5. Helping

The gift of helping is the ability to recognise when others need help and to serve them so their needs are met and their burdens are relieved. Sometimes helping enables others to use their gifts for the kingdom of God.

Acts 18:26–28; Romans 15:30; 1 Corinthians 12:28

6. Guidance, Administration

The gift of guidance (*1 Corinthians 12:28*) is often translated as administration or governance. This is the ability to organise people and tasks so that planned goals within a ministry are achieved.

Exodus 18:24–27; 1 Corinthians 12:28

C. Signs and Wonders

There are differing opinions among Christians about these gifts. To help you draw your own conclusions, some points for you to consider are detailed below.

a) They Are Biblical

- Throughout history there have been countless miracles because God performs supernatural miracles. These confirm God's omnipotence and love, and often help people come to believe in him. The Creation Story (*Genesis 1–2*) is a perfect example of God's miraculous power being displayed (*Romans 1:20*).
- Jesus himself performed countless miracles while living as a man on earth.

b) Satan Also Works Signs and Wonders

Signs and wonders are not always from God. Satan can use them to lead people away from God. Miraculous signs can therefore become a means of deception. Jesus warns that in the End Times great signs and wonders will be performed to deceive, if possible, even the elect (*Matthew 24:24; cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:9–10; Revelation 13:13–14*).

c) Consider Why Their Frequency Differs

In the Bible we can observe that there were times when miraculous signs and wonders happened frequently, while at other times they were a rarity:

- Many took place at the time of Moses. The people of Israel, Egypt, and other nations recognised that God is the only true God, as they witnessed his mighty miracles. This was a special time when God made his covenant with the people of Israel and gave them his Law.

- Many miracles took place at the time of Elijah and Elisha when the people were about to fall away from God. The people were told to repent and come back to God through prophets who announced God's will and judgements.
- Jesus performed many miracles confirming that he is the Messiah who was prophetically described in the Old Testament.
- At the time of the first church, miraculous signs and wonders often took place.

We see that the frequency of miraculous signs and wonders has varied throughout history. Furthermore, the Bible teaches that their source may be either God or Satan. Therefore, if our faith is to remain biblical, we must test each miracle by Scripture and remain open to God's miraculous work.

1. Faith

The gift of faith is the ability to set high goals and to expect great things from God, even if the way to meet these goals is still hidden. Faith involves trusting God (his character, abilities, and promises) regardless of the circumstances.

Acts 3:16, 6:5, 11:24; 1 Corinthians 12:9, 13:2, 13:13

2. Healing

The gift of healing is the ability to minister God's healing to the sick or impaired.

Mark 1:34; Matthew 10:1; Acts 3:6–8, 5:12–16; 1 Corinthians 12:9, 12:28

3. Miraculous Powers, Miracles

The gift of miracles is the ability to perform deeds that go beyond the normal laws of nature, using God's power.

Acts 2:43, 5:12, 6:8, 14:3; 1 Corinthians 12:10

4. Distinguishing Between Spirits

The gift of distinguishing between spirits is the ability to recognise whether a situation or behaviour is of divine, human, or satanic origin.

Matthew 16:23; Acts 5:3, 8:20–21; 1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 John 4:2–3

5. Speaking in Tongues

The gift of speaking in different kinds of tongues is the ability to convey a divine message or to pray in a new, unlearned language.

Mark 16:17; Acts 2:1–13, 10:45–46; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 14:2–4, 14:18

6. Interpretation of Tongues

The gift of interpreting tongues is the ability to convey a message that was given in tongues in an understandable language.

1 Corinthians 12:10, 14:13, 14:26–29

D. Application

Our lives are enriched and others are blessed when we use the gifts and abilities that God has given to us.

If we do not know our spiritual and natural gifts, we may struggle while trying to minister in areas that do not suit us. However, when we know and use our gifts, we will experience a greater sense of fulfilment, as we do what God has created us to do, for his kingdom.

God has good works that he has prepared in advance for all of us to do (*Ephesians 2:10*) and he has given us gifts to fulfil these tasks.

What practical steps could you take right now to apply this teaching to your life? One suggestion is to prayerfully consider the questions below and then discuss them with a leader from your church or with another spiritually mature Christian.

► **Activity 14:** What *gifts of grace* do you think you have?

► **Activity 15:** In which areas of ministry or mission work would you like to be involved?

DISCOVERING AND USING YOUR GIFTS

WHAT ARE GIFTS?

A. Gifts of the Holy Spirit

These are special abilities that the Holy Spirit gives to born-again Christians, to help build the kingdom of God (*Romans 12:6a; 1 Corinthians 12:1*).

B. Natural gifts / talents

Psalms 139:14

C. Counterfeit gifts

Matthew 7:22-23

THE PURPOSE OF GIFTS

A. For the benefit of all

1 Corinthians 12:7

B. For building up the church

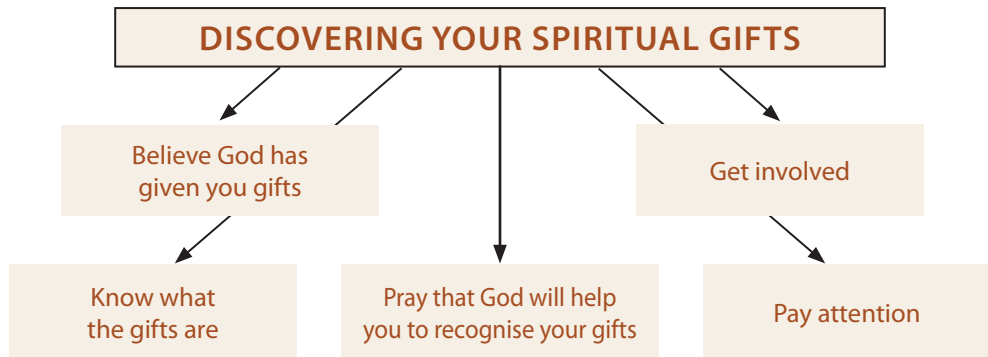
1 Corinthians 14:12

C. To bless, not divide

1 Corinthians 1:10

- What can we do to create a safe and encouraging environment where we can discover and use our spiritual gifts?

DISCOVERING YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS



HOW MANY SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE THERE?

1 Corinthians 12:8-10

Romans 12:6-8

1 Corinthians 12:28-31

Ephesians 4:11

A. Speaking gifts

1. Encouragement
2. Wisdom
3. Message of knowledge
4. Apostleship, apostle
5. Prophecy, prophet
6. Evangelism, evangelist
7. Pastoring, pastor
8. Teaching, teacher

B. Gifts of service

9. Serving
10. Giving
11. Leadership
12. Showing mercy
13. Helping
14. Guidance, administration

C. Signs and wonders

15. Faith
16. Healing
17. Miraculous powers, miracles
18. Distinguishing between spirits
19. Speaking in tongues
20. Interpretation of tongues

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *1 Peter 4:10*.
2. What are gifts of the Holy Spirit?
3. How can counterfeit gifts be recognised?
4. Who has spiritual gifts?
5. What significance do spiritual gifts have for ministry?
6. Are the gifts of the Holy Spirit also a sign of spiritual maturity?
7. How can someone who wants to work in the church find out which gifts they have?
8. Where do we find the four most detailed lists of spiritual gifts in the Bible?
9. Into which three groups can the spiritual gifts in this section be divided?
10. How does knowing your spiritual and natural gifts help you discover God's will for your life?



Photo by Nacho Domínguez Argenta on Unsplash

Our lives are enriched
by the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

BEARING FRUIT

We cannot produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit by ourselves; this is only possible with Jesus. To lead a fulfilled and fruitful life we must remain closely connected to Jesus. This should be our daily desire.

Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. – John 15:4–5

When a plant bears much fruit we can rejoice, enjoy, and share the delicious harvest. Similarly, our lives (and the lives of others) are enriched when the fruit of the Holy Spirit grows in us.

- **Activity 1:** According to *Jeremiah 17:8*, what does a tree need so that it never fails to bear fruit?

I. WHAT DOES “BEARING FRUIT” MEAN?

A. Naturally

In the natural world, fruit is the highest stage in the development of organic life. Fruit carries the ability to produce new life of the same kind.

Genesis 1:29

Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.”

Fruit is a valuable source of nutrition, and every harvest reminds us that we depend on God’s blessing.

B. Spiritually

In the Bible, fruit often symbolises God's spiritual blessings or Christlike character traits.

Jesus has destined us to bear fruit. This means that we have the opportunity to bear fruit at all times; fruit that will last for eternity (*John 15:16*).

► **Activity 2:** What is essential for a fruitful life (*John 15:4–5*)?

II. WHY SHOULD WE BEAR FRUIT?

A. Good Fruit Is the Mark of a Christian

Matthew 12:33

Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognised by its fruit.

Just as a tree is recognised by its fruit, both a Christian and a false prophet can be recognised by their fruits (*Matthew 7:15–20*).

► **Activity 3:** What is the fruit by which a Christian can be recognised (*Luke 6:43–45; John 13:35*)?

B. We Are Appointed to Bear Fruit

John 15:16

[Jesus said:] You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.

We expect a fruit tree to bear fruit; that is why it was planted. If it does not bear fruit, there are usually consequences (*Luke 13:6–9*).

Likewise, Christians are called and appointed by Jesus to bear fruit. If they do not bear fruit, they fail to fulfil their purpose and come under God's judgement (*John 15:6*).

► **Activity 4:** What results can we expect if we are actively seeking to bear fruit (*John 15:2, 15:7–8*)?

C. Bearing Fruit Glorifies God

John 15:8

[Jesus said:] This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

As Christians, we are called to glorify God through our lives (*Ephesians 1:12*). When other people see our lives bearing much fruit, God is glorified, and they recognise that we are Jesus' disciples.

► **Activity 5:** For whom do we first and foremost bear fruit (*Romans 7:4*)?

III. THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Galatians 5:22–23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

The fruit of the Spirit should not be confused with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

- The fruit of the Spirit grows within us, whereas the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given.
- The fruit of the Spirit is the result of healthy spiritual growth.
- The gifts of the Holy Spirit are special ministry abilities that the Holy Spirit gives to each Christian.

► **Activity 6:** In *Galatians 5:19–23*, the fruit of the Spirit and the acts of the flesh are contrasted. What are the acts of the flesh?

The *flesh* desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh (*Galatians 5:17*). These two desires are in conflict with each another.

► **Activity 7:** What can we do to have victory over *the acts of the flesh* (*Galatians 5:16–18*)?

Galatians 5:22–23 describes the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

A. Love

Love is the most important characteristic of a Christian (*John 13:35*). Indeed, love is so important that all of God's laws can be summed up with the commandment to love.

Matthew 22:37–40

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

In *Galatians 5:22* the Greek word *agape* is used for *love*. It expresses the sacrificial and giving love that God has for us (*John 3:16; 1 John 4:9–10*).

We find a beautiful (and challenging) description of divine love in *1 Corinthians 13:1–8*.

- **Activity 8:** According to *1 John 3:16–17*, how did Jesus show his great love for us, and how should we show love to others?

B. Joy

The Greek word *chara* means *joy, gladness*.

Philippians 2:18

So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

The joy of the Lord is independent of earthly joy. It enables us to rejoice, even when our external circumstances give us no reason to do so (*Nehemiah 8:10; Philippians 1:18; Colossians 1:24*).

- **Activity 9:** When should we rejoice (*James 1:2; Philippians 4:4*)?

C. Peace

The Greek word *eirēnē* means *peace*. It is an expression of harmonious relationships between people and of the restored relationship between every born-again Christian and God, through Jesus Christ.

Only Jesus, the Prince of Peace, can bring us true peace (*Isaiah 9:6*).

Everyone needs...

- Peace with God. *Romans 5:1*
- The peace of God. *Philippians 4:7*

► **Activity 10:** What can we do to be peacemakers (*Romans 14:19*)?

D. Forbearance/Patience

The Greek word *makrothymía* means *forbearance, patience, or long-suffering*. These are important attributes of God.

Romans 2:4 *Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realising that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?*

This fruit of the Spirit helps us to patiently persevere in times of suffering or difficulties (*2 Corinthians 1:6*). We also need patience to do the will of God and to receive what he has promised (*Hebrews 10:36*).

► **Activity 11:** According to *Hebrews 6:13–15*, what did Abraham receive after waiting patiently? What did he put his trust in while he waited?

E. Kindness

The Greek word *chrēstótēs* means *kindness, goodness, or gentleness*.

God is so kind to us (*Titus 3:4*). We too can show kindness to others when the fruit of kindness grows in our lives. We can wear kindness like a garment.

Colossians 3:12 *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*

Furthermore, we demonstrate that we are God's servants when we show kindness (*2 Corinthians 6:4–6*).

► **Activity 12:** In what situations can we show kindness (*Ephesians 4:32*)?

F. Goodness

The Greek word *agathōsýnē* means *goodness, perfection, or excellence*. It encompasses everything that is good.

Only God is truly good (*Matthew 19:17*). His goodness is repeatedly praised, particularly in the Psalms (*e.g. Psalm 23:6, 25:7, 31:20*).

Paul was convinced that the believers in Rome were full of goodness.

Romans 15:14

I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another.

When goodness, as a fruit of the Spirit, manifests in our lives, we can be truly good to others. *Titus 3:1–2* tells us to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to always be gentle towards everyone.

► **Activity 13:** What did Paul constantly pray for (*2 Thessalonians 1:11*)?

G. Faithfulness

The Greek word *pístis* means *faith, faithfulness, trustworthiness, or reliability*.

We can always count on God. Even when our faithfulness wavers, he remains faithful to us (*2 Thessalonians 3:3; 2 Timothy 2:13*).

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

God wants us to be faithful to him (*Nehemiah 1:8*), and when people turn away from him, they face the consequences (*Psalms 73:27*).

Christians should be trustworthy and faithful people, who live as servants of Christ (*1 Corinthians 4:1–2*).

► **Activity 14:** What does *Luke 16:10* teach us about being faithful in small things?

H. Gentleness

The Greek word *praýtēs* means *gentleness*. It indicates a meek, gentle friendliness.

Jesus Christ is gentle (*Matthew 11:29, 21:5*). We can come to him without hesitation, knowing that his gentleness is available to us.

As Jesus' followers, we should also be gentle (*Colossians 3:12; 1 Timothy 6:11*).

► **Activity 15:** What special promise did Jesus give to those who are meek (*Matthew 5:5*)?

► **Activity 16:** According to *Galatians 6:1* and *2 Timothy 2:25*, when should we gently restore and instruct others?

I. Self-Control

The Greek word *enkráteia* means *self-control, abstinence, endurance, or steadfastness*.

It is only used in a few places in the New Testament. For example, in *2 Peter 1:5–8* Paul teaches that *self-control* (along with other character traits) will help us from being ineffective and unproductive in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 24:25a

As Paul talked about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid.

Self-control also helps us to stay away from destructive behaviours such as:

- sinful desires that wage war within our souls (*Hebrews 12:1; 1 Peter 2:11*).
- things that hinder our service for Jesus (*2 Timothy 2:4*).
- selfishness (*Philippians 2:3*).

► **Activity 17:** What goal should motivate us to live a self-controlled, disciplined life (*1 Corinthians 9:25*)?

IV. OTHER BIBLICAL FRUITS

In many places in the Bible, the word *fruit* is used figuratively to represent a spiritual truth.

A. Fruit of the Gospel

Sharing the gospel bears fruit: People come to believe in Jesus and their lives are transformed (*Romans 1:13*).

Colossians 1:6

In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God’s grace.

- **Activity 18:** When we share God’s Word with others, what happens (*Isaiah 55:10–11*)?

B. Fruit of the Light

Ephesians 5:8–9

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth).

- **Activity 19:** How should we, as children of light, live (*Ephesians 5:8–10*)?

C. Fruit of Our Works

Titus 3:14

Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives.

Colossians 1:10

Live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.

The results of our work, behaviour, and actions can be described as fruit (*Proverbs 1:31*).

The fruit of our works may be positive or negative because “a man reaps what he sows” (*Galatians 6:7*).

Proverbs 22:8–9

V. HOW CAN WE BEAR GOOD FRUIT?

We are unable to lead a fruitful life in our own strength. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit unless it remains on the vine, we cannot bear fruit if we do not remain in Jesus.

For us to bear good fruit, we must:

- be rooted in Jesus (*Psalm 1:1–3; Colossians 2:6–7*).
- remain in Jesus (*John 15:4–5*).

This involves knowing, trusting, and obeying God's Word, spending time with Jesus in prayer, and giving Jesus his rightful place as Lord of our lives every day.

A. Know God's Word

Matthew 4:4

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

God's words are like bread. We need them every day so that we can live the life that God has planned for us, in relationship with him.

B. Pray

Philippians 4:6

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

Through prayer we can deepen our communion with God, bring our concerns to him, receive strength to overcome our daily problems, and know the comfort that comes from being in a loving relationship with our Heavenly Father.

A close connection with God is necessary to bear spiritual fruit.

C. Abide in Jesus

If Jesus is given his rightful place in our lives every day as our Lord and Saviour, the fruit of the Holy Spirit will grow in our lives.

► **Activity 20:** What does it mean to abide in Jesus (*John 15:4–5*)?

BEARING FRUIT

MEANING

A. Naturally

Genesis 1:29

B. Spiritually

In the Bible fruit often symbolises God's spiritual blessings.

- What is essential for a fruitful life (*John 15:4–5*)?

WHY SHOULD WE BEAR FRUIT?

A. Good fruit is the mark of a Christian

Matthew 12:33

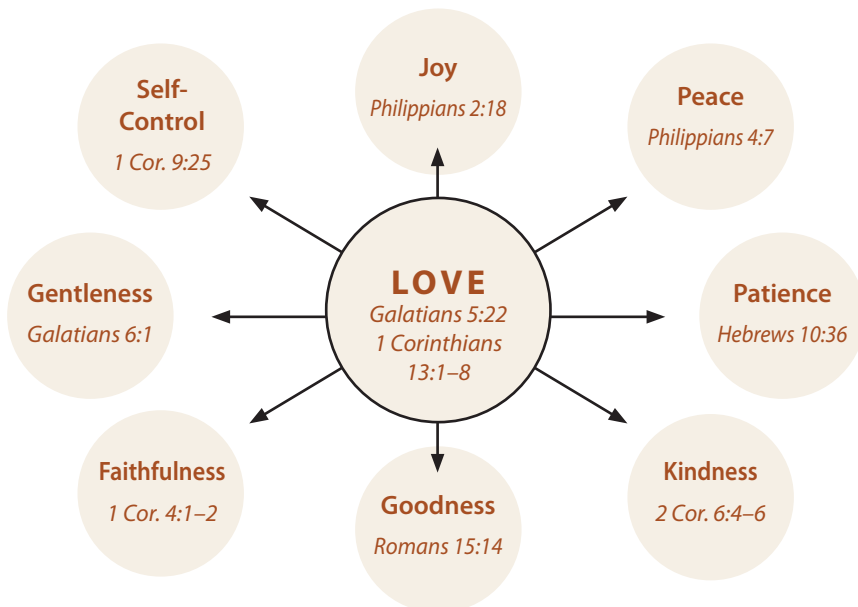
B. We are appointed to bear fruit

John 15:16

C. Bearing fruit glorifies God

John 15:8

THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



OTHER BIBLICAL FRUITS

A. Fruit of the gospel

Colossians 1:6

B. Fruit of the light

Ephesians 5:8–9

C. Fruit of our works

Colossians 1:10

BEARING GOOD FRUIT

A. Know God's Word

Matthew 4:4

B. Pray

Philippians 4:6

C. Abide in Jesus

John 15:4–5

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *Galatians 5:22–23*.
2. What does bearing fruit mean spiritually?
3. Why should we bear fruit?
4. By what fruit should Christians be recognised?
5. How does the fruit of the Spirit differ from the gifts of the Spirit?
6. Every person who has received Jesus has peace with God. What is meant by the peace of God that Paul writes about in *Philippians 4:7*?
7. In what situations can the spiritual fruit of forbearance (patience) be particularly helpful (*2 Corinthians 1:6*)?
8. In *Galatians 5:22–23*, what does self-control mean?
9. How can the fruit of the gospel be recognised (*Romans 1:13*)?
10. What can we do to bear good spiritual fruit?



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The Bible is the best foundation
on which to build your faith and your life.

THE BIBLE

ORIGIN – TRANSMISSION – INSPIRATION

*I delight in your commands because I love them.
I reach out for your commands, which I love, that I may
meditate on your decrees. – Psalm 119:47–48*

► **Activity 1:** What significance does the Bible have for your life?

The Bible is not the same as other books because it is the written Word of God. For Christians, the Bible is essential as it orientates our lives. Through it we get to know God and learn how to be reconciled to him. For more than 3,000 years countless people have received strength and encouragement through the Bible.

I. WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

The Bible is a collection of 66 individual books written over a period of approximately 1,500 years by over 40 different authors. It is inspired by the Holy Spirit and conveys God's message to us with divine authority. The Bible is authoritative for our relationship with God and for our lives as Christians.

A. Names for the Written Word of God

1. The Bible

The Bible is the name that's used most often for the written Word of God. *Bible* comes from the Greek word *biblia*, which means *books*. The books that the early Christians used in their church meetings were called *biblia*.

Thus, the word Bible points to the fact that it is composed of many books, forming one unique, unified, and complete text.

2. The Holy Scriptures

The entire Bible is sometimes called the *Holy Scriptures*. This is not a new term for the written Word of God. In fact, there are several places in the Bible where Old Testament texts are referred to as the Holy Scriptures (*Daniel 9:2; Romans 1:2; 2 Timothy 3:15*).

Holy conveys that the Bible is distinct from other books: it is sacred, unique, set apart, and should be revered.

3. God's Word

The Bible is often called the *Word of God*, because it comes from God himself. It is alive, active, and it judges the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts (*Hebrews 4:12*).

► **Activity 2:** What other names are used for the Bible (or parts of the Bible) in *Matthew 21:42; Luke 24:44* and *Acts 13:15*?

B. The Structure of the Bible

The Bible consists of two parts – the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT) – and comprises 66 different books.

The Bible (66 Books)					
The Old Testament (OT) 39 Books			The New Testament (NT) 27 Books		
17 Historical Books	5 Poetry Books	17 Prophetic Books	5 Historical Books	21 Teaching Books	1 Prophetic Book
Genesis – Esther	Job – Song of Songs	Isaiah – Malachi	Matthew – Acts	Romans – Jude	Revelation

The current chapter divisions were decided upon by Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury (1227 AD), and the verse divisions by Robert Stephanus, a book printer (1551 AD).

Did you know?

- The Bible has 1,189 chapters.
- It takes 80–100 hours to read through the Bible once.
- You can read the Bible in a year if you read four chapters a day.

C. The Original Languages of the Bible

1. The Old Testament

Most of the Old Testament was written in **Hebrew**. Until the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the people of Israel mainly spoke Hebrew.

► **Activity 3:** What else was the Hebrew language called (*Isaiah 19:18*)?

During the Babylonian captivity, the **Aramaic** language was used more and more in Canaan; eventually it largely replaced Hebrew as the spoken language. After the return from captivity, Aramaic became the common language of Israel.

Some passages of the Old Testament were written in Aramaic: *Ezra 4:8–6:18, 7:12–26; Daniel 2:4–7:28; Jeremiah 10:11.*

2. The New Testament

The New Testament was written in **Greek**. After the conquests of Alexander the Great (circa 330 BC), Greek became the predominant language in the Mediterranean region.

II. THE UNIQUENESS OF THE BIBLE

When we compare the Bible with other literary works, we realise that it is unique.

A. Its Message Is Unique

The Bible provides more material for sermons, discussions, teaching, and art than any other book in the world. Its central message is the reconciliation of mankind with God. It challenges us to repent and believe in Jesus as our personal Lord and Saviour who forgives our sins, restores our relationship with our Heavenly Father, and gives us life everlasting.

John 5:24

[Jesus said:] “Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.”

► **Activity 4:** What distinguishes the gospel from the religions of this world (*2 Corinthians 5:21*)?

B. Its Origin Is Unique

The Bible was written...

- over a period of 1,500 years (more than 60 generations).
- by more than 40 authors, from many different walks of life.
- on three continents (Africa, Asia, and Europe).
- in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek).

...and yet it is a perfectly unified book!

C. Its Transmission Is Unique

Until the invention of the printing press, the Bible was handed down through the generations as handwritten copies. It was copied with greater care than any other book.

There are at least 15,000 biblical manuscripts that can be compared to identify copying errors. Today, no text of antiquity can be established with such certainty as the Bible.

D. Its Distribution Is Unique

There is no other book that has been distributed as widely as the Bible or has had as many copies made or excerpts printed.

As of August 1, 2025, speakers of 4,007 languages have access to at least a portion of the Bible. The complete Bible is available in 776 languages, the New Testament in an additional 1,798 languages, and individual biblical books or portions in an additional 1,433 languages.

E. Its Influence Is Unique

No other book has influenced human society as greatly as the Bible. It has had a major influence, for example, on the development of legislation, culture, literature, and art, in many nations.

The teachings of the Bible have particularly influenced our values. The principles of helping one another and respecting all humans regardless of social status, age, wealth, background, or gender are biblical values.

- ▶ **Activity 5:** What impact does the Bible have on those who are willing to hear and accept its message (*Acts 2:37; Romans 10:17; 1 Peter 1:23*)?

III. THE ORIGIN OF THE BIBLE

A. Authors

The Bible was written by at least 40 authors, including kings, government officials, scholars, poets, shepherds, and fishermen. They wrote in many and varied localities (e.g. palaces and prisons) and also while travelling, over a period of 1,500 years.

► **Activity 6:** Name some authors of the Bible. What were their occupations, and where did they write?

B. Writing Materials

1. Stone

Exodus 31:18 When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant law, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.

The oldest inscriptions in Egypt, Canaan, and Babylon were inscribed in stone:

- God himself inscribed his covenant law – the Ten Commandments – into two stone tablets (*Exodus 34:1, 34:28*).
- In *Deuteronomy 27:2–3* and *Joshua 8:30–32* we learn that the covenant law was written on new stone tablets.

2. Clay

God commanded Ezekiel to draw up the designs for the city of Jerusalem on a block of clay:

Ezekiel 4:1 Now, son of man, take a block of clay, put it in front of you and draw the city of Jerusalem on it.

Large libraries of clay tablets have been found in Assyria and Babylon.

3. Leather

A scroll of the book of Isaiah (written circa 200–150 BC) was found in the spring of 1947 near Qumran (a region on the north-western shore of the Dead Sea), consisting of seventeen pieces of leather that had been sewn together.

4. Papyrus

The papyrus plant was used to make writing paper and scrolls in ancient Egypt as early as 3,500 BC.

Thin strips from the papyrus pith were layered and pressed together, to form a sheet of paper. For longer documents, several sheets were joined together to form a scroll.

The papyrus scroll was later replaced by the papyrus codex. A codex is a collection of papyrus (or parchment) sheets; it is comparable to today's book.

5. Parchment

Animal skins were dried, stretched, and rubbed with stones on both sides to make parchment. Because parchment is very durable, it gradually replaced papyrus.

From the fourth century AD and throughout the Middle Ages, the Holy Scriptures were written on parchment and passed on.

C. The Canon of the Bible

1. What Is the Canon of the Bible?

The canon of the Bible (the biblical canon) is the set of books that were recognised as belonging to the Bible.

Canon comes from the Greek and means reed or stick. Because reeds were also used as measuring sticks, canon also means measuring stick, standard, or guideline. Thus, the canon of the Bible is the measuring stick, standard, and guideline for the Christian faith.

During Old and New Testament times, other religious books were written that are not in the Bible. This raised two central questions: *"Which books are divinely inspired and are therefore a guideline for our faith?"* and *"Which books belong to the canon of the Bible?"*

For a book to be included in the biblical canon it had to meet the following criteria:

- Does it have divine authority?
- Was it written by a man of God?
- Is it historically authentic?
- Does it have spiritual and life-changing power?
- Was it accepted by God's people?

The canon of the Bible developed gradually because the individual books were written over a long time span.

Christians believe that the authority of each book in the biblical canon comes from God, not from the Jewish or Christian councils that recognised them. Thus, the God-given authority of each book was recognised, with the Holy Spirit's guidance, resulting in the collection of books that we now call the Bible. It is acknowledged throughout Christendom as the complete, perfect Word of God.

2. The Canon of the Old Testament

The canon of the Old Testament was completed as early as the fourth century BC.

- The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, began around 250 BC with the translation of the first Old Testament books. The other Old Testament books were also translated before the time of Jesus.
- Around AD 90, Jewish scholars in Jamnia (Israel) discussed questions concerning biblical writings. However, the canon of the Old Testament was already widely recognised at that time.

Jesus knew, accepted and used the Old Testament as we have it today (*Matthew 11:10; John 10:34–36*). Here we see an example of Jesus quoting *Psalms 118:22–23* from the Old Testament:

Matthew 21:42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes'?"

► **Activity 7:** Which parts of the Old Testament does Jesus refer to in *Luke 24:44*?

3. The Canon of the New Testament

In *1 Timothy 5:18*, Paul quotes both from Deuteronomy and from the Gospel of Luke. By doing so, he affirmed a New Testament text as part of the Word of God.

1 Timothy 5:18 For Scripture says, "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain (Deuteronomy 25:4)", and "The worker deserves his wages (Luke 10:7)."

Peter testifies in *2 Peter 3:15–16* that Paul's letters were written with wisdom from God, and they belong to the Scriptures.

This shows that Paul's letters carried divine authority long before they were officially recognised by the councils of the Church Fathers.

By the middle of the second century AD, Justin Martyr tells us that Christians were gathering on Sundays for worship and reading the *Memoirs of the Apostles* and the *Writings of the Prophets*.

Even though there were many other religious writings, the Christian Church only accepted the 27 books of the New Testament that we use today. By the end of the fourth century AD, the New Testament canon was essentially completed.

At the historically significant Synods of Hippo (393 AD) and Carthage (397 AD), the 27 books of the New Testament were recognised as belonging to the canon.

IV. THE TRANSMISSION OF THE BIBLE

There is, without a doubt, no other book that has been handed down through the centuries as accurately as the Bible. Whoever doubts the accuracy of the Bible questions the entire record of ancient literature.

A. Jewish Transcription Rules

For a long time, the Bible was copied by hand and there were strict instructions in Jewish law (*Talmud*) that every scribe had to observe. For example, no word or letter was to be written from memory, and they had to copy from a verified manuscript. The scribes were not allowed to deviate from these rules at all.

When a script was worn out and could no longer be used, it was reverently buried by the Jews, to ensure that God's holy name on it was not desecrated.

B. The Masoretes

The Masoretes were Jewish scholars whose responsibility was to copy the Hebrew text of the Old Testament with painstaking accuracy. They did this valuable work between the fifth and tenth centuries AD. To prevent any changes or additions to the text, they wrote notes in the margins (*marginal notes* = Hebrew: *masora*; hence: *Masoretes*).

In ancient Hebrew, only consonants were written, not vowels. As the Jews mixed more and more with other people groups, it became increasingly difficult for them to read their own writing. To ensure that nothing was changed in the text, they placed vowel marks (usually dots) above or below the consonants, to make it easier to read.

They had many systems in place to ensure the accuracy of each script. For example, they counted the letters and found the middle letter in each book, and the middle verse in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament.

Because of their thorough quality control systems, they knew, for example:

- the letter Aleph occurs 42,377 times in the OT.
- the letter Beth occurs 38,218 times in the OT.
- the middle verse in the Hebrew Bible is *Jeremiah 6:7*.

C. Important Documents

There are many old manuscripts and translations of the Bible that still exist. By examining them, we can see how accurately the biblical text was copied. Three of the most significant manuscripts that have been discovered are:

1. The Codex Sinaiticus (Codex Aleph)

The Codex Sinaiticus was discovered in 1844 and 1859 by the theologian and text researcher Constantin von Tischendorf in Saint Catherine's Monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai. The largest portion was acquired by the British Museum in London in 1933 and is now held by the British Library.

The Codex Sinaiticus was written around 350 AD and contains one third of the Old Testament, and the entire New Testament in the Greek language.

2. The Codex Vaticanus (Codex B)

The Codex Vaticanus has been in the Vatican since 1481. It was written circa 350 AD in Greek. It contains the majority of the Old Testament (586 of 617 pages) and most of the New Testament (142 of 162 pages).

3. The Codex Alexandrinus (Codex A)

The Codex Alexandrinus is in the British Library, London. It was presented as a gift to the English King Charles I in 1627 by Cyril Lucar, Patriarch of the Greek Church.

This codex dates from the fifth century AD. It includes most of the Old and New Testaments in Greek and is damaged in some places.

4. The Dead Sea Scrolls

In 1947 an amazing discovery was made in a cave near Qumran, by the Dead Sea. An Arab shepherd boy was searching for a lost goat when he discovered earthenware jars containing leather scrolls. Later, many more scrolls and fragments were discovered near Qumran. They represent over 900 biblical and non-biblical manuscripts, including more than 230 biblical manuscripts with parts of almost every book of the Hebrew Old Testament.

Among the most important biblical manuscripts discovered were Isaiah scrolls dating from around 200–150 BC. One of them, the Great Isaiah Scroll, contains almost the entire book of Isaiah. These scrolls are approximately 1,000 years older than any previously discovered Hebrew manuscripts.

It is remarkable that the Hebrew text remained almost unchanged over this long period of time. The differences between the older and the later texts are very few and minor. This once again confirms the careful transmission of the Hebrew text.

V. THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

A. What Does “Inspired” Mean?

2 Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is God-breathed [Greek: theopneustos] and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

The Greek word translated as *inspired* is *theopneustos*, which means *God-breathed*. This means that Scripture comes from God, was given through the Holy Spirit and carries God’s authority.

How is the Bible inspired?

The books of the Bible were written by many authors who used their personalities, gifts, and talents to write. They were also, most importantly, led by the Holy Spirit. As a result, every word in the Bible is God-inspired. It is God’s perfect, trustworthy, and inerrant message to us.

B. Evidence That the Bible Is God-Inspired

1. Evidence from Jesus

- Jesus often quoted the Old Testament Scriptures, thereby confirming them as God's Word (*Matthew 19:4, 21:42, 22:29*).

Matthew 5:18 For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

- Jesus himself also confirmed that his own words come from God and are fully reliable.

Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

John 7:16 Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me."

John 17:8

John 6:63

- Jesus also pointed in advance to his disciples' teaching ministry and showed that the Holy Spirit would guide them in it.

John 16:13–14 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.

John 14:26

Matthew 28:19–20

2. Evidence from the Apostles

The apostles recognised the Old Testament Scriptures as God's Word, and they often quoted them.

Acts 24:14 However, I [Paul] admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets.

Romans 9:17; Galatians 3:8; Hebrews 1:5–8; James 4:5

They verified that the message they were preaching was true.

John 19:35 [The apostle John wrote:] The man who saw it [Jesus' death] has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe.

Their message came from God, not from people.

1 Corinthians 2:13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.

1 Corinthians 2:10 ...these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.

The apostles knew that they were proclaiming and documenting God's divine message.

2 Corinthians 2:17 Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.

Galatians 1:11–12; 1 Peter 1:23–24; Revelation 1:1–2

► **Activity 8:** What conclusions did the Thessalonians draw from Paul's preaching (*1 Thessalonians 2:13*)?

► **Activity 9:** How should we treat God's Word according to *Revelation 22:18–19*?

3. Evidence from the Bible

The Bible itself claims to be God's true and eternal Word.

Psalms 119:160 All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.

2 Peter 1:20–21 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

There are 3,808 places in the Old Testament where "Thus says the LORD" and other similar statements are used. The Old Testament therefore affirms its validity as the Word of God, again and again.

4. Evidence from Experience

Countless Christians through the generations can testify that the written Word of God is true and that it has changed their lives (*Joshua 1:8; Luke 19:10; 1 Timothy 1:15*).

C. Effects of Inspiration

Because the Bible is inspired, it has divine authority. It is God's wise, powerful, living, and active message to us, which should be applied to our lives (*Hebrews 4:12*).

1. The Bible Is Trustworthy and Dependable

You can trust the Bible as the best foundation on which to build your faith and life (*Matthew 4:4, 7:24–25*).

Psalms 33:4 For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.

► **Activity 10:** Are you certain that the Bible is true and dependable? What significance do God's promises have in your life?

2. Through the Bible We Discover God's Plans and Love

Through the Bible we can discover God's will for our lives. God's Word also brings great comfort, reveals his love to us, and enables us to live a fulfilled life at the centre of God's will (*Psalms 119:159*).

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

► **Activity 11:** What happens when we delight in the Word of God and meditate on it continually (*Psalms 1:2–3*)?

3. The Bible Transforms Our Lives

God's Word is powerful. When we obey it, our lives are transformed.

John 17:17 [Jesus prayed:] Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

Isaiah 55:11

► **Activity 12:** What happens when God's Word is applied to our lives (*Hebrews 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:16–17*)?

THE BIBLE – ORIGIN – INSPIRATION

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

A. Names for the written Word of God

1. The Bible
Greek: *biblia* (= books)
2. The Holy Scriptures
2 Timothy 3:15

B. The structure of the Bible

1. Old Testament (OT)
39 books
2. New Testament (NT)
27 books

C. The original languages of the Bible

1. OT: Hebrew, Aramaic
2. NT: Greek

D. The canon of the Bible

1. The canon of the Old Testament
Matthew 21:42
2. The canon of the New Testament
1 Timothy 5:18
2 Peter 3:15–16

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE BIBLE

A. Its message is unique

John 5:24

B. Its origin is unique

The Bible was written over a period of 1,500 years (more than 60 generations) by more than 40 authors and yet it is a perfectly unified book.

C. Its transmission is unique

There are at least 15,000 biblical manuscripts that can be compared.

D. Its distribution is unique

No other book has been distributed as widely as the Bible.

E. Its influence is unique

No other book has influenced human society as greatly as the Bible.

- What impact does the Bible have on those who are willing to hear and accept its message (*Acts 2:37; Romans 10:17; 1 Peter 1:23*)?

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

Evidence that the Bible is God-inspired

1. Evidence from Jesus

Matthew 24:35

John 16:13–14

2. Evidence from the apostles

Acts 24:14

Galatians 1:11–12

- When the people from Thessalonica heard Paul's preaching, what conclusions did they draw (*1 Thessalonians 2:13*)?

3. Evidence from the Bible

Psalms 119:160

2 Peter 1:20–21

Effects of inspiration

1. The Bible is trustworthy

Psalms 33:4

2. Through the Bible we discover God's plans and love

Psalms 119:105

- What happens when we delight in the Word of God (*Psalms 1:2–3*)?

3. The Bible transforms our lives

John 17:17

- What happens when God's Word is applied to our lives (*Hebrews 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:16–17*)?

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *2 Timothy 3:16*.
2. In what languages was the Bible originally written?
3. How is the Bible unique?
4. What impact does the Bible have on those who are willing to hear and accept its message?
5. What writing materials were particularly important for the transmission of the Bible?
6. What is the canon of the Bible?
7. Who were the Masoretes?
8. What manuscripts were particularly significant for the transmission of the Bible?
9. What does it mean that the Bible is inspired?
10. How should we respond to the Bible if we believe it is God-inspired?



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The Bible shows us
how we can be saved and live fulfilled lives.

BIBLE STUDY

If we want to know how precious the Word of God is, we need to study the Bible thoroughly. Although this takes a lot of work, the results are priceless. We get to know our Heavenly Father and his will for our lives.

Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. – Joshua 1:8

- **Activity 1:** Have you ever studied the Bible in depth? What motivated you to do so?

I. WHY IS BIBLE STUDY IMPORTANT?

The Bible does us little good if we have it but do not know it or apply it to our lives. If we only read the Bible superficially, many valuable truths will remain undiscovered.

We should **search** the Bible, **reflect** on its words, and **apply** them to our lives (*Ezra 7:10*). This enables us to:

A. Be Grounded in Truth

Acts 17:11

Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

The Bible is the firm foundation on which we, as Christians, build our lives and faith. As such, it is imperative that we know it thoroughly. Furthermore, to face false teachings and temptations victoriously, we must be firmly grounded in the Word of God.

- **Activity 2:** What result can we expect if we study the Bible thoroughly (*John 5:39*)?

B. Know God's Will

Micah 6:8

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

The Bible reveals God's will for our lives. It shows us how we can be saved and how to grow in our love, faith, and commitment.

- ▶ **Activity 3:** In *Luke 16* there is a parable about a rich man who is suffering in Hades. To whom should his brothers listen, so that they do not go to Hades (*verse 29*)? How can you apply this advice to your life?
- ▶ **Activity 4:** What can a good knowledge of the Word of God protect us from (*Ephesians 4:14*)?

C. Have Life to the Full

Psalms 40:8

I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart.

John 10:10

[Jesus said:] The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

John 6:63

We can only have life to the full when we live in the centre of God's will. We learn what God expects of us through the Bible.

- ▶ **Activity 5:** According to *2 Timothy 3:16–17*, what can we expect when we use the Bible?

D. Pass On God's Word Correctly

2 Timothy 2:15

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

Every Christian has the responsibility to pass on God's Word. To do this well, we need to become familiar with the Bible. A growing knowledge of God's Word equips us to lead people to Jesus.

II. ANNOTATING THE BIBLE

Writing notes and applying colour-coding systems can make it much easier to navigate through your Bible, to quickly find specific verses or topics, and to keep a record of your own personal interactions with God's Word.

There are many ways to annotate your Bible.

A. Underlining

Verses that have become especially important to you can be underlined, using a colour-coding system for different topics.

For example:

Blue: Negative things (e.g. warnings, sins, etc.)

Red: Positive things (e.g. promises, victories, spiritual fruit, etc.)

Green: Place names, keywords

Yellow: God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, characteristics of God, names of God, etc.

It's best to use just a few colours to help prevent confusion.

► **Activity 6:** Do you already use an underlining system? If so, how does it work?

B. Using Symbols

To make it easier to find passages about the same topic, it can be very helpful to draw symbols in the margins. You can invent your own symbols for important topics. For example:

Conversion: 

Prayer: 

Heaven: 

Church: 

Baptism: 

Hell: 

Marriage: 

Commandments: 

Mission: 

C. Parallel Verses

It can be very helpful to write parallel verses in the margins to help you navigate efficiently from one verse to another. For example, when explaining the way of salvation, you could start with a pre-determined Bible verse, then simply read your notes in the margins to navigate to a parallel verse, then to another, and so on. In this way, the best resource for sharing God's Word is used again and again: the Bible!

D. Your Own Notes

You may also find it helpful to write your own notes in your Bible. For example:

- the meaning of an unfamiliar word.
- notes explaining how a section of the Bible is structured.
- how God spoke to you through a particular verse, with the date.

E. Additional Pages

If there is not enough space in your Bible, you can add extra pages. You may like to use them for:

- personal study notes.
- discipleship or counselling tips.
- maps.
- extensive Bible outlines.

If you use a digital Bible, you can find creative solutions to add your own notes, such as an accompanying journal or note-taking app.

III. MEMORISING BIBLE VERSES

Every Christian, not only children, should develop the habit of regularly memorising Bible verses that:

- strengthen our trust in God.
- show us how to live.
- can help lead others to Christ.

A. Why Memorise Bible Verses?

1. God Wants Us to Know His Word

Proverbs 7:2–3 *Keep my commandments, and you will live, and keep my teaching as the apple of your eye. Bind them around your fingers, write them on the tablet of your heart!*

2. God's Word Sanctifies Us

John 17:17 *Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.*

3. God's Word Is Our Spiritual Food

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

4. God's Word Is the Sword of the Spirit

Ephesians 6:17 *Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

5. God's Word Helps Us to Live Victoriously

Psalms 119:11 *I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*

B. How to Memorise Bible Verses

You may find it useful to write Bible verses on small cards and review them daily. You can set aside the verses you know best and focus on those you have not yet memorised. After a few weeks, you can review them again.

Memorising Bible verses can bring great joy into our lives when we prayerfully consider:

- What do these verses say?
- What do they mean to me?
- What is the context?
- What is God saying through these verses?

It is advisable to learn Bible verses from your own Bible whenever possible. This helps you to know the context of the text and makes it easier to find the verses again later.

IV. HOW TO STUDY A BIBLE PASSAGE

In addition to your daily Bible reading, you should also periodically study a Bible passage in greater depth. To do this, follow these three steps.

A. Get an Overview

After prayerfully choosing a Bible passage, we first need to get a good overview of the text. How can this be done in practice?

1. Read the passage thoroughly several times. It is even better to memorise it.
2. Familiarise yourself with the context of the passage by reading the surrounding verses. Then consider:
 - What comes before and after this passage?
 - What are these verses about?
 - Which people and places are involved?
 - What topics are addressed?
3. Familiarise yourself with the historical background by finding out:
 - Who wrote it?
 - To whom was it written?
 - Which people and places are mentioned? What do we know about them?
 - What was the historical situation or problem at that time?
4. You may want to find more information to support your Bible study. Helpful resources include:
 - Bible apps
 - Bible dictionaries
 - Bible atlases
 - Bible commentaries

B. Examine the Details

Once you have a good overview of the entire passage, it's time to examine the details.

1. Compare Translations

Because the Bible was not originally written in English, Bible translators have faced the great challenge of choosing the best English words to convey the correct meaning of each verse.

It is therefore wise to read the passage in more than one translation and to use a Bible dictionary to help understand the passage in greater depth.

2. Clarify Key Words

The meaning of key words should be clarified. Bible dictionaries and apps may be helpful for this. Examining other Bible passages where the same words occur may also be useful. Remember, the best resource to explain the Bible is the Bible!

3. Answer Difficult Questions

If the Bible passage raises questions that you cannot answer, other Bible verses that address the same topic should be found and compared. Bible commentaries can also help, as they often explain cultural and historical contexts and customs.

C. Develop a Theme and an Outline

Once you have examined the passage in detail, develop a theme and an outline.

This step is particularly important when preparing a Bible study for a group, as a theme sets the direction for the Bible study and the outline provides a framework that the participants can follow.

1. Develop a Theme

Try to paraphrase the main message of the Bible passage in a single sentence. Keep refining this sentence until you come up with a concise theme for the Bible study.

2. Develop an Outline

To create the outline, read the chosen Bible passage, write down the main idea of each Bible verse, then group the verses that logically belong together. Finally, write a suitable heading for each group.

Now revise the headings for each group. Try to edit them so the headings are concise and memorable, using key words or similarly worded statements.

For example:

Theme: ***Forgive One Another – Matthew 18:21–35***

1. The Difficulty of Forgiving, *Verses 21–22*
 - a) Peter's Question, *Verse 21*
 - b) Jesus' Answer, *Verse 22*
2. An Example of Forgiveness, *Verses 23–27*
3. An Example of Unforgiveness, *Verses 28–34*
4. The Challenge to Forgive Others, *Verse 35*

► **Activity 7:** Develop a theme and an outline for *Philippians 3:12–17*.

3. Create the Bible Study

If you plan to share the Bible study in a group setting, an introduction, discussion questions, life application ideas, and a conclusion need to be added.

V. HOW TO STUDY A TOPIC

A topic-based study is where multiple Bible passages about the same subject are examined. Many interesting and pertinent questions can be biblically addressed by doing this type of study.

While a topic-based study can be very interesting, it does require considerable preparation to ensure that the Bible is not used out of context to support one's own agenda.

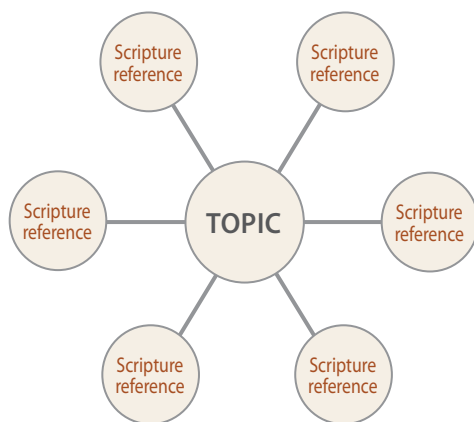
A. Gather Materials

Once you have decided on a topic, gather as much information as you can from the Bible about it.

Step 1: Which questions do you hope to answer?

Before you delve into the Bible, consider your topic and what questions you hope to find biblical answers to. Write a list of questions related to the topic.

These questions will guide your Bible research. You may also want to use them in a Bible study group.



For example:

If the topic is *Prayer*, these questions may be of interest:

- What is prayer?
- Why is it important to pray?
- Who can pray?
- Where can we pray?
- How often should we pray?
- What should we pray for?
- What hinders us from praying?
- What results can we expect from prayer?

Step 2: What does the Bible teach about the topic?

The next step is to read all the Bible passages about the chosen topic. A concordance or Bible app can help you find all the important Bible passages.

For example:

When the topic is *Prayer*, search the Bible using keywords such as *prayer, pray, worship, ask, praise, and petition*.

If you come across other interesting facts related to the topic during your Bible research, note them down. It is a good idea to make as many notes as possible, even if you don't use all of them later.

B. Examine the Details

Now that you have found many Bible passages about your topic, choose which ones you want to learn more about. Proceed in the same way as when preparing a Bible study on a specific passage.

- Familiarise yourself with the context of the passage by reading the verses before and after it.
- Familiarise yourself with the historical background of the passage.
- Find the best translation.
- Clarify key words with the help of other Bible passages, dictionaries, or commentaries.
- Find answers to difficult questions about the passage.

C. Develop an Outline

Now that you have collected plenty of biblical material on the topic and Bible-based answers to your questions, it is time to organise the findings into a logical and memorable outline.

If you want to examine the topic in a Bible study group, you probably have more information than you can address in one study. Therefore, choose what material you will use and keep the rest for a later date.

Here is an example of an outline, when the topic is *Prayer*:

- 1. What is Prayer?**
- 2. Why Do We Pray?**
 - a) To Have Fellowship with God
 - b) Our Joy Is Made Complete
 - c) To Overcome Problems
- 3. How Should We Pray?**
 - a) Worship
 - b) Confession of Sin
 - c) Intercession
 - d) Thanksgiving

If you plan to share the Bible study in a group setting, an introduction, discussion questions, life application ideas, and a conclusion need to be added.

- **Activity 8:** Choose a topic (e.g. mercy) and develop an outline for a Bible study, using the steps above.

VI. HOW TO PREPARE A GROUP BIBLE STUDY

After studying a Bible passage or topic, you may want to share your findings in a group Bible study (e.g. a lecture or a discussion group).

To do this, add an introduction and a conclusion to the passage-based or topic-based outline. For each main point, explore biblical truths, practical examples, life application ideas, and discussion questions.

A. Introduction

A good introduction should capture everyone's attention and lead them into the topic. It should be well thought out, engaging, and challenging, so that even the uninterested listener realises that the topic is important and relevant to their life.

Ideas for an introduction include:

- a personal experience
- a question
- a current situation or circumstance
- an overview of the Bible passage

B. Main Section

Most of the Bible study is spent exploring the Bible passage (or topic), following the main points of the outline. To ensure that the group can follow your train of thought, apply these steps at each main point.

1. Establish Biblical Truths and Dig Deeper

As you introduce each main point, emphasise one biblical truth. By doing so, the main points will be easier to remember.

For each biblical truth, use the Bible passage (or pre-prepared Bible verses) to show how and why this truth is biblical.

Dig deeper into the Bible passage using the materials that were collected during the preparation phase. If sufficient time is available, refer to parallel passages to reinforce the truth.

2. Life Application Ideas

Bible teaching should not remain theoretical. Instead, we should do what the Bible says, so we are changed and transformed by the Word of God.

As you address each main point, encourage the participants to consider how they can apply the biblical teaching to their lives. Do this by issuing a challenge, posing a question, or giving a practical example.

► **Activity 9:** How is *Ephesians 4:25* meaningful for the student, the business entrepreneur, and the reporter?

3. Illustrate the Biblical Truth with Practical Examples

Before leading the Bible study, find practical examples to illustrate the main points. For example, if the main point is “*We pray to overcome problems*”, share a real-life problem that was solved because God provided a solution.

Practical examples will help the Bible study participants to remember the main points and motivate them to apply them to their lives. Examples should be concise, from a reputable source, and appropriate.

4. Discussion Questions

To encourage the participants to talk, pre-prepared questions should be posed as you move through the study’s structure. Good discussion questions should:

- be well suited to the topic
- begin with who, what, when, where, why, or how, and avoid simple yes/no questions
- be relevant to the lives of the participants.

C. Conclusion

At the end of a Bible study, the main points can be summarised again. You can then encourage a clear response or action, or give an example that makes the main idea clear.

The conclusion should be brief, memorable, and motivating.

VII. LEADING A BIBLE STUDY

A Bible study can be presented as a lecture or held in a small group where participants discuss the Bible passage together.

Leading a Bible study is a form of spiritual ministry. That is why we must rely on spiritual resources, such as prayer, love, and perseverance, as we prepare and lead the study.

John 15:5b

[Jesus said:] "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

Ephesians 1:15–16

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

► **Activity 10:** In *Ephesians 6:18–19* Paul asked the believers to pray for him. What did he specifically ask them to pray for?

Overall, a Bible study should:

- be characterised by as many participants as possible taking part in the discussion.
- involve a thorough analysis of the Bible passage (or topic).
- generate ideas to apply the biblical truths to everyday life.
- be led by the Bible study leader, who welcomes everyone, introduces the study, guides the discussion from point to point, asks questions, and summarises answers. The leader also brings the study to a positive conclusion and ensures that it begins and ends with prayer.

What a privilege it is to study God's Word, involve others, and pass on a biblical message with enthusiasm, love, practical application, and conviction!

BIBLE STUDY

WHY BIBLE STUDY?

A. To be grounded in truth

Acts 17:11

B. To know God's will

Micah 6:8

- What will a good knowledge of the Word of God protect us from (*Ephesians 4:14*)?

C. To have life to the full

Psalms 40:8; John 10:10

- According to *2 Timothy 3:16–17*, what can we expect when we use the Bible?

D. To pass on God's Word correctly

2 Timothy 2:15

MEMORISING BIBLE VERSES

A. Why memorise Bible verses?

1. God wants us to know his Word – *Proverbs 7:2–3*
2. God's Word sanctifies us – *John 17:17*
3. God's Word is our spiritual food – *Matthew 4:4*
4. God's Word is the sword of the Spirit – *Ephesians 6:17*
5. God's Word helps us to live victoriously – *Psalms 119:11*

B. How to memorise Bible verses

1. Write them on small cards
2. Review them; focus on those not yet mastered
3. Think about their meaning

STUDYING A BIBLE PASSAGE

Get an overview

1. Read the Bible verses thoroughly
2. Become familiar with the context and historical background
3. Gather resources

Examine the details

1. Compare translations
2. Clarify key words
3. Answer difficult questions

Develop an outline

1. Develop a theme
2. Develop an outline
3. Create the Bible study

PREPARING A GROUP BIBLE STUDY

Introduction

An introduction should capture everyone's attention and lead them into the topic.

- A personal experience
- A question
- A current situation
- An overview of the Bible passage

Main section

- Establish biblical truths and dig deeper
- Life application
- Illustrate the biblical truth with practical examples
- Discussion questions

Conclusion

Encourage a clear response

Leading a Bible study

- Commit the study to the Lord in prayer.
- Involve as many people as possible in the discussion

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *Ezra 7:10*.
2. Why should you know the Bible thoroughly?
3. Explain three ways to annotate the Bible.
4. Give three reasons for memorising Bible verses.
5. Why is it helpful to compare more than one Bible translation when preparing a Bible study?
6. What is the best way to get a good overview of a Bible passage?
7. How can you clarify the meaning of a key word in a Bible passage?
8. What should you consider when creating an outline for a Bible study?
9. Briefly describe the steps needed to create a topic-based Bible study.
10. What should be included in the main section of a Bible study?



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Communion reminds us of
Jesus' suffering and sacrifice for our salvation.

COMMUNION

On the night Jesus was betrayed, he shared the Passover meal with his twelve disciples, and he spoke about his impending betrayal and death.

It must have been a very moving time together as Jesus gave the Passover a whole new meaning:

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." – Matthew 26:26–28

I . WHAT IS COMMUNION?

Communion is the Christian practice of gathering to observe what Jesus instituted in *Matthew 26:17–30*. Bread is eaten in remembrance of Jesus' body broken, and a drink is shared in remembrance of Jesus' blood of the new covenant which was poured out for the forgiveness of sins.

Communion is also known by other names, including Holy Communion, the Breaking of Bread, the Last Supper, the Lord's Supper, and the Lord's Table. In this chapter, these names will be used interchangeably.

A. Communion

1 Corinthians 10:16

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? (New King James Version)

When we partake in Communion, we express our fellowship and communion with Jesus in a special way. We remember his suffering and death for the forgiveness of sins and we thank him for his work of love (*John 15:13*).

B. The Breaking of Bread

In early Christianity, Communion was usually known as the Breaking of Bread.

Acts 2:42

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Acts 2:46

Acts 20:7

- **Activity 1:** In *1 Corinthians 11:23–24*, what does the broken bread symbolise?

C. The Lord's Supper / The Last Supper

Communion is sometimes known as the Lord's Supper, or the Last Supper, because it was instituted during Jesus' last meal before his death on the cross.

The term *Lord's Supper* appears in only one Bible verse:

1 Corinthians 11:20

So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat...

The term *Last Supper* appears as a heading in some English Bibles, but not in the Bible text itself.

- **Activity 2:** Why is the Last Supper an apt name for Communion (*Matthew 26:29*)?

D. The Lord's Table

1 Corinthians 10:21

You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's Table and the table of demons.

In the Old Testament, the Lord's Table referred to the altar of the Lord (*Malachi 1:7*).

When we partake of the Lord's Table, we express that we have submitted to Jesus as Lord and accepted his authority.

II. THE INSTITUTION OF COMMUNION

A. Jesus Instituted Communion

We read how Jesus instituted Communion in *Matthew 26:17–30*, *Mark 14:12–26* and *Luke 22:7–23*.

► **Activity 3:** Read *Matthew 26:17–30* and answer the following questions.

- During which festival did Jesus institute Communion (*verse 17*)?
- How did the disciples prepare for the Passover meal (*verses 17–19*)?
- How did it become clear who would betray Jesus (*verses 20–25*)?
- What special meaning did Jesus give to the bread (*verse 26*)?
- What special meaning did Jesus give to the cup (*verses 27–28*)?
- How did Jesus end the Passover meal (*verses 29–30*)?

B. Communion Is Based on the Passover

Communion is rooted in the Passover meal. Understanding Passover helps us to understand Communion correctly.

The first Passover is described in *Exodus 12:1–28*. It was instituted because Pharaoh continued to refuse to let God’s people, the Israelites, leave Egypt. As a result of Pharaoh’s persistent refusal, God sent the tenth plague upon Egypt, and only those who observed the Passover instructions were spared.

Exodus 12:12 *On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord.*

To be spared from the tenth plague, the Israelites were instructed to slaughter an unblemished lamb, put its blood on their doorposts and lintels, and to roast and eat it. The Lord’s judgement and punishment passed over the houses that were marked with the lamb’s blood.

Exodus 12:13 *The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.*

Exodus 12:7, 12:23

Thus, the Passover provided a picture, or foreshadowing, of the redemption that Jesus would bring to mankind in the future (*Colossians 2:17*):

- The Israelites were saved by the blood of the unblemished Passover lamb.
- We are saved by the blood of the sinless Lamb of God, Jesus – who takes away the sins of the world (*John 1:29*).

► **Activity 4:** Read *Exodus 12:5–13*. What parallels can you find between the Passover and Jesus' sacrifice for our sins?

► **Activity 5:** What name is used for Jesus in *1 Corinthians 5:7*?

III. WHY IS COMMUNION SO SIGNIFICANT?

A. We Remember Jesus' Sacrifice and Our Salvation

While the Passover lamb reminds us of God's protection from the tenth plague in Egypt, Communion reminds us of the crucifixion of Jesus, who took the punishment for our sins.

- The bread reminds us of the broken body of Christ.
- The cup reminds us of the blood of Christ that was shed for the forgiveness of sins.

1 Corinthians 11:23b–25 The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

► **Activity 6:** What special value do days of remembrance have?

B. We Proclaim Jesus as Our Saviour

1 Corinthians 11:26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

By taking Communion we acknowledge once again that Jesus died for us personally, and we proclaim that he is the Saviour of the world.

- **Activity 7:** What relevance can Communion have for those who see it, but have not yet accepted Jesus as their personal Saviour?

C. We Express Hope and Anticipation

1 Corinthians 11:26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

During the Last Supper, Jesus said that he would not drink the fruit of the vine again until he is with his disciples in his Father's kingdom (*Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25*).

Thus, every time we take Communion we can hold onto the hope and anticipation of the future meal that we will have with our Lord in eternal glory!

Taking part in Communion also reminds us that Jesus will return. No matter what is happening in the world around us, our hope for the future is certain: Jesus will return!

- **Activity 8:** What foundation must already be laid for someone to be filled with the hope of eternal life (*1 Peter 1:3*)?

D. We Reflect, Repent, and Claim Forgiveness

1 Corinthians 11:27–28 So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.

To take Communion in a worthy manner, we must have accepted Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour and live in peace with God. We also must not tolerate conscious sin in our lives.

Thus, before taking Communion, every Christian should examine themselves, confess their sins to Jesus, and claim forgiveness in faith (*1 John 1:9*).

Communion also promotes restored relationships with one another, as we should go to anyone who has a grievance against us and be reconciled to them before coming to the Table of the Lord (*Matthew 5:23–24*).

- **Activity 9:** What are the consequences of taking Communion in an unworthy manner (*1 Corinthians 11:29–30*)?

E. We Have Fellowship with Jesus

1 Corinthians 10:16

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?

As we take Communion, we express our fellowship with Jesus Christ in a very special way through the symbolic elements (bread and wine). We remember his suffering and thank him for his great sacrifice and love for us.

► **Activity 10:** How can we express our gratitude for Jesus' redemptive work (*Matthew 26:30; Colossians 3:16*)?

F. We Remember Our Unity

The Communion bread symbolises Jesus' body, broken for us for the forgiveness of sins (*1 Corinthians 11:24*). It also symbolises the unity of the Body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 10:17

Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.

Everyone who participates in Communion expresses that they belong to Jesus' church and depend completely on Jesus as Lord and Saviour. In this way, Communion reminds us that we are united as brothers and sisters in Christ because of his redemptive work (*Matthew 12:49–50; Hebrews 10:19*).

► **Activity 11:** In what practical ways is the unity between believers evident?

IV. SYMBOLISM IN COMMUNION

Luke 22:19–20

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

A. The Bread

During the Last Supper, Jesus took bread, broke it, and gave it to his disciples (*Matthew 26:26*). The first Christians also used bread to celebrate Communion (*Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 10:16–17, 11:23–24*).

The bread symbolises Jesus' body, which was broken for the forgiveness of sins (*Matthew 26:26; 1 Corinthians 11:24*).

It also symbolises that all Christians are united as members of the body of Christ (*1 Corinthians 10:17, 12:12–27*).

B. The Cup

After the disciples had eaten, Jesus gave them the cup and told them all to drink from it (*Matthew 26:27*). The cup contained fruit from the vine (*Matthew 26:29*). We cannot say for sure whether it contained wine or non-alcoholic grape juice.

The cup symbolises the blood of Jesus. By the shedding of his blood, the new covenant for the forgiveness of sins was established (*Matthew 26:28; 1 Corinthians 11:25–26*).

C. What Communion Is Not

To understand Communion correctly, it is helpful to clarify a few common misunderstandings.

- In Communion, no transubstantiation takes place. *Transubstantiation* (a term derived from Latin meaning *change of substance*) is the teaching that the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ during Holy Communion.

According to the Bible, however, the bread and the cup remain signs that point to Jesus' completed sacrifice. His sacrifice was offered once for all and does not need to be repeated (*Hebrews 10:10; Hebrews 10:14*).

- Communion does not give us forgiveness of sins. Some understand it as a sacrament or means of grace through which special spiritual benefits are received. However, the Bible shows that forgiveness of sins is not received by taking part in Communion, but through repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ (*John 1:12; Acts 3:19*).
- The passage in *John 6:53* is not primarily about Communion. It is about receiving by faith what Jesus did for us on the cross of Calvary (*John 6:47*). Salvation does not come through Communion itself. Rather, Communion looks back with gratitude to the decision already made to receive Jesus by faith.
- A Communion service must not be viewed as a meal to satisfy hunger. It should be partaken with respect and reverence (*1 Corinthians 11:20–22*).

V. THE COMMUNION SERVICE

A. How Often Should We Take Communion?

Jesus himself instituted Communion. His words of institution make it clear that his disciples should celebrate it again and again.

Luke 22:19

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

1 Corinthians 11:25–26

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

The first Christians followed Jesus' instruction and regularly celebrated Communion (*Acts 2:46*).

Acts 2:42

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

The Bible does not specify how often we should celebrate Communion. It is likely that the first Christians celebrated Communion every Sunday, or even more often. Church history records that the early church celebrated the Lord's Supper on Sunday, the first day of the week, because Jesus rose from the dead on that day (*John 20:1*).

► **Activity 12:** When did the first Christians in Troas celebrate Communion (*Acts 20:7*)?

B. Who Should Take Communion?

Communion is for those who have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Just as the Passover was only for the Israelites (*Exodus 12:43*), Communion is only for Christians.

There are times when a Christian should not take Communion. When they know that something is not right in their relationship with God, they should repent and confess their sins before taking Communion.

1 Corinthians 11:28–29

Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.

Before taking Communion, we should examine ourselves (*1 Corinthians 11:28*). If we become aware of unresolved sin against another believer, we should seek reconciliation (*Matthew 5:23–24*).

► **Activity 13:** What should believers pay attention to before taking part in Communion (*1 Corinthians 11:28–29; 1 John 1:7*)?

C. Where Do We Celebrate Communion?

The celebration of Communion usually takes place during a church service. In the Book of Acts, we see that the breaking of bread took place when believers gathered together (*Acts 2:42, 2:46*).

Acts 20:7 *On the first day of the week we came together to break bread.*

In *1 Corinthians 11* we see that the Lord's Supper was celebrated when the church came together.

1 Corinthians 11:33 *So then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together.*

When the Lord's Supper is celebrated in small groups – for example, in home groups or special situations – it should be done in agreement with the local church. This preserves the expression of the unity of the body of Christ (*1 Corinthians 10:17*).

D. The Communion Service

The Bible does not give us a specific procedure for a Communion service. The celebration can therefore be kept simple. In the New Testament we find the following components:

- Explain the meaning of Communion *1 Corinthians 11:23–30*
- Give thanks for the bread *1 Corinthians 11:24*
- Give thanks for the cup *Matthew 26:27; 1 Corinthians 11:25*
- Distribute the elements *Matthew 26:26–28*
- Worship *Matthew 26:30*

A Communion service should be full of joy, thanksgiving, and worship, as we remember Jesus, our crucified Saviour, and the new covenant that God has established with mankind.

COMMUNION

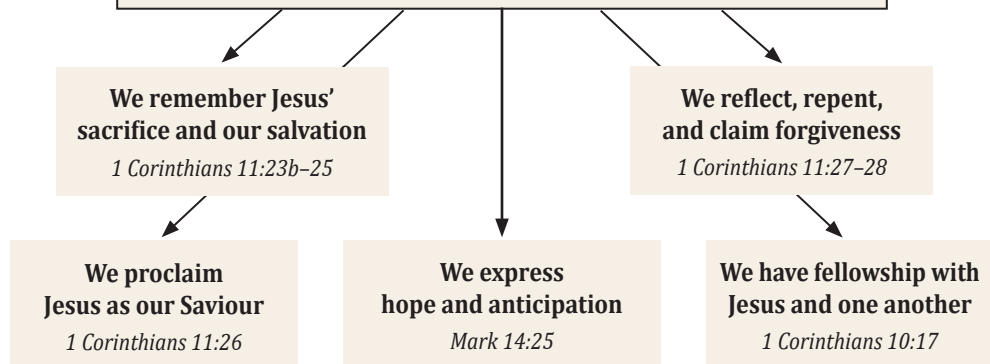
WHAT IS COMMUNION?

- A. **Communion**
1 Corinthians 10:16
- B. **The Breaking of Bread**
Acts 2:42
- C. **The Lord's Supper / The Last Supper**
1 Corinthians 11:20
- D. **The Lord's Table**
1 Corinthians 10:21

INSTITUTION

- A. **Jesus instituted Communion**
Matthew 26:17-30
 - What special meaning did Jesus give to the bread (*Matthew 26:26*)?
- B. **Communion is based on the Passover**
Exodus 12:1-28
 - Read *Exodus 12:5-13*. What parallels can you find between the Passover and Jesus' sacrifice for our sins?

WHY IS COMMUNION SO SIGNIFICANT?



THE COMMUNION SERVICE

Symbolism in Communion

- The bread
Matthew 26:26; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:24
- The cup
Matthew 26:27-29; 1 Corinthians 11:25-26

How often should we take Communion?

Acts 20:7
1 Corinthians 11:25-26

Who can take Communion?

1 Corinthians 11:28-29

Where do we celebrate Communion?

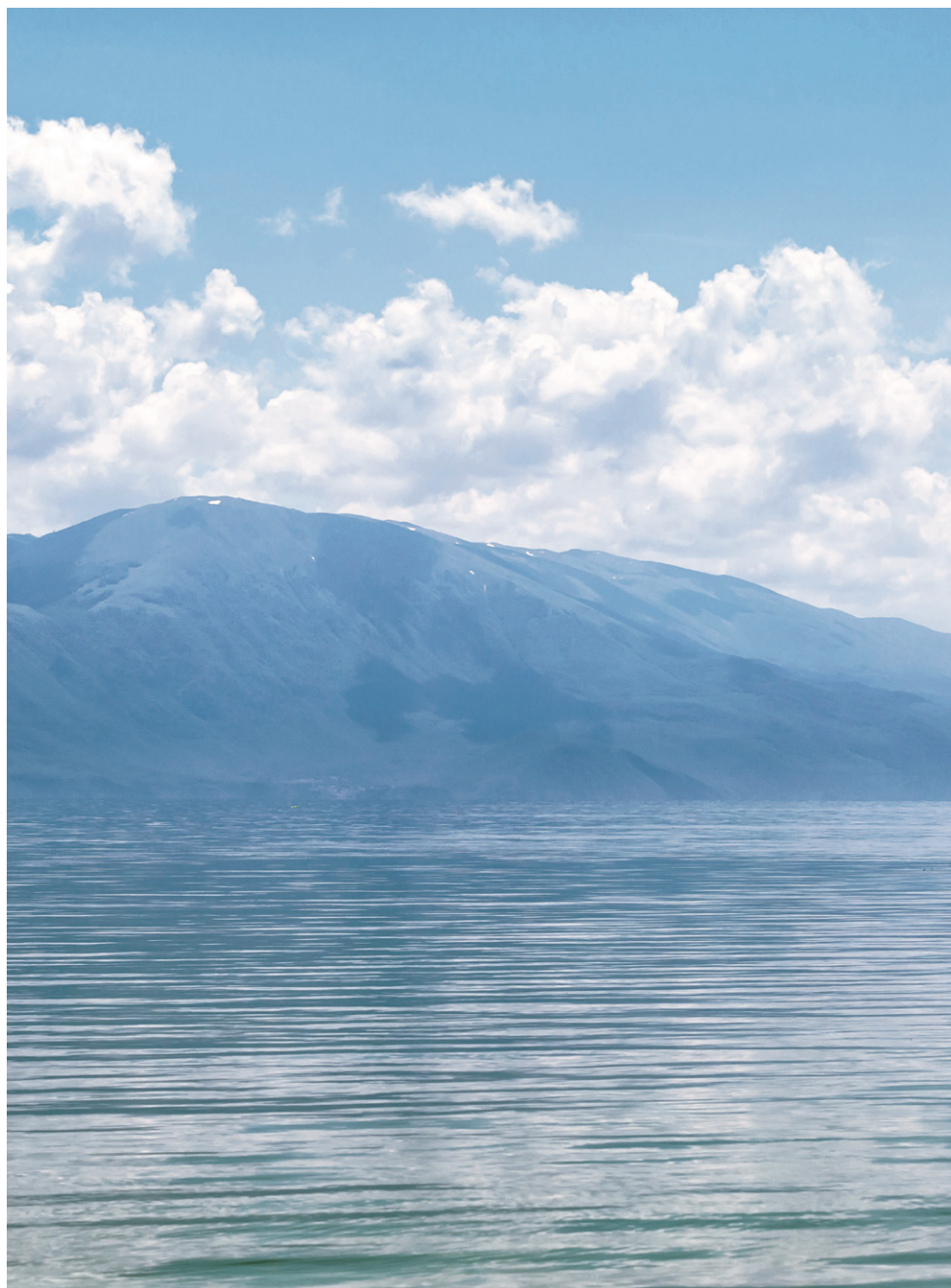
Acts 2:42, 2:46

Components of a Communion service

- Explain the meaning of Communion
1 Corinthians 11:23-30
- Give thanks for the bread
1 Corinthians 11:24
- Give thanks for the cup
Matthew 26:27; 1 Corinthians 11:25
- Distribute the elements
Matthew 26:26-28
- Worship
Matthew 26:30

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *1 Corinthians 11:23–25*.
2. What are two other biblical names for Communion?
3. Why do we celebrate Communion?
4. What symbolic meaning did Jesus give to the bread?
5. What symbolic meaning did Jesus give to the cup?
6. Suppose someone tells you that their sins are forgiven by taking Communion. What would you say to them?
7. What parallels do you see between Passover and Communion?
8. How does the Lord's Supper show the unity of Jesus' church?
9. Where did the first Christians celebrate Communion?
10. What are the usual components of a Communion service?



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Baptism shows a believer's commitment
to follow Jesus and live a new life with him.

BAPTISM

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, he gave his disciples the Great Commission to preach the gospel to all nations and to make disciples. Baptism is part of this missionary task.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. – Matthew 28:19–20

► **Activity 1:** What differing opinions about baptism have you encountered?

I. WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism is a symbolic act that takes place when a born-again Christian decides to be baptised. It involves confessing that Jesus is Lord and Saviour, and being immersed in water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (*Matthew 28:19*).

Baptism symbolises both death and resurrection with Christ: we died to our former self-centred life without Christ, and were raised with Christ to a new life with Jesus as our Saviour, Redeemer, and Lord.

The word *baptise* comes from the Greek word *baptizo*. It means to *immerse*, *dip*, or *submerge*. This shows that biblical baptism involves immersion in water. That is why John the Baptist and the apostles baptised where there was plenty of water.

John 3:23

Now John also was baptising at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptised.

Matthew 3:5–6, 3:16

► **Activity 2:** How do we know that the Ethiopian eunuch was submerged when he was baptised (*Acts 8:36–39*)?

II. BAPTISM IS DEEPLY SIGNIFICANT

Every baptism is a deeply significant event. It's rich in symbolism, reminds us of what Jesus has done for us, and is a public confession of our new life with him.

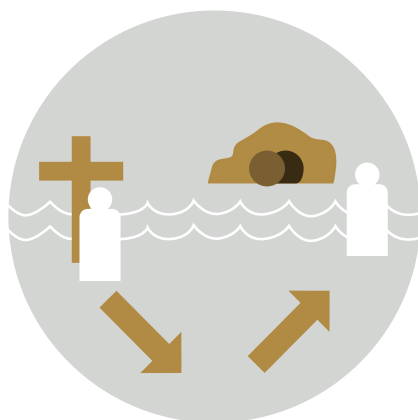
A. Death and Resurrection

Baptism is a beautiful image of death and resurrected life.

Colossians 2:11b–12 *Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.*

The baptismal waters symbolise a grave.

- When a person is submerged during baptism, this symbolises the death and burial of their old, sinful nature.
- When they come out of the water, this symbolises being raised with Christ to live a new life with him.



At our conversion, our sinful nature was crucified. We died to sin and are no longer ruled by it (*Romans 6:6*).

- ▶ **Activity 3:** What does *Romans 6:3–5* teach us about baptism, sin, and resurrected life?
- ▶ **Activity 4:** According to *Romans 6:4*, what are the similarities and differences between a burial and a baptism?
- ▶ **Activity 5:** What should we believe when we have “died” with Christ (*Romans 6:8–11*)?

Baptism is an outward sign of an inner spiritual process that took place at conversion. Forgiveness, salvation, and freedom from sin are obtainable only through the precious blood of Jesus (*Revelation 1:5*), not through baptism.

B. Commitment to Christ

Romans 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.

When we are baptised, we proclaim that we died spiritually and have been raised with Christ, and that we have decided to live a new life with him as Lord.

A baptism rarely goes unnoticed. Others take note of our commitment to Christ when we are baptised. It is therefore a confession of faith in Christ before other people (*Matthew 10:32*).

- **Activity 6:** Baptism symbolises our new life with Jesus (*Romans 6:4*). What practical advice does *Romans 6:12–13* give us for our new life?

C. A Picture of Cleansing

Baptism also symbolises being cleansed from sin. Just as dirt can be washed away, our sins are washed away at conversion by the precious blood of Jesus. Baptism is a figurative picture of this cleansing.

Acts 22:16

And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptised and wash your sins away, calling on his name.

1 Peter 3:21

Forgiveness of sins is not based on a symbolic act such as baptism, but on sincere repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (*Psalms 32:5; Acts 3:19*).

- **Activity 7:** What must we do so that our sins may be wiped out (*Acts 3:19*)?

D. Professing That We Belong to Christ

Galatians 3:26–27

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

The image of changing clothes is used in *Galatians 3:26–27*. At conversion, the filthy clothes of sin are taken away, and we are now “*clothed with Christ*.”

Being “*clothed with Christ*” is a picture of belonging to Jesus. Thus, baptism expresses our new, eternal bond with Jesus. We belong to him (*John 10:27–28*; *1 Corinthians 6:19*).

► **Activity 8:** How are the garments that the Lord has clothed us with described in *Isaiah 61:10*?

Baptism goes beyond our confession of Jesus in front of people. The invisible, spiritual world also takes part in it. Baptism is therefore a confession before the visible and invisible worlds that we belong to Jesus (*Ephesians 6:12*; *Colossians 1:16*).

E. A Step of Obedience

Being baptised is a step of obedience. Jesus was baptised, and he tells us to make disciples and baptise them.

Matthew 28:19 *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

Jesus made it very clear that his disciples should be baptised. Thus, every Christian should obey Jesus and be baptised.

John 14:21 *Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.*

► **Activity 9:** How can we remain in the love of Christ (*John 15:9–10*)?

III. WHO SHOULD BE BAPTISED?

A. Everyone Who Believes in Jesus

Mark 16:15–16 *He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”*

From this passage, we see that before people are baptised, they must:

- hear the gospel
- believe in Jesus

A consistent pattern emerges in the Book of Acts, showing believers being baptised soon after their conversion. The Ethiopian eunuch (*Acts 8:34–38*), Saul of Tarsus (*Acts 9:18*) and Lydia in Philippi (*Acts 16:14–15*) were all baptised soon after coming to faith in Christ.

These examples suggest that new Christians should be baptised soon after their decision to follow Christ.

Acts 8:34–38

Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptised?” And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptised him.

► **Activity 10:** When was the jailer from Philippi baptised (*Acts 16:30–34*)?

In the New Testament letters, it is assumed that believers have been baptised.

Romans 6:3

Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death?

Colossians 2:12

The Bible does not specify how old a person should be when they are baptised. Instead, it emphasises the importance of being baptised in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (*Matthew 28:19*) as a step of faith and obedience. This shows that someone must be old enough to make this decision for themselves.

B. Only Those Who Believe in Jesus

Baptism is only for Jesus’ disciples (*Matthew 28:19*). In the New Testament, we only see examples of believers being baptised.

Acts 2:41

Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Acts 8:12

But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women.

Acts 8:36–38, 16:14–15, 16:30–34, 19:4–5, 22:16

- **Activity 11:** What did Crispus and the Corinthians experience before being baptised (*Acts 18:8*)?

The Bible gives us no teaching about the baptism of children or infants. The practice of infant baptism began to emerge during the second century and remains established in many churches to this day.

Biblical baptism follows conversion to Jesus Christ and presupposes personal faith. Otherwise, its symbolism of burial and resurrection is lost.

IV. WHY BAPTISM?

The Bible gives us at least three reasons why every Christian should be baptised.

A. Jesus Commands It

Matthew 28:19–20

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising 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 am with you always, to the very end of the age.

The instructions Jesus gave us about baptism are clear. Therefore, we obey Christ when we are baptised and when we baptise those who have come to faith in him.

- **Activity 12:** According to *Matthew 28:19–20*, what should Jesus' disciples be taught?

B. The Apostles Taught It

Acts 2:38

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Acts 10:47–48

Teaching about baptism was part of the apostles' message (*Acts 8:12, 18:8, 19:4–5*).

C. The First Christians Practised It

Acts 2:41 *Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*

Acts 9:18 *Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptised.*

The Book of Acts tells of numerous people who were baptised because of their faith in Jesus (*Acts 8:12–13, 8:16, 8:36–38, 10:47–48, 16:15, 16:33, 18:8, 19:5*).

V. DIFFERENT BAPTISMS IN THE BIBLE

The Bible mentions other kinds of baptism in addition to baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

A. In the Old Testament

In Old Testament times, baptism as we know it today did not exist. There were, however, ritual cleansings.

Leviticus 14:8 *The person to be cleansed must wash their clothes, shave off all their hair and bathe with water; then they will be ceremonially clean. After this they may come into the camp, but they must stay outside their tent for seven days.*

Leviticus 17:15–16

Exodus 29:4

In the period leading up to the New Testament, ritual immersion was already known in Jewish culture, although it had a different meaning from Christian baptism. People who converted from paganism to Judaism were known as proselytes and also underwent ritual immersion. This means that the practice of immersion was already familiar before Jesus commanded his disciples to baptise new believers.

B. In the New Testament

1. By John the Baptist

John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus Christ (*Matthew 3:3*) and his ministry was prophesied at least 700 years before his birth (*Isaiah 40:1–5*). John called people to repent and confess their sins. As an outward sign of repentance, they were baptised by him in the Jordan River (*Matthew 3:1–12; Mark 1:1–8; Luke 3:1–18; John 1:19–28*).

Mark 1:4–5 And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptised by him in the Jordan River.

- John challenged people to show by their way of life that they had turned from their sinful ways and turned to God (*Matthew 3:8*).
- John also pointed to Jesus, who would come after him and baptise people with the Holy Spirit (*Mark 1:7–8*).

Although John the Baptist called people to repent and confess their sins, only Jesus, our crucified and risen Saviour, can forgive sins (*Matthew 26:27–28; Ephesians 1:7; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 1:5*).

► **Activity 13:** How is the baptism by John described in *Luke 3:3*?

2. Jesus' Baptism

Because Jesus never sinned (*Hebrews 4:14–15*), he did not need to repent or be baptised. However, he decided to be baptised by John the Baptist (*Matthew 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22*).

Jesus' baptism shows how closely he identified with us as human beings. Although he is the sinless Son of God, he humbled himself and lived as a human to redeem us (*2 Corinthians 5:21*).

By being baptised, Jesus set an example that we should follow.

Baptism was also the beginning of Jesus' public ministry (*Mark 1:12–15*).

► **Activity 14:** What reason did Jesus give for being baptised (*Matthew 3:15*)?

► **Activity 15:** What happened as soon as Jesus was baptised (*Matthew 3:16–17*)?

3. The Baptism of Jesus' Suffering

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 what constraint I am under until it is completed!

The baptism Jesus spoke about in *Luke 12* refers to his suffering and death on the cross (*Mark 10:38–39*).

4. By Jesus' Disciples

The baptism carried out by Jesus' disciples before his death and resurrection was very similar to John's baptism. Both were a public sign of repentance and prepared people for the kingdom of God (*John 4:1–3*).

Only after the death and resurrection of Jesus did the full meaning of baptism become clear.

► **Activity 16:** The message that Jesus preached was consistent with John the Baptist's message. What was it (*Matthew 3:2, 4:17*)?

5. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

John the Baptist told his listeners that Jesus would baptise them with the Holy Spirit and with fire (*Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33*).

Matthew 3:11 I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

After his resurrection, Jesus told his disciples that he would send the promised Holy Spirit to them (*Luke 24:49; John 15:26, 16:7; Acts 1:5*).

On the day of Pentecost, Jesus' disciples experienced a powerful baptism with the Holy Spirit (*Acts 2:1–4*). Since then, everyone who repents of their sins and receives Jesus as Lord and Saviour immediately receives the Holy Spirit (*Ephesians 1:13*).

► **Activity 17:** *1 Corinthians 12:13* describes something that happens when we are baptised with the Holy Spirit. What is it?

Jesus has given us a clear command: we should be baptised ourselves, go and make disciples, and baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (*Matthew 28:19–20*).

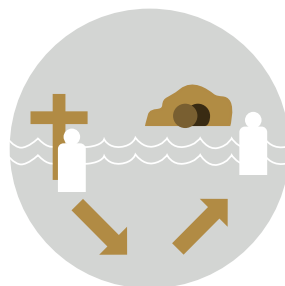
BAPTISM

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism is a symbolic act that takes place when a born-again Christian decides to be baptised. It involves confessing that Jesus is Lord and Saviour and being submerged in water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (*Matthew 28:19*).

The word *baptize* comes from the Greek word *baptizo*. It means to *immerse*, *dip*, or *submerge*.

- How do we know that the Ethiopian eunuch was submerged when he was baptised (*Acts 8:36–39*)?



WHY BAPTISM?

- Jesus commands it** – *Matthew 28:19–20*
- The apostles taught it** – *Acts 2:38*
- The first Christians practised it** – *Acts 2:41*

BAPTISM IS DEEPLY SIGNIFICANT

Death and resurrection

Romans 6:3–5
Colossians 2:11b–12

Professing that we belong to Christ

Galatians 3:26–27

Commitment to Christ

Romans 6:4

A picture of cleansing

Acts 22:16

A step of obedience

Matthew 28:19

DIFFERENT BAPTISMS

- By John the Baptist** – *Mark 1:4–5*
- Jesus' baptism** – *Matthew 3:13–17*
 - What reason did Jesus give for his baptism (*Matthew 3:15*)?
- The Baptism of Jesus' suffering**
Luke 12:49–50
- By Jesus' disciples** – *John 4:1–3*
- The Baptism of the Holy Spirit**
Matthew 3:11

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTISED?

- Everyone who believes in Jesus**
Mark 16:15–16
 - When was the jailer from Philippi baptised (*Acts 16:30–34*)?
- Only those who believe in Jesus**
Acts 2:41
 - What did Crispus and the Corinthians experience before being baptised (*Acts 18:8*)?

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *Acts 2:38*.
2. What does the Greek word for baptise mean?
3. Where and how did John the Baptist baptise people?
4. Why was Jesus baptised?
5. When should someone be baptised?
6. List three Bible passages that show that everyone who believes in Jesus should be baptised.
7. What does baptism symbolise?
8. What do people confess before the visible and invisible worlds when they are baptised?
9. Why is baptism also a step of obedience to Christ?
10. Find a Bible passage that shows that a new Christian should be baptised as soon as possible after conversion.



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Our best future is in God's hands.

KNOWING GOD'S WILL

There is nothing better than living constantly in the centre of God's will. To do this we need to learn how to recognise God's will, not only when we face major decisions but also in our everyday choices.

The Bible gives us many examples of people who gave their lives completely to God and experienced the fullness of his blessing.

Our constant desire should be to do what Jesus wants us to do. We will never regret it. Walking with Jesus and doing his will is the key to the fulfilled life we were created for.

Jesus said to them: My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to fulfil his work. – John 4:34

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I [Jesus] have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. – John 10:10

I. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO SEEK GOD'S WILL?

No matter how young or old you are, your decisions shape your future. Why is it so important to seek God's will and follow it when making decisions?

A. Only God Knows Our Future

Isaiah 46:10

I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.'

It is a great comfort to know that the Lord knows our future, and that when we put him first in our lives (*Matthew 6:33*) and commit all our decisions to him, he will make our paths straight (*Proverbs 3:5–6*).

► **Activity 1:** According to *Jeremiah 29:11*, what plans does God have for us, and what will these plans achieve?

B. So Our Lives Stay on the Right Track

We cannot shape our lives in a truly fulfilling way by ourselves. *Isaiah 53:6* describes all people as sheep who have gone astray and turned to their own ways. When we live without Jesus, our lives are not on the path God planned for us, and we will not find true fulfilment.

Jeremiah 10:23

Lord, I know that people's lives are not their own; it is not for them to direct their steps.

However, when we rely on the Lord's guidance and obey him, our lives stay on track. This is the way to live the fulfilled life God has prepared for us (*Proverbs 28:26; 1 Corinthians 3:18–20*).

► **Activity 2:** According to *Proverbs 3:6*, how can we keep from going astray?

C. God's Way Is the Best Way

1. For This Life

Those who have followed Jesus testify that their journey with him has been truly worthwhile. They know from firsthand experience that living according to his will is the best way.

John 7:16–17

Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me. Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own."

► **Activity 3:** When will God give us the desires of our hearts (*Psalms 37:4*)?

► **Activity 4:** Name some Bible characters who lived according to God's will. What promises were fulfilled in their lives?

2. For Eternity

Paul looked forward to eternity. He knew that the crown of righteousness awaited him and that death would bring him the greatest reward of all: being with Jesus forever.

Philippians 1:21

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

► **Activity 5:** According to *2 Timothy 4:7–8*, why was Paul looking forward to eternity?

II. WHAT ARE GOD'S PLANS LIKE?

The more we understand God's plan for our lives, the more we learn to trust him completely.

A. God's Plans Are Good

Jeremiah 29:11

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Romans 12:2

Because God has good plans for our lives, it is worth seeking his will and living according to it.

Sometimes our circumstances are very difficult, but this does not change the fact that God's plans are good. Jesus does not promise that things will always be easy and pleasant. He says that in this world we will experience trouble, but we should be courageous because he has overcome the world (*John 16:33*). For us, things may seem impossible, but for God nothing is impossible (*Matthew 19:26*).

► **Activity 6:** What characterises the lives of those who trust in the Lord and submit to him (*Proverbs 3:5–6, 15:19*)?

► **Activity 7:** How can *Romans 8:28* offer us comfort during difficult times?

B. God's Plans Are Unique and Specific

We can depend on God's guidance in every situation because he knows and cares about even the smallest details of our lives (*Luke 12:6–7*).

The Lord has unique and specific plans and purposes for every person. In fact, the Bible teaches that even while we were being formed in the womb, the Lord already knew all our days (*Psalms 139:15–16*).

Psalms 25:12

Who, then, are those who fear the Lord? He will instruct them in the ways they should choose.

► **Activity 8:** What does *Psalms 32:8* teach us about God's guidance in our daily lives?

III. WHAT IS GOD'S WILL FOR EVERYONE?

Often we know exactly what God's will is because the Bible says so. The challenge lies within ourselves. Are we willing to do what the Bible says?

The following points are biblical examples of God's will for everyone.

A. Salvation

1 Timothy 2:3–4

This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

It is God's will for everyone to experience salvation through Jesus Christ. This does not mean, however, that anyone is automatically saved. Everyone who wants to be saved must make a personal decision to follow Jesus (*Acts 3:19; 2 Peter 3:9*).

- **Activity 9:** What responsibility do Christians have so that others hear the gospel (*Luke 24:47*)?

B. Sanctification

1 Thessalonians 4:3a

It is God's will that you should be sanctified.

Romans 6:11–12

Because God is holy, he calls us to live holy and sanctified lives (*1 Peter 1:15–16*). The word *holy* describes something that is set apart from what is ordinary. In the biblical sense, holiness means being separated from all evil and living in purity. Being sanctified means being set apart for God, cleansed from sin, and separated from evil.

When we try to live sanctified and holy lives, we quickly realise that we cannot meet God's standards by ourselves. The good news is that God sees us as sanctified and holy in Christ. When he saved us, he cleansed us from our sins. We are now a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God's special possession (*1 Peter 2:9*).

- **Activity 10:** What does living a sanctified life look like (*1 Thessalonians 4:3–7*)?

C. Joy, Prayer, and Thanksgiving

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit and should grow in us and characterise our lives as Christians (*Galatians 5:22*).

A key to living a joyful life is to bring our worries and anxieties to Jesus. In return, he promises to give peace to our hearts and minds (*Philippians 4:6–7*; *1 Peter 5:7*).

God also wants us to live a life of persistent prayer and thankfulness.

► **Activity 11:** How can we put the command to pray continually into practice (*1 Thessalonians 5:16–18*; *Ephesians 6:18*)?

D. Good Deeds

1 Peter 2:15 For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Our lives as Christians should be characterised by our devotion to doing good deeds (*Titus 2:14, 3:8*).

We know that doing good things cannot earn our salvation (*Ephesians 2:8–9*). Rather, we do good things because we love the Lord and we know this pleases him (*Matthew 25:44–45*; *Mark 12:30–31*).

► **Activity 12:** How do our good deeds affect our witness in the world (*Matthew 5:16*)?

E. Suffering for Christ's Sake

Even though God's plans for us are good (*Jeremiah 29:11*), there are occasions when his will may involve suffering.

1 Peter 4:19 So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

We must expect suffering (e.g. persecution) because all Christians are *strangers* in this world (*1 Thessalonians 3:2–3*; *1 Peter 1:17*).

Christ also suffered. Through his suffering, he became an example for us to follow in his footsteps (*1 Peter 2:21*).

Matthew 16:21

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

Following Christ came at a high cost to the apostles. They often went hungry, were treated brutally, and were homeless (*1 Corinthians 4:11*).

Acts 5:41

The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

The Bible teaches us that we should not despair in our sufferings but bear them willingly and even be joyful (*2 Timothy 1:8, 4:5; 1 Peter 4:13*).

Matthew 5:4

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Philippians 1:29

For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him.

In times of suffering, we can hold on to God's great promises: he will never leave us and will give us strength (*Deuteronomy 31:6; Matthew 28:20*).

► **Activity 13:** What should we do in times of trouble (*James 5:13*)?

► **Activity 14:** According to *1 Peter 4:15–16*, what kind of suffering should Christians not bring on themselves?

IV. KNOWING GOD'S WILL FOR BIG DECISIONS

Sometimes we face big decisions where it is particularly important to know the will of God. The following principles can help us discover God's will and confidently follow the path he has prepared for us.

► **Activity 15:** Do you have some important decisions ahead of you where you particularly want God's guidance?

A. Four Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles, or prerequisites, can help us discern whether a decision is pleasing to God. Consider each one carefully when you face a big decision.

1. Be Genuinely Committed to Obeying the Lord

God will reveal his will to us if we are willing to do what he says. A sign of genuine willingness to obey the Lord is doing what the Bible says.

Psalm 40:8 I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart.

Whether or not you face a big decision, do what you already know is the right thing to do according to the Bible. When we are faithful in small things, God can entrust us with bigger things (*Luke 16:10*).

► **Activity 16:** According to *Matthew 7:24*, what makes a person wise?

2. Read God's Word

The Bible is the guideline for our lives as Christians, and God speaks to us through it. When we read the Bible, we find many answers to our questions.

Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

► **Activity 17:** What attitude of heart does the Psalmist ask the Lord for in *Psalm 86:11*? How can you apply this verse to your life?

3. Pray

When you face an important decision, pray earnestly and persistently. It pleases God when we ask for his guidance, and he promises to answer our prayers (*Matthew 7:7; 1 John 5:14–15*). Nehemiah, for example, prayed and experienced God's intervention:

Nehemiah 1:11 "Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favour in the presence of this man." I was cup-bearer to the king.

Nehemiah 2:8b And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests.

► **Activity 18:** According to *Proverbs 16:3*, what should you do with every decision and what will the Lord do in response?

► **Activity 19:** What should you do when you need wisdom (*James 1:5*)?

4. Be Attentive to God's Guidance Through the Church

When making decisions, welcome input from other believers. God can speak to us through conversations and prayer with other Christians, as well as through church services.

Colossians 3:16 *Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.*

Seek advice from Christians whom you respect as mature and wise, and ask them to pray for you. God has made special promises to answer our prayers when we pray with other believers (*Matthew 18:19–20*).

► **Activity 20:** What are the advantages of belonging to a church fellowship when you are seeking God's guidance for big decisions (*Proverbs 15:22*)?

B. Four Confirmations

God's guidance often comes quietly rather than in a spectacular way. The following four confirmations can help us recognise his will. When they come together, they may indicate that our decision is pleasing to God.

If you are facing a decision right now, read through these confirmations and apply them to your own situation.

1. The Bible

There are many things that we, as Christians, should never do because they do not agree with the revealed will of God through the Bible. If a decision is not biblical, we should not take that path.

Conversely, there are many things that we can do that align with God's Word and therefore his will.

Psalms 119:105 *Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.*

If you do not know what decision to make, do what you already know is right according to the Bible.

► **Activity 21:** Is the decision that you want to make in line with the Word of God?

2. Open or Closed “Doors”

When we face a decision, God can guide us through open and closed “doors”. He may lead us in the right direction by closing a door we would like to go through. On the other hand, he may open a door that he wants us to enter. When we have committed our ways to the Lord, such open or closed doors may be an indication of his guidance.

- The prophet **Jonah** was stopped from going to Tarshish when the Lord sent a great wind on the sea and the ship that Jonah was on threatened to break up (*Jonah 1:4*). He already knew that going to Tarshish was not the Lord’s plan (*Jonah 1:1–3*) and God showed him clearly that his disobedience was not okay.
- When **Paul** was in Corinth he met a Jew called Aquila, who was also a tentmaker. As a result, Paul had a place to stay and work, and he could speak in the synagogue every Sabbath. Paul’s circumstances were an “open door” to stay and minister in Corinth (*Acts 18:2–4*).
- God confirmed **Paul’s** ministry in Ephesus by opening a “*great door for effective work*”.

1 Cor. 16:8–9 But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.

It is worth noting that Paul experienced a lot of opposition towards his ministry. Remember, opposition does not necessarily mean that we are outside the will of God.

In the New Testament we have examples of the Holy Spirit’s leading.

- In *Acts 16:6–7*, the Holy Spirit guided Paul and his companions as they travelled and preached. The Holy Spirit prevented them from preaching the gospel in the province of Asia and also from crossing the border between Mysia and Bithynia.
- In Troas, Paul experienced a vision of a man begging him to come to Macedonia. Paul and his companions concluded that God was telling them to go to Macedonia to share the gospel, so they went (*Acts 16:9–10*).

When the Holy Spirit shows us the way to go, his guidance is always in line with the Bible (*Ephesians 6:17*).

- **Activity 22:** Since submitting your decision to the Lord, have external circumstances supported or hindered your plans?

3. Advice from Other Christians

Proverbs 15:22 Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

Acts 15:32 Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers.

It is wise to seek the advice of other Christians when facing a big decision. God can use them to help us recognise his will.

However, we must not assume that human advice is always the same as God's guidance. But when mature, prayerful Christians point us in the same direction, this can be a strong indication that God is leading us that way.

This shows once again how important it is to have close fellowship with other believers and to value their input (*Acts 13:2*).

- **Activity 23:** Does your decision align with the discernment of mature Christians whom you trust?

4. Inner Peace

We should have the peace of God in our hearts in every decision we make.

Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

When we do not have inner peace, it may be an indication that there is something wrong with our decision (*2 Corinthians 2:12–13*). Deep peace, on the other hand, can confirm that our decision is the right one.

- **Activity 24:** Are you at peace about the decision you want to make?

V. HOW TO LIVE CONSTANTLY IN GOD'S WILL

A. Submit to God and Trust Him

As Christians, we want to live consistently in God's will. *Proverbs 3:5–6* shows us how.

Proverbs 3:5–6

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

- **Activity 25:** What promise is in *Proverbs 3:5–6*, and what are we expected to do?

Making the right decisions should not be complicated. When we commit each day to the Lord, trust him, and are genuinely committed to doing his will, we will live the life that he has planned for us. Thus, the Christian life, starting from conversion, is a life of faith.

Isaiah 48:17

This is what the Lord says — your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go."

- **Activity 26:** What can we trust God to do when, after much prayer and careful examination, we are still unsure whether our decision truly corresponds to his perfect will (*Psalms 23:3*)?

B. Accept Course Correction

Sometimes Christians deviate from God's will. This does not mean, however, that their whole life is ruined. They will have missed some opportunities to serve the Lord, and there may be consequences for going their own way, but they can live once again under the lordship and guidance of their loving Heavenly Father.

If you know you are not living according to God's will, humble yourself, come to Jesus, seek his forgiveness, and walk anew in the life that the Lord has planned for you.

Psalms 32:9

Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.

- **Activity 27:** What can we do to help someone who has lost their way and is caught in sin (*Galatians 6:1*)?

KNOWING GOD'S WILL

WHY SEEK GOD'S WILL?

A. Only God knows our future

Isaiah 46:10

- According to *Jeremiah 29:11*, what plans does God have for us?

B. So our lives stay on the right track

Jeremiah 10:23

- According to *Proverbs 3:6*, how can we keep from going astray?

C. God's way is the best way

John 7:16–17

WHAT ARE GOD'S PLANS LIKE?

A. God's plans are good

Romans 12:2

- How can *Romans 8:28* offer us comfort during difficult times?

B. God's plans are unique and specific

Psalms 25:12

- What does *Psalms 32:8* teach us about God's guidance in our daily lives?

WHAT IS GOD'S WILL FOR EVERYONE?

Salvation

1 Timothy 2:3–4

Good deeds

1 Peter 2:15

Sanctification

1 Thessalonians 4:3a

Joy, prayer, and thanksgiving

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

Suffering for Christ's sake

1 Peter 4:19

KNOWING GOD'S WILL FOR BIG DECISIONS

Four Guiding Principles

1. Be genuinely committed to obeying the Lord
Psalms 40:8
2. Read God's Word
Psalms 119:105
3. Pray
Nehemiah 1:11
4. Be attentive to God's guidance through the church
Colossians 3:16

Four Confirmations

1. The Bible
Psalms 119:105
2. Open or closed "doors"
1 Corinthians 16:8–9
3. Advice from other Christians
Proverbs 15:22
Acts 15:32
4. Inner peace
Philippians 4:7

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. Write down from memory: *Proverbs 3:5–6*.
2. Why is it important to know God's will?
3. Use the Bible to show that God has a plan for everyone's life.
4. Although God's will for our lives is good, we are not always spared from hard times. What should we do when we face trials, suffering, or persecution (*1 Peter 4:13, 4:19; 2 Timothy 4:5*)?
5. According to *Proverbs 3:6*, how can we keep from going astray?
6. Give one reason why it's worth doing God's will.
7. The Bible shows us many things that are always God's will. Give some examples.
8. What guiding principles can you apply to your life when facing a big decision?
9. What confirmations should we look for when making big decisions?
10. What can we trust God to do when, after much prayer and careful examination, we are still unsure whether our decision truly corresponds to his perfect will (*Psalms 23:3*)?

AFTERWORD: MOVING FORWARD IN YOUR JOURNEY WITH JESUS

Congratulations on completing the Bible course *New Life with Jesus!*

These lessons have introduced you to the foundational truths of the Christian faith. I trust that they have strengthened you to walk faithfully with God, helped you grow in spiritual maturity, and equipped you to share your faith with others.

The new life you have received through Jesus Christ is both a gift and a calling. My hope and prayer is that the following steps will help you to live your new life with joy and confidence.

A. Read the Bible Daily

God speaks to you through his Word. Aim to read the entire Bible so that you can see how God's plans unfold from Genesis to Revelation. Take notes, mark key verses, and reflect on how each passage points to Jesus Christ.

B. Pray Regularly

Prayer is the key to a living relationship with God. Speak with him about everything: your joys, your fears, your questions, and your daily needs. Take time to thank him for his blessings and to seek his guidance in your decisions.

Make prayer a natural part of your day, not only in the morning or evening. Ask God to strengthen your faith and to give you opportunities to share the Good News of Jesus with others. Pray for your family, friends, and neighbours who do not yet know him. God delights to answer the prayers of his children.

C. Be Part of a Local Church

Be involved in a local Bible-believing church where you can worship God, learn from his Word, and serve together with other believers. Being part of a church family will help you grow in faith and encourage you in difficult times.

Don't just attend. Get involved. Use the gifts God has given you to serve others and help your church reach people who do not yet know Jesus. Your desire should be that more people are saved and become part of God's family.

D. Share the Good News

God wants others to experience the joy of salvation. Ask him in prayer to open doors and to show you opportunities to share the gospel. Be willing to lead others to Jesus, step by step.

There is no greater joy than seeing someone receive eternal life through Christ, knowing that God has used you to bring someone to him.

As you continue your journey with Jesus, you can be sure that he is always by your side. God has promised: *"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you"* (Hebrews 13:5).

May your new life with Jesus be full of joy, peace, and fruit for God's kingdom.

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