

BASICS OF THE FAITH SERIES - #1

“The Bible: God’s Inspired Word”

This first study in the “*Basics of the Faith Series*” is designed to familiarize people with God’s Word as revealed in the Bible. Most people have very little knowledge of the scriptures, even if they have gone to church all their lives. And yet, the Bible is God’s inspired Word; His “*love letter*” to mankind, that reveals His plan of salvation for each and every one of us! Contrary to what some people think, the message of the Bible is not difficult to understand. After all, God *wants* us to know Him, and His will for our lives. In fact, nothing you will ever do in this life is more important than learning about, understanding, and obeying God’s will. That is what this Bible study series is all about. The three main goals of this first study are:

- 1) To gain a basic understanding of the make-up and message of the Bible.
- 2) To accept the authority of the Bible as the divinely, inspired Word of God.
- 3) To make God’s Word, as revealed in the Bible the authority for your life.



A Brief Overview Of The Bible:

- The term, “Bible”, comes from the Latin word for “Books” (“*Biblia*”).
- There are 66-books in all that comprise the complete Bible.
- There are 2-major divisions of these Books: the Old and New Testaments.
- The Old Testament makes-up the first 2/3 of the Bible. In general, it records things we need to know prior to the coming of Jesus Christ. These include things like: God’s creation of the world; man’s fall into sin; God’s history of dealing with sin as embodied in the nation of Israel; and God’s promise of a coming Savior who would deal with sin once and for all. Everything in the Old Testament looks to the coming of Jesus, as recorded in the New Testament, for its fulfillment.
- The New Testament makes-up the final 1/3 of the Bible. It records the coming of the promised Savior in the person of Jesus Christ. It describes Jesus’ ministry; His death for our sins; His resurrection; His command to share His salvation with the world, the spread of this message through the work of the early church; and His imminent return, at which He will judge the world.



The Bible Is The Word Of God:

- (Hebrews 1:1-2) In the past, God spoke to man through the prophets. However, now He has fully revealed Himself and His word to us through His Son, Jesus Christ.
- (John 12:44-50) *Jesus* claimed to speak the very words of God. To reject Him is to reject God.
- (Galatians 1:11-12) *Paul* claimed that his message was not man-made, but directly from Jesus Christ.
- (2 Peter 1:16-21) *Peter* also claimed that scripture is of divine origin. He was an eyewitness of Christ’s life, death and resurrection. *In fact, for a book to be included in the New Testament canon, it had to have an eyewitness, or someone closely associated with an eyewitness, as its author. A review of the various books bears this out.**
- (John 20:30-31) *John* was yet another eyewitness of Christ (1 John 1:1-4). His gospel records some of the key information needed in order to believe in Jesus and have life.
- (2 Timothy 3:16-17) All scripture is from God. We cannot pick & choose what we’d like to believe, and which parts we will accept or reject. We either accept it all, or reject it all.



Characteristics Of The Word:

(Hebrews 4:12-13)

The Word of God is not ancient history that has no bearing upon our lives. It is living and active and applicable for us today. Sharper than the sharpest sword, it functions much like a “*divine scalpel*” that God uses to cut away the cancer of sin and unbelief from our lives. It may hurt a little when we feel the prick of conviction from the Word, but the resulting healing that comes from following God’s directives for our lives is priceless.

(Mark 13:31)

The Word of God is eternal. Heaven and earth will pass away, but not the Word of God.

(John 12:47-50)

We will be judged by the Word. If we reject it; that very word we reject will stand as evidence against us on the Day of Judgment.



The Word Is Our Authority:

(Matthew 28:18)

Jesus said that all authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to Him. Will we accept His authority and the authority of His Word in our lives?

(1 Timothy 4:16)

We must watch our life and our doctrine closely.

(2 Timothy 2:15)

Do your best to be a workman who does not need to be ashamed, but who correctly and accurately handles the Word of God.

(2 Timothy 4:1-5)

Unfortunately, the time will come (and has now come) when people will turn aside from truth of God, and listen to teachers who will tell them what they want to hear. Don’t be one of them!



What You Can Do:

(Colossians 2:8)

Base your beliefs upon teachings of Christ as recorded in the Scriptures. Don’t be taken captive by the traditions and teachings of the world; especially “religious” traditions that have no basis in Scripture.

(Acts 17:1-4 / 10-12)

Have “*the mind of a Berean*”. Don’t just believe whatever religious leaders say. Search the scriptures for yourself on a daily basis to see if what is being said is true. A good place to begin reading is the Gospel of John.

(James 1:22-25)

Don’t make the mistake of listening to the Word of God, but not doing anything to implement what you learn from it in your life. Put it into practice through obedience and you will be blessed. To do otherwise is simply self-deception.

Concluding Challenge:

(John 7:16-18)

If you have gone through this study and are still unsure about whether the teachings of Jesus as recorded in the Bible are actually the Word of God, then take the challenge that Jesus, Himself, lays out. Namely, begin to *do* the will of God (*i.e. what Scripture says*), and you will know whether or not it is of God.

BASICS OF THE FAITH SERIES - #2

“God: Our Divine Source & Standard”

This second study in the “*Basics of the Faith Series*” is designed to familiarize people with the one, true God as revealed in the Bible. Many people say they believe in God. However, often this belief is based more on what they *want* to believe about Him than what is actually *revealed* about Him in Scripture. This study will attempt to address this problem by focusing on what the Bible has to say about God. The three major goals of this study are:

- 1) To gain a biblical understanding of God as revealed in Scripture.
- 2) To accept God, as revealed in Scripture, as the one true God.
- 3) To recognize this one true God as the ultimate authority for your life.



God Is:

- ([Psalm 14:1](#)) Only a “fool” says that God is not real or doesn’t exist.
- ([Proverbs 9:10](#)) The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.
- ([Romans 1:18-25](#)) There is no excuse for not believing in God. The created world around us is evidence of His existence and power. See also ([Psalm 19:1-4](#)).
- ([Revelation 4:8-11](#)) God was, and is, and is to come! He lives forever, and is the creator of all things.
- ([Psalm 102:25-27](#)) God remains the same. The heavens and earth that He made will eventually wear out and be discarded, but God never changes.



He Is The Creator of All Things:

- ([Hebrews 11:1-3](#)) By faith, we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command. He created the heavens and the earth, and everything in them. See ([Genesis 1](#)).
- ([Job 38:1-5](#)) To all those who are skeptical; God’s challenge to Job is very appropriate!
- ([Acts 17:16-31](#)) The Apostle Paul speaks to the Athenians about God. He points out to them that God made the world and everything in it; and in Him we live and move and have our being. He is not confined to an idol of gold or a temple of stone. In the past, God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent and believe in Him. He has done this by sending Jesus Christ, His Son.



He Is The Only True God:

- ([Isaiah 44:6-8](#)) God is the first and last; apart from Him there is no God.
- ([Isaiah 45:18-25](#)) The Lord is God, and there is no other. He is the righteous God and Savior. One day, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess this fact.
- ([Jeremiah 10:1-16](#)) The Lord is the true God; the living God. All the gods of the nations are idols made by men. They have no power, but God made the world by His power.



What Is God Like?

- (Isaiah 55:6-9) God's ways are not our ways; neither are His thoughts our thoughts. His ways are as much higher than ours as the heavens are above the earth. This is very important to understand, for man has always tended toward "*Anthropomorphism*" (i.e. imposing human characteristics onto the Divine to re-make God in *our* image). That's why, when you look at the "gods" of ancient peoples like the Greeks or Romans, they seem just as selfish, petty, and carnal as the people who worshipped them. This is often the case even today. Without a Biblical understanding of God, we tend to settle for a belief about the Divine that makes Him far different than He actually is. But the scriptures give us a very clear picture of the Lord, God Almighty.
- (Exodus 33:18-34:8) Moses asked to see God's glory; to see firsthand what He is like. The Lord replies that no man can see Him face to face and live; His holiness is too great. However, by hiding Moses in the cleft of a rock, God allows Moses a brief glimpse of His back while He passes by and proclaims His nature. He is, "***The Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished....***" The encounter is so awesome that Moses is glowing when he comes down from Mount Sinai (see Exodus 35:29).
- (Revelation 4:8) God is *holy*. All God's characteristics can be summed up by this word. To be holy is to be set apart from anything that is evil and unto everything that is good.
- (Romans 14:10-12) God is *Judge*. We will all stand before His judgment seat.
- (2 Peter 3:9) God is *patient*. He doesn't want anyone to perish, but all to come to repentance.



God Is Our Standard For Life & Conduct:

- (Genesis 1:26-27) God made men & women as the crowning achievement of His creation. We are not just another species of animal. God gave us dominion over the whole earth. We are unique from anything else in that we are ***made in the image of God****. He is not made in our image; we are made in His image! Among other things, this means we're made to mirror God's character; to be "*the splitting image*" of our Heavenly Father in terms of love, goodness, holiness, etc.
- (1Peter 1:14-16) We are to be holy just as God is holy. Remember, we were made in His image.
- (Hebrews 12:14) Without holiness, no one can see the Lord. He is our standard.
- (Hebrews 4:13) Nothing you do is hidden from the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Concluding Challenge:

- (Eccles. 12:13-14) The conclusion that Solomon came to in the book of Ecclesiastes is the only sensible conclusion for our own lives. Remember your Creator! Fear God and keep His commandments; for God will bring every deed into judgment!

BASICS OF THE FAITH SERIES - #3

“Man: The Problem of Sin”

Although men & women are the crowning achievement of all God’s creation, their individual and collective stories all bear the imprint of the ever-present, corruptive influence of sin. This third study in the “Basics of the Faith Series” is designed to familiarize people with the Biblical truths of mankind’s origin and intended purpose; his tragic fall into sin; and the devastating consequences brought about as a result of that sin. The three major goals of this study are:

- 1) To gain a biblical understanding of God’s intent for mankind.
- 2) To understand man’s fall into sin and the resulting consequences.
- 3) To accept personal responsibility as a sinner accountable to a holy God.



Made in God’s Image:

(Genesis 1:26-27) God made men & women as the crowning achievement of His creation. We are not just another species of animal. God gave us *dominion* over the whole earth. We are unique from anything else in that we are ***made in the image of God****. He is not made in our image; we are made in His image! Among other things, this means we’re made to mirror God’s character; to be “*the spitting image*” of our Heavenly Father in terms of love, goodness, holiness, etc. We are to be holy as He is holy. See (1Peter 1:15)*.



Fallen Into Sin:

(Psalms 36:1-2) We all have a tendency to flatter ourselves into thinking that we are not that bad when it comes to sin. However, God’s Word says otherwise!

(Romans 3:23) Sin is falling short of what God intended for us. The word “*Sin*” in the original New Testament Greek is the term “*Hamartia*” - a word used in archery to describe someone who takes aim at a target, but completely misses the mark. God is our standard, and sin is anything that falls short of, or misses that mark.

(Galatians 5:19-21) Many of the acts of the sinful nature are obvious. Those who live like this will not enter the Kingdom of God.

(Matt. 5:21-22 / 27) Sin is not just the actual act of doing something wrong; it starts with the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. In God’s eyes, murder is not just the physical act of killing, but an attitude of anger towards someone; adultery is not just the physical act of infidelity, but even looking at another person with lust in our hearts.

(Mark 7:14-23) Ultimately, sin is a matter of the heart. Evil thoughts, desires, and motives are what make us “unclean” before God, even when our behavior seems good. God does not look at things the way man looks at things. Man tends to focus only on the outward appearance of things, but God looks at the heart.

(James 4:17) Sins of *omission* are just as wrong as sins of *commission*. That is, to fail to do the right thing is just as bad as actually doing the wrong thing!



Who Has Sinned?

- (Romans 3:9-18) Who has sinned? All of us! Even the most righteous person in the world falls far short of the image of God we were intended to reflect. Often, we are tempted to think we are not as corrupted by sin as the Bible states. We say things like, “*I’m basically a good person. I don’t steal or kill or do really bad things like some other people do.*” The error of such statements is that they reveal that we are judging ourselves by the wrong standard. God is the standard for comparison, not other people! We are created to reflect His image, not image of Joe, Susan, Tom, Lisa, or any other human being. When we honestly examine our lives in light of God’s holiness, there is not a person alive who measures up.
- (Isaiah 64:6-7) Even our most righteous acts fall far short of the goodness of God. Our best is like filthy rags compared to God’s holiness.
- (1 John 1:5-10) If we claim that we have not sinned, we are deceiving ourselves. God is light, and in Him is not darkness. To claim to have fellowship with Him when we are living in unrighteousness is the ultimate form of delusion.
- (James 1:13-16) We cannot blame God for our sin; He does not tempt us. *We* are to blame. We sin when we are carried away by our *own* evil desires. If left unchecked, this desire gives birth to ungodly behavior that ultimately results in death (spiritual as well as physical).



The Consequences of Sin:

- (Genesis 3) Sin is not a “*mistake*” or a “*slip-up*”; it is *rebellion* against the authority of God. As with Adam and Eve, sin is always rooted in the prideful thought that we know more about what’s best for ourselves than our Creator. History has shown how wrong we have been! The consequences of the first sin included: broken fellowship with God and one another; physical death; and spiritual condemnation. These same consequences result from our sin today. Adam and Eve tried to hide their sin from God, but could not; and neither can we. God sees and He knows! (Hebrews 4:13)*
- (Isaiah 59:1-2) Our sins have separated us from God, the source and sustainer of life.
- (Romans 1:28-32) It is God’s righteous decree that those who sin deserve death. This is not just physical death, but spiritual condemnation.
- (Romans 6:23) The wages of sin are death (both physically & spiritually). A wage is what you earn; what you are paid. When we sin, we justly earn condemnation and death.
- (Rev. 20:11-15) There is a Day of Judgment for those that live and die in sin. They will be judged according to what they have done, as recorded in God’s books, and then will be thrown into Hell (*the lake of fire*) for all eternity. See (Revelation 21:8)*

Concluding Challenge:

- (Romans 7:14-25) We are *all* sinners before a holy God. Sin enslaves us, making us unable to do the good that God requires. If we received what our sin deserves, every one of us would be eternally condemned. We are in a wretched predicament, indeed! We need rescuing! And that is exactly what Jesus has come to do; save us when we are powerless to save ourselves. We’ll learn more about this in our next study.

BASICS OF THE FAITH SERIES - #4

“Jesus Christ: Our Savior from Sin”

There's no message more wonderful to hear than the message that God has made a way of salvation for us through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ! In the Bible, this message is called “*the Gospel*” (*literally: “good news”*). As we discussed in the previous study, each of us stands as a sinner deserving of condemnation before a holy God. Throughout history mankind has attempted to deal with sin by means of sacrificial rituals, ethical behavior, and all sorts of religious and philosophical belief systems aimed at restoring fellowship with God. The problem is that none of these things can ever do that! But, God, in His mercy, has made a way of salvation where none other could be found; and that way of salvation is through Jesus Christ. And so, the three major goals of this study are:

- 1) To gain a biblical understanding of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.
- 2) To understand the purpose of Christ's death for our sins upon the cross.
- 3) To accept the truth that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation and no other.



The Son of God:

- (Isaiah 9:1-2 / 6-7) The prophet Isaiah spoke about God's Savior 750-years before the birth of Jesus. He is the “*Wonderful Counselor; Mighty God; Everlasting Father; Prince of Peace.*”
- (Matthew 1:18-25) At His birth, He is given the title “*Immanuel*”, which means “God with us”. Even the name “*Jesus*” means “the Lord saves”; for Jesus came to save us from our sins.
- (John 1:1-5 / 14-18) John describes the birth of Jesus in terms of the “*Word*” (*Greek: logos*) becoming flesh! In Jesus, all the truth of God is embodied and made visible in human form.
- (Hebrews 1:1-3) In sending Jesus, God did far better than merely sending us another prophet to *tell* us about Himself. In Christ, we actually *see* the exact representation of His being.
- (Colossians 1:15-18) Jesus Christ is the very “*image*” of the invisible God. To see Him is to see God. He is the Creator of all things, the Sustainer of all things, and the Head over all.
- (John 14:8-10) We don't need to guess or wonder anymore what God is like. Jesus reveals Him to us. Anyone who has seen Jesus has seen the Father.
- (Hebrews 2:14-18) Although Jesus was fully God, He can sympathize with our weaknesses because He was tempted as we are – yet was without sin. See (Hebrews 4:14-16)*



The Sacrifice for Sins:

- (Matthew 26 & 27) Jesus' death on the cross was according to God's plan to pay the penalty for sin (*i.e.* death). Although innocent, Jesus was crucified in our place. Through His death all barriers separating us from God because of our sin were removed. The tearing of the temple curtain dividing the “*holy of holies*” from worshipers vividly illustrates this
- (Hebrews 9:11-15) Through His death on the cross, Jesus fulfilled the righteous requirements of the Old Testament sacrificial system. As the unblemished Lamb of God, His shed blood accomplished what no religious rituals or sacrifices ever could.

- (Romans 5:6-8) We were powerless to save ourselves, but Christ died for us. God demonstrates his love for us in this: that, even though we are sinners, Jesus died in our place.
- (2 Corinthians 5:21) God made Him who had no sin to *be sin* for us!
- (1 Peter 2:24) He, Himself, *bore our sins* in His body on the tree so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds we have been healed. See (Isaiah 53)*
- (Colossians 1:19-23) God has *made peace* with us through the blood of His Son shed on the cross.



The Risen Lord:

- (John 20) Jesus did not stay dead after His crucifixion. Three days after being laid in a tomb, He rose triumphantly from the grave! Even “*doubting Thomas*” was convinced!
- (1 Cor. 15:1-9) Jesus’ resurrection was predicted by the Scriptures, as was His death for sins. He was seen by numerous people after His resurrection; even as many as 500 at one time. This truth is vitally important to understand, because it proves His ability to raise us to life as well! See (1Cor. 15:12-25).
- (1 Peter 1:3-9) We have a “*Living Hope*” because of Christ’s resurrection from the dead. He has secured an eternal inheritance for us with God; one that can never perish, spoil or fade...the very salvation of our souls!



The Only Way:

- (John 14:6) Jesus is the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Him. He alone has paid the price for sins and triumphed over death.
- (1 Timothy 2:5-6) There is one mediator between God and men; ...Jesus Christ!
- (Acts 4:12) Salvation is found in no one else. Only Jesus has opened the way to God, not Buddha, Mohammad, or any other religious figure.



The Coming King:

- (Acts 1:9-11) Christ ascended to the right hand of God, the Father. He will return a second time.
- (Hebrews 9:27-28) Christ’s second coming will to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him, and judgment upon those who reject Him.
- (Matthew 24:36-44) Christ will return at an hour that no one knows; like a thief in the night. Be ready!
- (2 Peter 3:3-15) The reason Christ has not yet returned is that God is being *patient* with you; not wanting anyone to perish, but all to come to repentance.

Concluding Challenge:

- (1 John 5:11-13) Whoever has the Son has eternal life; whoever does not does not have life. Do you have the Son?

BASICS OF THE FAITH SERIES - #5

“*Salvation: Being Born Again*”

As we discussed in the previous study, God has made a way of salvation for us through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ! In the Bible, this message is called “*the Gospel*” (*literally: “good news”*). Forgiveness for our sins and the gift of eternal life is now available to all! However, it is important to understand that, although a way of salvation has been made through Jesus Christ, this does *not* mean that all are automatically saved. Each of us must choose to personally respond to God’s offer of salvation in order to experience it. We do this through faith, by accepting Christ as the Lord and Savior of our lives. The Bible calls this being “*born-again*”. The three goals of this study are:

- 1) To understand the nature of the “new birth” that God offers us in Christ.
- 2) To “count the cost” of accepting this gift by choosing to follow Christ as Lord & Savior.
- 3) To personally experience salvation by being “born-again” through faith in Jesus Christ.



Understanding the New Birth

([John 3:1-8](#))

Jesus states that no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he undergoes a “*new birth*”. Although each of us has been born in a physical sense, in order to enter the Kingdom we must be *born of the Spirit*. Being born-again is a supernatural work of God that involves Him actually “breathing” new life into us through the Holy Spirit, even when we are “dead” in our sins. See ([Ephesians 2:1-5](#)) & ([Ephesians 1:13-14](#)).

([Galatians 2:20](#))

The new birth is a complete break with the old and the beginning of something new; a radical change in our lives. In one sense, it involves *a death*, as we let go of our old, sinful life and allow it to be nailed to the cross. In another sense, it involves *a birth*, as we allow Christ to actually come and live *in* us. This is the “hope of glory” ([Colossians 1:27](#)).

([Colossians 3:3-4](#))

Those who undergo the new birth have *died* to their old life and have that life *hidden* under the blood of Christ. They’ve been “*clothed*” with Christ ([Galatians 3:26-27](#)). When God looks at them, He no longer sees their sinfulness, but the perfect purity of His Son.

([2 Corinthians 5:17](#))

When a person is born-again they become *a new creation* in Jesus Christ. The *old* has gone (all their sins are washed away) and the *new* has come. This is actually the beginning of a process of being *re-made into the image of God*, as we were meant to be ([Colossians 3:7-10](#)) ([Ephesians 4:22-24](#)).

([Ephesians 2:8-9](#))

The new birth is *not* something that can be brought about by your own effort. Rather, it’s God’s work of salvation possible only through His grace in Jesus Christ. We *can*, however, accept or reject this salvation by accepting or rejecting Christ.



Experiencing the New Birth

([John 1:10-13](#))

There’s no doubt about whom Jesus is, and what He came to do; that is clear: *Jesus IS Lord and Savior!* The key question for each of us then becomes: “*Will I accept Jesus as MY Lord and Savior?*” Not everyone believed in Jesus when He walked this earth. Not everyone will believe in Him today either. But, to those who *receive* Him, God gives the right to be born-again and experience His salvation. *The question is will you accept Him?*

([Acts 2:36-41](#))

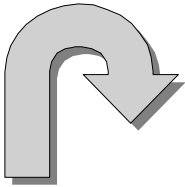
Acts chapter-2 tells about a group of people faced with this very question. They had to choose whether or not to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior or to reject Him. Gladly, three thousand people chose to surrender their lives to Christ, be born-again and receive His salvation that day! Now that you know who Jesus really is, and what He offers you, what will you choose? (**Note:** To *not* make a decision about Jesus is to have already made the choice to reject Him!) Let’s look at this more closely at what it means to be born-again.



YOU MUST BELIEVE: In Peter’s sermon to the multitude, he urges them to “...*be assured that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36).*” In other words, Peter is telling them; *believe that Jesus is Lord and Savior!* To accept Christ we must place our *faith* in Him. This means far more than mere intellectual assent to His existence; it involves trusting Him completely for what only He can do. (*Example: The Tight-Rope walker over Niagara Falls: *Do you believe? Are you willing to get into the wheelbarrow?*)

(John 3:16-18) It is those who believe in Christ who inherit eternal life. Those who don’t believe are condemned. See also (John 11:25-27). Do you believe?

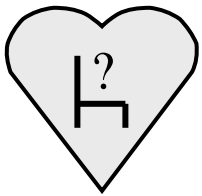
(James 2:14-26) Genuine faith in Christ is more than mere acknowledgement of the facts; it is always accompanied by action! A person who says they believe but doesn’t obey doesn’t believe.



YOU MUST REPENT: Peter tells the multitude in (Acts 2:38) to “*repent*”. Genuine faith is always accompanied by repentance. Derived from the Greek word “*metanoia*”; repentance means “*to change one’s direction and/or mindset*”. Repentance can best be thought about as doing a “U-turn”. If I am driving the wrong way down a one-way street, I need to repent (i.e. do a “u-turn” and go the right way)! When it comes to our lives; the “right way” is always God’s way. (*Example: Tug-a-war with God: *Will you stop going the wrong way and go God’s way?*)

(Acts 3:19-20) Repentance is turning *away* from sin and *to* God. More than just feeling sorry for our sins, repentance involves a complete change of direction (See Luke 9:23-27).

(Luke 15:11-24) The parable of the lost son presents a beautiful picture of repentance.



YOU MUST COMMIT: Peter tells the people in (Acts 2:38) to “*be baptized*”. This has to do with commitment and surrender. A critical issue in salvation is “*Who is in control?*” Genuine faith in Christ as Savior is always accompanied by a commitment to Him as Lord. Many people want Jesus to be their Savior without being their Lord. But, this is impossible. To accept Christ as our Savior, we must accept Him as our Lord as well! (*Example: Who is on the throne of your heart: *Are you willing to surrender to Christ and place Him on the throne?*)

(Luke 14:25-33) No one can be a follower of Jesus without placing Him first in their life, above anybody or anything else! (See Matthew 10:37-39).

(Matt. 28:18-20) Jesus gave us a beautiful way to embody our commitment to Him: through baptism. From a Greek word meaning to “*submerge or go under*”, baptism was how the first century believers proclaimed their allegiance to Christ as Lord and Savior. In baptism, someone who has decided to follow Jesus re-enacts His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6:1-7); proclaiming to God and a watching world their decision to die to their old way of life and rise to walk in newness of life in Christ. Baptism is both a *funeral ceremony* for your old life, and a *birthday celebration* for the new life Christ gives you when you accept Him. What better depiction could there be of the new birth? Consider some examples from the Book of Acts:



- (Acts 8:26-40) - The Ethiopian believes and embodies his faith through baptism.
- (Acts 9:1-19) - Saul is radically converted, and proclaims his faith in baptism.
- (Acts 16:16-34) - The Philippian jailer believes in Christ and is baptized that very night.
- (Acts 22:1-16) - Paul recounts his own conversion to Christ. *What are you waiting for?*

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

Deciding what you will do in response to Jesus Christ is the most important decision you’ll ever make! To accept Him is to receive the salvation He offers, while to reject Him is to choose condemnation. What God is asking us to do is *step across the line from death to life* by *Do you **Believe** that Jesus is the Son of God, and of your sins and turn to God? Will you **Commit** to “YES” to these questions, you can be born-again. are? He hears you! Let Him know that you Tell Him you’re sorry for your sins and want to accept Him as the Lord of your life. If you’ve done this, you’ve just made the decision of a lifetime! Now let’s embody it in baptism! A new life awaits you, both now and for eternity!*



deciding to submit our lives to His Son in faith. *the only Savior from sin? Are you ready to **Repent** Jesus as the Lord of your life?* If you can answer Why not pray to Christ right now, right where you believe in Him and desire the new life He offers.

BASICS OF THE FAITH SERIES - #6

“Discipleship: The New Life in Christ”

If you've accepted Christ as your Lord & Savior you have made the most important decision you will ever make! Through Jesus Christ, you've been “*born-again*” as a son or daughter of God (John 1:12-13/3:1-8). Consider just a few of the many blessings you have received by choosing to follow Jesus. You have been: *rescued from the dominion of darkness* (Colossians 1:13); *forgiven of your sins* (Colossians 1:14); *reconciled to God* (Colossians 1:19-23); *made a new creation in Christ* (2 Corinthians 5:17); *sealed with the Holy Spirit* (Ephesians 1:13-14); and *given the gift of eternal life* (1 John 5:11-12). As a child of God, the Lord now wants you to grow up healthy and strong in your faith. Your conversion is the beginning of an exciting process of transformation in which God sets about actually *re-making* you into His image (Genesis 1:27). The Bible refers to this process as “*sanctification*” (i.e. being made holy). God has *saved* you; now He wants to *sanctify* you by making you like Jesus. Said another way, God has saved you from the *penalty* of sin (i.e. death/hell); now He wants to save you from the *power* of sin (i.e. its control and influence in your life). Our willing participation in this process of growth and purification is referred to as “*discipleship*”. Just as a new-born baby needs proper nurture and nutrition to grow up healthy and strong; a new disciple of Jesus will need a steady diet of God's word, prayer, fellowship, communion, and the working of the Holy Spirit to grow in faith and godliness as the Lord intends. The goals of this study are:

- 1) To understand Christ's call to a life-time of growing and learning as His disciple.
- 2) To understand and yield to the work of the Holy Spirit in your life as a disciple.
- 3) To understand and put into practice the “4-Basic Devotions” of a disciple.



Living as a Disciple of Jesus

(Colossians 2:6-7)

Just as you *received* Jesus as Lord, you now need to *live and grow* in Him, setting your roots down deep in Christ so you can be changed by Him. You also need to be careful not to allow worldly thinking to capture your mind rather than the truth of Jesus Christ. How can you do this?

(Matthew 28:18-20)

Jesus wants newly baptized “disciples” to be taught to *obey* everything He commanded. This involves growing in both our *knowledge* of Christ's commands, and our *commitment* to living them out. After all, a disciple desires not only to *know* his Master's will, but to *do it!* In fact, the question, “*What would Jesus want?*” should continually be in the heart and mind of every disciple of Christ!

(Luke 6:40)

A disciple will become increasingly like Jesus as he grows in faith and godliness. Such Christ-like qualities as love, joy, and purity should be more and more evident.

(John 15:1-8)

Jesus is the “true vine” from which His followers derive their spiritual life and nourishment. *Abiding* in Him is key to bringing forth godly “fruit” in your life (see Galatians 5:22-23). It also insures His “pruning” touch, as He cuts away “dead” areas to allow for even greater growth. It is this growth in godliness that proves the genuine-ness of our discipleship. How can you *abide* in Christ?



Out with the Bad; In with the Good

(1 Peter 1:14-15)

Healthy spiritual growth as a new disciple of Jesus is impossible if you are continually allowing evil things to influence your life. As an obedient child of God, you need to stop conforming to worldly desires and start pursuing holiness. Your Heavenly Father is holy, and He desires you to be holy as well.

(Colossians 3:1-17)

We are influenced greatly by what we think about and spend time doing. A disciple of Jesus needs to *set his/her mind* on things above, not on earthly things. The Lord wants you to *put to death* your old sinful ways so you can *put on* the new self which is being renewed in the image of its Creator. This process is a lot like *taking out the trash*. In order to create space for good and godly things in your life you may need to give some things up, throw some things out, and change some life-long habits. That's OK, your living for a different Master now!

(Ephesians 4:22-5:21)

Once again, we're called to *put off* the old self, and *put on* the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. This involves scrutinizing many different areas of your life, and bringing them under Christ's control.

(Romans 12:1-2 / 9-21)

Offer your body as a living sacrifice to God. This is true spiritual worship, and it is the secret to being transformed by His Holy Spirit living in you. Sincerely pursue godliness in practical ways as outlined in these verses.



Sanctified By the Holy Spirit

(John 14:15-17/26)

The Holy Spirit is given to each believer as a counselor (*Greek: "parakletos" - "one who comes alongside to help"*). The third Person of the Trinity, He actually takes up residence in the heart of every believer and begins to lead, guide and change us from the inside-out. He's the power source of God's sanctifying work in our lives.

(Romans 8:1-17)

We are to live in accordance with the Holy Spirit of God. This means *setting our minds* on the things the Spirit desires. The Holy Spirit brings us into intimate fellowship with God. Through Him, God is our "*Abba*" (i.e. "Daddy").

(Galatians 5:16-26)

Live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. The Spirit's work, as we allow Him to do it, is to produce the godly "fruit" of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control in our lives. **IMPORTANT:** This is *not* something that you can drum up by your own effort (see John 15:5). Rather, it is something the Spirit of God produces in us as we learn to not "quench" or "grieve" Him, but to obey Him.



4-Basic Devotions to Grow By

(Acts 2:42)

There are a few, basic things to which all new disciples of Jesus needs to devote them selves. A continuing commitment to these things is essential for our growth.

(1 Peter 2:2-3)

Just as a new-born baby craves milk, we, as new-born believers need to feed *daily* on the pure milk of God's word. Set a *time* and *place*; have a *plan*; and start today!

(Ephesians 6:18)

Prayer gets God involved. He wants His children to pray to Him about *everything*. There's no situation He won't get involved in if we ask Him (see Philippians 4:6-7).

(Hebrews 10:24-25)

Don't give up meeting with your Christian brothers and sisters! We all need the encouragement of fellowshiping and worshipping together. *No disciple can go it alone*. Make regular worship and fellowship a non-negotiable in your new life.

(1Corinthians 11:23-34)

The Lord's Supper is a meaningful way Jesus gave us to remember Him. He is the "*Bread of Life*" (John 6:48-59). Communion helps us learn to *feed* on Him.

* * *

(1 Thess. 5:23-24)

God has *saved* you; now he wants to *sanctify* you as a disciple of Jesus. This process will have its challenges as well as victories. But, God is faithful! He *will* finish the work He began in you! So persevere; the best is yet to come!

BASICS OF THE FAITH SERIES - #7

“The Church: Belonging to the Family of God”

As believers in Jesus Christ, we are not left to live out our faith on our own. Although each of us must individually make our own decision as to whether or not we will accept Christ as Lord and Savior, once we have experienced that conversion, God graciously gives us other believers to serve as companions and co-workers with us in our new life of the spirit. That is why God has given us the Church. The Church is integral to God’s plan for world redemption. Christians have met together for corporate worship, fellowship, teaching, encouragement and witness from the beginning. However, as with so many things in the Bible, the concept of “church” has been much misunderstood. The three goals of this study are:

- 1) To understand the origin and nature of the Church of Jesus Christ.
- 2) To grasp the scriptural concept of the Church as the “*Body of Christ*”.
- 3) To commit to living as a contributing “*member*” of Christ’s Church on a local level.



The People of God

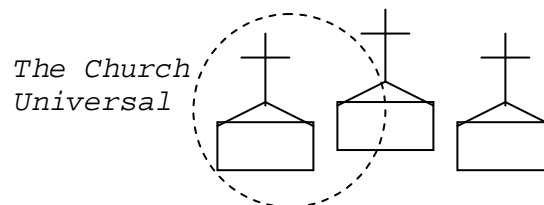
(Matthew 16:13-20) Jesus said He would build His Church and the gates of Hell would not prevail against it. The rock-solid truth it would be built upon is the belief that Jesus is the Christ; the Son of God.

Note: The biblical concept of “church” refers to *people*, not a building or institution. The Greek word translated church is “*Ecclesia*” (*Literally: “the called-out ones”*). So the church is *people...*, people who have been called-out of an old, sinful way of life and into a new relationship with Christ and one another.

(Acts 2:36-47) The church actually came into existence on the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out and Peter preached the first Gospel sermon. Three thousand people put their faith in Jesus that day, and were baptized. This was the beginning of the Church. Note the devotion to God and one-another that the early church demonstrated!

(1Peter 2:4-10) The Church is the household of God; a family of Christian brothers and sisters. Like *living stones* joined and fitted together by a Master Architect; believers are built together into a holy temple in which God lives by His Spirit. Jesus, Himself, is *the chief cornerstone* (the first stone laid with which all others must be lined up). No other foundation will do! He’s our unity, not denominational loyalty. See also (Ephesians 2:19-22).

The Universal Church In its “*Universal*” sense, the Church (capital “C”) is *all* true believers in Christ throughout all times and places. This is not an organization you can join; it’s the people of God that you must be born-again into. In contrast, people who attend services at a church building, but have not been born-again are *not* part of Christ’s Church no matter how “religious” they may appear. This is a salvation issue. See Diagram below:



The Local church In its “*local*” sense, the Church exists as *congregations* of Christians that meet together for worship, support and teaching. This is the church in its “*local*” (small “c”) sense. See (1Corinthians 16:19). This *is* a group you can join. If you’re a born-again believer and are willing to support and work alongside other believers in a particular congregation, then you can “place membership” in that local church, and live out your Christian faith with them. If you haven’t done so yet, you need to place membership in a local church and become involved in the life of the community of faith.



The Body of Christ

- (Ephesians 1:22-23) Christ is the head over everything for the Church. The Church is His body; the physical representation of His love to earth until His return.
- (Ephesians 4:1-6) There is one Body (or Church), not many. Although there are many different Christian movements and denominations, as long as each is based upon the truth of Christ, they are merely different “parts” or “members” of the one Body; each representing Jesus to the world in a way they alone are uniquely gifted to do.
- (Romans 12:4-8) Similarly, each of us as individuals is uniquely gifted as a “member” of the body of Christ. Like the eyes, ears, arms, legs, fingers, and toes of a human body; each Christian serves a vital and important role in the life of the Church (both universal and local); and each one “belongs” to all the others. It’s important that we utilize our God-given gifts and talents so the Body of Christ can function properly and do His work in the world.
- (1Cor. 12:12-31) Every part of the Body is important and necessary, not just the visible or more prominent parts. (*ie.* Your toes may not seem to be all that important to the rest of your body, but just try and walk well without them!). Similarly, no Christian is independent and capable of living a part from the rest of the Body (*ie.* If your arm decided it didn’t need the rest of the body and cut itself off; it would quickly find out that, not only is the body crippled by its absence, but it is very difficult to survive alone, without being connected to the other members!). God’s desire for the Church is that we function *together* so that there’s no division in the Body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.
- (Ephesians 4:11-16) The function of church leaders and pastor/teachers within the Body is *NOT* to do all the works of service and ministry. Rather, their God-given role is to teach, equip and prepare the rest of God’s people so *they* can do the work of ministering to one another and others. In this way, the Body of Christ builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. *Are you doing your part?*



Being the Church

The following passages of scripture are just a few of the so called “*One-Another Passages*” in Bible; teachings that have to do with how we are to treat one another as fellow members of the Body of Christ. These scriptural admonitions provide an excellent guide for what it means to “be” the Church. Put them into practice in your life!

- (Hebrews 3:12-13) Encourage one another. Do it daily. Make sure no one gets “hardened” by sin’s deceit.
- (Hebrews 10:24-25) Consider how you can spur your brothers and sisters on toward love and good deeds. Don’t give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but encourage one another!
- (Romans 12:10) Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.
- (Romans 12:13) Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.
- (Romans 12:16) Live in harmony with one another.
- (Romans 15:7) Accept one another just as God accepted you.
- (Galatians 5:13-14) Serve one another in love. Avoid biting and criticizing one another.
- (Galatians 6:2) Carry each others’ burdens. This fulfills the law of Christ.
- (Ephesians 4:32) Be kind and compassionate to one another; forgiving each other just as God forgave you.
- (Colossians 3:16) Teach and admonish one another.
- (James 5:16) Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other.
- (Ephesians 6:18) Always keep on praying for all the saints!

BASICS OF THE FAITH SERIES - #8

“The Mission: Fishing for Men”

As those who have experienced God’s saving grace through Christ, we know what it means to be brought from death to life. We can joyfully echo the words of the old hymn that says, “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see”. But the reality is that not everyone can sing those words. There are still many people, in this world, who either don’t know or have yet to accept the salvation that God offers us in Christ. They are lost. And yet God earnestly desires their salvation. He desires that no one should perish, but that everyone would come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). And He asks us to join Him in seeking for their salvation. What a calling! What higher purpose could we ask for? The three goals of this study are:

- 1) To make “Great Commandment Love” your main motivation in life.
- 2) To make “Great Commission Living” your main mission in life.
- 3) To allow Jesus to make you a faithful and fruitful “fisher” and “discipler” of men.



Great Commandment Love

Loving God & Loving People

(Mark 12:28-34)

God’s Great Commandment to us is to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength; and love our neighbors as our selves. In other words, we are to *love God and love people!* This kind of love sums up the heart behind every command in the Bible.

(1 John 4:19)

Loving God and loving people can only become a reality in our lives because God has first loved us so deeply! This is very important! In Christ, God has given us everything we need. We don’t have to spend our lives looking for a sense of worth from other sources. Rather, God’s incredible love for us frees us to be able to pour out our lives for Him and for others.

(1John 3:16-19)

We know what real love is because Jesus’ death on the cross defined it for us. This kind of genuine love is much more than a warm and fuzzy feeling. It spares no expense for the sake of another. *It’s a commitment to what is best for others regardless of what it costs self.* It always expresses itself in action, not just in words or sentiments.

A Heart for the Lost

(Luke 15:1-32)

A heart for lost people is a natural outpouring of Great Commandment Love. Consider Jesus. His whole reason for coming to earth was to *seek and to save the lost*. His heart is like that of a shepherd who *goes after* the lost sheep; like that of someone who *searches carefully* for a precious, lost coin; and like that of a father longing to welcome his runaway son back home. There is great rejoicing in heaven when a single “sinner” repents! The attitude of the older son is *not* what God wants in us!

(1Timothy 1:15-16)

Christ came to save sinners. He came even for the “*worst*” (as Paul calls himself). His love and grace extends to all who will accept it. We are to have that same love.

(John 10:14-16)

Jesus loved us so much that He was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice in order to save us. He is the Good Shepherd who lay down His life for the sheep (see also John 3:16). Are we willing to “*lay down our lives*” for others?

(2 Cor. 5:14-15/20)

The love of God in Christ is the most compelling force in the world! It provides all the motivation we need to love others. In fact, the greatest way we can love others is to share Christ’s salvation with them. We are God’s “ambassadors” in this great enterprise

The Need for Workers

(Matthew 4:18-22)

An integral part of the call to follow Jesus is Him making us “*fishers of men*”.

(Matthew 9:37-38)

Jesus said the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. We are certainly to pray for workers. But, we also need to realize that we are the workers! God wants to use us!



Great Commission Living

(Matthew 28:18-20) Jesus' final commission was to carry on His work of fishing for men by "making disciples" of all nations. These we are to *reach* (baptize) and *teach* (to obey everything He commanded us). The Lord is with us every step of the way in this! ***Important:** We need to understand that obedience to the Great Commission is a *lifestyle*. Jesus' command to "go" doesn't require us all to move to a foreign country as missionaries (although some will be called to do so, and that is important!) Rather, we're to have a *missionary lifestyle* of sharing His love and salvation with those around us right where we are! His command to "go" is a participle meaning continuous, ongoing action. It might best be translated "*as you go.*" See (Matthew 10:7). The people we meet in the course of our daily lives are our mission field!

Some "Fishing Tips"

(Acts 1:7-8) *Start right where you are.* Being Jesus' witnesses "to the ends of the earth" all started in Jerusalem. Likewise, God wants us to reach the world, but we need to begin right where we are, in our "Jerusalem". There are people all around us who need Jesus. They live in your neighborhood. They're employed where you work. They're in your classes at school. They might even be members of your own family. ***Key:** Make a list of people you know who need Christ. Keep this list where you can see it and begin praying for these people regularly.

(Luke 5:27-32) *Intentionally build friendships these people.* Jesus intentionally spent time with "sinners" not to condone or join them in their sin, but to save them from of it. He accepted a dinner invitation from Matthew. He initiated a relationship with Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). He was known as the "friend of sinners". What about you? Are you willing to befriend as well as pray for the lost people in your life? ***Key:** This will take intentional effort on your part. Initiate and cultivate friendships through conversations, invitations, hospitality, etc. Remember, loving God and loving people is what you're all about!

(John 4:1-42) *Be on the lookout for divine appointments.* It shouldn't surprise us that God arranges "divine appointments" between His servants and people who need Him. The disciples walked right by the Samaritan woman, but Jesus saw her need, and reached out to her. He later told His disciples "Open your eyes!" People like this woman are all around us! Phillip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch is another good example (Acts 8:26-40). ***Key:** When such an appointment presents itself, you need to walk through the door God has opened for you. Don't be afraid! God has prepared the way!

(John 1:29-51) *Invite people to come and see Jesus.* Whether a person is a *seeker* like Andrew or a *skeptic* like Nathaniel, introducing them to Jesus and His saving work is what brings them to faith. Inviting someone to church (though important) will not, in-and-of-itself, save them. However, inviting them to "come & see" Jesus in Scripture (perhaps for the first time) usually results in amazing transformation. He is our message (2Cor. 4:5)(Col. 1:28)! When we lift Him up, He will draw people to Himself (John 12:32)! ***Key:** Help people encounter Jesus by getting them into His Word. Offer to meet with them weekly to study through this "Basics of the Faith" series with you. Encourage them to read through the Gospels on their own, and share what they are learning. When people really meet Jesus, they'll be changed!

(1Thess. 2:8) *Share you life as well as the Gospel.* Paul told the Thessalonians, "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the Gospel of God, but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us." That needs to be our practice as well. ***Key:** Be honest; be genuine; be vulnerable; be real with people. Don't be afraid to admit your mistakes and failures. Open your heart to your friend along with your Bible.

(Galatians 6:9) *Persevere.* You may invest months (even years!) of time, effort and prayer into the life of someone who needs Christ, and yet they still may not be a Christian. Don't be discouraged! Our involvement with people will vary. Sometimes we *plant* the seed of the Gospel. Other times we *water it*. And sometimes, we get to be involved in *harvesting* (1Cor. 3:5-8). ***Key:** The important thing is to be faithful. God will bring about a harvest in due time!

(Isaiah 6:8) *Start today!* Isaiah's response needs to be ours as well, "*Here am I. Send me!*" There's no substitute for obedience. Get involved in the greatest work in the world..., and start today!

