

**A study of the Scriptures aimed to help a seeker find saving faith in Jesus Christ.**

**The Pioneer Valley Church of Christ  
Proclaiming the Transforming Grace of God**

## The Good News About Jesus Christ

Seek  
God

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See  
Need

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Faith in  
Jesus

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New  
Life

God wants all to be saved and calls us to salvation through the gospel of Jesus Christ. The 3000 converts at Pentecost, the Ethiopian eunuch, the Philippian Jailer, Cornelius the Centurion, Lydia and even Paul can serve as helpful paradigms for the journey from darkness to light. As we observe each journey, we consistently find a **seeker** realizing his **need** for God's intervention in his life. As soon as he comes to **faith in Jesus** for his salvation, he is moved to respond to God's offer of grace by repentance and baptism into Christ. The **new life** as a disciple of Jesus is made possible through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and strengthened in the fellowship of the Church.

For example in Acts 2, Peter and the other brothers encounter a large gathering of Jews...

- *seeking God* through the festival of Pentecost.
- Upon hearing the gospel, many were cut to the heart regarding *their need* for reconciliation to God. Peter offers them a solution for their sins and the resulting separation from God.
- Those who *believed Jesus* to be Lord and Christ were compelled by the cross to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins.
- They began their *new life* as devoted followers of Jesus after receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, and joined together daily in fellowship as the first Christian church.

The following Bible studies, adapted from a study series developed by the Hampton Roads Church of Christ, are designed to be a flexible tool to aid the seeker along this journey. While every seeker arrives at the same destination, all begin from unique starting points. Along the way, different Scriptures will prove more applicable and effective with different people. You may wish to add to or adapt these studies and illustrations based on your own experiences studying the Bible with family and friends.

Every Christian can be a fisher of men! Some suggestions:

- Get to know the person, build a loving friendship
- Buy a Bible for your friend
- Take notes so that he or she can review the Scriptures you look at together.
- Ask questions about each passage—don't simply state your points. People learn best through a process of discovery!
- Share from your own life and spiritual journey.
- Pray, pray pray! In the end, conversion is a supernatural process that can only come about as a result of the work of God in people's hearts.
- Adapt or add to these studies over time. Use verses, illustrations and studies that you find most helpful to reach the heart of the person you are studying with.
- You may find it useful to memorize these Scriptures which can aid a seeker along the path to salvation.
- Have faith in the power of God's word to change people's hearts with the truth of the gospel!

***“All Scripture is God breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)***

**Seek God**

**Seeking God**

**Knowing Jesus**

**The Word of God**

**See Need**

**The World's Wisdom or God's Wisdom**

**Sin**

**Faith in Jesus**

**The Cross of Christ**

**Saved by Grace through Faith**

**Repentance**

**Baptism**

**New Life**

**Discipleship**

**Holy Spirit**

**The Church**

# Seeking God

## Purpose

To teach a person how to pursue a relationship with God by developing a seeker's heart and by coming to know Jesus as revealed in God's Word, the Bible.

- **Acts 17:16-28.** Ever ask yourself: “What on earth am I here for?” You aren't alone! Why did God create you and bring you to this very point and time in your life? So that you would seek him and find him in order to have a personal relationship with him. Who takes the initiative in seeking this relationship? Because God loves us and desires a relationship with us, he has been actively determining times and places long before we ever thought about seeking him (*Psalm 14:2-3*). Why do so few seem to be seeking today? God is unknown and the image many have of him is distorted. To seek God, we must be willing to change our ideas about who God is to match what has been revealed to us in the Bible. There is nothing more important or exciting in life than to seek and to find our Creator God.
- **Jeremiah 29:11-14.** We will find God if we seek Him with all our heart. Have you ever done something with all your heart? What will it mean for you to seek God with all your heart?
- **Matthew 7:7-11.** What does God promise those who diligently seek? Prayer is the means by which we can make our requests known to God. Do you pray? As you seek to know God better, take him at his word that he truly listens and responds to our prayers as a loving Father.
- **Acts 8:26-40.** What do we know about this seeker? He is important and therefore certainly busy, but still finds time for God. He reads the Scriptures himself and asks questions about what he is reading. He is humble and sincere enough in his search to ask for help. What he learns he acts on right away, as seen with his baptism. How did he feel after coming to know God better? The burning questions he had about God were answered in an afternoon.
- **Acts 17:10-12.** What was it about these Berean seekers that made Luke refer to them as having “noble character”? What does “great eagerness” imply? Why was it important for them to “examine the Scriptures every day” for themselves? What was the result of this eager yet diligent attitude? As with prayer, reading the Bible is vitally important to knowing God.
- **John 1:18.** Jesus has made God known. Where do we begin our search for God? We begin by getting to know Jesus. To the degree that we know Jesus, we will know God.
- **John 20:30-31.** The Word of God produces faith in Jesus. What will we find if we seek God by coming to know Jesus through God's Word? Finding God begins with coming to faith in Jesus which promises true life now and eternal life later! As we take a closer look at Jesus, are you willing to make a heartfelt effort to draw closer to God by praying and reading the Bible?

### Additional Helpful Scriptures:

- |                       |                   |                    |
|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| ▪ Deuteronomy 4:28-31 | ▪ Matthew 6:25-33 | ▪ Matthew 13:44-46 |
| ▪ 2 Chronicles 15:1-4 | ▪ Matthew 7:13-14 | ▪ Hebrews 11:6     |

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# Knowing Jesus

## Purpose

To highlight the life, character and teachings of Jesus so that an individual can come to faith in him and aspire to know God through him.

- **John 1:1, 14.** Jesus is God in the flesh. He is the unique Son of God: fully God and fully man! God came to earth as a man in order that we could come to know him. If you were an all-powerful and invisible God, how would you have tried to communicate your love to your creation? Illustration: Imagine trying to talk to an ant.
- **Colossians 2:9.** All the fullness of God lives in Jesus Christ. This means that every aspect of God's character can be found in Jesus. Reading through any of the Gospels describing Jesus life and words will give you insight into God's character and will for your life. Here are several aspects from a day in the life of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark:
  - **Mark 1:21-22.** Jesus was an amazing teacher whose words were spoken with authority.
  - **Mark 1:23-28.** Jesus cast out demons, showing that the power of God was present in him.
  - **Mark 1:29-31.** Jesus met people's felt needs and healed the sick.
  - **Mark 1:32-34.** Jesus focused his attention on others and selflessly gave of himself.
  - **Mark 1:35.** Jesus was dependent upon God in prayer for his strength and direction.
  - **Mark 1:36-39.** Jesus was consumed with his mission to preach the good news.
  - **Mark 1:40-42.** Jesus was filled with compassion for all people.
  - **Mark 10:32-34, 45.** Jesus came to serve, and gave his perfect life as a ransom for sinners. As predicted, he was rejected by his people and crucified—but he rose from the dead three days later.

Choose a Gospel and read more about Jesus for yourself.

- **1 John 2:3-6.** Knowing Jesus is not just an intellectual exercise. The goal of the Christian is to obey his commands and become more and more like him: to think like Jesus, to act like Jesus, to live like Jesus.
- **John 14:6.** Jesus claimed to be *the* way, not a way. He claimed to be *the* truth and not one truth among many. He said he was *the* life, not just a better life. How important is it that we put our faith, our trust, our obedience in Jesus? No one will make it to the Father unless they come to him through Jesus! (Acts 4:12)

### Additional Helpful Scriptures:

- Hebrew 1:1-3
- Hebrews 2:14-18
- Hebrews 4:14-16
- If needed, read through an entire Gospel with your friend.

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# The Word of God

## Purpose

To show a seeker what the Bible says about itself so that he will be eager to read it in order to discover God's will and apply it to his life so he can change to become like Jesus!

- **2 Timothy 3:16-17.** All Scripture is inspired by God, and is to be applied to our lives so that we can be ready for every spiritual challenge.
- **Hebrews 4:12-13.** The word of God is relevant and can expose and convict us of sin in our lives. It can cut us, but its purpose is to cut out the bad, so that we can be healed—just like a surgeon's scalpel.
- **John 8:31-32.** Jesus teaches these Jews that intellectual belief is not enough. He calls them to believe God enough to trust his will for their lives. This trust is demonstrated by the decision to live according to Jesus' teaching. True faith is seen in our obedience.
- **1 Timothy 4:16.** How we live and what we teach are both essential to salvation. Illustration: Which wing of an airplane is most important? So it is with what you teach and how you live out those beliefs. What is the result of careful attention to our life and doctrine?
- **2 Timothy 4:2-3.** If the Bible is so powerful and helpful, why aren't more people truly following what it says? Bottom line, we prefer to live according to our own feelings and desires.
- **Matthew 15:1-9.** What is another hindrance to following God's word? Religious tradition which takes precedence over the Word of God can result in worldly solutions to spiritual issues and make our worship of God empty and pointless.
- **Acts 17:10-12.** We are ultimately responsible for what we believe. Religious leaders can be wrong, so we cannot be lazy. Review in greater depth the lessons and sermons you hear to be sure about what you are being taught. Are you willing to take personal responsibility for knowing what the Bible says?
- **Psalms 1, Psalm 19:7-11.** The Bible is more than just words on a page. We need to develop a thirst and devotion to the word of God. How eager are you to regularly meditate on the Scriptures?
- **Isaiah 66:1-2.** Our attitude should be one of humility, reverence and awe for God's word. Are you willing to live by the Bible, taking God at his Word in your relationship with him? Are you willing to trust God's Word above your own feelings, religious traditions or religious leaders? Will you seek to understand God's will and ways through his inspired Word?

### Additional Helpful Scriptures:

- Psalm 119:60
- John 12:47-48
- James 1:22-25
- Matthew 13:1-23
- 1 Thessalonians 2:13
- 2 Peter 1:20-21, 3:15-16
- Give a brief overview of the contents of the Old and New Testament books.

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# The World's Wisdom or God's Wisdom?

## Purpose

This study will show the stark contrast between the world's wisdom and God's wisdom and help the seeker understand that he or she cannot have it both ways. The accompanying diagram should be developed as the study progresses. (You may want to refer back to this diagram periodically, as it sets up a helpful way of viewing the whole process of conversion.)

- **1 Corinthians 1:18-20.** Everyone wants to know “How can I really live?” This passage spells out two fundamental ways to answer this question. The world's wisdom or God's wisdom. How does man in his wisdom view God's wisdom (the cross)? How does God view man's wisdom? Can we have it both ways? If you think I am a fool and I think you are a fool, what will our relationship be like? Establish the wide gulf in the two ways of viewing and living life.
- **1 Corinthians 3:18-20.** Why does Paul say “Do not deceive yourselves?” There is something about the world's wisdom that is deceiving. It is easy to convince ourselves that what we want to believe, what is comfortable, what is familiar, is right.
- **Matthew 16:13-17.** What kind of man was Peter? Was he religious? He certainly gets a right answer here. According to Jesus, where does this answer come from?
- **Matthew 16:21-23.** What does “Peter rebuked him” mean? Peter thought he was seeing things God's way, but in reality he was still on the side of the world's wisdom. We can know the right answers and still be living according to the wisdom of the world. What was Jesus' response? Where does the world's wisdom really come from? From Satan. No wonder it is the opposite of God's wisdom.
- **Before we go on:** What is the “world's wisdom”? If you asked a person who is street smart or the person on Wall Street or just a person who watches a lot of TV, what is at the heart of the world's wisdom about how to live? “Look out for number one.” “Get what you want.” “Get the power, the pleasure, the control you want.” “Get the money.” “Protect yourself.” “Guard your rights.” “Maintain your independence.” And so what is at the center of man's wisdom? Self! (See 2 Timothy 3:2.)
- **Matthew 16:24-26.** What is Jesus' message? How is it the opposite of the world's message? (1) Deny self – “disown” (Matthew 26:34). We renounce our old self, our old approach to life. (2) Take up the cross (instrument of death). Die to ourselves. (3) Follow Jesus. Make his life our model. Jesus life is a demonstration of his message. What does Jesus say will be the bottom line for those who “save their own lives”? For those who foolishly lose their lives for him?
- **Final thought.** What is everything on the left side (world's wisdom) called? Sin. What is everything on the right side (God's wisdom) called? Love. How have you lived according the world's wisdom? Have you ever made a decision to renounce it? Which side was Peter still on (though he was religious)? Which side are you on?

### Additional Helpful Scriptures:

- Isaiah 55:8
- Luke 16:15
- 2 Corinthians 1:12
- Matthew 5:1-12
- James 4:4
- 1 Corinthians 13:4-5

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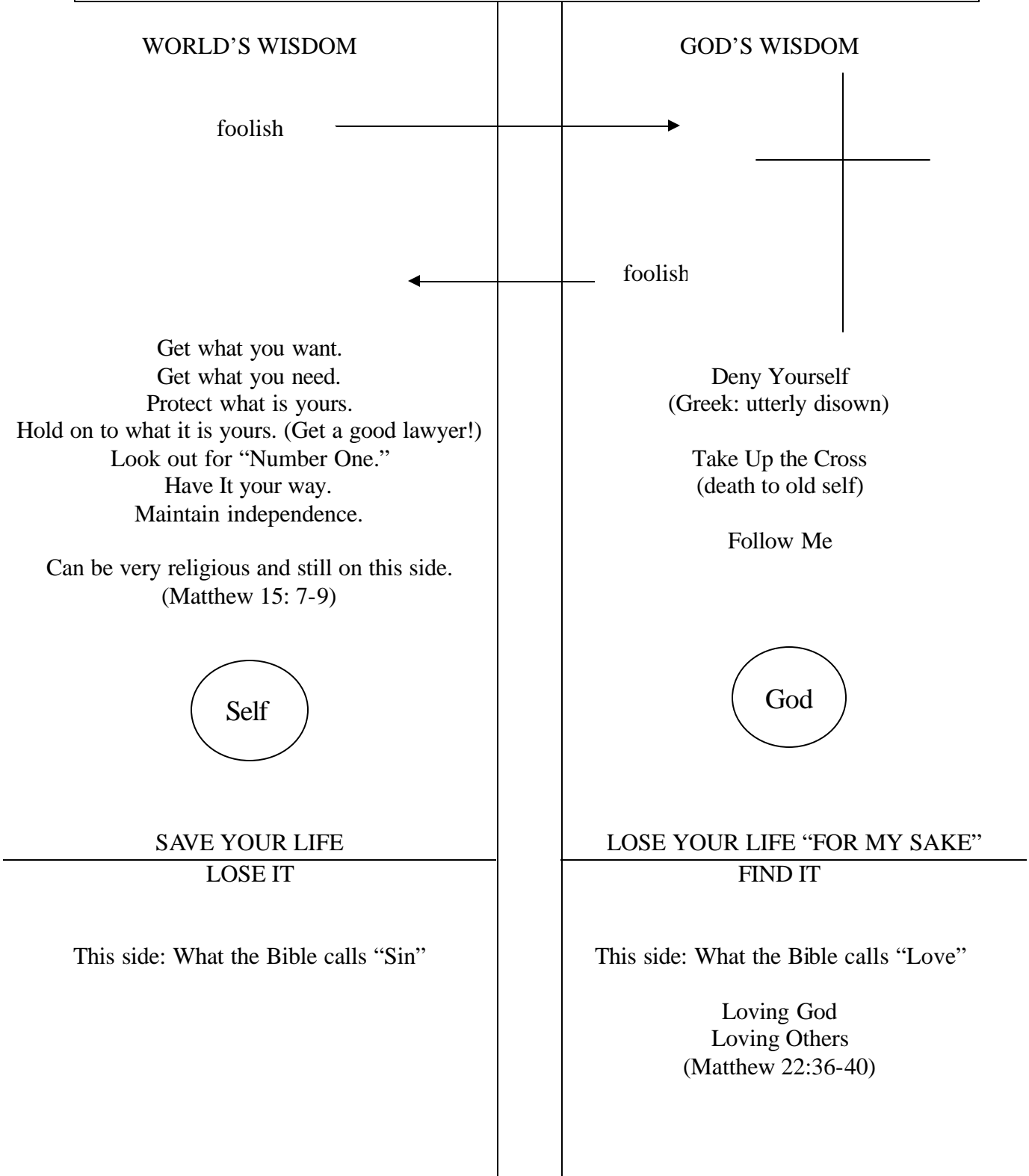
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# How Can I Really Live?

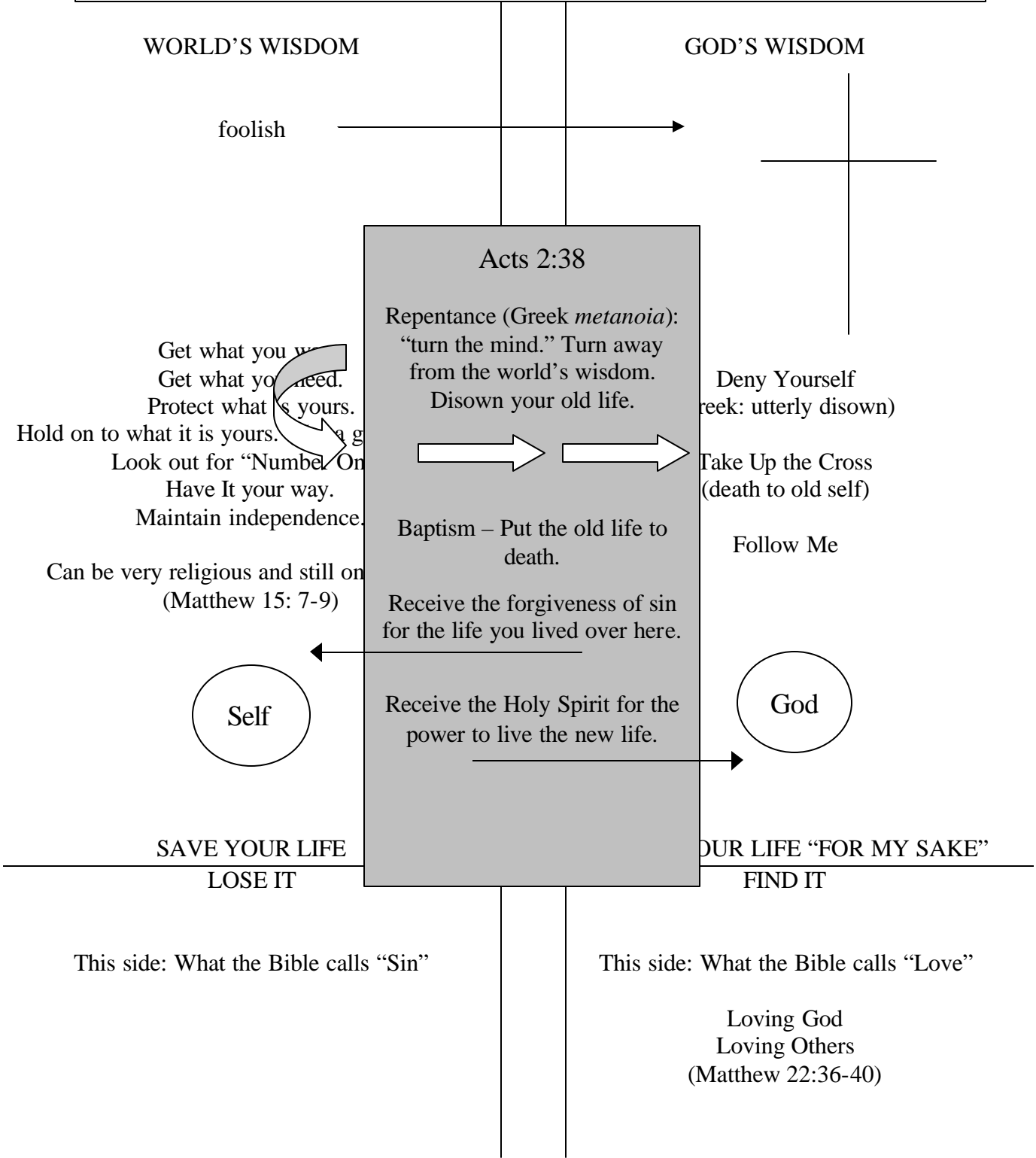


How have you lived according to man's wisdom? What are your greatest tendencies in this direction?

When did you make the decision to renounce man's wisdom and commit to following God's plan?

# How Can I Really Live?

(Additional material for extended or future study)



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# Sin

## Purpose

To help seekers see themselves as our Holy God sees them: utterly sinful and separated from him. This realization brings about a desire for both forgiveness and repentance. Pray for the Holy Spirit to convict seekers of their sinfulness in this study (John 16:8).

- **1 Peter 2:9-10.** Darkness | Light  
Not a People | People of God  
No Mercy | Mercy

Every person is either in the darkness or the light. This study will show us that outside of Jesus we are all in the darkness.

- **Isaiah 59:1-2.** What is the consequence of sin? Sin hurts others, hurts ourselves, but ultimately sin hurts and separates us from God. God is light. As long as the wall of sin remains, we are in the darkness. In order to have a relationship with God, the barrier of sin must come down.
- **Romans 3:21-24.** We will come back to other ideas in this text later, but focus on v23. Who has sinned? Use illustrations to show that some are better than others, but all sin and fall short. Examples: Swimming to Hawaii, or graph showing piles of sin. Who is more lost? There is no “good person” who is without sin.
- **Mark 7:14-23.** Sin is not simply wrong actions, but a problem of the heart. Who is responsible for our sin? Despite genetics, parenting, peer pressure and socio-economic conditions, we are responsible for our own sin, which comes from our own hearts and makes us unclean. What is the consequence of being unclean before God? Discuss the sins Jesus talks about here.
- **Galatians 5:19-21.** Sin is the fundamentally “un-God-ward” orientation of our “flesh” or “sinful nature” and finds expression in many different ways. Emphasize “and the like.” What is the common element in all these things? Self-centeredness. Be as specific as necessary to explain and share from your own life about the sins listed. How do you see yourself in these verses? What sins have been characteristic of your own sinful nature? (If needed, look at additional Scriptures which catalog sins.)
- **James 4:17.** We are sinful and in need of forgiveness not only as a result of those sins we have committed but for failing to do the good that we know to do.
- **Romans 6:15-18.** How does sin enslave? Note that sin is a *power* that must be defeated as well as *specific acts* that must be repented of. Who alone can set us free from sin? (*John 8:31-36*)
- **Romans 6:23.** What are the eternal consequences of sin? Why be urgent to learn about receiving the gift of God that comes through Jesus Christ? Review these verses as honestly as you can to get in touch with the *bad news* about your own sinfulness. In the next couple of studies, we will look at the *good news* of God’s solution to our bondage to sin. (Note: In some instances it is important to have the person articulate how he or she was saved or forgiven of sin before examining the Bible’s teaching about salvation.)

### Additional Helpful Scriptures:

- Revelation 21:8
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
- 2 Timothy 3:1-5
- Romans 1:21-32
- Colossians 3:5-11
- James 2:10-11

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# The Cross of Christ

## Purpose

To better understand the love of God and the cost of purchasing our forgiveness as seen in the death of Jesus. This study uses the Gospel of Mark and Isaiah 53 and may be more compelling when done in connection with watching scenes from a movie like “The Passion of the Christ.”

- **Romans 3:22-26, 5:6-8.** The cross is a demonstration of God’s *justice* in the face of sin. God would not be righteous if he simply looked the other way in the face of sin and evil. At the same time, the cross is the greatest demonstration of God’s *love*. Because God loves us, Jesus Christ died for our sins.
- **Mark 10:42-45.** Jesus understood God’s plan for him to give himself as a ransom for us—to die for our sins. He could do this only because of his sinless life.
- **Mark 14:26-15:41.** One account of the crucifixion. As you read and discuss each section, ask the question: “Why did God allow this to happen to Jesus?” Because He loves us! (To better describe the physical torments of the crucifixion, you may also wish to read “The Passion of the Christ from a Medical Point of View” by C. Truman Davis, M.D.)
- **Isaiah 53.** Written about 700 years before Jesus, this chapter predicted what the Messiah would do at the cross and why. (Note: In Luke 22:37, Jesus quotes from Isaiah 53 and says it was about him.) Read entire chapter. Points of emphasis:
  - Verses 1-3 – despised and rejected
  - Verses 4-6 – pierced for our transgressions; crushed for our iniquities; by his wounds we are healed. Suggestion: read this passage again putting in your own name.
  - Verses 7-9 – like a lamb to the slaughter; for the transgressions of my people he was stricken. You may want to remind the person of the sins he/she described in earlier study.
  - Verses 10-12 – he is a guilt offering; but after the suffering of his soul, satisfaction (resurrection)
- **1Peter 2:21-25.** Why did Jesus die on the cross for us? So that we might die to sin and live for righteousness. This is our whole-hearted response to the cross.

### Additional Helpful Scriptures:

- Psalm 22
- Acts 2:22-38
- Colossians 2:13-14
- Ephesians 2:1-10
- John 1:29

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# Saved by Grace through Faith

## Purpose

To show that we are saved by God's grace, through our faith in Jesus. We cannot earn our salvation.

- **Psalm 103:1-18.** In this psalm, David talks about the heart of the Lord toward weak and sinful people: he is a compassionate, gracious, loving father. How deeply does God love those who fear him? What is he willing to do with their sins (transgressions)? Is this the way you see God?
- **Luke 15:11-31.** Jesus taught many things in parables, short stories created to teach spiritual truths. What does this story tell you about God's attitude toward us when we repent and turn back to Him? Why did the older brother have such a hard time with his father's attitude? In what way did he fail to understand the father and his grace?
- **Luke 18:9-14.** In this story, we see two very different ways of viewing ourselves and God. How did the Pharisee approach God? How did he view himself? On what basis did he presume to be righteous? (His goodness, religious activities, his own efforts). By contrast, how did the tax collector see himself? What was his appeal to God based on? (God's mercy). Who went home justified (pronounced and considered "not guilty")? Jesus taught that a person can never be good enough to be saved through his own efforts. The only basis of our salvation is the mercy and grace of God.
- **Ephesians 2:1-10.** What condition are we all in? We are *dead* in sins and transgressions. How much can a dead man do to improve his own condition? What then is the only way we can be saved? What do you learn about God in his passage? His love? His mercy? His grace? What is the condition of receiving what God has done on our behalf? We are saved *by grace through faith*. Faith is obedient trust in God (James 2:14-18). Here we trust what God has done in Jesus as the grounds of our salvation and commit our lives fully to him. While we can never do enough good works to save ourselves, what are we saved *for*? Saving faith is "worked out" in ways that bring glory to God and attest to a Christ-centered life.
- **Romans 3:21-26.** Having shown that Gentiles (non-Jews) are sinners in Romans 1 and Jews are no better off in Romans 2, Paul summarizes his argument here. Is it possible for anyone to be "good enough" to be saved? Illustration: a plane goes down half way between Hawaii and California. Everyone must swim for the coast. Can some swim much further than others? But what eventually happens to them all? So with us, no one's own efforts are enough. All fall short. So how are we saved? God justifies those who "have faith in Jesus" (v26). Saving faith is not in ourselves but "in his blood"—that is, in the death of Jesus on our behalf (v25).
- **Titus 3:3-8.** When we humbly consider our own sinfulness, it becomes obvious that we are saved because of God's mercy, not because of righteous things we have done. Those who have trusted God for salvation, however, will devote themselves to doing his will. God's grace is AMAZING! He generously accepts us as a result of Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf. To enter into this saving relationship with God, we must be washed of our sins and renewed by the Holy Spirit. We will look more at the conditions of accepting God's grace in the coming studies.

### Additional Helpful Scriptures:

- Psalm 51:1-17
- Ezekiel 18:21-32
- Matthew 18:21-35
- Romans 4:1-8, 18-25
- Colossians 1:21-23
- 1 Timothy 1:12-16
- 2 Timothy 1:8-9
- Titus 2:11-14

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# Repentance

## Purpose

When we understand who Jesus is in light of his death and resurrection, our response of faith is to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (*Acts 2:36-38*). This study is designed to show a seeker what biblical repentance entails.

- **Luke 13:1-5, 6-9.** Jesus preaches that without repentance, we will all perish. He likewise expects to find fruit every time there is true repentance. The Greek word for repentance, *metanoia*, signifies a “turning,” a “change of heart and mind.” When we discover we’ve been going the wrong way on a one-way street, we immediately turn around (repent) and go in the opposite direction. In this case, we turn from a selfish life that has marginalized God to a life that makes God the center of our devotion, our faith, our obedience.
- **Luke 3:7-14.** The tangible fruit of repentance is the evidence of a changed mindset. John the Baptist insisted on repentance before baptism. If you were to ask John, “What should I do?” how would he respond to you?
- **Acts 26:15-21.** Jesus gives Paul the charge to “open their eyes” so that “they may turn” and prove their repentance by their deeds. Repentance involves a new perspective, a turning of allegiance, and fruit.
- **Ephesians 4:20-24.** Repentance is turning from an old life to a new one. Negatively, what must be “taken off”? Positively, what is the new attitude to be embraced? What is “put on” in place of the “old self”? Repentance orients us toward God and the true life and purpose we were created for: to become like him in righteousness and holiness. What do you need to “take off” and “put on”?
- **2 Corinthians 7:8-11.** What is the difference between “worldly sorrow” and “godly sorrow”? What kinds of attitudes characterize godly sorrow? Have you previously confused worldly sorrow with true repentance? We must consider the destructive consequences of our sin and what our sin cost God, because only godly sorrow leads to repentance and salvation. Repentance is above all a matter of *heart*.
- **Luke 15:11-32 or Luke 19:1-10.** Examples of heartfelt repentance. What kind of fruit did their repentance produce? How did they feel after repenting? How did God feel? What will repentance look like for you?

### Additional Helpful Scriptures:

- |                |                 |                     |
|----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| ▪ Matthew 4:17 | ▪ Acts 28:25-28 | ▪ 2 Timothy 2:24-26 |
| ▪ Acts 3:19-20 | ▪ Romans 12:1-2 | ▪ Titus 2:11-12     |
| ▪ Acts 5:30-31 | ▪ Romans 2:4    |                     |

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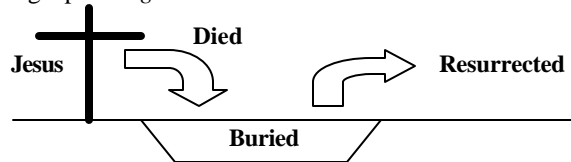
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# Baptism into Christ

## Purpose

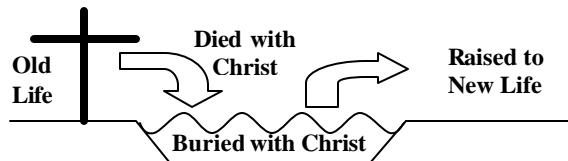
This study helps establish that baptism—and the faith that prompts it—is the link between Christ’s sacrifice and the forgiveness of our sins and gift of God’s Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

- **1 Corinthians 15:1-11.** God’s plan to bring salvation to the world culminated in the death, burial and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the heart of the “gospel” or *good news* about Jesus.



Through Jesus, the *forgiveness of sins* is now available. In this study we will look at the Bible’s teaching about baptism, a crucial link between Christ’s sacrifice and the forgiveness of our sins.

- **Acts 2:36-41.** The first proclamation of the good news of Jesus after his departure. What did Peter instruct those to do who believed the message about Jesus? When do we receive the forgiveness of sins? The Holy Spirit? (More on this later.) Those who accepted this message were baptized, thus they were saved. Let’s look at some passages that describe more fully what takes place in baptism...
- **Romans 6:1-4.** In baptism, we are united with Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection.



The benefits of salvation made *available* at the cross become *real for us* when we participate in his death, burial and resurrection. Through baptism, we die to sin and are raised to a new life.

- **Ephesians 1:3-10.** An important New Testament teaching: every spiritual blessing from God is found “in Christ.” What are some of those blessings listed here? (Sonship, adoption, grace, redemption, forgiveness...) So how does a person enter “into Christ”? (Next passage.)
- **Galatians 3:26-29.** We are baptized “into Christ.” Note that Paul did not consider faith and baptism to be contradictory. Baptism is a tangible expression of faith that places us “in Christ” where salvation occurs.
- **Infant Baptism?** Colossians 2:11-12: Baptism is an immersion in water (from the Greek *baptizo* meaning “plunge, dip, immerse”—see Acts 8:38-39), but it does not operate “automatically” apart from the faith of the one who is baptized. Can an infant believe? Repent of sin? And what sins need to be forgiven? Ezekiel 18:20: Contrary to the widely held doctrine of “original sin,” guilt for sin is not inherited from our parents. We are guilty for *our own* sins and saved by grace through *our own* response of faith.
- **Sinner’s Prayer?** 1 Peter 3:21: Some claim that a person needs only to pray a “sinner’s prayer” or “ask Jesus into his/her heart” in order to be saved. This is the predominant view in the evangelical Christian world. However, this is not the message that was preached in the Book of Acts. Everyone was called to repentance, faith and baptism, and as Peter wrote here, “baptism now saves us” by the resurrection of Christ from the dead.
- **Acts 22:7-16.** After encountering Jesus, repenting, praying, fasting (*Acts 9:9-11*), being healed, and being called by God, Paul remains in sin. What was left for him to do? Why the urgency—what is so pressing about the need for baptism? What remains for you to do or think about before you are ready to be united with Christ in baptism?

### Additional Helpful Scriptures:

- Matthew 28:18-20
- John 3:3-5
- Ephesians 4:4-6; 5:26
- Mark 16:16
- Acts 18:24-26
- Titus 3:3-5

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# Discipleship

## Purpose

The only appropriate and acceptable response to Jesus and his death on our behalf is willing obedience to God through following his Son; anything less cheapens the sacrifice that was made for us. These Scriptures should inspire us to embrace the high calling of discipleship to Jesus Christ.

- **Acts 11:25-26.** To call oneself a Christian can mean many different things to people today. The name “Christian” was applied for the first time to disciples at Antioch, about seven years after the beginning of the church. How many times is the word “Christian” used in NT? (Three times.) How many times is the word “disciple” used? (About 300 times.) What is a disciple? A disciple is a learner who strives to conform his thoughts, words and actions to those of his master. To understand what it means to live as a Christian today, we will start by looking at Jesus’ expectations for those who would be his disciples . . .
- **Mark 1:16-20.** Call of the first disciples: “Follow me.” A disciple asks himself, “What would Jesus do?” then strives to do it—regardless of the cost. A disciple of Jesus has the same purpose as Jesus: to be a fisher of men. What does this mean? What did they abandon to follow Jesus? Everything! (job, possessions, family)
- **Luke 9:23-27.** Emphasize the *heart* that God wants. What are the three demands of discipleship in this verse? What does it mean to “deny yourself?” What does it mean to “take up your cross daily?” What does it mean to “follow Jesus?” How can we be “ashamed of Jesus and His words?”
- **Luke 9:57-62.** Examine the issues involved with each person – thoughtless following, excuse making and second thoughts.
- **Luke 14:25-35.** If *anyone* would come after me... A disciple loves Jesus more than any other person (v.26). A disciple loves Jesus in spite of any persecution (v.27). A disciple loves Jesus more than any possession (v.33). Count the cost (vv.28-30): it’s the most important decision of your life! Consider the alternatives (vv.31-32): Surrender or lose everything! It’s a decision for the rest of your life (vv.34-35).
- **John 13:34-35.** What will disciples of Jesus will be known for? Their love. “As I have loved you”: What kind of love did Jesus demonstrate for us?
- **Matt. 28:18-20.** The Great Commission: God’s plan to save the world. Disciples make disciples by baptizing people from all nations in his name and teaching them to become mature, obedient followers of Jesus. Efforts to reach the world with the gospel are *multiplied* when every disciple embraces Jesus’ final charge. Are you willing to answer the call to be a disciple of Jesus?
- **Mark 10:28-31.** What did Peter and the others give up in order to follow Jesus? Is it possible to “out-give” God? What does Jesus promise to those who have committed their lives to following him? Being a Christian is not always easy, but it is the life we were created for. It is the best life *now*, and the best life for *eternity*!

### Additional Helpful Scriptures:

- |                    |                       |                      |
|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| ▪ Matthew 22:34-40 | ▪ Galatians 2:20      | ▪ Philippians 2:5-11 |
| ▪ Luke 11:1-4      | ▪ Philippians 1:20-21 | ▪ 2 Timothy 3:12     |
| ▪ John 15:1-12     |                       |                      |

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# The Holy Spirit

## Purpose

To encourage the seeker that he or she will receive the gift of God's Holy Spirit. After baptism we are sustained by the help of the Spirit, who works powerfully in the life of every disciple of Christ.

- **Acts 2:36-38.** At baptism, we are not only forgiven by Jesus' death to begin a new life, we are also filled with the Holy Spirit.
- **John 3:1-8.** Jesus taught that we must be born again via water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God.
- **John 7:37-39.** After Jesus' glorification (crucifixion, resurrection and ascension), God sent his Spirit to flow from within us like streams of running water. Previously (Old Testament), the Spirit came *upon* people. Now, he dwells *within* us.
- **John 16:5-15.** One of the primary roles of the Spirit is to convict us (and the world) with regard to sin, righteousness, and judgment. He does this in harmony with (though not exclusively through) his Word, which he gave to the Apostles as they were guided into all truth.
- **Ephesians 1:13-14.** The Spirit is God's mark of ownership on his children and a "deposit" of the blessings of the age to come.
- **Ephesians 3:14-21.** We are strengthened with real power through the Spirit who dwells within us. We cannot live the Christian life on our own strength, but God himself provides us with the power to live as followers of Jesus. Understanding Jesus' amazing love for us is a source of that strength.
- **Ephesians 4:29-32.** How do we "grieve" the Holy Spirit? Why is anger and anger-related sin so devastating? How is disharmony in our relationships incompatible with having the Spirit of God in us?
- **1 Thessalonians 5:16-20.** How do we "put out the fire of" the Holy Spirit? Why is a life of faith the only one that is in keeping with God's Spirit living in us? What influences in the world around us can keep us from having a faithful, God-centered outlook?
- **Romans 8:5-17, 26-27.** A spiritual mindset brings life and peace, and obedience to God's Word. The Spirit frees us from fear and confirms that we are fully God's children. The Spirit also aids in our life of prayer and devotion to God.
- **Galatians 5:22-23.** The fruit of the Spirit: Expect it! Pursue it! This is the best "evidence" that you have received the Holy Spirit, who is transforming us to become like Jesus. Decide to live according to the Spirit—and keep affirming that decision!

### Additional Helpful Scriptures:

- Jeremiah 31:31-34
- Acts 1:4, 2:15-18, 32-33
- Galatians 3:26-29, 4:6-7
- Ezekiel 36:24-28
- 2 Corinthians 3:17-18
- Titus 3:3-7

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# The Church

## Purpose

To encourage the seeker that Christians are not left to fend for themselves after baptism. Instead, Jesus baptizes us into the body, the church (*1 Corinthians 12:12-13*), where we are joined by a family of likeminded disciples in our devotion to Him. These brothers and sisters are meant to be a continual source of encouragement in our walk with Christ.

- **Acts 2:40-47.** The first 3000 converts joined together in devotion to the Apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. A beautiful view of the early church. How would you like to be part of such a church?
- **Romans 12:1-8.** The church is a community of people (1) devoted to God (vv1-2), (2) belonging to one another (vv3-5) and (3) devoted to one another (vv 6-10).
- **1 Corinthians 12:12-27.** The Spirit baptizes us into the body of Jesus, his church. The church consists of distinct yet unified parts, just like a human body. God himself has arranged it this way. We are the church; each of us must actively look for the distinct yet unified ways we are to support this body. How will you help build up the body of Christ?
- **Ephesians 2:19-21.** Like the Gentiles discussed here, we can now be part of God's household. The church is the family of God. What does "family" mean to you? The church is also a spiritual temple built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, whose teachings we find in the Bible, with Jesus as the cornerstone. To be part of his temple, we must build our lives and our church on that foundation.
- **Ephesians 4:1-16.** Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the church requires humility, patience, gentleness, and selflessness (vv.1-3). We maintain unity on the essentials of doctrine (vv.4-6). God provides specific leadership roles within the church (vv.7-11) in order to prepare us for works of service which build up the body in Christ-likeness and love (vv.12-16).
- **Hebrews 3:12-14.** Christianity is a "one another" religion, not a solo endeavor. We have the charge and the responsibility to be deeply involved in each other's lives. Daily encouragement helps everyone stand firm until the end. (You may wish to refer to additional "one another" verses listed below.)
- **Hebrews 10:22-25.** After being washed in baptism, we need the continual exhortations of brothers and sisters to stay the course. Consider ahead of time how you can spur on fellow Christians in the fellowship. Also prepare to receive biblical input that will result in greater love and good deeds. Why is missing meetings of the body described as a bad habit? Why and when do we meet?
- **Mark 3:31-35.** What will it mean for you to be part of Jesus' family?

### Additional Helpful Scriptures:

- Matthew 16:17-18
- John 17:20-26
- More "One Another" passages: John 13:34-35, James 5:16, Romans 12:10, 15:14, Galatians 5:13, Ephesians 4:32, 5:21, Colossians 3:16, 1 Peter 4:9
- Ephesians 5:24-33
- Colossians 1:18
- Colossians 2:18-19
- Hebrews 12:18-24

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