

Survey in Basic Christianity

Third Edition: Revised and Expanded

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Acknowledgments by Don Robertson, editor of *Survey in Basic Christianity: Third Edition*

My mentor and Bible teacher, William MacDonald, once said to me, "I have never had an original thought in my life." Nor have I. The Bible is the central resource used for the training manuals, and we gathered the remainder of thoughts from countless resources written by numerous authors.

As the editor of the Third Edition, I sense I am standing on the shoulders of spiritual giants who have gone before me and whose tireless labors were completed the old-fashioned way by manually checking commentaries, dictionaries, concordances, and word studies. Countless people provided input for the training manuals. I thank the Lord for each person who had a part in producing the original manuals.

I am grateful that the author, Otis Jean Gibson, my mentor and teacher, had the vision to develop the training manuals "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12).

I appreciate the work of the contributing author and editor, S.M. Kennedy, who completed the original 1978 edition before the Lord called him home to heaven. In addition, I am thankful for his team of people who contributed with edits, proofreading, and support.

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To God be the glory!

I Will Trust in the Lord Ministries

exists to glorify God

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

We produce biblically accurate resources to encourage believers to continue walking with the Lord that they “may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

Survey in Basic Christianity
Third Edition: Revised and Expanded

Author: Otis Jean Gibson
Editor: Don Robertson

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How to Get the Most Out of Survey in Basic Christianity

The following suggestions will make this study profitable.

1. **Pray to God**

Ask God to help you understand His word. Claim the promise of Psalm 119:130: “The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.” It is impossible to truly understand the Bible without God’s help (1 Corinthians 2:14).

2. **Prepare Before Class**

a. **Read the Notes**

Read and reread the lesson. Underline key thoughts, mark anything that you do not understand or about which you have questions. Make notations in the margin at the side of each lesson.

b. **Look Up Key References**

If time permits, read all Bible references from a translation such as the New King James Bible. The Bible is one volume that contains 66 books. Each book contains numbered chapters, and each chapter has numbered verses. Specific Bible verses are written with - the book’s name followed by the chapter number and verse number separated by a colon (ex. Colossians 3:23). The abbreviation “cf.” means to compare two verse references (example: Psalm 45:6-7, cf. Hebrews 1:8). Most Bibles have a table of contents that lists the starting page number for each Bible book. After finding the page, locate the appropriate chapter and verse. Or, you may wish to use a Bible app or program. You can also read the lessons on our website at <https://www.iwilltrustinthelord.com>, where all verse references are tagged.

c. **Answer Homework Questions**

Complete all items of the homework as directed. If you have trouble with a question, move on to the next question.

3. **Attend Class Regularly**

There is a time for small group interaction as well as a lecture period. Your questions and comments will encourage others to share.

4. **Save Your Notes and Materials**

Keeping good notes will help you retain the material you study and remind you what you have learned. You may wish to refer back to these lessons in your future study of God’s word, and you may want to share them with others.

Survey in Basic Christianity

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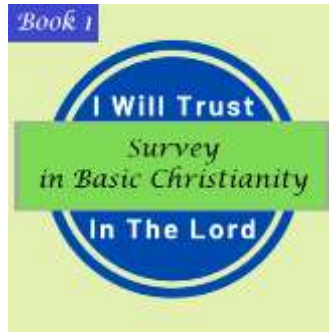
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Survey In Basic Christianity

Lesson 1

Your Word Is Truth

O. J. Gibson

“Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice,” said the Lord Jesus to the Roman governor. “Pilate said to Him, ‘What is truth?’” (John 18:37-38). There is little lasting value in studying anything if we believe that:

1. There is no such thing as truth, *or*
2. Truth is constantly changing, *or*
3. It is impossible to know truth with any certainty.

Truth has been defined as conforming to fact or reality; being in accord with what is, has been, or must be; it is the opposite of false, wrong, error, or lie. Truth is narrow and unchanging regardless of history and culture; it is absolute and independent of anything else. To believe otherwise is destructive to both learning and morals.

The Search for Truth

The psalmist cried out, “Lead me in Your truth and teach me” (Psalm 25:5). He believed that this truth is forever (Psalm 117:2). Because it is so precious, we are advised, “Buy the truth, and do not sell it” (Proverbs 23:23). The prophet spoke of “the God of truth” (Isaiah 65:16).

God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). But, the Bible says that people generally have “exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (Romans 1:25). Often, those who say they are truth-seekers do not love the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10). They instead seek their own way, and that way is a path of error. Jesus promised to those who genuinely seek Him, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). People need to know the truth about God, about life, about eternity.

The Source of Truth

Where shall we seek the truth?

Some seek it *within themselves*. They believe their reason, emotions, and desires are sufficient guides. Some seek it *among themselves*. They look to the advice, experiences, and teaching of other people. Some seek it *beyond themselves*. They believe that truth is greater than our limited ability to understand. It requires the help of God or some supernatural power.

God is the source of all truth. God communicated certain things that we could not otherwise know. This communication is known as **revelation**. He guided men to write down the exact words that He wanted to communicate. This process of moving men to write out the truth is called **inspiration**. “No prophecy of

Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21; cf. 2 Timothy 3:16).

The Bible is called both the “Scripture” and the “Scriptures” (Mark 12:10, 24), meaning that these are sacred writings. We call these collected writings the Bible, meaning “the Book”—signifying its place above all other books. These writings are further called “the word of God” (Mark 7:13; Romans 10:17; 2 Corinthians 2:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 4:12).

God has spoken, and He is the “God of truth” (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 31:5; Isaiah 65:16). At first, He spoke through messengers called prophets. “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets” (Hebrews 1:1). What they spoke or wrote was true because it came from God. But just as evil men try to counterfeit money, false prophets tried to counterfeit God’s message of truth. “But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die” (Deuteronomy 18:20). But how would people know the difference between a true prophet of God and a false prophet? God had built-in safeguards to keep the truth secure. “When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him” (Deuteronomy 18:22). False prophets who tried to lead people astray were put to death (Deuteronomy 13:1-5).

Next, God promised to send a unique Prophet. “The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear...I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him” (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19; cf. Acts 3:22-23).

Who is that Prophet? “God...has in these last days spoken to us by His Son” (Hebrews 1:1-2). God’s preeminent and final revelation is Jesus Christ. The only one who can fully reveal God to man is God’s unique Son because He is God Himself and knows the Father intimately. He is the only one who can fully reveal God to us (John 1:18; John 14:9). Jesus affirmed that He is “the truth” (John 14:6), that God’s word is truth (John 17:17), and that the historical accounts in the Bible are true (Mark 10:6; Matthew 12:39-40; 24:37-39).

Jesus confirmed the Old Testament’s truth by assuring His listeners “that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me” (Luke 24:44). Hundreds of prophecies had already been fulfilled. His listeners were about to be eye-witnesses to the fulfillment of some of the most significant Bible prophecies ever recorded.

The greatest error anyone can make is to ignore the truth of God’s word. Sadly, this was true of religious leaders when Jesus lived on earth. “Jesus answered and said to them, ‘You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God’” (Matthew 22:29). The greatest blessing comes to anyone who reads God’s word and believes the truth (Psalm 19:7-11). Come with an open and willing heart to believe the One who gives eternal life (John 5:39-40).

Such expressions as “God said,” “the Lord spoke,” and “the word of the Lord came” occur perhaps 3,000 times in the Old Testament alone. God speaks directly on many occasions (Exodus 24:12, Deuteronomy 10:1-2). The writers of Scripture said that God was giving His words through them to men. Consider these statements by holy men of God:

- Moses: “And God said”; “the Lord said” (Exodus 3:14-15; Deuteronomy 1:42)
- Joshua: “The Lord spoke” (Joshua 1:1)

- Jeremiah: “The Lord said”; “says the Lord” (Jeremiah 1:7-9)
- Ezekiel: “He said to me” (Ezekiel 3:4)
- Malachi: “Thus says the Lord” (25 times)
- Jesus: “All [will be] fulfilled” (Matthew 5:18, speaking of the Old Testament Law)
- Jesus: “The commandment of God” (Mark 7:8, speaking of the Old Testament Law)
- Jesus: “It is written” (John 6:45, speaking of the Old Testament Prophets) “They have Moses and the prophets” (Luke 16:29-31) “Written in the Law ... the Prophets ... the Psalms” (Luke 24:44)
- The apostles: “the Holy Spirit spoke” (Acts 1:16). “The Holy Spirit spoke rightly” (Acts 28:25)

The Bible claims to be God’s word. “All Scripture is God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16 NIV). “Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). “Not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches” (1 Corinthians 2:13). It is His message of truth for all mankind.

The Sign of Truth

The following points give supporting evidence that the word of God is the truth:

1. Hundreds of detailed prophecies have already been fulfilled. Over 60 specific prophecies about Jesus Christ were fulfilled when He was on earth. Hundreds of other prophecies dealing with Israel and Gentile nations have come to pass. There is simply no other prophetic record with one hundred percent accuracy in every detail, which underscores the truth of God’s word.
2. The Spirit of God moved over 40 men in various countries, in different times and circumstances, using three unique languages over a period of 1500 years to accurately write His word. Yet, the Bible has a profoundly unified theme. It is a single consistent story that demonstrates its divine origin. It is God’s word.
3. Archaeological discoveries are continuously proving the historical accounts in the Bible are true. Archaeologists have unearthed extensive evidence confirming biblical accounts of historical events, nations, and people. Each new discovery validates the truth of God’s word.
4. The Bible continues to transform lives. Violent criminals, as well as gentle people, are touched and changed by its message. Millions of people have experienced the transforming power of God’s word and have turned from a life of sin and shame to a new life of virtue and integrity. The truth has made them free (John 8:32). The Bible continues to provide hope, comfort, and encouragement to individuals in their darkest hours. No other book has transformed so many lives for the better.
5. People have extensively attacked the Bible more than any other book, yet it has survived many efforts to destroy every copy. It has not only survived but thrived in its publication, distribution, and world impact as the most important volume ever written. It is a book feared by its enemies and embraced by those who love God’s word. No other book has sustained such criticism while continuing to be a best-seller year after year. Its intact survival underscores its divine origin.
6. From its beginning to its ending, the Bible is the story of a perfect Person. It is not only an account of history; it is His story. The story of the Bible includes you and how you can have a personal relationship with God. Your response to the truth of God’s word will impact your life and determine your eternal destiny.

Many great minds have wrestled with the profound questions of life and eternity. These questions are defined and answered in the Bible. The lessons included in this book are designed to help the reader understand precisely what the Bible teaches about God, man, sin, salvation, eternity, and Jesus Christ. It is important to learn what the Bible says before we decide whether we agree or disagree. Jesus said the errors of the religious leaders of His day were because they did not know the Scriptures (Matthew 22:29). Daniel said that the Bible is “the Scripture of Truth” (Daniel 10:21). Do you know the truth?

8. The New Testament writers recorded the words and teaching of Jesus. What attitude did they have about the authority of what they wrote (1 Corinthians 11:23; 2 Peter 1:16-21)?

9. What was one of the greatest errors of the religious leaders of Jesus' day (Matthew 22:29)?

10. Paraphrase (rewrite in your own words) 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

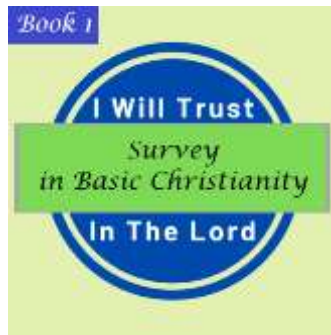
11. What are the benefits of studying the Bible (Psalm 19:7-11; John 5:39)?

12. *What do you say?* Place a circle around the letter of each statement that reflects your feelings about the Bible:
 - a. I believe the Bible is God's word to man. Although many different men wrote it over many years, it is error-free in its original writing, and it is reliable and trustworthy both in historical fact and in doctrine.
 - b. I believe that only the words of Jesus in the Bible are inspired.
 - c. I believe that many of the Bible stories, such as Adam and Eve, Noah and the Ark, are not meant to be taken literally but still have meaning for teaching.
 - d. I believe that the Bible contains many contradictions.
 - e. I believe that the Bible contains all I need to know about God, life, and the hereafter.
 - f. I believe that the Bible has many good moral teachings but is not absolute truth.
 - g. The truth of the Bible is for every generation, every culture, and every race.

13. We encourage you to memorize God's word. The suggested memory verse for this lesson is:

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV)

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”



Survey In Basic Christianity

Lesson 2

The Person of God

O. J. Gibson

The first four words of the Bible are, “In the beginning God...” (Genesis 1:1). His eternal existence is assumed. The eternal God reveals Himself as the Creator of all things. “God, who made the world and everything in it...He is Lord of heaven and earth” (Acts 17:24). The Bible tells us that “He gives to all life, breath, and all things” (Acts 17:25). His purpose in creating human beings was “so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope [reach out] for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:27). We have designed this lesson to introduce you to God.

There is only one God. He says, “Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me” (Isaiah 43:10). “For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me” (Isaiah 46:9). He is the eternal God who had no beginning and has no end. He existed “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God” (Psalm 90:2). He is “the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity” (Isaiah 57:15). Out of the mystery and infinity of His absolute being, He has revealed Himself as “the living God” (Psalm 42:2; 84:2; Daniel 6:20; 1 Timothy 4:10; 6:17; Hebrews 9:14; 10:31).

“Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable” (Psalm 145:3). His immensity is such that “in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). Men stand in awe and ask, “Who is like You, O LORD” (Exodus 15:11; cf. Psalm 71:19; 89:8; 113:5; Micah 7:18). The reply must always be, “There is none like You” (1 Chronicles 17:20).

Popular Concepts About God

In the history of humankind, people have always spoken of God. But not everyone believes in a Supreme Being, who is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, and who alone is worthy of worship as God.

Atheists believe that there is no God and that they can prove it.

Agnostics believe that it is impossible to know if God exists, and they lead millions astray in a declaration of ignorance.

Pantheists believe God is the universe itself, that God is nature, and man is a part of it.

Polytheists say there is not one God but many. Ancient pagans to modern-day Mormons have clung to this belief in many gods.

Many other ideas have been put forward either from ignorance or purposeful deception. The practice of idolatry, where people make images or idols that represent gods (Acts 19:23-28), is forbidden in the Bible (Exodus 20:4-5). Men have worshiped the creation in the forms of animals, or human beings, rather than the Creator (Romans 1:22-23). The Bible acknowledges that some people have been misled to believe in many false gods, yet it maintains the truth that there is only one God (1 Corinthians 8:4-6). At times, men

have called themselves gods and called on others to worship them. God's judgment is upon those who practice such things (Romans 1:24-32).

Self-Evidence of God

The Bible does not attempt to prove there is a God. It assumes this knowledge is woven into the very being and consciousness of every human being. It says that the fool denies His existence (Psalm 14:1; 53:1). God's word says that "the wicked...does not seek God" (Psalm 10:4). In archaeology, it is considered proof that humans have been present if there is evidence of the worship of God. Despite strenuous efforts, no dictator or government has yet been able to wipe out the belief in God.

Throughout human history, people throughout the world have been incurably convinced in the depths of their being that God exists and that they must answer to Him. This knowledge is the very basis of his accountability. "Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:19-20; cf. Psalm 19:1-4).

The firm conviction of God's existence was present long before people assembled arguments for and against the belief in God. It takes a systematic attack by the state, the education system, and the popular media to undermine belief in God. It is also evident that as pride, intellectual arrogance, wickedness, and social degeneration increase, so does questioning God's existence. Some ask, "Why should we believe in God? We can account for everything on a natural or evolutionary basis." Those who feel they can dismiss God on that basis should consider:

1. Nothing is Self-Originating

No scientific work has ever demonstrated an endless chain coming from nothing. In fact, nothing ever comes out of nothing. The Bible says, "For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God" (Hebrews 3:4).

2. Elaborate Structures Require a Maker or Designer

The human brain or eye is more complex than a computer or a watch. Yet, no one would believe the latter came into existence by chance.

Biblical View of God

1. There is One God

Both Old and New Testaments proclaim that there is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Timothy 2:5). No greater authority than God Himself says, "I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me (Isaiah 45:5). Judaism and Islam agree with the Christian faith on this point. There is only one true God, and He says, "I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God" (Isaiah 44:6).

2. God Exists in Three Persons

The one true God is a plural rather than a simple unity. He is one in essence but revealed in Scripture as three distinct and coequal persons. One name for God in the Old Testament is *Elohim*, used about 2600 times. It is *plural* in form though at times used with a singular verb. Deuteronomy 6:4 is the classic Jewish affirmation that there is only one God. "The LORD our God, the LORD is one!" This verse uses the plural name for God, *Elohim*. We further note that God speaks of Himself in the Old Testament as "Us" and "Our" (Gen. 1:26, 3:22).

In several verses, we read the conversation between the distinct persons of God. In the following verses, there is a distinction between “God and God” (Psalm 45:6-7, cf. Hebrews 1:8) and between “LORD and lord.” “The LORD said to my Lord” (Psalm 110:1, cf. Matthew 22:42-46). The New Testament provides a fuller revelation of God as existing as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each is directly called God, even though the New Testament plainly affirms there is only one God.

- The Father is God (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Peter 1:17).
- The Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4; 2 Corinthians 3:17).
- The Son is God (John 1:1, 14; 20:26-28; Acts 20:28; Romans 9:5; Colossians 2:8-9; 1 Timothy 3:16; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8; 1 John 5:20; Revelation 1:8, 17-18).

All divine attributes belong to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The qualities of will, emotion, and reason are ascribed to each. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct from one another and yet joined in divine association (1 Peter 1:2; Jude 20-21). Their names are linked in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) and the Apostolic Benediction (2 Corinthians 13:14). They can be further identified in the baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:16-17). Jesus speaks plainly about all three persons of the Godhead in the Upper Room Discourse (John 14:16-20; 15:26; 16:7-16). The *oneness* is also shown in John 14:9 and John 17:22.

They are called the persons of the Godhead, although they differ from what we mean by “persons.” They are not three different gods, nor a three-headed god. There is but one God in substance. The word “Trinity” is used as a convenience to describe the Godhead, although it is not in the Bible. The same is true with the expression “Triune God.” Since we have nothing to parallel God in this respect, we have no term in our language that fully expresses this truth. The Bible does not explain it. We should accept the direct statements of Scripture and leave it at that.

3. God is Spirit

“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). He may take the form of a man or be heard in a voice. He may manifest Himself in some natural occurrence such as thunder or lightning. Yet He is an invisible spirit being who is not bound by space, time, and form.

4. God Has Personality

He is not a mere principle or idea. Such personal characteristics as knowledge (1 John 3:20), sensibility or emotions (Genesis 6:6), and will or decision-making (James 1:18) are attributed to Him. He manifests both love and anger. God remembers or chooses to forget. He makes decrees and announces the future. God is not a self-functioning machine. It is of great comfort to the believer to know that “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). The statement, “casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7), shows that God is not a principle or impersonal force.

The word for “God” in our language is taken from “good.” He is indeed good. He is also called the Lord, the Almighty, the Creator, the Savior, the Redeemer, and many other names. The name Jehovah comes from JHVH, a four-letter word for the Divine Name in the Old Testament. It was never pronounced, and its full spelling or pronunciation is unknown. The many names of the one true God describe aspects of His many-faceted character.

God wants you to know Him as your personal Lord and Savior. He offers eternal life to you through the Lord Jesus Christ who said, “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

SBC Study Guide Lesson 2

The Person Of God

It is essential to know God. What is He like? Do you have false ideas about God?

1. God is (select one)
 - a. An idea
 - b. A force
 - c. A man
 - d. A spirit

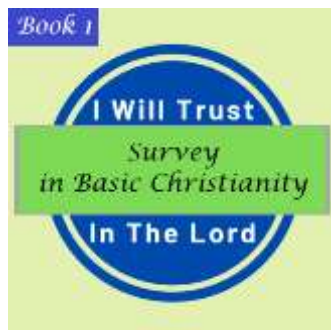
2. Which of the following best describes *your* concept of God?
 - a. A policeman
 - b. A manager
 - c. Your own father on earth
 - d. A machine
 - e. None of the above

3. How would you describe God to someone who has never heard of Him?

4. Does the Bible attempt to prove the existence of God, or does the Bible assume that God's existence is self-evident (Genesis 1:1)?

5. How would a person know that there is a God even if he did not have the Bible (Psalm 19:1-4; Romans 1:19-20)?

6. Why do you believe God exists?



Survey In Basic Christianity

Lesson 3

The Likeness of God

O. J. Gibson

“To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him?” asked the prophet (Isaiah 40:18). Isaiah contrasts the greatness of the living God with the impotence of the carved images of man-made idols. We also must be careful in forming wrong ideas about God because we do not have anything to compare to Him since He is unlike anyone or anything we know. The Bible teaches that “God is Spirit” (John 4:24) which means that He is invisible and is not subject to the limitations of humanity.

The Bible helps us begin to understand who God is and how He acts by using language that describes Him in human terms, attributing to God human traits, emotions, and intentions. We read of His arms (Deuteronomy 33:27), His hands (John 10:29), His feet (Isaiah 66:1), His eyes (2 Chronicles 16:9), His ears (Isaiah 59:1), His mouth (Isaiah 58:14), and His face (Exodus 33:11, 20). Although God does not possess these organs, the use of these terms helps us, in a limited way, to understand some of His traits.

Although this lesson describes and defines many of God’s attributes, we cannot reduce God to a list of character qualities. The list may help fill in gaps in our understanding of God, and we may gain insight about God through studying His attributes, but the ultimate goal is to know God personally. The Bible reveals what God is like through His personal interaction with people. For example, the Bible states, “God is love” (1 John 4:8), but we know how deep His love is for us through His actions. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

A man asked Job, “Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?” (Job 11:7). The answer is that we can know some things about God through His creation. We learn even more about God through what He reveals about Himself in His word. Best of all, we can know Him intimately if we have a personal relationship with Him. “Know the Lord” (Hebrews 8:11).

Unique Attributes (Those Only God Possesses)

God reveals who He is to us in the Bible. We learn about these traits by plain statements of fact and through God’s interaction with people. We call these traits *attributes*. God is:

1. Self-Existent (Aseity)

God has life in Himself (John 1:4; 5:26), and He is the source of life. He was not created but is the Creator. He comes from nothing prior. He has always existed, and all life comes from Him (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1, 3, Acts 17:28). Our physical and eternal life depends on Him. No other being is self-existent.

2. Eternal

God has no beginning and has no end. He will never cease to exist. The Bible says, “Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God (Psalm 90:2; cf. Habakkuk 1:12). “He who is” expresses His

name “I AM WHO I AM” (Exodus 3:14). Angels worship Him as the eternal One “who was and is and is to come” (Revelation 4:8)! By contrast, our life is brief, but God offers us eternal life (John 3:15-16).

3. Infinite

This means “without bounds or limits.” He is not restricted by time or space. The created universe cannot contain Him (1 Kings 8:27; Psalm 113:4-6). God alone is infinite in power, knowledge, presence, and eternal existence.

4. All-Powerful (Omnipotence)

The Almighty has unlimited power and authority to do whatever He chooses (Job 42:2; Psalm 115:3; Matthew 19:26). We can be confident that nothing can thwart His plans and purposes. What He promises He will fulfill.

5. All-Knowing (Omniscience)

God has unlimited knowledge, understanding, and awareness (Psalm 147:4-5). His infinite wisdom makes Him the most suitable judge over all things. Since there is nothing He does not already know, no one can surprise Him or deceive Him, and no sin is hidden from His sight (Hebrews 4:13; 1 John 3:20). He knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). Omniscience includes His foreknowledge of all things (Acts 2:23).

6. All-Present (Omnipresence)

God is present everywhere at all times. It is impossible to escape His presence (Psalm 139:7-12; Jeremiah 23:23-24; Amos 9:2). God promises His continuous presence to His people, “He will not leave you nor forsake you” (Deuteronomy 31:6, 8; Joshua 1:5; Hebrews 13:5).

7. Changeless (Immutability)

“For I am the LORD, I do not change” (Malachi 3:6; cf. Numbers 23:19; Psalm 102:27; Ezekiel 24:14). God cannot change in His eternal character, purposes, or promises (James 1:17). He is faithful to fulfill His word. His immutability applies to all other attributes. He never changes in His love, mercy, grace, power, holiness, wisdom, etc. When it appears that God does change His mind, we must understand that God always remains consistent with His character, but He may change His interactions with people based on their response to Him (Isaiah 55:7; Jeremiah 26:3; Jonah 3:9-10; John 1:12).

8. Self-Sufficient

He needs absolutely nothing from any source because He has no deficiencies or needs (Acts 17:24-25).

9. Sovereign

God is ruler and controller over all, and none can hinder Him. He “works all things after the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1:11; cf. Isaiah 40:13-14). God has the unrestricted right to do whatever He pleases and what He pleases is always right (Romans 9:15-18). How appropriate are these words, “‘As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’ So then each of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:11-12).

Relative Attributes (Those Man Can Share)

Although humans share the following attributes in limited measure, God displays them in perfection. (An application to our lives will follow the description of each attribute).

1. Love

“God is love” (1 John 4:8). Love is that sacrificial and self-giving expression which seeks the highest good for another. It is perfect, practical, and beneficial. God demonstrated His love to us by giving His

Son to die for us (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). His love is not dependent on the loveliness or responsiveness of the object. In fact, God loves the hostile, the unappreciative, and the sinful person, though hating the sin (Jeremiah 31:3; Ephesians 2:4-5; 1 John 4:10). Compassion is closely allied with love. It involves inner sympathy or pity for others (Psalm 86:15; Matthew 9:36; 14:14). His love for us should encourage us to “love Him” (1 John 4:19) and to “love one another” (John 15:12, 17).

2. Wrath

God’s love for all that is good, right, just, and fair necessitates that He exercises His wrath against all forms of evil in which men persist and will not repent (Romans 2:4-6; Colossians 3:5-7). His wrath is the just response in judgment against sin and rebellion. God’s wrath is “against all ungodliness and unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18). Wrath in man is often uncontrolled anger which “does not produce the righteousness of God” (James 1:20). We are to “put off wrath” (Colossians 3:8), and be “slow to wrath” (James 1:19) and let God avenge for wrongs committed against us (Romans 12:19).

3. Grace

God’s grace is undeserved and freely-bestowed favor towards us. Grace is not a debt God owes in response to our good works (Romans 4:4-5; 11:6). Grace offers salvation as an unmerited gift to everyone (Ephesians 2:8; Titus 2:11). Believers stand in a position of indescribable favor with God (Romans 5:1-2; Ephesians 1:3-14) and are to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

4. Mercy

Mercy is God’s active pity or compassion towards repentant sinners and His direct care for people in distress from which He gives relief (2 Samuel 24:14; 2 Corinthians 1:3). Mercy is often coupled with grace (Psalm 103:8). “God...is rich in mercy” (Ephesians 2:4). God desires that we “love mercy” (Micah 6:8) and offers His mercy to those who show mercy to others (Matthew 5:7).

5. Holiness

He is separate from all other beings, and there is no evil or impurity in Him (Psalm 99:9; Isaiah 57:15). He is called “the Holy One” (Proverbs 9:10). The angels of heaven declare His holiness (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8). In the absolute sense, no one is holy but God (Hebrews 7:26; Revelation 15:4). His holiness necessitates the punishment of sin (Isaiah 59:2). We are called to be holy because He is holy (1 Peter 1:16).

6. Righteousness and Justice

These attributes spring from the same root word in the New Testament’s original Greek language. This attribute includes impartiality or fairness in dealing with others. God can only do what is right (Genesis 18:25; Deuteronomy 32:4; Nehemiah 9:33; Psalm 145:17). He is “the righteous Judge” (2 Timothy 4:8). His justice demands that sin’s penalty be paid, and His love provides the payment so that He can be both “just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:26). Christians are to present their bodies to the Lord to be used in the cause of righteousness, not as tools of wickedness (Romans 6:12-14).

7. Truth

With God, there is no falsehood, no unfaithfulness, and no lack of consistency with Himself (Numbers 23:19; 1 John 5:20). He is the truth (John 14:6). He is absolutely and totally faithful to His promises and true to His character (2 Timothy 2:13; Revelation 19:11). Believers are to “walk in truth” (3 John 3-4).

8. Patience

His self-imposed restraint of actions that He might otherwise take is a quality that is appropriate to one who has great power. Endurance with longsuffering toward that which is displeasing to Him is one aspect

of patience (Acts 13:18; Romans 9:22); persistence in seeking good is another (2 Peter 3:9). Christians are told, “You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:8).

9. Wisdom

God has all knowledge, but His application of that knowledge displays infinite wisdom—a deep understanding coupled with sound judgment (Romans 11:33; Ephesians 3:10). “His understanding is unsearchable” (Isaiah 40:28). The all-wise God searches the hearts of all men (Romans 8:27; 16:27). We are encouraged to seek wisdom, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5).

10. Goodness

God’s goodness is seen as He delays the punishment for sin and endures hostility from sinners. His goodness is the very quality that should lead men to repentance (Romans 2:4). God is full of kindness, goodwill, or benevolence (Psalm 119:68; 145:9). Daily He expresses His goodness to all people everywhere, whether evil or good, just or unjust (Matthew 5:45). Life’s difficulties or sorrows should never cause us to doubt His goodness. “Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!” (Psalm 34:8). God’s people are “to be ready for every good work” (Titus 3:1).

11. Generosity

God is the greatest of all givers, having shown this by giving the supreme gift of His Son (John 3:16). That is why He loves cheerful givers (2 Corinthians 9:7). God gives liberally (James 1:5). To those who give generously, He displays an even greater generosity. “‘Try Me now in this,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it’” (Malachi 3:10). Love displays itself in giving. Therefore He says, “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you” (Luke 6:38). Follow the irresistible logic of this verse, “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things” (Romans 8:32)?

The list of His attributes cannot be exhausted. As we think of God, our hearts should burst with praise. “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” (1 Timothy 1:17).

SBC Lesson 3 Study Guide

The Likeness Of God

God's character and attributes govern His ways. The following questions should help us to understand Him better.

1. It is difficult for people to understand what God is like because (select one)
 - a. People think God is like they are
 - b. God's ways are "higher" than man's ways
 - c. There is nothing and no one with whom to compare God
 - d. God is unknowable
 - e. All of the above
 - f. a through c above

2. What characteristics of God are described in the following verses that emphasize His total independence and self-sufficiency? (Explain in your own words)
 - a. John 5:26
 - b. John 1:1
 - c. Genesis 1:1
 - d. Exodus 3:14
 - e. Psalm 90:2
 - f. Revelation 4:8
 - g. 1 Kings 8:27

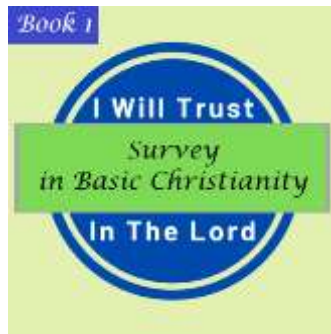
3. Read Psalm 139. List three characteristics about God described in this Psalm.

4. What relationship does God have to everything that exists (Acts 17:24-25)?

5. Paraphrase (rewrite in your own words) Romans 14:11-12. What do these verses mean to you?

6. Which of the following is *not true* of God's love? (select one)
 - a. God loves the whole world
 - b. God loved us before we loved Him
 - c. God's love is everlasting
 - d. God's love overlooks sin

7. The wrath of God is as real as His love. What are the objects of God's wrath? (select all that apply)
- All ungodliness and unrighteousness of men
 - The hard, unrepentant heart
 - The disobedient
 - The forgiven sinner
8. Using the letters a-d, match the characteristics of God with the definition:
- | | |
|---|---|
| a. Grace (Ephesians 2:8; Titus 2:11) | ___ Undeserved and freely-bestowed favor toward others |
| b. Holiness (Psalm 99:9; Revelation 15:4) | ___ Active pity or compassion toward offenders or the needy |
| c. Mercy (Psalm 103:8; Ephesians 2:4) | ___ Completely lacking in impurity or evil. Set apart from all other beings |
| d. Righteousness/Justice (Nehemiah 9:33; Genesis 18:25) | ___ Impartiality or fairness in dealings with others |
9. When the Bible says God is holy, it means (select one)
- He is sinless
 - He hates sin and loves all that is good
 - He is separate from sinners
 - all of the above
10. *What do you say?* Carefully think through the characteristics of God that you studied above. Which ones are especially comforting to you?
11. Are there any of God's attributes that disturb you? Why or why not?
12. Often people say, "I think God would do this" or "I don't think He would do that." Why is it important to understand God's character before speculating on what He might or might not do?
13. We encourage you to memorize God's word. The suggested memory verse for this lesson is:
- 1 Timothy 1:17**
 "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."



Survey In Basic Christianity

Lesson 4

Understanding Man

O. J. Gibson

“What is man that You are mindful of him?” asks the psalmist (Psalm 8:4). Our bodies come from the dust and return to dust (Genesis 3:19). What are we? Why are we significant? What is our purpose in life? The answers to such questions will profoundly affect our outlook and the way we live.

Man’s Origin

Many have claimed that man is just one of many life forms that came into existence in the universe by accident. They say humans are a “higher animal,” the “pinnacle of evolution,” and that man has a transient life with no lasting significance. People respond to this theory by living as mere animals, selfishly grasping for every pleasure at hand, and living in despair while awaiting entry into nothingness.

Others have a mystical view that life is like a cosmic wheel, endlessly revolving. They say that life always existed in some form. Man appears, dies, merges into a sort of nothingness, and is reincarnated in some other life form. In this view, there is no explanation for origin, no directing intelligence, and no personal God.

Contrast the following two systems of belief. Which seems the more intelligent?

Belief in Origin by Chance

1. Originally, there was nothing. Matter and energy came into existence uncaused, then formed entire planetary systems, all by chance.
2. Life began spontaneously in various planetary systems. It developed from simple to more complex forms by mindless direction. There was no designer or intelligence behind it.
3. Man evolved from an ancient ancestor similar to the apes. He is an animal without any spiritual nature, a biological accident in space, with no purpose and no future.

Belief in Supreme Creator

1. God created the universe, the earth, and everything in it, including man (Genesis 1:1, 25; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 11:3.)
2. God, the Supreme Intelligence, is the source of design, order, and laws. He is the source of all life. Human beings are His unique creation made in His spiritual image and likeness.
3. God created Adam and Eve from whom all people have descended, as described in Genesis 1-2. People differ from animals in their capacity to know God, worship Him, articulate speech and use written communication, and have a soul and spirit that will never cease to exist.

The Bible provides the true account of an intelligent Designer, an omnipotent Creator, who spoke the word, and the entire universe came into being. We should be in awe! “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have

made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You” (Jeremiah 32:17; cf. Psalm 33:6, 8-9; Hebrews 11:3). “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). And what a creation it is. In just six days, God made every earth system, all living things and creatures with the ability to reproduce after their own kind, and a perfect environment suitable for life on this planet. God made the sun, the moon, and every heavenly body that fills the universe. “He has made the earth by His power; He has established the world by His wisdom, and stretched out the heaven by His understanding” (Jeremiah 51:15). In stunning understatement, we read, “He made the stars also” (Genesis 1:16). And, of course, “God created man” (Genesis 1:27). At the end of the six days of creation, “God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). You can read the complete account of the six days of creation in Genesis 1-2.

Man’s Nature

The crowning work on the sixth day was God’s creation of man. “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:26-27; cf. Genesis 5:1; 9:6). When we read that God created man in His image and likeness, it means “shadow” or “resemblance.”

Since God is Spirit, our resemblance to Him is not physical but spiritual (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10). Man is unique in comparison to the rest of creation. Humans have a material part called the body, which in many respects is like the bodies of other creatures in function. Yet our bodies are merely the “tent” or “earthly house” in which we live (2 Corinthians 5:1-4; 2 Peter 1:13-14). More significantly, man has a soul and a spirit, together forming his triune being (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

The body has to do with sensory contact with our surroundings. It is therefore called *the seat of world consciousness*. The soul is the center of emotion, reason, and decision (Psalm 13:2; 42:5). It is *the seat of self-consciousness*. The spirit has to do with our ability to know God and the things which pertain to the spiritual realm. It is *the seat of God-consciousness* (Romans 8:16). Even a person who does not know God has a spirit (James 2:26).

The Bible describes how God formed us in our mother’s womb and skillfully fashioned us before we were born (Psalm 139:13-16). He is our Creator (Psalm 100:3). We belong to Him (Psalm 24:1), and we are created for Him (Colossians 1:16). He made us so we can have a relationship with Him, to love Him and glorify Him (Deuteronomy 6:5; Psalm 86:9, 12; Isaiah 43:7; Matthew 5:16; Romans 1:21; Revelation 4:11).

God’s deep love for man is seen in His careful preparation of the earth for life, the perfect environment He provided, and the abundant food supply given (Genesis 1:29-30). Everything man needed, God provided. The psalmist puts man’s place in the world in perspective when he writes, “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For you have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen – even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth!” (Psalm 8:3-9). Everything was very good at the end of the sixth day of creation (Genesis 1:31). Man’s relationship with God was perfect.

Man's Free Will

God created all humans with free will. "Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die'" (Genesis 2:15-17).

There was only one rule (law) to follow in the garden of Eden. God gave man the freedom to choose whether to obey or not. He could eat the forbidden fruit or not. He could choose to love and honor God by obeying the one rule or not.

Man's ability to decide a matter, especially in the moral and spiritual realm, is the most basic demonstration of his free will. His choices can and will affect his eternal destiny. God has clearly given man the right to choose and has made it the basis of righteous judgment (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19; Joshua 24:15; Revelation 20:12-13).

Some religious systems teach that man is a moral robot designed by a God who determines everything and gives him no real chance to choose. But there is no ground for that teaching. The Bible teaches and human experience confirms that man has free will. All choices have consequences for good or evil. Ultimately, there is no excuse for a person to turn his heart away from God (Romans 1:20).

Thoughtful people have realized for thousands of years that something has gone wrong with man. Even certain types of animals show an ability to live in harmony and cooperation among their own kind. Why does man kill, hate, act brutally, let others starve and die? Why are selfishness and misconduct evident even in young children without anyone teaching them these things? Why do children have to be instructed to do good while it is not necessary to teach them to do evil? Theories about their environment, parental habits, psychological forces, political and social systems have all been proposed. Yet, no one has been able to prove their propositions or successfully change man's nature by their theories.

When we consider the terrible conditions on earth today with suffering, pain, sickness, disease, crimes, wars, and death, we have to ask, "What went wrong?"

Man's Fall

The Scripture tells us what went wrong. Adam and Eve were faced with a simple choice – to obey God or not. One day *the serpent* tempted Eve to disobey God (Genesis 3:1-24). We learn later in the Bible that the serpent is also "called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9). Satan is known as the dragon, Lucifer, and the Devil. He is a fallen angel who rebelled against God and was cast out of heaven for his pride and sin (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Luke 10:18; Revelation 12:7-12). He was in the garden of Eden and appeared in the form of a serpent and lied to Eve, deceiving her so that she ate the forbidden fruit and gave it to Adam to eat also. Adam and Eve chose to believe Satan's lie rather than the truth of God's word. The moment they ate the fruit, they sinned. God said, "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17).

In the Bible, death always means separation. Immediately Adam and Eve died *spiritually*. That means they were separated from their relationship with God. At some future point, they died *physically*. We are more familiar with physical death. It is when our soul and spirit are separated from our bodies. The Bible also describes something called the second death. That is *eternal death*, where a person is separated from God for all eternity in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15).

Adam and Eve chose to disobey God (Genesis 3). Man wants freedom of choice but does not like to bear the consequences of sinful choices. When a person's sin is exposed, he often throws the blame on others. He blames God, parents, friends, family, society, various institutions, and the passing of events to shift responsibility from himself even while continuing to make evil choices. God asked Adam and Eve, "Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" (Genesis 3:11). Adam blamed Eve and God. Eve blamed the serpent for her sin. But God held both of them accountable for their choice.

They broke the law. Adam and Eve sinned. The punishment for sin is costly. Sin entered into the world (Romans 5:12-19) and with it a chain of dire consequences. Judgment was swift because man was plainly guilty (Genesis 3:16-24). It resulted in the loss of that perfect environment and their relationship with God. Sin brought the certainty of physical death, pain, and struggles for man and his descendants to the present day. This one act of rebellion has been called the fall of Man. The consequences of the fall are detailed for us in Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Psalm 12:1-3; Romans 3:10-23.

The continuing effects are seen in man's nature even today. Sin has clouded his spiritual understanding (1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 4:18), given him a deceitful heart (Jeremiah 17:9), and defiled both his flesh and mind (Ephesians 2:3). The Bible attributes all human conflicts, sorrows, and evil to one source—sin—and says that it permeates man's very nature. It also states that it has affected the entire creation, from thorns in the botanical world to violence in the animal kingdom.

Man's Conscience

As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, they were no longer innocent people. They became aware of good and evil, and their newborn conscience condemned them. Never before had they felt guilty because they had never previously sinned. "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden (Genesis 3:7-8).

Just as Adam and Eve hid behind fig leaves and among the trees, people today try to hide their sin from others and God. "The wicked flee when no one pursues" (Proverbs 28:1). No one can hide from God, for He says, "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13).

God has given us a sensitive conscience to know what is right or wrong, good or evil (Romans 2:15; Hebrews 5:14). The conscience functions as a moral monitor confirming what we instinctively know to be right and wrong, approving or disapproving of our actions.

Man's Responsibility

Man is accountable to a loving and caring God. This loving concern is seen in the attitude of Jesus as He wept over a city that had rejected Him (Luke 19:41). Jesus was willing to save them, but the inhabitants refused (Luke 13:34). The greatest expression of God's love is this: "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Man can choose to believe in Him, and God will give him eternal life (John 3:15).

Man is not independent and self-governing (autonomous), although he sometimes thinks and acts this way. He came from the hand of a Creator and Sustainer on Whom he is dependent for even a breath (Isaiah 42:5). One day, everyone must face his Creator and give account (Romans 14:12; Hebrews 9:27). Man has a choice between eternal life and God's wrath (John 3:36; 1 John 5:12). What will you choose?

7. The free will of man or his ability to choose:
 - a. Is an illusion because God's purposes overrule
 - b. Is so limited that he is not really responsible
 - c. Gives man the right to choose to love and obey God
 - d. Is made impossible because of difficult circumstances

8. How do the following verses indicate that God has given man a right to choose and has made it the basis of righteous judgment (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19; Joshua 24:15; Revelation 20:12-13)?

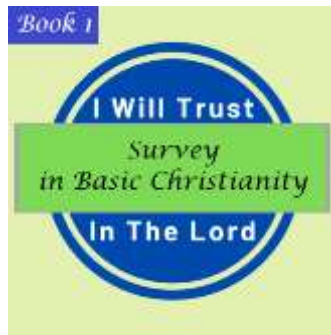
9. The consequence of sin is death. Death always refers to separation. What separation occurs in:
 - a. Spiritual death
 - b. Physical death
 - c. Eternal (or second) death

10. What evidence do you see in the world to support the Bible's teaching that man is a sinner by nature and choice?

11. *What do you say?* Summarize in your own words what you feel is your own personal responsibility to God. How can God get pleasure and glory out of your life?

12. We encourage you to memorize God's word. The suggested memory verse for this lesson is:

Psalm 86:12 (NKJV)
"I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify Your name forevermore."



Survey In Basic Christianity

Lesson 5

The Problem of Sin

O. J. Gibson

Why is there wickedness, sorrow, suffering, war, and hatred in the world? Why is there greed, envy, pride, and cruelty? Why do even children act selfishly, lie, disobey and bring grief to those closest to them without having anyone directly teaching them to do so? Is this only due to a bad environment? The Bible tells us that the root of man's condition begins from birth and is present before there are any outside influences on him (Psalm 51:5; 58:3). The problems of man cannot be properly understood without facing the problem of sin.

Common View of Sin

What is sin? A standard dictionary will tell us that it is an offense against moral law or the law of God. The definition is clear enough. Yet, men have departed from this simple definition to introduce various strange ideas. Examples include:

1. There Is No Sin

Right or wrong is only a matter of changing social practice. Some say if two people consent to wrongdoing, it is not a sin. Some believe there is no moral standard at all.

2. Sin Is Not Wrong If It Doesn't Hurt Someone Else

If what you do privately doesn't affect anybody else, how can it be wrong? This view rejects the idea that sin is primarily against God and His standards.

3. Sin Has To Do With Various Bad Habits

Different groups view these in different ways. Standards can vary wildly. This view may or may not take into account a divine standard of righteousness.

4. Sin Displeases God But Is Not Serious

Everyone does it, and we are only human.

Biblical View of Sin

The Bible teaches that sin is:

1. Turning To Our Own Way

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). Sin is doing our own thing without caring about what God says. It's following the crowd. It's turning from God.

2. Breaking The Law Of God; Lawlessness

“Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4), the rebellion of the creature pitting his will against God’s will.

3. Knowing To Do Good And Failing To Do It

“Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). Sin is not only doing what is wrong but the failure to do what we know is right.

4. Acting Other Than According To Faith

“Whatever is not from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23). If a person does not have a clear conscience about doing something yet does it anyway, he sins.

5. Not Believing In Jesus

“He will convict the world of sin...because they do not believe in Me” (John 16:8-9). The Holy Spirit of God actively works to draw people to the Savior so that they might receive forgiveness for their sins. Adam and Eve did not believe God but believed the lies of Satan and sinned. People do the same today. They refuse to believe in Jesus but eagerly accept the lies of Satan.

6. Anything Contrary To God’s Character

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Everyone continuously keeps on falling short of God’s standard of holiness and perfection. Jesus is “the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person” (Hebrews 1:3). God calls us to be like Christ. Daily we miss the mark.

7. All Unrighteousness Or Wrongdoing

“All unrighteousness is sin” (1 John 5:17). Man’s inner being is sometimes called the heart (Deuteronomy 29:4; Psalm 40:8, 10, 12; Proverbs 14:10; Isaiah 44:18). Desires, perceptions, and inner attitudes come from this source. Sin begins in the heart and soon breaks forth in evil acts (Matthew 15:18-19).

8. Evil Thoughts Are As Sinful As The Act

A person is forbidden to murder another human being. Jesus taught that anger in the heart and abusive speech deserves the same punishment as murder (Matthew 5:21-22). A person may pride themselves in avoiding sexual sins, but Jesus said, “whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27-28). Our hearts have an insatiable appetite for evil (2 Peter 2:12-14).

Mark 7:21-23 lists various evil things that come from within our hearts, such as “evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.” Our speech also betrays us, “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34; cf. Luke 6:45). No sins are hidden from God (Psalm 90:8; Hebrews 4:13).

Sins spring from a sinful nature (Romans 7:18). “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5). We are sinners by nature and by practice. Our sins are an offense against God because He is absolutely righteous and holy (Psalm 145:17; Isaiah 6:3-5; Habakkuk 1:13). God is a perfect Being, and His perfection is the standard for what is right (1 John 3:5). Every person falls short of God’s perfect standard of righteousness and is a sinner (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8).

The Origin and Results of Sin

The first recorded instance of sin took place in heaven. The angel Lucifer desired to be equal with God (Isaiah 14:12-14). His sin was pride (Ezekiel 28:15-17). He was cast out of heaven for his sin and became

known as the devil (the serpent, Satan, the evil one). Through his temptation of the first human couple, he introduced sin into the world. Their sin was disobedience to God (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-6). Adam and Eve were held responsible for their sin and judged accordingly (Genesis 3:16-24). Their sin nature was passed on to all of their descendants even to this day (Romans 5:12). All humans are born “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). This verse means that people are born spiritually dead. They are born with a sin nature. They are born separated from God’s presence and without a personal relationship with God.

Genesis 3 describes the consequences of Adam and Eve’s sin. They immediately experienced spiritual death, which is the separation of the soul from fellowship with God. Their judgment was separation from His presence. Physical death would ultimately follow, which is the separation of the soul from the body. They discovered the truth of the classic Bible statement, “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Wages are what we earn and deserve.

“The soul who sins shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4, 20). Death is the payment for sin. This death includes the second death (Revelation 20:14), which is eternal separation from God in the lake of fire. Men’s sins are recorded in heaven and will be used as a basis of judgment (Revelation 20:12). Confirmation, baptism, church membership, Holy Communion, trying to keep the Ten Commandments, giving to charity, being a good neighbor, or living a moral, respectable life can never pay the debt of sin. Good works cannot spare a person from sin’s penalty (Ephesians 2:8-9). Death is the only payment (Romans 6:23).

God Loves and Receives Sinners

It is amazingly true that a holy God, who hates sin, still loves the sinner. To us, there seems to be a dilemma because God is perfectly just and must punish our sin with the death penalty it deserves, including spiritual, physical, and eternal death. Yet, God is a perfectly loving “Savior who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3-4). He “is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

God resolves this dilemma for us through the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. God demonstrates “His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:26). God is just. His law requires death as sin’s punishment. Jesus died in our place, and by shedding His blood, He paid sin’s debt, for “without shedding of blood there is no remission (forgiveness)” (Hebrews 9:22). Heaven’s praise to the Lord Jesus includes these words, “For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood” (Revelation 5:9). Because of His death on the cross, He can righteously justify (declare righteous) sinners who have faith in Jesus.

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13). “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). We were, in fact, His enemies when He died for us (Romans 5:10). It is “not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Through His Son’s death for us, God offers forgiveness of sins (Acts 13:38; 26:18; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14). The Lord Jesus Christ paid sin’s debt when He died on the cross for our sins (Isaiah 53:4-5; 1 Peter 2:24).

The acknowledgment of sin must precede any genuine desire for forgiveness. The psalmist cried, “I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me” (Psalm 51:3). He cried out for cleansing and freely admitted his sins against God. The prodigal son said, “I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you’” (Luke 15:18).

Jesus told a story of two men who prayed. One man would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but instead, he beat his breast and cried, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” Jesus pronounced this man justified (Luke 18:13-14). God, the Holy Spirit, works to bring inner conviction of sin (John 16:8-11).

God Calls Sinners to Respond

“I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance,” said Jesus (Luke 5:32). The convicting work of the Holy Spirit brings men to repentance (John 16:8). Repentance means a “change of mind.” The Bible indicates that repentance involves a change of mind with the intent to turn from sin and turn to God. The Old Testament God calls people to “Return to Me” (Zechariah 1:3). When people consider God’s goodness, it should lead them to repentance (Romans 2:4) with genuine sorrow for their sin (2 Corinthians 7:9-10). Repentance works to bring about real change, rather than empty words (Matthew 3:8; Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 26:20).

Early Christian preaching commanded men to repent (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30). Repentance is not an action that earns our way to God but one that acknowledges our wretched condition. Repentance is not a meritorious work that earns salvation. Our response toward God acknowledges the seriousness of our sins and includes the desire to change with His help (Isaiah 55:7). “Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” are companion acts of a proper response to God (Acts 20:21).

Faith is our response to God’s gift of salvation, “The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). Faith accepts God’s gift. The Bible uses various words to describe our faith in action. Some of the terms include: *trust*, *accept*, *receive*, *believe*, and *confess* (Matthew 12:21; Mark 4:20; John 1:12; 3:18, 36; Romans 10:9-10, 1 Timothy 4:10). Faith responds by believing in Jesus Christ as our only Savior. Faith believes “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

Need for Self-Examination

It is essential to know that we are lost and that Jesus seeks to save those who are lost (Luke 19:10). That lostness is due to our sin, which has separated us from God.

Check List:

1. Have you always been unselfish?
2. Have you always been free of envy and covetousness?
3. Have you unflinchingly done every good you could do?
4. Have you consistently been kind and thoughtful to everyone?
5. Have you always loved God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength?
6. Have you persistently loved others just as yourself?
7. Are you as perfect as the Lord Jesus Christ?

If the answer to any of these is “NO,” the Bible says you are a sinner. To have kept the whole law and be guilty of one violation is to be guilty of all (James 2:10). One violation of the perfect holiness of God makes a person a sinner.

The Lord Jesus came to “save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). The penalty and power of sin are dreadful. The possibility of the second death is overwhelming. The psalmist writes, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity” (Psalm 32:1-2).

A person who professes to be a Christian, but continues to practice sin as a way of life, must consider this question: If a person is not saved from his sins, from what is he saved?

8. What does the phrase “We are sinners by nature and by practice” mean?

9. According to Romans 5:8, for whom did Christ die? There are two types of sinners, as illustrated by Luke 18:10-14: those who admit that they are sinners and those who do not. Why is it important to realize you are a sinner?

10. How does the death of Jesus Christ pay for our sins (Isaiah 53:4-5; 1 Peter 2:24)?

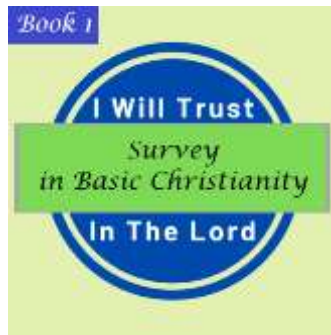
11. Repentance means (select one)
 - a. A religious rite to be observed on specific days
 - b. A change of mind that results in a change of action
 - c. Telling God that you are sorry
 - d. We are unhappy with the way things turned out

12. To receive God’s forgiveness, we must (select one)
 - a. Acknowledge our sin
 - b. Admit our responsibility for sin
 - c. Be willing to forsake our sin
 - d. Trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord
 - e. All of the above

13. *What do you say?* How and when were you first convicted of sin and your need for a Savior?

14. We encourage you to memorize God’s word. The suggested memory verse for this lesson is:

1 Peter 2:24 (NKJV)
“Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed.”



Survey In Basic Christianity

Lesson 6

Considering Eternity

O. J. Gibson

“But man dies and is laid away; indeed he breathes his last and where is he?” (Job 14:10). Thoughtful people who observe the constant stream of funerals and obituaries realize that their time on earth is limited. They also pause to consider whether they have any hope of living beyond the short time of this life. Others pay no attention to death and live as if it will never come. Of course, ignoring something will not change reality, but it avoids the pain of thinking about it. At some point, most of the living ponder the question, “What happens after death?” Their theories are stated and answered under several headings below:

1. Non-Existence

We cease to exist. This view is sometimes called *annihilation*. “When you are dead, you are dead.” But the Bible teaches that when sinners die, they will suffer “everlasting punishment” (Matthew 25:46) where “there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:50). Sinners endure eternal conscious suffering.

2. Reincarnation

One comes back to earth as a different form of life or in the body of another person or creature. Presumably, this would require supernatural power of some kind. However, the Bible teaches that “it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27; cf. Job 7:9-10).

3. Spirit Communication

The dead live in a mysterious spirit world and may seek to maintain contact with those still living on earth. Yet, in Luke 16:19-31, there is no communication between the dead and the living. In this story, the dead rich man wanted to warn his family about the horrors of eternal torment, but he could not communicate with them, nor could anyone rise from the dead to warn them.

4. Impossible To Know

Some believe that our state after death is beyond human knowledge. They do not know if there is life after death or not. Many people live with the attitude that they will simply wait and see what happens, trusting in blind fate or hoping that a good life will outweigh any punishment for sins. But choosing ignorance over the truth of what God says in the Bible is foolishness. It is possible to know because God has revealed it. The Bible teaches that you can know that you have eternal life (John 17:3; 1 John 5:13).

No one can make these deceptive theories fit the teachings of the Bible. God’s word teaches that those who have died are conscious and aware, in one of two places (Matthew 25:46). They are either in the presence of God (2 Corinthians 5:8) in a state of blessedness (Revelation 14:13), or they are separated from God in a place of great torment (Revelation 20:10, 15).

Resurrection from the Dead

“If a man dies, shall he live again?” (Job 14:14). God’s word teaches that everyone who dies will rise from the dead. The very word *resurrection* means *a standing or rising up*. The Lord Jesus responded to people who denied the resurrection by pointing out that God’s name is associated with great men who had long since died. “He is not the God of the dead but of the living” (Luke 20:37-38). Proclaiming the resurrection was foundational to the apostles’ teaching (Acts 1:22; 4:2; 17:18; 23:6). The Apostle Paul said there were more than 500 eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:4-8) and that if it were not true, their faith was empty (1 Corinthians 15:12-17).

The striking truth of Scripture is that there are two distinct groups of people in the resurrection, carefully separated from one another.

“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to *everlasting life*, some to shame and *everlasting contempt*” (Daniel 12:2).

“All who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth - those who have done good, to *the resurrection of life*, and those who have done evil, to *the resurrection of condemnation*” (John 5:28-29).

“There will be a resurrection of the dead, both of *the just* and *the unjust*” (Acts 24:15).

When a person considers what the Bible teaches about God’s judgment, there are only two possible outcomes. Eternal judgment is one alarming possibility (Hebrews 6:2; 9:27). The other is the assurance of eternal life (John 3:16) and freedom from the sentence of condemnation (John 5:24; Romans 8:1).

The Length of Eternity

It should be evident that the plain meaning of words such as “eternity,” “everlasting,” and “forever and ever” refer to an eternal duration. Yet, some teachers, trying to soften the blow of eternal punishment, have sought to prove these expressions mean merely an extended or indefinite period. There is nothing temporary about the length of eternity.

The following verses illustrate that the words “eternal” and “everlasting” mean the same thing in their various uses.

1. As Applied To God

“The everlasting God” (Romans 16:26), “everlasting power” (1 Timothy 6:16), “the eternal Spirit” (Hebrews 9:14), “His eternal glory” (1 Peter 5:10), “everlasting kingdom” (2 Peter 1:11).

2. As Applied To The Unbeliever’s Future

“Everlasting fire” (Matthew 18:8), “everlasting punishment” (Matthew 25:46), “everlasting destruction” (2 Thessalonians 1:9), “eternal fire” (Jude 7).

3. As Applied To The Believer’s Future

“Eternal life” (Luke 18:30; John 3:15), “everlasting life” (John 3:16, 36), “eternal salvation” (Hebrews 5:9), “eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:12).

The exact comparisons exist when the phrase “forever and ever” is used. It is used of God and His throne (Hebrews 1:8; 1 Peter 5:11; Revelation 1:6; 4:9-10; 10:6; 15:7), of the endless torment of unbelievers (Revelation 14:11; 20:10), and the believer’s future reign with the Lord (Revelation 22:5).

Some presume that certain words such as “destruction,” “perish,” and “consume” mean annihilation. But the Bible does not teach this. It is clear that the devil was destroyed (Hebrews 2:14) but not annihilated (Revelation 20:10). Believers who engage in destructive speech are said to consume one another, but they do not annihilate each other (Galatians 5:15). The prodigal son felt he was perishing, yet he did not cease to exist as a person (Luke 15:17). The future of the unsaved is everlasting destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:9). The fact that destruction is everlasting indicates that it does not involve a cessation of existence. Destruction is the loss of well-being but not the loss of being (existence).

The Condition of the Lost

1. As Described By Jesus

The Lord Jesus told a story called *The Rich Man in Hell* (Luke 16:19-31). He describes it as a factual story. However, even if it is a parable, figurative language would not invalidate the truth that He teaches in this story. We should seriously consider the lessons the Savior taught:

- a. Individuals do not cease to exist after death.
- b. There was no unconsciousness or “soul sleep.”
- c. There was no salvation of all men.
- d. A second chance for salvation is not offered.
- e. Reincarnation or coming back to earth does not happen.
- f. There was no end of torment or hope of change for the unsaved man.
- g. The place of torment does not purify a person; it is their final destiny of eternal punishment.

2. As Further Taught By Jesus

The terrifying descriptions listed below are loving warnings by the One who demonstrated the greatest of all loves by giving Himself to save men from the judgment that is to come (John 3:17). He describes the truth of what awaits those who die while neglecting or refusing to trust Him for salvation.

- a. Unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:12; 18:8; Mark 9:44, 48)
- b. Torment forever (Revelation 14:11)
- c. Outer darkness (Matthew 22:13; 25:30)
- d. Weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 13:42, 50; 24:51; Luke 13:28)
- e. Lake of fire (Revelation 20:15)

Objections to Teaching of Eternal Punishment

There are several objections to this unpopular doctrine.

1. It Is Incompatible With The Love Of God

“‘As I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die?’” (Ezekiel 33:11). The Lord Jesus saw a city that had rejected Him and wept over it (Luke 19:41). Although He is a loving God, He cannot righteously pardon the guilty who reject His salvation (Numbers 14:18).

2. Appealing To Fear Is Not Persuasive

Some people avoid teaching about eternal punishment because they believe that focusing on God’s love or appealing to a person’s desire for improvement are more appealing messages. Yet even in everyday life, warnings that cause fear are essential to alert people to avoid choices that may cause severe harm or personal injury. The Lord Jesus appealed to the fear of God and His coming judgment to awaken His audience to the serious consequences of their choices (Matthew 10:28). Fearing God is said to be the

beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). The Bible encourages people to fear God (1 Peter 2:17; Revelation 14:7; 15:4).

3. It is Unfair Of God to Be So Severe

People who have been offered a way of escape by a God who loves them and who have responded by refusal, evasion, and procrastination need not be surprised when they receive swift justice from a perfect and impartial Judge. “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7). Rejecting the infinite love and patience of God demands infinite retribution (cf. Romans 1:18).

The Condition of the Redeemed

The final state of the righteous is in striking contrast to what we have read so far. “In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11). “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord” (Revelation 14:13). The believer looks “for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10). The description of heaven is more wonderful than anything we have experienced or seen on earth. The eternal state and home of the believer are further described below:

1. It Is With Christ

“I go and prepare a place for you ... that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3; cf. John 17:24). To be absent from the body is to “be present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8).

2. It Is In A Changed Body

Believers’ new bodies will be like “His glorious body” (Philippians 3:21) and, therefore, incorruptible (1 Corinthians 15:35-44). We will be recognizable as was the Lord (Matthew 28:9, 17; Luke 24:31, 39-40). For believers, the resurrection of the body occurs at the Second Coming of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).

3. It Is In A Place Of “No Mores”

There is “no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4). There will be no sins and no sinners in heaven (Revelation 21:8, 27).

4. It Is In A Place Of Infinite Beauty

The city’s building materials include jasper walls, pure gold, all kinds of precious stones, gates of pearl, and streets of gold, like transparent glass (Revelation 21:18-21). God’s creation of our eternal home surpasses anything we have ever seen or known.

5. It Is In A Place Free From Sin And Defilement

Heaven is the eternal dwelling place of the redeemed, and it is sometimes called the “New Jerusalem.” Before Jesus died and rose again, the Jewish believers called it “Paradise” or “Abraham’s Bosom.” It is a place free from all sin and defilement (Revelation 21:27). It fills believers’ hearts with the desire to be there and removes the fear of death. As Paul said, “to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). How wonderful it was when the Lord Jesus said to the thief on the cross who repented of his sins and believed in Him, “Today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43).

Will you be there with Him?

SBC Lesson 6 Study Guide

Considering Eternity

“If a man dies, shall he live again?” (Job 14:14). This question, posed by one of the ancients, is still of great importance today. What happens after death?

1. The Bible presents those who have died as being conscious and aware in one of two places. What are those two places (2 Corinthians 5:8; Revelation 20:10, 15)?

2. The Bible further indicates that all who die will be resurrected (raised) from the dead. Describe the two different destinies of all humanity (Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15).

3. Paraphrase (rewrite in your own words) the following verses (John 3:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

4. How long is eternity? Can you think of an illustration to describe it?

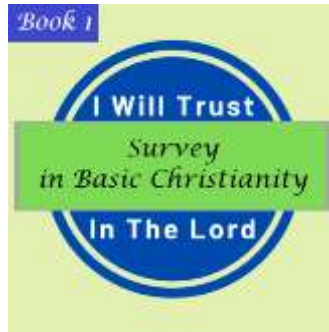
5. Jesus told the story of *The Rich Man in Hell* (Luke 16:19-31). According to these verses, which of the following is true? (select one)
 - a. A person ceases to exist when he dies
 - b. A dead person experiences a state of unconsciousness or “soul sleep”
 - c. Hell is a place of conscious, never-ending torment
 - d. God will save everyone
 - e. If a person goes to hell, he will get a second chance

6. Which of the following did Jesus *not* use to describe hell? (select one)
 - a. Unquenchable fire
 - b. Torment forever
 - c. Outer darkness
 - d. Weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth
 - e. A place of temporary purification
 - f. Lake of fire

7. How would you answer the following objections?
- a. The doctrine of hell is incompatible with the love of God
 - b. This teaching appeals to fear
 - c. It is unfair of God to be so severe
8. The Bible describes the future of the believer in heaven as (select one):
- a. Being with Christ forever
 - b. Existence in a changed body
 - c. Being free from sorrow and pain
 - d. Being in a place where nothing unholy enters
 - e. All of the above
 - f. a and c above
9. *What do you say?* Have you come to the place in your own spiritual experience where you know for sure that you would go to heaven if you were to die tonight? Explain.
10. We encourage you to memorize God's word. The suggested memory verse for this lesson is:

1 John 5:11-12 (NKJV)

“And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”



Survey In Basic Christianity

Lesson 7

Jesus the Messiah: God's Provision

O. J. Gibson

“I know that Messiah is coming’ (who is called Christ),” said the woman of Samaria. “Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am He’” (John 4:25-26). A short time earlier, a Galilean fisherman said to his brother, “‘We have found the Messiah,’ (which is translated, the Christ)” (John 1:41).

Names of the Messiah

God promised to send one to be the Savior of the world. Who would He be?

Messiah – this word comes from the Old Testament Hebrew language and literally means “the anointed one.” The Jewish people expected the Messiah to be their savior and deliverer. He must be of Jewish origin, a descendant of the paternal line of King David. Based on Old Testament prophecies, He will “bring in everlasting righteousness” (Daniel 9:24) by establishing His everlasting kingdom. He is also identified as God. He is called “Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us” (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23).

The Anointed One – this is the literal translation of the Hebrew word Messiah. Prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with oil at the inauguration of their service. Jesus Christ was anointed with the Spirit of God (Isaiah 61:1-2; cf. Luke 4:16-21; Acts 10:38). The anointed one must qualify as the final Prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Hebrews 1:1-2), the final High Priest (Hebrews 2:17; 3:1-2; 4:14-15; 7:26-28), and final king (2 Samuel 7:13, 16; Jeremiah 33:14-17; Luke 1:31-35; Revelation 11:15).

Christ – Greek is the New Testament language. The Greek word for Messiah (Anointed One) is *Khristós*, from which we get our word, Christ. The New Testament declares that Jesus is the Christ and often uses His given name, *Jesus*, with His titles, *Lord* and *Christ*. Jesus Christ is the One sent by God to be the Savior of the world (Isaiah 43:11; Luke 2:11; John 4:42; Acts 13:23; Philippians 3:20; Titus 2:13).

Prophecies Concerning Jesus Christ

The significance of the life of Jesus Christ (Jesus the Messiah) and His impact on world history cannot be denied. It is without equal. Jesus was born over 2,000 years ago, and His birth is the dividing point of all history. The Bible identifies Him as the Messiah. The volume of Old Testament prophecies, written long before His birth, leaves no doubt that He is the only one who qualifies as the Messiah. The hundreds of prophecies Jesus fulfilled exclude all other contenders.

The evidence that He is the Messiah is well-documented by matching fulfilled prophecy with the details of His birth, birthplace, life, ministry, suffering, death, burial, and resurrection. There is no other human being who has ever or could ever fulfill the prophecies. In His first coming, Jesus fulfilled over 200 prophecies. The following are a few examples:

1. The Seed of the Woman (Genesis 3:15; Galatians 4:4)
2. His birth at Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1, 4-6)
3. His virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18, 23-25)
4. His forerunner (Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:1-3)
5. His entry into Jerusalem (Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:1-11; Luke 19:28-38)
6. His rejection (Psalm 69:8; Isaiah 53:3; John 7:5; 19:15)
7. His betrayal (Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 10:4; 26:14-15)
8. Struck, spat upon (Isaiah 50:6; Matthew 26:67)
9. Suffering for the sins of others (Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18)
10. Pierced on the cross (Psalm 22:16; Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34, 37)
11. Praying for His enemies (Isaiah 53:12; Luke 23:34)
12. Crucified with criminals (Isaiah 53:9, 12; Matthew 27:38)
13. Buried in a tomb of the rich (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57-60)
14. Rising from the dead (Psalm 16:8-10; Luke 24:46; Acts 13:33-35)

The same Scriptures prophesy His second coming (Psalm 50:3-6; Daniel 7:13; Zechariah 12:10; 14:4). His second coming is proclaimed in 23 of the 27 New Testament books. The Lord Jesus spoke about His second coming 21 times, and 1 out of every 30 verses in the New Testament refers to it. Since the prophecies about His first coming were fulfilled with precise accuracy, we can be confident the remaining prophecies will be fulfilled the same way. The Bible predicts His universal rule (1 Chronicles 17:11-14; Psalm 2:6-8; 45:6-7; 72:8; 110:1-3; Isaiah 9:7; Daniel 7:14).

The Offices of Jesus Christ

The Lord Jesus uniquely combined in Himself the three great offices that come from God.

1. He is a Prophet

He is the greatest prophet of all (Mark 6:4; Acts 3:22). He was the very One of whom Moses spoke (Deuteronomy 18:15-19).

2. He is a Great High Priest

He represents His people before the Father and prays for them (Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:25). He faithfully fulfills His role, doing God's will (1 Samuel 2:35).

3. He is a King, the King of Kings

Jesus is known as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Revelation 19:16). He came at first as the King of the Jews (John 19:19). Today, He is King in the hearts of His people. Every knee shall bow to Him in a future day as all people acknowledge him as Lord of all (Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:9-10).

The Deity of Jesus Christ

The Bible declares that Jesus Christ was God revealed in flesh (1 Timothy 3:16). He was the exact likeness of the unseen God (Colossians 1:15). How amazing that the living God came in the flesh (John 1:1, 14). How sad it was that "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him" (John 1:10).

Jesus came to be our "great God and Savior" (Titus 2:13). Only God can save us. He says, "I, even I, am the LORD, and besides Me there is no savior" (Isaiah 43:11). An angel announced, at His birth, "there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). Mary said, "My

spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior” (Luke 1:47). She knew that her son was also her Savior and God. The Biblical references that point to Jesus as God are many.

1. He is Directly Called God

Jesus is called God (John 1:1, 14; 20:28; Romans 9:5; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 5:20). The Father addresses the Son as God (Hebrews 1:8).

2. He is Called the Son of God

The Jews clearly understood that Jesus claimed that He was God (John 10:33-36). There is a lesser use of the term “son of God,” but He is the unique (only-begotten) Son of God (John 1:14, 18).

3. He is Fully God

One of the clearest verses on the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ is, “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9; cf. 1:19). Jesus is fully God.

4. He Bears the Divine Names of God

He is called the Alpha and Omega, the First and Last, the Beginning and End, the Almighty (Isaiah 44:6; Revelation 1:8, 17; 22:13), and the great “I AM” (Exodus 3:14; John 8:24, 58). To say of himself, “I AM” is a self-declaration of His deity.

5. He is Worshipped As God

Men and angels worship Him as God (Isaiah 45:23; Matthew 14:33; John 20:28; Philipians 2:10; Hebrews 1:6). Worship is reserved exclusively for God (Matthew 4:10; Revelation 22:8-9).

6. He is to be Equally Honored

God does not give His glory to another (Isaiah 42:8). The fact that Jesus is to be honored equally with God the Father (John 5:23) indicates He is God.

7. He Performs the Role of God

Jesus is the Creator (Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:2, 10). He is the Judge of all (John 5:22). He is the forgiver of sins (Matthew 9:2-6), yet only God does this (Isaiah 43:25).

8. He Has Life Within Himself

He gives life to others, but He is self-existent (John 5:26).

9. He Has All Divine Attributes

He is unchangeable (Hebrews 13:8). He has all-power (Revelation 1:8), all-presence (Matthew 28:20), all-knowledge (John 21:17), is eternal (Micah 5:2; 1 Timothy 1:16-17), and He demonstrates all other divine qualities.

10. He Did the Works of God

He commanded the winds and waves, and they obeyed His voice. He had power to control nature (Matthew 8:26-27; Mark 4:39-41). He had authority over demons (Matthew 8:16, 28-32). He had power over sickness (Matthew 8:1-17). He created food for the multitudes (Matthew 14:19-21; 15:36-38), raised the dead (Luke 7:12-16; John 11:32-44), and fulfilled the works of God (Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:16-21).

The Humanity of Jesus Christ

The Gospel of John opens with this phrase, “In the beginning was the Word” (John 1:1). The term “Word” is usually used as an expression of speech. We use words to communicate with one another. John is not writing about a unit of speech but of a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is God’s full

expression of Himself to the world. When Jesus came into the world, He enabled us to see what God is like (Colossians 1:15), He spoke what was on God's heart (Hebrews 1:1-3), and demonstrated the fullness of God's attributes to us (Romans 5:8). We read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). The Word is fully God (John 1:1). John states that the Word is eternal (John 1:2), the Creator (John 1:3; cf. Colossians 1:16), the self-existent source of life – both physical and eternal (John 1:4), and the light to expose the darkness of sin (John 1:4-5). Although Jesus is fully and eternally God, He became "the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). John says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). He, who existed forever as God, chose to come to earth, take on a human body, and live among men for 33 years. God walked among people as a human being.

Jesus' humanity was real. He experienced our emotions. He hungered, thirsted, suffered, wept, and was weary. He experienced temptation by the devil (Matthew 4:1-11), yet He "knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21), did not sin (1 Peter 2:22), "and in Him there is no sin" (1 John 3:5). He suffered, bled, died, was buried, and rose again from the dead. He was different from ordinary men, yet fully human.

1. He Had Human Parents

We can trace His genealogy back through David to Adam (Luke 3:23-38). He was not born of man's seed, *but* He was born of a virgin through a conception by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18-23). As a result, Jesus did not inherit man's sin nature (Hebrews 4:15).

2. He Had a Human Body

He looked like others (John 4:9; Romans 8:3). He grew to manhood in a typical fashion (Luke 2:40, 52), *but* His life was untainted by sins (Hebrews 2:18; 1 Peter 2:22-23).

3. He Was a Triune Being

Just like other human beings, Jesus had a body (Hebrews 10:5), a soul (Matthew 26:38), and a spirit (Luke 23:46), *but* He exhibited a unique God-consciousness, communing intimately with the Father like no other man.

The most important question that Jesus asked of men was, "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15). Your answer to His question is a matter of eternal significance. Jesus said, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24). Jesus then prophesied that the Jews would crucify Him, and after that, they would know that He is who He says He is – He is the Messiah (John 8:28). Who do you say Jesus is?

SBC Lesson 7 Study Guide

Jesus the Messiah: God's Provision

Jesus asked, "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15). People must recognize Him fully and acknowledge His identity. Test yourself.

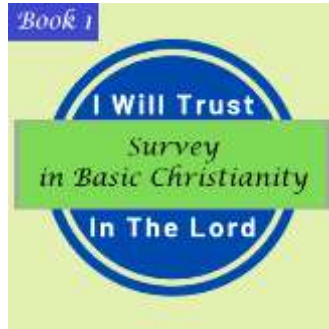
1. For whom was the Samaritan woman looking to reveal to her the truth of God (John 4:25)? How did Jesus respond to her statement (John 4:26)?
2. The coming of Messiah (translated "Christ" in Greek) was foretold hundreds of years before the Old Testament writings. Match the following verses on the right with the prophecy on the left.

Prophecies:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| ___ Birth at Bethlehem | a. Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18,23-25 |
| ___ His virgin birth | b. Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:1-3 |
| ___ His forerunner | c. Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18 |
| ___ His entry into Jerusalem | d. Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 27:38 |
| ___ His betrayal | e. Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57-60 |
| ___ Suffering for the sins of others | f. Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1, 4-6 |
| ___ Pierced on the cross | g. Psalm 16:8-10; Luke 24:46; Acts 13:33-35 |
| ___ Crucified with criminals | h. Psalm 22:16; Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34,37 |
| ___ Buried in tomb of rich | i. Zechariah 9:9; Luke 19:35-38 |
| ___ Rising from the dead | j. Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 10:4; 26:14-15 |

3. Identify the three great offices of Messiah (Christ):
 - a. Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Mark 6:4
 - b. 1 Samuel 2:35; Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:25
 - c. John 19:19; Philippians 2:9-10; Revelation 19:16
4. How was Jesus different from other men while on earth (as described in the following verses)?
 - a. Matthew 1:23
 - b. Mark 4:37-41
 - c. Luke 7:22
 - d. John 7:46
 - e. John 8:46
5. In what ways was Jesus like other men while on earth?
6. How does it help you to understand that Jesus experienced common human emotions?

7. What attributes of God are ascribed to Jesus Christ in the following verses?
- Matthew 28:20
 - Mark 2:5-7
 - 1 Timothy 1:17
 - Hebrews 13:8
 - Revelation 1:8
8. Answer by circling True or False.
- God the Father addressed Jesus as God. (Hebrews 1:8) – True or False
 - Jesus refused to allow men to worship Him. (Matthew 14:33; John 20:28-29) – True or False
 - The Lord Jesus never claimed to be God. (John 8:58; 10:30) – True or False
9. When Jesus was born on earth (select one)
- He ceased to be God when He became man.
 - He was fully God and fully human.
 - He was not genuinely human because He was God.
 - His true father was Joseph, just as His true mother was Mary.
10. Paraphrase (rewrite in your own words) John 1:1-3, 14.
11. *What do you say?* Philippians 2:9-11 indicates that every creature will “bow the knee” to Christ at a future time. How and when will you do this in your life?
12. We encourage you to memorize God’s word. The suggested memory verse for this lesson is:
- Philippians 2:10-11 (NKJV)**
“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”



Survey In Basic Christianity

Lesson 8

The Meaning of the Cross

O. J. Gibson

The cross is the most recognized symbol of the Christian faith. It was upon a cross that our Savior died. When the gospel is preached, it must include the “message of the cross” (1 Corinthians 1:17-18). Millions have been taught that Christ died on the cross for our sins. What does that phrase mean? Why was it necessary? What did it accomplish? These questions often leave those who profess to be Christians in a state of confusion.

The Necessity of the Cross

Why was Christ’s death upon the cross necessary? Consider this:

1. God is Righteous and Holy

God is holy (Isaiah 6:2-3; 1 Peter 1:16). Nothing that defiles can enter His presence (Revelation 21:27).

2. Sin Must Be Judged

As a righteous Judge, God must punish sin (Romans 2:3,12). He will not acquit the guilty (Exodus 34:7; Job 10:14). All the world is guilty before God (Romans 3:19). Sin demands capital punishment, which is death (Romans 6:23).

Sin’s penalty must be paid. That should strike fear in every human heart. How can a righteous God be entirely just and punish our sin, yet be able to justify the sinner (Romans 3:26)? How can God’s justice and righteousness satisfy the law’s demand for death and still show grace, mercy, and love to the sinner?

The Principle of Substitution

When one person takes the place of another person, it is called *substitution*. In the Old Testament, sinners could approach God with substitutionary animal sacrifices for their sins. The Passover lamb was sacrificed to spare the firstborn sons from God’s judgment in Egypt (Exodus 12:3-17). Millions of animal sacrifices were offered to God, according to His commandment. Such offerings made *atonement* (Leviticus 5:10), which means that the innocent victim’s death *covered* the sin but did not take it away.

It is important to note that John the Baptist publicly hailed Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). No longer would sin merely be covered; it would be removed, never to be remembered again (Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 43:25). John saw in Jesus the One who would be the perfect sacrifice for sins and toward whom all previous sacrifices had been pointing. He was the one true and final substitute. The prophets predicted that God’s judgment for our sins would fall on the coming Messiah. He suffered and died as our substitute – notice the words “our,” “we,” and “us” (Isaiah 53:4-6; 1 Peter 3:18). It is the heart of the Christian proclamation that “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3).

The Scriptures which teach this substitutionary death should be carefully studied (Romans 5:6-8; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18). The Savior took the sinner's place. The Just One died instead of the unjust sinner. And, the innocent took the place of the guilty. Jesus did not die as a moral example, but for our offenses against God (Romans 4:25). It was according to the counsel of God (Acts 2:23). He offered Himself willingly in our place, and no man took His life from Him (John 10:17-18). He gave Himself for our sins (Galatians 1:4) and was made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). He was made a curse for us (Galatians 3:13). If Jesus had not died in our place, we would be hopelessly and forever lost (Matthew 18:11; John 3:18).

Jesus paid the ransom to redeem us to God (Matthew 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18-19). He "made peace through the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:20). The sinner is *justified* or *declared righteous* and is reconciled to God by the death of Jesus (Romans 5:9-10).

The Perfection of the Sacrifice

Sacrifice is a word repeatedly used in the Bible and is at the heart of the Christian message. Consider the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus in the following ways. His death is:

1. A Blood Sacrifice

"Without shedding of blood there is no remission," or forgiveness, of sins (Hebrews 9:22).

2. A Human Sacrifice

Only a man can die in place of another man to satisfy God's justice (Hebrews 9:12-14; 10:4).

3. A Sinless Sacrifice

Only the One without sin can die for the sins of another (John 8:29, 46; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 1:19).

4. A Divine Sacrifice

God Himself purged our sins which means He cleansed and purified us from our sins (2 Corinthians 5:19; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3). God alone can blot out your transgressions (Isaiah 43:25).

5. A Loving Sacrifice

Christ's death on the cross is the ultimate expression of God's love for sinful men (Romans 5:8; Ephesians 5:25; Revelation 1:5).

6. A Sufficient Sacrifice

He thoroughly and finally satisfied every claim of perfect justice (Hebrews 10:14; 1 John 2:2).

The Finished Work

The Lord Jesus said to the Father, "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do" (John 17:4). On the cross, His final, triumphant cry was, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). What was the great work that He came to finish? "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). "The Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world" (1 John 4:14). His mission was to "save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Consider how fully Jesus completed the work which He came to accomplish.

1. He satisfied the full requirements of the Law (Romans 8:3-4).
2. He justified us from all things from which we could not be justified by the Law of Moses (Acts 13:39).
3. He freed us from all condemnation (Romans 8:1).

4. His righteousness and holiness were satisfied (Psalm 85:10).
5. His work is sufficient to save all sinners (John 1:29; 12:32; 1 John 2:2), but He cannot do so unless they come to Him (Matthew 23:37).
6. He “offered one sacrifice for sins forever” (Hebrews 10:12). No one can add to His finished work on the cross. His sacrifice completely satisfied the justice of God and is the sole basis for putting away our sins.

The Proof of Acceptance

The consistent proclamation of the early church was that God had raised Jesus from the dead. On this basis, men were called to believe upon Him (Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15, 26; 10:40; 16:31).

1. He rose according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:4). He fulfilled a thousand-year-old prophecy by doing so (Psalm 16:10; Acts 13:35-37).
2. He rose according to His own words (Matthew 12:39-40; 16:21; Luke 18:31-33). He specified the exact day of His resurrection (Matthew 27:63).
3. He rose despite a Roman guard watching over His tomb. The Roman government made every attempt to prevent an imaginary resurrection (Matthew 27:63-66). Over 500 eye-witnesses saw Him after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:5-8).
4. He rose by the power of God and convincingly proved that all He said and did was fully accepted by God (Romans 1:3-4; Ephesians 1:19-20).
5. He rose because His resurrection is essential to our justification (Romans 4:25).

The greatness of this work does not change the necessity of man’s response. The payment for sin has been made for all humanity, but sinners are not automatically or universally saved from judgment. Every individual must personally respond to Jesus Christ and believe in Him to escape condemnation (John 3:18; Acts 3:19). Will you repent of your sins and believe in Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?

SBC Lesson 8 Study Guide

The Meaning of the Cross

Millions say they believe that Jesus died on the cross for man's sins, but they do not understand how that affects them. Prayerfully consider your understanding of this great truth by answering the following:

1. Jesus died on the cross because (select one)
 - a. He was a victim of circumstance
 - b. He was a victim of a tragic mistake
 - c. God must judge sin to restore our relationship with Him
 - d. He could not escape from either the Romans or Jewish leaders

2. God can free sinners from the penalty of death by (select one)
 - a. Allowing them to do penance
 - b. Overlooking their failures due to His love
 - c. Providing a perfect sacrifice for sins
 - d. Doing whatever He pleases because He is God

3. Paraphrase (rewrite in your own words) 1 Peter 3:18 *or* Isaiah 53:4-5.

4. If God loved His Son, why did He allow Him to suffer and die at the cross (Romans 4:25; 5:6-8)?

5. If Jesus had not died on the cross, we would have been (select one)
 - a. Hopelessly and forever lost
 - b. Taught an equally acceptable way to God
 - c. Forced to work harder to please God
 - d. Accepted on the ground of His love.

6. For whom did Jesus die (John 3:16; I John 2:2)?

7. What did Jesus mean when He said, "It is finished" (John 19:30)?

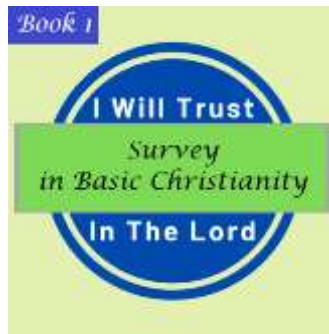
8. Name one convincing proof of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

9. *What do you say?* Explain in your own words why Jesus died on the cross.

10. We encourage you to memorize God's word. The suggested memory verse for this lesson is:

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."



Survey In Basic Christianity

Lesson 9

The New Birth

O. J. Gibson

“Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Jesus Christ spoke these solemn words to a Jewish religious teacher named Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish ruling council. Nicodemus’ confidence about his relationship with God was probably like another Pharisee who wrote: “If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel...a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee...concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless” (Philippians 3:4-6). It is hard to imagine anyone more religious than Nicodemus. He was a moral, devoutly spiritual leader, called “the teacher of Israel” (John 3:10). It would be hard for anyone to match his zeal for religious matters. Yet, it was to this man Jesus said, “You must be born again” (John 3:7). If Nicodemus was not fit for the kingdom of God, who is?

Nicodemus called Jesus “Rabbi” and “a teacher come from God” (John 3:2), thinking Jesus was his equal – but not recognizing that Jesus is God. He met with Jesus and likely wanted to hear more about what Jesus taught. Nicodemus did not need a teacher – he needed a Savior. He did not need to be better – he needed to be born again.

Although Nicodemus was very religious, he was still “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). He was spiritually dead and had no personal relationship with God. He was born separated from God, and he needed to be born again. In this night-time meeting with Jesus, Nicodemus came face to face with God and was told, “You must be born again” (John 3:7). You may be religious. You may have gone to church your entire life. You may know about Jesus, but have you ever been born again?

What is Meant by Being Born Again?

Nicodemus, like so many people today, was confused about what is meant by being born again. “Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’” (John 3:4). Nicodemus was stuck on physical birth. Of course, it is impossible to be born a second time physically, but he *did* need to be born again spiritually.

Our need is for a new life from God, and this need began in the garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve sinned, they immediately experienced spiritual death. Remember that death always means separation. Their sin severed their relationship with God. Their sin also caused their offspring to be born spiritually dead since they inherited their parents’ sin nature. That pattern has continued to the present day.

We are born spiritually dead. We were born “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). We have to admit, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5). We are born separated from a relationship with God. We need a spiritual birth. We must be born again.

Another term that describes the new birth is *regeneration*, the act of God which imparts eternal life to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). Jesus questioned why Nicodemus did not understand this as the teacher of Israel (John 3:10). The rebirth or regeneration of the nation of Israel was taught in the Old Testament (Ezekiel 36:26; 37:1-10; cf. Jeremiah 31:33). Nicodemus had not understood that regeneration is an event that must take place in an individual’s life to become a member of the family of God.

The new birth is a work of God in a person’s life that brings him into the family of God. We become children of God by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, by believing in His name (John 1:12). When we do, that is the moment of our spiritual birth.

Being born again is a personal event. It is a new life, a new family relationship, a new power within. The Bible says we enter the kingdom of God as one who passes “from death into life” (John 5:24). We no longer walk in darkness but in the light (John 8:12). God delivers us from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Colossians 1:13). We become “a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17). That transformation is evident as we “put off the *old man* with his deeds” (Colossians 3:8-10) and “put on the *new man* which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:24). The conversion is remarkable.

Why Must the Old Man be Born Again?

The *old man* is who we are at birth – we are sinners by nature. The *old man* is who we are as we live sinful lives – we are sinners by practice. And the *old man* is who we are before new life from God is given to us – we are spiritually dead. The following describes the *old man*.

1. He is Corrupt

He is born with a sin nature (Psalm 51:5; 58:3; Romans 3:10, 23; cf. Genesis 8:21). He has a deceitful heart (Jeremiah 17:9). Nothing good dwells in his sinful nature (Romans 7:18).

2. He is Dead in Sins

He is born spiritually dead, which means he has no relationship with God. The old man is alive to sin but lives with no vital relationship with God (Ephesians 2:1). By God’s standard, there is no spiritual life.

3. He is Controlled by Satan

He is born into the family of Satan, who is his father. He practices sin and fulfills Satan’s desires (John 8:44; Romans 1:24-32; Ephesians 2:2; 1 John 3:8). Satan is diabolical, so it is not surprising that sinners stoop to vile and wicked behavior.

4. He is an Enemy of God

By nature, he is born as an enemy of God (Romans 5:10). He has no hope and is without God in this world (Ephesians 2:12). Every child of God was in this condition before his new birth (Ephesians 2:3).

“Born of the Spirit”

A person cannot enter heaven by good deeds, joining religious organizations, or going through religious ceremonies. The only way to be accepted into God’s kingdom and enjoy a relationship with God is through the new birth. The following describes how a person is born again.

We were born physically. Your parents produced you after their kind – another human being – flesh produced flesh with no spiritual life at all. In order to have spiritual life, you must experience a spiritual birth. That is the work of the Holy Spirit of God. You must be “born of the Spirit” to enjoy a relationship

with God (John 3:5-6, 8). Physical birth is not enough to get you into heaven. In fact, it disqualifies you from the start. The new birth is required, and it is the Spirit of God who produces spiritual life.

Where we read “water and the Spirit” (John 3:5), it likely means “water *even* the Spirit.” Water is used to illustrate the cleansing aspect of the Spirit’s work in regeneration. His work is described as “the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5). If a person believes in Jesus for cleansing, He promises, “out of his heart will flow rivers of living water,” referring to the work of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life (John 7:38-39).

To be born again, a person first experiences the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, who shows him that he is a sinner in need of a Savior (John 16:8-11). Then the Spirit leads a person to faith in Christ, transforming him through the new birth (John 3:5-6, 8). The work of the Spirit of God in a believer produces spiritual fruit (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:9-10).

What is man’s role in the new birth? As for human responsibility in regeneration, Jesus said to Nicodemus, “You must be born again” (John 3:7). Man’s responsibility is to “believe in Him” (John 3:15-16, 18). Belief is not simply intellectual assent or agreeing with a set of facts. Belief is the same thing as trust or faith. If Nicodemus put his faith or trust in Jesus Christ, he would be born again, and the Lord would give him eternal life. If you place your faith or trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior, you will be born again. God will give you eternal life.

How is A Person Born Again?

1. The Illustration of the Wind

Jesus said, “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). Jesus spoke in the Greek language and used the word *pneuma*. This verse presents a wordplay that is not apparent in English. The word *pneuma* means both wind and Spirit. The work of the Spirit of God is like the wind – invisible, unpredictable, yet evident in its effects. The source of the wind is from God, and He controls it.

The new birth has its source in God (John 1:13). The Spirit works invisibly in the hearts of people, convicting them of sin (John 16:8), showing them their need for a Savior. He may be doing that in your life at this moment. The effects of His work are evident in the life of a person who has been born again. The sins he formerly loved he now hates. He now loves the Lord whom he had rejected. The transformation is profound. Just as no one can fully understand the impact of the wind, no one can fully comprehend the impact of the work of the Spirit of God in a person’s life. But the results are obvious.

2. The Illustration of the Bronze Serpent

Jesus said, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:14-15). The story of the Bronze Serpent addresses the sin issue. How can we be born again if we are still sinners?

In Numbers 21:4-9, the people of Israel began to speak against God and Moses. God punished them for their sin of rebellion by sending venomous serpents among the people. People died from the painful, fiery snake bites. Finally, the people admitted that they had sinned, and God provided a way for them to live and not die. God directed Moses to make a bronze serpent, put it on a pole, and lift it in the air for all to see. God told Moses that if the people looked to the bronze serpent, they would live. That look would demonstrate their faith in what God said. So Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness, and God immediately healed everyone who looked at it. This simple act of trust in God’s word gave them life. What if they did not act in faith by *looking* at the bronze serpent? They would have died in the wilderness.

Jesus told Nicodemus that this Old Testament event pointed forward to when He, the Son of Man, would be “lifted up” like that serpent on the pole. Jesus was lifted up on the cross (John 12:32-33) to die for our sins. He died in our place, for our sins. Every person who, by faith, looks to Jesus for salvation will have eternal life (John 3:14-15). The new birth occurs by trusting alone in Jesus Christ as the One crucified for your sins. When you trust in Him, He gives you eternal life. What if a person knows these things but never personally trusts (believes, exercises faith) in Him? They will perish (John 3:15-18).

The illustration of the bronze serpent tells us how we can be born again. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Just as the Jews in the wilderness had to believe what God said and look at the bronze serpent lifted on the pole in the wilderness for their deliverance, so we must believe what God says and look to Jesus Christ who was lifted up on the cross for our salvation. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

3. The Impact of the Word of God

The Bible is instrumental in the new birth (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23). We hear the word of truth and believe it, resulting in salvation (Ephesians 1:13; cf. Romans 1:16; 10:17). It is the seed of salvation (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23). The new birth comes when we genuinely believe God’s word and obey the gospel, that is, Jesus’ command to be born again.

What Are the Results of the New Birth?

Some of the life changes that occur when we are born again are immediately given to us by God. Other changes exist in “seed form” and develop over time as we grow in our Christian life (1 Peter 2:2-3).

- We love God’s word (Psalm 119:97, 119, 127, 159, 163, 167)
- We have a new heart and a new spirit (Ezekiel 11:19)
- We are children in the family of God (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1)
- We are indwelt by the Spirit of God (Romans 8:9)
- We exercise the gift(s) of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)
- We display the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:9)
- We partake of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4)
- We have a will to obey the Lord Jesus (1 John 2:3, 5)
- We practice righteousness (1 John 2:29)
- We do not practice sin (1 John 3:9; 5:18)
- We love others, especially Christians (1 John 3:14; 4:7)
- We believe that Jesus is the Messiah (1 John 5:1)
- We love the Lord Jesus Christ (1 John 5:1)
- We overcome the world (1 John 5:4)
- We have eternal life (1 John 5:11-12)

Has the Spirit of God convicted you of your sins? Have you turned to Jesus Christ and looked to Him for deliverance? Have you recognized that, like Nicodemus, being religious is not the same as being born again? Have you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and trusted in Him for your salvation? You must be born again (John 3:3, 7).

“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9-10).

6. What is the Holy Spirit's role in the new birth (John 3:6-8; 16:7-11; Acts 2:37-38; Titus 3:5)?

7. What is the role of the word of God in the new birth (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23; Romans 10:17; Ephesians 1:13; 1 Peter 1:23)?

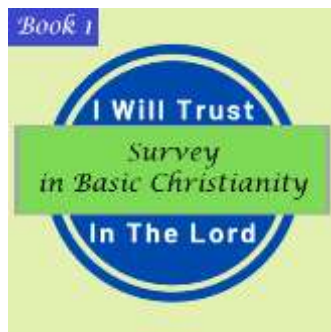
8. What are some results of the new birth?

9. *What do you say?* Explain the new birth in your own words.

10. We encourage you to memorize God's word. The suggested memory verse for this lesson is:

Romans 10:9-10 (NKJV)

“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”



Survey In Basic Christianity

Lesson 10

Salvation by Grace

O. J. Gibson

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). Grace is God’s kindness and favor shown to those who deserve His judgment. There is nothing in man that requires God to show him grace, But God saves a person from judgment based on His grace. Salvation is a gift, which means that it cannot be bought or earned.

An illustration from a courtroom setting may help. If a man murdered your child and you pursued that person to kill him, that would be *vengeance*. If you left the outcome of the crime to the police and the courts to arrest, convict, and execute him, that would be *justice*. If you forgave and pardoned the criminal, adopted him as your son, and welcomed him into your home, that would be *grace*.

If a person breaks God’s law, the punishment for that crime is death and eternal torment in the lake of fire. If God immediately hunted you down and killed you, that would be *vengeance* (Hebrews 10:30-31). If God summons sinners into His courtroom and sentences all men to death, that would be *justice* (Romans 3:19, 23; Revelation 20:14-15).

What if God sent His Son to die as your substitute, to pay the death penalty for your sins (crimes)? And what if God offered you the gift of salvation if you simply believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your substitute, your sin-bearer, the One who died and rose again for your sins? And suppose God provided that gift of salvation to you freely so that you neither had to work for it nor earn it in any way? Imagine if God pardoned you for your sin, offered to make you His child, and provided you with a home in heaven to live with Him for all eternity! What would you call that? That would be *God’s amazing grace*.

John Newton, a very sinful man, was saved by God’s grace, and he wrote the words to a song expressing what the Lord did for Him. The world-famous song is *Amazing Grace*.

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.

This doctrine of grace is difficult for religious people to accept because God’s grace is not for people who consider themselves good, moral, religious, and upright. God’s grace is not for people who attempt to earn their salvation by their good works, for that denies the truth of grace. God’s grace is for ungodly sinners, the helpless, the hopeless, and the lost. Those eligible for God’s grace are miserable wretches, enemies, and those who richly deserve hell who say, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” (Luke 18:13).

The Old Testament word for grace means “to stoop in kindness to an inferior.” This definition perfectly describes God’s action toward us. The New Testament word means “favor, free generosity, kindness to

someone, or a gift.” This indicates that salvation is not earned, deserved, or bought, either in whole or in part. Salvation in Jesus Christ is “the gift of God.” A gift is not a gift if one must earn it or pay for it.

Questions About Grace

It is difficult for people to grasp the truth that no amount of good works will ever help them gain merit for salvation before God. Consider the Bible’s answers to the following questions:

1. Can I earn God’s favor by doing good works?

No. Grace is a gift and cannot be earned by doing good works or trying to live a good life. “And if by grace, then it is no longer of works” (Romans 11:6). The Bible says, “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10). Even our good works are tainted with sin since “we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). The Bible says salvation is “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us” (Titus 3:5). We have no righteousness of our own. We need God’s righteousness to enter heaven, and it is graciously granted “to him who does not work” (Romans 4:5). The one who tries to earn favor for salvation through good works seeks to make God his debtor (Romans 4:4).

2. Can I earn God’s favor by keeping the Ten Commandments?

No. Most people can only name a few of the commandments at best. How can one earn God’s favor by keeping that which he does not know? The Ten Commandments are the standard of God’s righteousness that no one can observe with 100% perfection. The law exposes our sin. “Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20). The law is unforgiving, “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). The law cannot save anyone. All it can do is condemn. Many people think that if they obey the law, they will be justified or declared righteous by God. That is simply not true. “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28). “For by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified” (Galatians 2:16). But we are “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). Salvation is not by works, not by law-keeping, not by religious ceremonies, and not by seeking to make God our debtor. Salvation is by grace alone. There is nothing you can add to Jesus’ finished work on the cross.

Does God Simply Overlook Our Sin?

No! Every person has earned wages for their sin, “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Those wages must be paid, and death is the payment. The law demands that we receive our wages, which means eternal death, the second death, eternal separation from God. But God, in His grace, sent Jesus Christ to the cross as our substitute. Jesus received the wages of our sin. He died in our place (Isaiah 53:4-5).

God cannot simply overlook our sin, excuse it, or act as if it never happened. A person must be punished for every wrong he has ever committed. “The soul who sins shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4). To be just, God must carry out His law. If a person must pay the penalty for his own sin, he will perish forever (2 Peter 3:9). But, in His grace, God provided a substitute – someone to take your place (1 Peter 3:18).

The Substitute

- He must be a human to be equal to our humanity. Jesus Christ was born of a virgin (Matthew 1:23) and is a man (1 Timothy 2:5).
- He must be a perfect, sinless man, or He would have to die for His own sins. The Bible says of Jesus, He “committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth” (1 Peter 2:22), He “knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21), “and in Him there is no sin” (1 John 3:5).

- He must be God since only an infinite person could be a substitute for numberless sins. The value of the life of the one dying must be great enough to pay for every sin of every human being who has ever lived or will ever live on the earth. Jesus Christ is God, “Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:3).
- He must shed His blood because the law demanded blood as necessary for the forgiveness of sins. “And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission [forgiveness of sins]” (Hebrews 9:22). Jesus shed His precious blood as the spotless Lamb of God (John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18-19).
- He must be willing to die in place of sinners, which demonstrates His great love for us (John 15:13). It was His delight to do the Father’s will. He looked beyond the suffering to the joy that would come from seeing sinners saved from their sins (Psalm 40:8; Hebrews 12:2).
- He must rise from the dead. Otherwise, sin and death have conquered Him. “If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!” (1 Corinthians 15:17). “But now Christ is risen from the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:20). Jesus said, “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore” (Revelation 1:18).

Why Is Grace Necessary?

1. The Moral Condition of Man

Man is a sinner (Romans 3:9), ungodly (Romans 5:6), dead in sins (Ephesians 2:1), and an enemy of God (Colossians 1:21). These are the things that qualify people to be recipients of God’s grace. Grace is not shown to people who think they are good enough to get to heaven, religious people who have never been born again, or to those who believe that their good works will offset their sins. The Apostle Paul testifies that God showed him grace, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Timothy 1:15). If you are a sinner, Christ’s grace, His undeserved favor, is available for you.

2. The Absolute Holiness of God

Man can never reach God by his own efforts. God’s absolute holiness is beyond even the best of men (Isaiah 6:3-5). Trying to obey God’s laws will end in utter failure. We know that “the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (Romans 7:12). The law of God condemns all people. “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Romans 3:19). God stoops to man in grace to save him (Psalm 113:5-7; Philippians 2:7-8).

What Are the Effects of Grace?

1. We Are Saved by Grace

The only way of salvation is by grace (Romans 3:24; 4:16; Ephesians 2:8-9).

2. We Are Kept by Grace

He holds us in His hand and keeps us by His power (John 10:28-29; 1 Peter 1:5; 5:10). We are not kept through the law (Galatians 3:2-3) or by other works. We are under grace, not law (Romans 6:14).

3. We Stand in Grace

Our standing refers to our position of favor before God that is perfect and permanent (Romans 5:2; 1 Peter 5:12; Jude 24).

4. We Live by Grace

It is God who works in us to empower Christian living (Philippians 2:13; Hebrews 13:21).

Warnings About Grace

God's grace to us does not grant us a license to sin or undermine our calling to live a godly life.

1. We Must Not Sin That Grace May Abound

God offers salvation by His grace. We should not presume upon His grace by continuing to live in sin (Romans 6:1-2).

2. We Must Not Turn the Grace of God Into an Excuse for Impurity

Liberty is not an occasion for wickedness but rather for loving sacrifice (Galatians 5:13; Jude 4).

3. We Are Saved For Good Works

We are not saved *by* good works, but we are saved *for* good works (Ephesians 2:10; Titus 3:8). We must not practice sin (1 John 3:9). We are to keep God's word (1 John 2:3-5). Good works are the fruit of salvation and not the root of salvation. Good works do not earn God's favor. We live for God because we love the Lord Jesus (John 14:15, 21).

The unique Christian message is the gospel of grace (Acts 14:3; 20:24, 32). This gospel proceeds from the God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10), who receives us at the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16). Grace is an abiding principle of God's character and is how He deals with us. We should always humbly approach the Lord, knowing He desires to respond to us in grace.

Respond to God's Grace

The first use of the word *grace* in the Bible is in Genesis 6:8, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." The backstory is that "the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). Sin was rampant on the earth. God's *justice* would not allow sin to go unchecked. "So the LORD said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them'" (Genesis 6:7). Then we read, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Genesis 6:8). Noah was a sinner, but God showed him grace and saved him in the ark during the worldwide flood. There was only one way of salvation, and it was God who provided it. The grace of God saved Noah.

World conditions today are similar to the way they were in Noah's day. "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man" (Luke 17:26). In those days, "the flood came and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:27).

Jesus is coming again, and He will judge the world by fire. His *justice* will replace His *grace*, and He will come "in flaming fire taking *vengeance* on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

Today, we live in the Age of Grace. Jesus is the only way of salvation (John 14:6), and God has provided Him for us by His grace. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). Will you respond to His grace today and trust in Him alone for your salvation?

SBC Lesson 10 Study Guide

Salvation by Grace

The Christian faith is unique in emphasizing the truth of salvation by grace. Other systems of approach to God deny this truth in whole or in part. Be sure that you understand this doctrine by answering these questions.

1. Grace is God (select one)
 - a. reaching those undeserving of His favor
 - b. reaching those deserving of His favor
 - c. reaching those deserving of His judgment

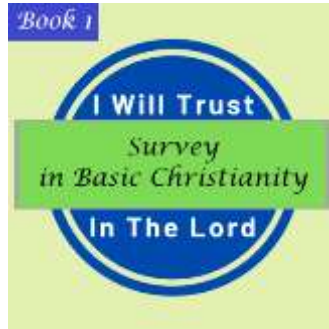
2. Explain the difference between vengeance, justice, and grace.

3. According to Scripture, all men are (select one)
 - a. basically good
 - b. seeking God
 - c. corrupt
 - d. well-meaning, but weak

4. Observing the Ten Commandments (select one)
 - a. is essential for a Christian's salvation
 - b. is to be joined together with Christ's work on the cross
 - c. can now be disregarded
 - d. is the perfect standard required for attaining God's righteousness
 - e. is none of the above

5. God can save sinners by grace and still be holy because (select one)
 - a. Christ took the sinner's place and suffered for us
 - b. God can do whatever He pleases, even if inconsistent
 - c. sin is not all that serious
 - d. that is His duty to His creatures

6. Paraphrase (rewrite in your own words) Ephesians 2:8-9.



Survey In Basic Christianity

Lesson 11

Believing on Jesus Christ

O. J. Gibson

The jailer at Philippi asked, “What must I do to be saved?” The Apostle Paul answered, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:30-31). But what does it mean to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?

Some people have unbiblical ideas about what it means to believe on Him. Here are some common but wrong ideas. If one were to ask, “Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?” they might say, “I believe:”

- Because they acknowledge that Jesus lived and died here on earth
- Because they admire the morals and ethics of Jesus
- Because they joined a religious group
- Because they pray to God
- Because they repeated a prayer, doctrinal statement, or formula

But do these answers reflect what the Bible means by “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?” Does this kind of belief change a person’s life? Does it give solid assurance of going to heaven?

What is Faith?

Believing on Jesus Christ for salvation involves faith. Faith is our response to God. Biblical faith includes the ideas of trust, personal confidence, persuasion, and reliance. It is the opposite of doubt. Faith is not gullible or naïve. Faith depends entirely on what the Bible says and agrees with the truth about Jesus Christ and what He has done and can do for you. Faith has the following components:

1. Faith Has an Object

Faith is in someone or something. For Christians, this someone is a living Person, the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21). “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent” (John 6:29). The Lord Jesus asked the blind man, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” (John 9:35). To be accepted into Paradise (Heaven), the thief on the cross had only to believe on Jesus (Luke 23:42-43). This trust in Jesus is at the heart of the gospel message (Acts 8:35-37; 1 John 5:13). It is not how much, but in whom we believe. Faith receives Him (John 1:12).

2. Faith Requires Content

Faith does not rely on ambiguous feelings but requires a clear message to be believed. We must hear the word of the gospel and believe it (Acts 15:7). The Apostle Paul said that the gospel message “is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). Paul preached the gospel to the Corinthians, resulting in their salvation. That gospel is “good news,” and the gospel message that saves a person is carefully defined in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” Trusting Christ

comes after hearing the gospel, called the word of truth (Ephesians 1:13). This gospel is so precious and vital that any man or angel who alters it is under a curse (Galatians 1:6-9).

3. Faith is Built on Truth

Faith demands truth, and that truth comes from the Bible, which is the word of God (Romans 10:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13). Faith accepts God's word and believes that God is true, though every man may be a liar (Romans 3:3-4). We are not "leaping into the dark," exercising blind faith, or trusting in our emotions. We believe and rely entirely upon the truth of God's word.

4. Faith Brings About Action

We may think that faith is merely a mental agreement with a particular statement of facts, but that is not so. Notice the action words in the following verses: people came to Jesus, fell down before Him and obeyed His word; He told a man to stretch forth his hand (Matthew 12:13); He said to another to take up his bed (Matthew 9:6); He commanded another to wash in a specific pool of water (John 9:7). Repeatedly He called for action. Faith believes the truth and responds to it.

Abraham is the model of a man who believed in God. When comparing Genesis 12:1-4, Acts 7:2-3, and Hebrews 11:8, we read that Abraham heard God's word and responded by leaving his hometown without knowing where God would lead him. This believing response demonstrated his faith.

The faith that saves is a faith that produces action. Saving faith has never been merely a passive, mental assent to historical facts. Any so-called "faith" which does not produce works is a "dead faith." When a person truly believes in Christ, the result will be a life of good works. (See James 2:14-26 for an obvious contrast between *saving faith* and *dead faith*). Saving faith is more than believing *that* the facts about Christ and His death are true. We believe *in/on* the Son of God, being committed personally to Him.

5. Faith is Trust in God

It is striking to read about Abraham's simplicity of faith. One night, God said to Abraham, "'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' And he [Abraham] believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:5-6). Abraham was declared righteous because he believed God's promise.

Abraham was justified (declared righteous) by faith. This fact is stated in Genesis 15:6 and is so vital that it is repeated three times in the New Testament. "For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness'" (Romans 4:3). And we read, "Just as Abraham 'believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness'" (Galatians 3:6). Once more, we read, "And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' And he was called the friend of God" (James 2:23).

Examples of Faith

Examples of faith fill the pages of the Bible. Hebrews 11 is known as the *Honor Roll of Faith* because it lists some outstanding men and women who had a living and active faith. Review the chapter and mark the actions taken by each person of faith.

Jesus marveled at two notable examples of faith. The first is the faith of the centurion in Matthew 8:5-10. The centurion believed that Jesus did not have to be physically present to heal but could merely say the word and heal his servant. The other example is the faith of the woman of Canaan (Matthew 15:22-28). She pleaded that the Lord would deliver her daughter from demons. Her faith was humble and persistent.

How to Come to Christ

When we come to Christ for salvation, what happens?

1. The Spirit Convicts us of Sin

Only sinners need a Savior. The Spirit of God faithfully shows us that we are sinners in need of the Savior (John 16:8-11). Once we understand that our sin separates us from God, we acknowledge our sin to Him and seek His forgiveness (Luke 15:18; 18:13-14).

2. We Repent of Our Sins

Repentance is a change of mind. We have been convicted of our sin and know the penalty for sin is death. We now want to be saved from our sin and desire to leave our sins in the past. Repentance is a change of mind that ultimately leads to a change of action (Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30; 20:21).

3. There is an Understanding of the Gospel

We must believe the gospel message to be saved (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Ephesians 1:13). The heart of that message is what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us; He died on the cross, was buried, and rose again the third day.

4 We Believe God's Word

The message of the gospel comes from the word of God. We hear the word preached or spoken to us and believe its message (Mark 4:20; John 5:24; Romans 10:17).

5. We Receive God's Son by Faith

Jesus is the only way of salvation (John 14:6). Thus, faith's response to the gospel message is to *receive Him* as you would receive a gift; to *believe in Him* as the only One who can save you; to *confess* that He is God and *believe in your heart* that God raised Him from the dead (John 1:12; Romans 10:9-10; 1 John 5:12-13). This trust in Him is saving faith.

6. We Become His Follower

The natural response of a true believer is to follow the Lord Jesus. The Bible illustrates this as sheep following the voice of the Shepherd who loved them and gave Himself for them (John 10:4-5, 27; Galatians 2:20).

7. We Confess Him Before Others

A true believer will want to confess Him before others. To *confess Him* means to *openly declare* our allegiance to Him as our Lord and Master (Matthew 10:32; Luke 12:8; Romans 10:9).

Saving faith rests its entire weight upon the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work. God offers salvation as a gift of His grace to us, and by faith, we receive it. Faith is the instrument, the means, and the channel through which the grace of God flows. Faith is not the source of salvation, nor is it an act of merit. It is the empty hand that accepts what God freely offers. The urgent message to believe delivers a person from his sin and the vengeance that awaits those who do not obey the gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

Sadly, some claim to have faith in Jesus Christ but are imposters, including many religious charlatans. These frauds may claim to know Jesus Christ and may even be religious figures who seem to do mighty works, but the Lord will expose and reject imposters (Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 13:28), for these are tares among the wheat (Matthew 13:24-30). ("Tares" are likely darnel, a worthless weed that resembles wheat).

True saving faith gives all the glory to God. It can be exercised by all classes of people of varying ages, positions, and intelligence. It is universally available. Faith transforms a person's life (Hebrews 6:9-10).

That transformation occurs because the Bible says, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). God gives believers new desires they did not have before, and these desires increase as we mature in our faith. Some of these new desires include:

- A desire to abandon sinful behavior (Galatians 5:19-21; 1 John 3:9-10)
- A passion for fulfilling God’s purpose in life (Ephesians 2:10)
- A hunger to practice righteousness (Ephesians 4:22-24; 1 John 3:7, 10)
- A willingness to obey the word of God (1 John 2:4-5)
- A love for other believers (1 John 3:14).

God has spoken in His word and invites you to “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). Will you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ today?

7. What was the evidence of true faith in the woman of Canaan in Matthew 15:22-28? Would you take the same position before the Lord Jesus?

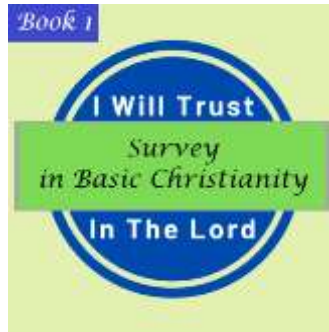
8. In what way have you personally known or acted upon the following verses?
 - a. Luke 13:3
 - b. John 5:24
 - c. John 10:4-5, 27
 - d. John 16:7-9
 - e. Romans 10:9-10
 - f. Ephesians 1:13

9. *What do you say?* In what areas do you still have questions about what it means to believe in Jesus?

10. If you died today and stood before God, and He asked you, "Why should I let you into My heaven?" what would you say?

11. We encourage you to memorize God's word. The suggested memory verse for this lesson is:

John 5:24 (NKJV)
"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."



Survey In Basic Christianity

Lesson 12

Assurance of Salvation

O. J. Gibson

Some say, "No one can know for sure that he is going to heaven." There are two prevailing views among Bible teachers about the topic of the eternal security of believers. Some say, "Once saved, always saved." Others argue that personal sins may cause us to lose our salvation. God has spoken on this matter, "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:11-12). God's testimony is sure. You *can* know! You have eternal life if you have the Son of God.

Our assurance should be based on what God said, not on the trembling feelings in our hearts and minds. The Lord wants us to enjoy a stable Christian life, sure of our relationship with Him. And for that reason, He offers the assurance of salvation to every believer.

Promise of Assurance

"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). You will note that it does not say that you may feel—or hope—or think—or imagine. It says, "you may *know* that you have eternal life." Over 30 times in his first epistle, John repeats the word "know" in some form. Consider these phrases: "know that we know Him" (1 John 2:3), "know that we have passed from death to life" (1 John 3:14), "know that we are of the truth" (1 John 3:19), "know that He abides in us" (1 John 3:24), and "know that we abide in Him" (1 John 4:13).

It is certainly true that "not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 7:21). Just as there is counterfeit currency, so there are counterfeit "Christians." Some who profess to be believers and have associated themselves with Christians will be turned away by the Lord (Luke 13:25-27). Jesus warned of imposters He described as wolves in sheep's clothing or as rotten fruit trees (Matthew 7:15-19). Jesus said, "Therefore by their fruits you will know them" (Matthew 7:20). Yet, if a person has been born again, sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13), and shows evidence of a changed life (1 John 2:6), that believer can be confident of eternal life right now (Romans 8:38-39; 2 Timothy 1:12).

Assurance is defined as "confidence" or a "state of certainty." *Assurance of salvation* is the confidence or state of certainty a Christian has about his salvation (eternal life). The Scriptures clearly indicate that God wants Christians to know that they are heaven-bound. Assurance of salvation is not merely human optimism or presumption. It is a fact confirmed by God's testimony that He has given us eternal life.

Three Witnesses for the Believer's Assurance

God has given the Christian three witnesses that testify to his relationship with God, and on which he should base his assurance:

1. The Word of God

The Bible is our most decisive witness. Just as our salvation is based on belief in God's word (Genesis 15:6; Romans 10:9-10), so also our assurance must rest on the promises of the Bible. "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life" (John 3:16, 36; 5:24). The word of God was "written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). Our salvation is based on the *fact* that we have the Son of God, not that we have a certain *feeling* (1 John 5:12). Nowhere does the Bible speak of "feeling" saved. If we come to Jesus, we have His word that He will never cast us out (John 6:37).

2. Objective Tests of Reality

Another important witness is the reality of a *changed life*. The thief on the cross had limited opportunity to stand for Christ, but he publicly confessed his faith and rebuked the other thief (Luke 23:40-43). Although there are believers who live a carnal (fleshly) life (1 Corinthians 3:1-4), of whom Lot is typical (2 Peter 2:7-8), that is not to say their lives show no evidence of spiritual life. Human failure has Scriptural provision (1 John 1:9; 2:1-2), but this is not a license to sin (Romans 6:1-2). As a genuine believer matures, he will demonstrate the following evidence of spiritual life:

- Confessing Christ (Romans 10:9-10)
- Good works (Ephesians 2:10; James 2:14-26)
- Obedience to the word of God (1 John 2:4-5; 5:2-3)
- Not loving the world (1 John 2:15)
- Practicing righteousness (1 John 3:7, 10)
- Not practicing sin (Galatians 5:21; 1 John 3:9-10)
- Love for fellow-believers (1 John 3:14)
- Affirming Christ's deity (Colossians 1:15-16; Titus 2:13; 2 John 9)
- Willingness to admit and confess sin as a believer (1 John 1:8-9)

3. Inward Witness

A third witness is our own feelings. This witness is the weakest of the three because it is subjective, and a person may deceive himself. Yet, taken with the other two, it is still a significant witness. The following are subjective tests of the reality of divine life:

- The witness of the Spirit with our spirit (Romans 8:16)
- No more consciousness of sin as an unpaid debt (Hebrews 10:2)
- Distress when we sin (Psalm 32:3-5)
- Our way of life has changed (see previous objective tests); we sense reality in prayer; we are concerned for the lost; we desire to read and follow the Bible, etc.

How To Deal With Doubts

1. Recognize Doubts

Why do some Christians experience doubts?

- Emotional temperament plays a role. Some people have a sensitive conscience to sin. Others are troubled by a lack of fruit-bearing in their Christian life. Trials in life also disrupt their peace of mind.

- Satan sows seeds of doubt in the heart that trouble believers. Questions such as, “Did you truly believe the right way?” Or “How can you say you are a Christian yet you still sin?” Or “Maybe you have committed the unpardonable sin!”
- Inconsistencies or sins in their life often plague believers with doubts.
- Negligence in prayer, worship, and witnessing may also undermine their assurance.
- Uncertainty about the timing of one’s salvation often causes a lack of peace and assurance.

If you experience any of these doubts, you will find these questions are answered in Appendix B - God’s Answers to Man’s Questions.

2. Examine Yourself

Some Christians may not remember all the details of when they first believed. Some children trust in the Lord at a very early age. Some adults turn to the Lord out of a life of drugs and alcohol. Some memory lapses may occur. The following questions may help pinpoint a person’s true spiritual state:

- Do you remember experiencing the conviction of sin that led to your salvation?
- On what are you currently basing your hopes of heaven?
- When and under what circumstances did you receive Christ?
- If you were to die tonight and stand before God and He were to say to you, “Why should I let you into heaven,” what would you say?

A true believer experiences conviction of sin and repentance and rests his hope of salvation solely on Christ and His finished work. Generally, a believer will recall when he made an unconditional commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior. If the exact date is unknown, he will at least remember that he did trust in the Lord. The question is, “Are you trusting in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord right now?” If not, why not trust Him for your salvation today? “Now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

3. Understand That All Believers Have Eternal Security

Not only does the Lord save us, but He keeps us forever. Jesus said of believers, “I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one” (John 10:27-30).

The Lord gives eternal life to those who believe in Him and excludes them from eternal judgment (John 5:24). Nothing “shall be able to separate [believers] from the love of God” (Romans 8:39). “He who has begun a good work in you will complete it” (Philippians 1:6). The believer’s eternal security rests in the hands of the One who triumphed over sin, death, and hell, and He “is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24). The truth of eternal security should bring peace and assurance of salvation. (This topic is more fully developed in Basic Christian Training, Lesson 5).

4. Understand That All Believers Are Perfect “in Christ”

When a person trusts in Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord, God immediately places him “in Christ.” Being in Christ refers to our position before God. Believers are perfect in His sight, “For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14). Future judgment is averted because “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). Christ died for us, and we are saved from the penalty of sin; we are being saved from the power of sin; and we will be saved from the presence of sin (Romans 6:23, 8:2; Hebrews 9:28).

Believers are perfect in their position before God, but they are not yet perfect in practice. The Bible says of our perfect *position* that believers *are holy* (Colossians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; Hebrews 3:1). But our *practice* may not always reflect that perfect holiness. Peter writes, “but as He who called you is holy, you also *be holy* in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:15-16).

In heaven, our practice will finally be made perfect, and “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). At that time, we will be morally like the Lord Jesus and be free from all sin and defilement. While we live on earth, we still sin, and this may cause a lack of assurance. The cure for this temporary lack of assurance is to confess and forsake all sin (Proverbs 28:13). God’s perfect standard is “that you may not sin.” His perfect provision is available if we do sin. “And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). A believer’s *position* is secure and brings assurance; a believer’s *practice* may undermine that assurance. Believers are encouraged “to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called” (Ephesians 4:1). (This topic is more fully developed in Intermediate Christian Training, Lesson 2).

5. Recognize That All Believers Are In God’s Family

When believers are born again into the family of God, a new relationship begins. “As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12). Believers “receive the adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:5, 7; Ephesians 1:4-5), and as sons, call Him “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). He says, “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters” (2 Corinthians 6:18).

Our *relationship* can never be severed, but *fellowship* with our Father can be broken. When a child breaks a family rule, he usually is corrected, not removed from the family. Sin breaks our fellowship with God but not our relationship. “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth” (1 John 1:6; cf. 1 John 1:8). The Lord loves us and desires to restore that broken fellowship. His correction is evidence that we are His children. “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives” (Hebrews 12:5-6). Fellowship can quickly be restored if we confess and forsake our sin (1 John 1:9). The happy fellowship is restored, and assurance returns.

The Value of Self-Evaluation

Jesus warned against self-deception concerning salvation. Many will claim to have known Him and to have done much in service for Him, yet they will be cast out of His presence and into outer darkness because they were not true believers (Matthew 7:21-23; 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; Luke 13:23-28). Therefore, if you have doubts, you should examine yourself “as to whether you are in the faith” (2 Corinthians 13:5) using the objective tests of reality given above. If there is still doubt, then consider a prayer of commitment to Christ as Lord and Savior.

SBC Lesson 12 Study Guide

Assurance of Salvation

The next best thing to knowing God is having the assurance that we are His forever. How can we know for sure that we have eternal life? Carefully consider the following questions.

1. Which of the following statements best reflects the Biblical concept of assurance of salvation?
 - a. I think I have eternal life
 - b. I hope I have eternal life
 - c. I know I have eternal life
 - d. I'll find out when I die if I have eternal life

2. Answer by circling True or False
 - a. A person cannot know for sure he has eternal life. (True or False)
 - b. It is possible to have assurance based on false reasons. (True or False)
 - c. Some who say they believe will be lost. (True or False)
 - d. Assurance of salvation is merely human optimism and presumption. (True or False)

3. Paraphrase (rewrite in your own words) 1 John 5:11-13

4. What do the following verses indicate about a person's ability to know he has eternal life?
 - a. 1 John 2:3
 - b. 1 John 3:14
 - c. 1 John 3:16-19
 - d. 1 John 3:24
 - e. 1 John 4:13

5. Which of the following are the best witnesses of the reality of our relationship with God? List in order of importance from most reliable to least reliable. Use numbers 1 - 4.
 - a. _____ The witness of friends
 - b. _____ The word of God
 - c. _____ An objective test of reality
 - d. _____ An inward witness

6. From Matthew 7:21-23, why is it essential that our assurance of salvation be based on objective facts?

7. Which of the objective tests of reality listed in the chapter are true of your life?

8. How do the following truths bring assurance to believers?
 - a. Knowing a believer has eternal security

 - b. Knowing the difference between a believer's *position* "in Christ" and their *practice*

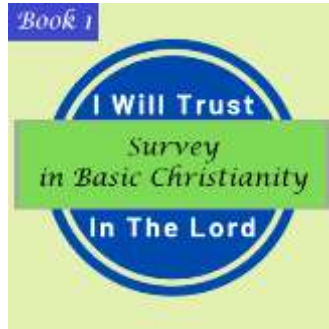
 - c. Knowing the difference between a believer's *relationship* with God and their *fellowship* with Him

9. *What do you say?* What would you say if someone were to ask you, "How do you know for sure you have eternal life?"

10. We encourage you to memorize God's word. The suggested memory verse for this lesson is:

John 10:27-28 (NKJV)

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand."



Survey In Basic Christianity

Lesson 13

Living the New Life

O. J. Gibson

“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10b). The life He promises is eternal (John 10:28), refreshing (John 7:38), victorious (1 John 5:4), and includes life benefits such as peace, rest, and spiritual power (Matthew 11:28-29; John 14:27; 2 Timothy 1:7).

The Lord offers pardon for sin and the assurance of eternal life. The Spirit of God provides new life to believers, and He works actively to transform our walk and renew our minds. The abundant life can be ours if we follow what the Scripture says about how to live.

Words for the New Believer

The clear promises of God’s word confirm that having believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have eternal life (John 3:16; 36; 5:24; 1 John 5:11-13). Genuine believers will demonstrate a changed life, proving the reality of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Here are some initial steps a new believer can take:

1. Confess Jesus as Your Lord Before Others

When you consider what the Lord Jesus has done for you, it is appropriate to tell others so that they may come to know Him, too (Luke 12:8; Acts 1:8). Refuse to be a silent, undercover believer.

2. Discontinue Harmful Habits and Associations

The Bible encourages separation from evil practices and people. The Lord warns against a Christian entering into a marriage with a non-Christian, being in a business partnership with unbelievers, or other alliances with those who do not know our Savior (Psalm 1:1-6; 2 Corinthians 6:14 -18). Do not let others pull you down or drag you back into your former lifestyle. Do not compromise your Christian testimony.

3. Seek a Mature Prayer Partner and Helper

“Two are better than one” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10). You will grow stronger and be encouraged with the help of a more mature believer at your side.

Spiritual Life Principles

Victorious Christian living is not simply for missionaries and exceptional disciples. It is Christ’s will for all His people (2 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 4:13). The following steps mark the path of triumph each day:

1. Submit to Jesus Christ as Lord Daily

We now belong to Christ, and we should walk with Him daily. Believers consciously give themselves first to the Lord and then to serve other believers. (2 Corinthians 8:5; Colossians 2:6). He blesses those who willingly bow the knee to His supremacy (Philippians 2:9-11). You belong to the One who loves

you. You are His and not your own, “For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

2. Yield Daily to Every Prompting of the Holy Spirit

Believers are to present their bodies to God and not to unrighteousness, seeking to be led by the Spirit of God (Romans 6:13-19; 8:14). We are not to grieve or quench the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19) who lives and abides in us (Romans 8:9; 1 John 2:27). We are to be filled, or controlled, by the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). A Spirit-filled believer walks worthy of God (Colossians 1:10).

3. Be Occupied with Christ Himself, Rather than Yourself

Being occupied with the Lord Jesus helps us run the Christian life-race with endurance and keeps us from becoming “weary and discouraged in (our) souls” (Hebrews 12:1-3). We are to focus our thoughts upon Him (Colossians 3:2). Our entire life is to be Christ-centered and not self-centered.

4. Obey the Word of God

When we obey the Lord, it is strong evidence that we love Him. “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3). It also indicates that He lives in us, and we live in Him (John 14:15, 21; 15:10; 1 John 3:24). To obey God is better than all sacrifices (1 Samuel 15:22). If we call Jesus “Lord,” we will want to do what He says (Luke 6:46; John 7:17). We can expect our willingness to obey the Lord to be tested (Genesis 22:1-18). We should never think of obedience as “legalism.” Legalism is adding to God’s requirements—whether relating to salvation or living the Christian life. We obey Him because we love Him.

5. Believe God and Trust Him for Every Need

Believers walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7) and trust the Lord for everything (Matthew 6:24-34). We trust in Him for salvation and in all areas of life (John 14:1). He rewards those who live by faith (Hebrews 11:6). Faith is the exercise of trust in the Lord, as seen in the lives of those listed in Hebrews 11. Jesus rebuked His disciples for their unbelief (lack of faith in Him) (Matthew 8:26; Luke 24:25).

6. Serve Others for the Lord’s Sake

Jesus “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). We should serve one another in love (2 Corinthians 4:5; Galatians 5:13; Colossians 3:23-24). God calls us to humbly serve, putting self-interest aside, and be constantly looking out for the interests of others (Philippians 2:3-4). Believers grow by serving one another. “He who waters will also be watered himself” (Proverbs 11:25). It is said, “The Dead Sea is dead because it is always taking in and never putting out.” The Lord rewards believers for their loving service (Hebrews 6:10).

7. Discipline Your Life

Christians live a disciplined life (1 Corinthians 9:27) exercising self-control, or temperance, which is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23; 2 Peter 1:6). Believers are to put to death sinful behavior (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5). God works with us in this discipline (Hebrews 12:6-7).

The daily presentation of our body to God is necessary (Romans 12:1-2). We are to resist the devil (James 4:7), endure and overcome temptation (James 1:12), be zealous for good works (Titus 2:14), and love others (John 13:34). When we do wrong, we are to confess and forsake the sin (Proverbs 28:13).

Provision-for-Failure Principles

Do believers ever stumble or fail? Yes, they do. Consider some great men of God, such as David, Peter, or others. Although they had significant failures, the Lord restored them to Himself. When we sin, it is

essential to seek restoration to God so we do not come under His discipline and correction (Hebrews 12:5-9). These are the divine remedies:

1. Fulfill Your Responsibilities

- a. Confess and forsake all thoughts or actions you know to be outside God's will (Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9).
- b. Make things right with others wherever possible (Matthew 5:23-24; Romans 12:18).
- c. Be forgiving (Matthew 6:14-15; 18:35). Be forbearing (Colossians 3:13). Cover with love as much as possible (1 Corinthians 13:4-7; 1 Peter 4:8).
- d. Maintain your fellowship with God by reading and studying the Bible, through prayer, and by engagement with other believers in a solid Bible-believing church.

2. Rely on Christ's Victory

Break repeated cycles of failure and confession involving the same areas of sin. Remember that the Lord Jesus delivers believers from the power of sin in their lives. Believers have three primary enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil.

- a. The world includes a Satanic system of values, morals, and ungodly influence that is the Christian's enemy (1 John 2:15-16). God loves the world's inhabitants, but He has condemned the world system (John 12:31; 1 Corinthians 11:32). He prays for us to be kept from it (John 17:15). We have overcome it (1 John 4:4; 5:4).
- b. The flesh is the expression of our sin nature. "We all once formerly conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). We are no longer slaves of our sin nature (Romans 6:6, 20; 8:2), for Jesus condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3) and set us free. God gives us a new nature; this does not mean that our sin nature has been removed or eradicated (Matthew 26:41; Romans 7:21, 23; Galatians 5:16-17), but its former prevailing power has been annulled.
- c. The devil was our father, and we fulfilled his desires (John 8:44). Believers no longer need to fear Satan. He was defeated at the cross (John 12:31; 16:11), and his power over believers was broken (Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14). We are now in the family of God, and He is our Father (John 1:12; Romans 8:16; 2 Corinthians 6:18; 1 John 3:1). We are to resist the devil (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9), and we are not to give him a base of operations to drag us down (Ephesians 4:27).

Devotional Principles

Believers want to spend daily time with God to enjoy intimate fellowship with Him. Some practices characterize the life of a believer whose life is used and blessed by God.

1. Quiet Time

The ear of the disciple is awakened to hear the voice of God (Isaiah 50:4). The first part of each day should begin with Him (Mark 1:35). Evenings and other periods may be set aside for Scripture study and prayer. The experience of many believers in Scripture and our Lord Jesus' example confirms the importance of beginning the day with God. This regular quiet time is for meditation and direct contact with God.

2. Prayer

Our Savior said, "Men always ought to pray" (Luke 18:1). It was not an option in His earthly life and should not be an option for us. It should be our lifeline of communication with God. If we are not receiving, likely, we are not praying (Matthew 7:7). An excellent way to start each day is to commit our bodies to the Lord for His purposes and seek His guidance throughout the day.

3. Study of the Bible

God has given the Scriptures as food for our souls (Psalm 19:10; Hebrews 5:12-14). We are to eat (consume) God's word (Jeremiah 15:16). "How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word" (Psalm 119:9). Many believers use their morning Quiet Time for a meditative study of a short portion of the Bible. They reserve a longer dedicated time for reading through the Bible, a systematic study of the Bible, or for group Bible studies. It is important to read the Bible for ourselves and make good personal applications of the truth. Memorizing Scripture is encouraged (Psalm 119:11).

4. Witnessing

God gives us the power to be witnesses for Jesus Christ in this world (Acts 1:8). The natural way of witness is to share our faith as a way of life with those around us. By overcoming the fear of man, we will be able to speak up for Christ and win those who are lost and bound for a Christless eternity.

Church Principles

The Lord Jesus Christ has a great love for His church despite its earthly deficiencies (Ephesians 5:25). His church is made up of redeemed people. He wants them to gather together in various localities to encourage one another, worship the Lord, preach His word and obey His commands. The Bible expects believers to be in fellowship at a local church and engaged by exercising their spiritual gifts, not isolating themselves from other believers. A great passage on this subject is Acts 2:41-42. In studying this Scripture, you will note normal church activities and responsibilities:

1. Baptism

Baptism is a public confession of what the Lord Jesus Christ has already done to save you, and it should quickly follow your profession of faith (Acts 8:36-38).

2. Apostles' Teaching

The early church continued in the apostles' teaching. Their teaching is now contained for us in the New Testament books of the Bible. The preaching and teaching of all 66 books of the Bible to the church is one of God's appointed means for growth. It provides systematic instruction for all believers. It supplements personal Bible study and gives direction and personal encouragement to believers.

3. Fellowship

Believers are told not to forsake the assembling of themselves together with other believers (Hebrews 10:25). Isolationism or individualism has no place in a healthy Christian experience. Note how the early believers were actively involved with each other (Acts 2:44-47).

4. Breaking of Bread

On the night in which the Lord Jesus was betrayed, He established a memorial feast with bread and wine that we might remember Him and His sacrifice for us (Luke 22:19-20). This meal is called the "Breaking of Bread" or "The Lord's Supper," and it was observed by the early believers and is still practiced today (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34).

5. Prayer

In addition to individual prayer time, there is a place for coming together with other believers to pray. The early church made this a regular practice (Acts 1:14). There is an added value to joint prayer (Matthew 18:19). Mighty events came about as believers prayed together.

You may have given yourself to Christ as Lord and Savior. If so, that is the proper beginning. You must now commit yourself to Him that He might live His life in you day by day (Galatians 2:20). Thus He will be victorious in you and through you.

6. Answer by circling True or False.
- a. It is possible to sin after becoming a Christian. (True or False)
 - b. We have to sin. (True or False)
 - c. It does not make any difference if we sin or not since “once saved, always saved.” (True or False)
 - d. We do not have to confess our sins after we are saved because God has already forgiven all our sins—past, present, and future. (True or False)

7. Paraphrase (rewrite in your own words) 1 John 1:9

8. What actions, in the following verses, will deepen our devotion and intimate fellowship with the Lord?

- a. Mark 1:35
- b. Luke 18:1
- c. Psalm 119:9-11
- d. Acts 1:8

9. What five things were the believers in the early church actively engaged in (Acts 2:41-42)?

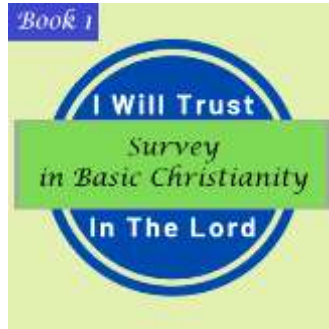
10. Which of the five things has become a genuine part of your Christian life?

11. *What do you say?* What were the events leading up to the time that you became a Christian? What have been the most meaningful changes in your life since you were born again?

12. We encourage you to memorize God’s word. The suggested memory verse for this lesson is:

John 10:10b (NKJV)

“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”



Survey In Basic Christianity

Appendix A

Terminology of Salvation

O. J. Gibson

1. Regeneration

The word *regeneration* means *a birth again* or to be *born again*. Spiritual life for every believer begins with the new birth (John 3:3-8). When God imparts divine life, God's Holy Spirit enters the believer's body (1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Peter 1:4). This miraculous transformation is the Holy Spirit's work (John 3:5-6; Titus 3:5), which occurs when a person hears God's word and responds to Him by believing the truth (Romans 10:17; Ephesians 1:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:23). The new birth brings us into the family of God where God becomes our Father (1 Peter 1:3; cf. Romans 8:14-15), we become the children of God (John 1:12-13; Romans 8:16; Galatians 3:26), "and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17).

2. Reconciliation

Man is born separated from God. Reconciliation brings together those who are separated from one another (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). By Christ's death on the cross, God has removed the sin that was the cause of separation. When a person trusts in Jesus Christ as his Savior, he is no longer alienated from God but is at peace with God. In this verse, the idea of reconciliation is for an enemy to put down his weapons of rebellion and gain an offended King's pardon.

3. Redemption

The word *redemption* means to purchase something or someone at a price freely paid (Revelation 5:9). The price paid was the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19; Revelation 5:9). Redemption also means complete deliverance of the soul from sin's penalty (Romans 3:24; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:12) and the body from the grave (Romans 8:23; Ephesians 1:14; 4:30; Philippians 3:20-21). Believers were once the slaves of sin and uncleanness (Romans 6:17-20). They were under the curse of the law's terrible judgment (Galatians 3:13; 4:5) and in fear of impending death (Hebrews 2:15). They were subject to Satan's power (Colossians 1:13; 2:15; Hebrews 2:14-15). Now we have been made free in Christ (John 8:36) because He has paid the price with His precious blood (1 Peter 1:18-19). The book of Ruth is the story of redemption. The redeemer must be a near kinsman, able to redeem, be willing to redeem, and free to redeem (not needing redemption himself). Christ is our Kinsman-Redeemer.

4. Atonement

The word *atonement* is used only in the Old Testament. Its primary meaning is "to cover." Millions of animal sacrifices were offered to God, according to His commandment. The offerings made *atonement* (Leviticus 5:10), which means that the innocent victim's death *covered* the sin but did not take it away

(Hebrews 10:4). The offerings illustrated the necessity of a blood sacrifice for sin. The Jewish Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:33-34), today called Yom Kippur, is an example of the Old Testament use of the word. The offerings continued until God found complete satisfaction in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, whose death satisfied God's claims of justice because of our sin (Hebrews 10:12). John the Baptist publicly proclaimed Jesus to be "the Lamb of God who *takes away* the sin of the world" (John 1:29, emphasis added). No longer would sin merely be covered; it would be removed, never to be remembered again (Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 43:25).

We do not find the word *atonement* in the New Testament because Jesus did not simply cover sin but put it away forever (John 1:29; Hebrews 9:26; 10:8-10, 18). Unfortunately, some Christian teachers and songwriters use the word atonement, but it does not belong in a New Testament setting. Jesus did not "cover" our sins, He took them away forever, and God reconciles us to Himself. Jesus did what the Old Testament sacrifices could not do (Colossians 1:19-22) (See also "propitiation").

5. Justification

Justification is a divine act whereby a holy God declares that the sinner who believes in Christ is now righteous before Him and acquits him from all charges. A sinner has no merit of his own, but God justifies him "freely" by His grace (Romans 3:24). One should note that this is a declaration of God, not an experiential thing (Romans 4:4-5; 5:1; Galatians 2:16; 3:11). Justification is by God (Romans 8:33), grace (Romans 3:24), blood (Romans 5:9), power (Romans 4:24-25), and faith (Romans 5:1). Justification by works, referred to by James (James 2:14-24), demonstrates the reality of faith already possessed. This is not a justification that leads to salvation but an outward display of faith in action following salvation.

6. Imputation

The word *imputation* means "to reckon" or "to put to one's account" by a judicial act of God. *Adam's sin was imputed to the human race* – When Adam sinned, his sin was imputed to the entire human race. All future humans were "in Adam" (in seed form), and he acted as our representative. When Adam sinned – we sinned. And his sin was imputed to us (put to our account). His sin brought death, judgment, and condemnation to the entire human race (Romans 5:12-14, 18).

Our sins were imputed to Christ at His death – God put our sins upon Christ at the cross, not imputing our trespasses to us (2 Corinthians 5:19), but to Him (Isaiah 53:5-6, 11; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24). We deserved to die, but He died and paid for the sins on our account.

God's righteousness is imputed to believers – All believers are "in Christ," and Jesus acted as our representative on the cross. "God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). God's righteousness is imputed to believers. Christ's death brought the free gift of eternal life, justification, abundant grace, and the gift of righteousness (Romans 5:15-21; 8:1). This righteousness is what makes a believer acceptable in God's presence. Paul writes, "That I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Philippians 3:8-9).

7. Mediator

A mediator is needed to bring together two people in conflict with each other. Sin has set mankind at odds with a holy God, and we need a middle-man to bring us together. To fulfill this role, the Mediator must be

both God and sinless man (otherwise, He would also be in conflict with God). Such a mediator excludes all other men. But “there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5; cf. Hebrews 8:6; 9:15; 12:24).

8. Propitiation

The word is related to “mercy” or “mercy seat,” which was the place where the sacrificial blood was sprinkled before God in the Old Testament sanctuary (Romans 3:24-25; Hebrews 9:5-7; 1 John 4:10). Through Christ’s work, God has become favorable toward us. Jesus satisfied the claims of justice against us, restored our relationship with God, freed us from guilt, and removed every barrier to fellowship with Him. The man who prayed the sinner’s prayer cried, “God, be merciful [propitious] to me” (Luke 18:13). The answer for everyone who prays that prayer is, “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

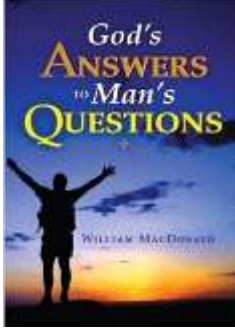
9. Sanctification

Believers are sanctified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 26:18). “Sanctify” means “to set apart” (1) from the defiling and sinful elements of this life and (2) to the sacred purposes of God. There are three aspects of sanctification for believers:

a. *Positional Sanctification* – God places all believers *in Christ*, and they are called saints (Colossians 1:12) and holy (Hebrews 3:1). They are now forever sanctified (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Hebrews 10:10; Jude 1).

b. *Practical Sanctification* – The Holy Spirit continues a sanctifying work in believers’ lives. We are holy as far as our *position* is concerned, but in our *practice*, He calls us to “be holy in all your conduct” (1 Peter 1:15-16). He says we are saints but instructs us to live in such a way “as is fitting for saints” (Ephesians 5:3-7). Practical sanctification comes as a result of committing ourselves daily to God (Romans 12:1), turning from sin (1 John 2:1), and living for God (Romans 12:2).

c. *Perfect Sanctification* – By God’s grace, every child of His will be perfectly sanctified in heaven. “We know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2), and we are “predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son” (Romans 8:29). We will be presented to Christ “not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that [we] should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27). He “is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24).



Survey In Basic Christianity

Appendix B

God's Answers to Man's Questions

William MacDonald

184 Questions Answered

God's Answers To Man's Questions
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If you are not a Christian, and if you do not know how to become one, but if you are interested in the subject, and if you would be willing to give it a fair hearing, then you will find the following pages of interest.

The Christian message is here presented as a series of questions and answers: questions such as you might possibly ask and answers based directly on the Bible.

Well, then, where shall we start? We shall start with the subject that gave rise to the necessity of the Christian gospel in the first place, that is, with the subject of:

Sin

What is sin?

Sin is lawlessness, that is, doing one's own will without restraint of God or man. It is missing the mark or coming short of God's standard of perfection in thought, word, or deed. It is the failure to do what one knows is right (Romans 3:23; James 4:17; 1 John 3:4).

Where did the first sin take place?

The first sin took place in heaven when Lucifer, the chief of the angels, desired to take God's place. He was then cast out of heaven and became known as Satan (Isaiah 14:12-15).

How did sin enter the world?

Sin entered the world through Adam when he disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-13).

Why did God allow sin to enter?

God made man as a free, moral agent with the power to choose between good and evil. His desire was that His creatures should choose to love and worship Him voluntarily and desire good rather than evil. But if a creature has the power to choose good, he must, of necessity, have the power to choose evil (Genesis 2:15-17).

What would have happened to Adam if he had not sinned?

He would have enjoyed long life in the garden of Eden (Genesis 2:17).

What happened to Adam when he did sin?

1. He became spiritually dead toward God.
2. He became subject to physical suffering, sickness, and death.
3. He lost his innocence, became unrighteous and unholy, guilty and lost, an enemy and an alien (Genesis 3:7; Ephesians 2:1-3).
4. If he died in his sin, he would suffer eternal doom.

How did Adam's sin affect his children?

His sinful nature was passed on to all his posterity – “As through one man sin entered the world, and death by sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12; cf. Romans 5:13-19.)

Do you mean that we are all born into the world sinners because of Adam's sin?

Yes! Adam could only beget children with his own nature, and that nature was sinful. All children have to be taught to do right, but they know how to do wrong without being taught (Psalm 51:5).

As an illustration of this principle, a metal jelly mold gives its shape to all the gelatin desserts or salads that are made in it. If you should drop the metal pattern and it becomes dented, all the future gelatin molds will show the effects of the.

Well, does that seem fair that Adam's sinful nature should be passed down to all of us?

Adam acted as a representative of the human race. Since we are all created as free, moral agents, perhaps we would all eventually have done the same as Adam did anyway.

Is there not some good in all men?

It depends on whether you are looking at it from God's standpoint or man's. God can find no good in man that would help to earn him a place in heaven. As far as righteousness or fitness for heaven is concerned, God says there is none. Man is totally depraved (Isaiah 1:6).

What is meant by the expression “totally depraved”?

It means that sin has affected every part of a man's being, and although he might not have committed every sin, he is capable of doing so (Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:10-18; 7:18). In addition, it means that he is totally incapable of pleasing God, as far as salvation is concerned (Romans 8:8).

But will God find fault with a person who has not committed the terrible sins of murder, drunkenness, immorality, and so forth?

God sees not only what a person has done but what he is in himself. What a man is, is a lot worse than anything he has ever done. A filthy thought-life, a hatred of some other person, a lustful look—these are terrible sins in God's sight (Matthew 5:27-28; Mark 7:21-23; Romans 8:7-8). They separate man from God (Isaiah 59:1-2).

But are not some sinners worse than others?

Undoubtedly they are, but we must not compare ourselves with others. People who do that are not wise. We will not be judged in comparison with others but in the light of God's holiness and perfection (Romans 2:1-3; 2 Corinthians 10:12).

Will all sinners suffer the same punishment?

No! All who die in their sins will spend eternity in hell. However, there will be degrees of punishment, depending on the opportunities a man has had to be saved and the sins he has committed (Matthew 11:20-24).

What about the heathen who has never heard the gospel?

God has revealed Himself to all mankind in creation as well as in conscience. If a heathen lived up to this knowledge, God would send him further light so that he might be saved. But the heathen has rejected the knowledge of the true God and has worshipped idols of wood and stone. Therefore, he is without excuse (Romans 1:20). Without Christ, the heathen is lost, and that is why Christian missionaries go into all the world with the gospel.

How could you prove to me that I am a sinner?

If you have to answer “No” to any of the following questions, then you are a sinner. If you have never trusted Christ as your Lord and Savior, then you are lost, and you need to be saved.

Answer Y/N

1. _____ Do you love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind?
2. _____ Do you love your neighbor as you love yourself?
3. _____ Would you like your friends to know the most impure thought you have ever had?
4. _____ Is your life as holy in the dark as in the light?
5. _____ Is it as pure when you are alone as when you are with others?
6. _____ Is it as clean when you are away from home as when you are at home?
7. _____ Have you always performed all the good you knew you should do?
8. _____ Can you honestly say, “I have never taken the Name of the Lord in vain?”
9. _____ Have you an unbroken record of never having told a lie?
10. _____ Are you as perfect as the Lord Jesus Christ?

The Necessity of Salvation

What is God’s attitude toward sin?

Because God is absolutely holy, He cannot approve or excuse sin. Because He is absolutely just, He must punish sin wherever He finds it. He has decreed that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

What is God’s attitude toward the sinner?

God loves the creatures whom He has made. While He does not love sin, He does love the sinner (Romans 5:8).

What is God’s desire with regard to all sinners?

God’s desire for all is that they be saved. He does not want them to perish (2 Peter 3:9).

What problem was raised by the entrance of sin into the world?

It raised the problem as to how God could save ungodly sinners and still be righteous in doing so (Romans 3:26).

Why was this a problem?

God’s love desired the salvation of sinners (Ezekiel 33:11). Yet because of His holiness, He could not permit sinful creatures to enter His heaven (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). In fact, His justice demanded that all

sinner must die as a result of their sins (Hebrews 9:27). The problem then was this: how could God's love be satisfied without violating His holiness and His justice?

What would have happened if God had done nothing?

All sinners would have perished in hell (Psalm 9:17).

Isn't God too good to send men to hell?

God is good, but He is also righteous and holy. Not one of His attributes can triumph at the expense of another. His love can only be exercised in a righteous, holy way.

Would God have been right if He had done nothing?

Yes. Then we all would have received exactly what we deserved. But God's love impelled Him to action.

How could God solve this problem?

He could solve it only by finding a substitute to die in the place of the guilty sinner.

What requirements would such a substitute have to meet?

1. First of all, he would have to be a man; otherwise, the substitution would not be a fair one.
2. Then, he must be a sinless man. If he were not sinless, he would have to die for his own sins.
3. Thirdly, he must be God since the Substitute must be able to put away an endless number of sins of an endless number of people.
4. Finally, he must be willing to die for sinners; otherwise, Satan would charge God with unjustly making an innocent victim die unwillingly for guilty rebels.

Could such a substitute be found?

Yes, God found a Substitute Who met all these requirements in the Person of His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (Isaiah 53:4-5).

The Work of Christ

Was Jesus truly man?

Yes, He was born as a baby in a hotel stable in Bethlehem, grew up in Nazareth, and ended His ministry at Jerusalem.

Was He sinless?

Yes, He was born of the Virgin Mary and thus did not inherit Adam's sin. He knew no sin; He did no sin; there was no sin in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5).

Is Jesus God?

Yes, Jesus is truly God, just as He is truly man (John 1:1; John 10:30; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:8).

Was Jesus willing to die as a Substitute for sinners?

Yes, He expressed complete willingness to do His Father's will, even if it meant death (Psalm 40:7; John 10:17-18).

Could we not have been saved by Jesus' sinless life?

No, our sins could never have been put away by His sinless life (John 12:24).

Why did He have to die?

Our sins deserved eternal death. He must bear the punishment in His body on the cross (1 Peter 2:24).

Was there any special requirement in connection with the death of the Substitute?

Yes, His blood must be shed (1 Peter 1:19).

Why was this necessary?

God had decreed that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22).

What is the importance of the blood?

The blood is the life of the flesh. The shedding of Christ's blood indicated the giving of His life as a Substitute for sinners (Leviticus 17:11).

What actually happened on the Cross?

In the three hours of darkness, God caused all our sins to be placed on the Lord Jesus. He died the death which those sins deserved (Luke 23:44).

What did Jesus cry at the end of those three hours?

He cried, "It is finished" (John 19:30)!

What did He mean by this?

He meant that the work of redemption had been completed, that everything necessary for the salvation of sinners had been provided (Hebrews 10:14).

What happened to Jesus after His death?

His body was buried in a tomb, but on the third day, God raised Him from among the dead (Luke 24:1-7; John 19:42).

Why was this necessary?

God indicated His complete satisfaction with the work of His Son by raising Him from the dead (Romans 4:25).

Did Jesus rise from the dead in a literal body?

Yes, His body was a real body of flesh and bones (Luke 24:39).

Could men be saved apart from the resurrection?

No, the resurrection was absolutely necessary for the salvation of others (1 Corinthians 15:14-19).

What happened after the resurrection?

Forty days later, the Savior went back into heaven, where He was honored and glorified by God, the Father (Acts 1:9).

Then He sent the Holy Spirit back to the earth to announce the wonderful news that a way had been provided whereby guilty sinners might be saved (Acts 2:1-4).

The Way of Salvation

Since Christ has finished the work of redemption, then are not all men saved?

No, Christ's work is sufficient in its scope and power to save all men, but it is effective only for those who are willing to receive Him. This may be illustrated by an incident from American history.

In 1830 George Wilson was tried by a United States Court in Philadelphia for robbery and murder and sentenced to be hanged. Andrew Jackson, President of the United States, pardoned him. But Wilson refused the pardon and insisted that it was not a pardon unless he accepted it. The question was brought before the Supreme Court, and Chief Justice John Marshall wrote the following decision: "A pardon is a paper, the value of which depends upon its acceptance by the person implicated. It is hardly to be supposed that one under sentence of death would refuse to accept a pardon, but if it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must hang." And he was hanged. (Lee, Robert G., *The Sinner's Savior* [Nashville: Broadman Press, 1950] pp. 35, 36.)

Why doesn't God save everyone?

He desires to do so (1 Timothy 2:4).

However, He has chosen to give men their choice in the matter of salvation. Otherwise, He would take men to heaven who didn't want to be there, and for such, it would scarcely be heaven.

What must happen to a person before he can go to heaven?

His sins must be put away, and he must be given a new nature that enables him to enjoy heaven (John 3:3, 5).

How is a person saved?

"By grace you have been saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

What is meant by grace?

Grace is the unmerited favor of God shown to people who deserve the very opposite. It is God offering salvation to man as a free gift (Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:7).

What is faith?

Faith is belief or trust. It is man receiving salvation from God as a free gift.

What must a person believe to be saved?

He must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:16; 20:30-31).

Is it not enough to believe that there is a God?

No, even the devils believe that and tremble, but they are not saved (James 2:19).

What does it mean to believe on Jesus?

It means to confess that you are a sinner needing salvation and to receive Him as your only hope of salvation, acknowledging Him to be Lord of your life (Romans 10:9).

Is it not sufficient to believe all the historical facts about Jesus?

No, a person may believe all that the Bible says about Jesus and still be lost.

What else is necessary then?

True belief involves a commitment of one's entire self to Jesus as only Lord and Savior.

Can a man have faith and not be saved?

Certainly! Faith in an unworthy object will only bring disappointment. Our faith must be in Christ if we are to be saved.

Can anyone do this?

Salvation is offered to all, but it is only those who admit themselves to be lost who will ever want to be saved (Luke 19:10).

Who produces this conviction of sin in a person's life?

The Holy Spirit of God is the One who produces conviction of sin (John 16:8-11).

What can a person do then, who does not realize he is a sinner?

He should read the Bible and be honest (Romans 10:17).

What will happen then?

He will see that he is a sinner and that if he dies in that condition, he will go to hell (John 8:21, 24).

Will he be saved whenever he sees this?

No, he must repent of his sins and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as His Savior (Proverbs 28:13; Acts 16:31).

To be saved simply through faith seems to be too easy, doesn't it?

It might seem to be too easy, but it is God's only way of salvation. While it may seem easy to us, we should remember that it was a very costly transaction for God; it cost Him the death of His only begotten Son. So it is an easy salvation but not a cheap one (Isaiah 1:18).

Why did God decide that salvation should be given on the basis of faith?

The reason probably is that believing on Him is the only proper thing that all normal people can do. Even a child can believe.

But isn't there some work a person must DO in order to be saved?

No, there is no work a person can do. Christ finished the work on Calvary's cross. All the sinner has to do is believe (Titus 3:5).

Well, isn't that a contradiction? You say there is nothing to DO. All you have to DO is believe.

There is nothing you can do by way of earning or meriting God's approval. You can do nothing to buy your way or help purchase your admission to heaven (Romans 4:4-5).

Faith is a non-meritorious act. A person cannot be proud because he believes in the Lord; what is more reasonable than for a man to trust his Creator? Thus, faith excludes human boasting and is the only thing a person can do without doing a "good work" that he might think would entitle him to heaven (Romans 3:27).

You mean to say then that we are not saved by good works?

That is what the Bible says: "... not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:9).

Why couldn't man be saved by doing good works?

Man is a sinner, and everything he does is stained by sin. The best he can do is like filthy rags in God's sight (Isaiah 64:6).

But suppose that I could live a perfect life from this day forward, would I not be saved?

No, you would not, because God requires that which is past. Your past sins must somehow be put away before you could enter God's presence (Ecclesiastes 3:15).

Do you mean to say that decent, self-respecting, cultured people don't go to heaven?

The only people who go to heaven are those who acknowledge themselves to be sinners and who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Matthew 21:31).

Are there not some people who are not good enough for heaven and not bad enough for hell?

No, there are only two classes of people, saved and unsaved (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Well, then, are there not some people who are too wicked to be saved?

No, the gospel invitation is extended to all mankind and whosoever will may come (Isaiah 55:7; 1 Timothy 1:15; Hebrews 7:25).

Doesn't a person have to clean up his life before he can be saved?

As long as he thinks he can clean up his own life, he won't feel the need of the Savior. He should simply come to Christ just as he is, sins and all, and receive pardon and peace (Isaiah 1:18; Matthew 9:13; Luke 19:10).

Couldn't I be saved by following the example of Jesus?

Jesus' life was sinless. No mere man is able to follow that example. Moreover, the only reason Jesus died is because men could be saved in no other way (1 Peter 2:24).

If believing on Jesus is the right way, then why do the vast majority of people refuse to accept Him?

Satan has blinded the minds of those "who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them" (2 Corinthians 4:4). "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

Couldn't a person be saved by trying to keep the Golden Rule?

No, when Jesus said, "Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them" (Matthew 7:12), He was speaking to those who were already saved. He never intended it as the way to heaven.

Well, could we not be saved by obeying the Beatitudes or by living according to the Sermon on the Mount?

Once again, these teachings were addressed to those who had already acknowledged Jesus as Lord. To obey them requires Divine life, and a person receives this life when he is saved.

You aren't going to tell me that a person cannot be saved by keeping the Ten Commandments?

No one can fulfill what is demanded by the Ten Commandments (Romans 3:20).

Exactly what do the Ten Commandments require?

The Ten Commandments are as follows:

1. You shall have no other gods before Me.
2. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, etc.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
10. You shall not covet. (See Exodus 20:1-17.)

Were the Ten Commandments not given by God to His people?

Yes, they were, but He never intended that they should serve as a means of salvation (Galatians 2:16; 3:11).

Why then did God give the Commandments?

They were given to show the people what sinners they were. Just as a straight line shows up a crooked line, so the law shows men how far they have departed from God's standard of perfection (Romans 5:20; Galatians 3:19).

Has anyone ever kept these laws perfectly?

The Lord Jesus Christ is the only One who has ever kept the law perfectly.

Then are we not saved through His keeping of the law?

No, we are only saved through His death, burial, and resurrection. We are condemned and cursed by the law (Galatians 2:21; 3:10).

If a man could keep the law all his life, would he be saved by this?

Such a man would need to have been born a perfect being. But the Bible states: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him [God] a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:10).

Suppose that a man could keep nine of the Ten Commandments! Would he be saved?

No, the law demands continual and complete obedience. If a person breaks one commandment, he is guilty of all (James 2:10).

What is the punishment for failing to keep the law?

Death, now and forever (Galatians 3:10).

Weren't the Ten Commandments made for good people?

No! "... the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine ..." (1 Timothy 1:9-10).

What effect should the Ten Commandments have on us?

They should make us realize what guilty sinners we are, and should cause us to cast ourselves on the mercy of the Lord (Romans 3:19).

But does it seem reasonable that we should be saved by faith alone and not by faith plus good works?

The Scripture says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us ..." (Titus 3:5).

Does it say somewhere in the Bible that faith without works is dead?

Yes, it says that in James 2:20.

Doesn't that show that salvation is by faith plus works?

No, it does not. The teaching of the passage is that a man may say that he has faith, but if he does not have good works, it shows that he was never truly saved. That kind of a faith never saved anyone.

What kind of a faith does save?

The kind that is not merely a matter of the lips but is a matter of the heart and which results in a new life filled with good works.

Then you mean that good works follow salvation but do not secure it.

Yes, that is right. We are not saved by good works, but we are saved for good works (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Is it not necessary to join some church in order to be saved?

Joining all the churches in town wouldn't save a person. "You must be born again."

But doesn't God expect us to join some church?

Whenever a person is saved, he becomes a member of the true church composed of all true believers in the Lord Jesus. Then he should find fellowship in some local church where Christ is acknowledged as Head and where the Bible is accepted as the only inspired word of God, our sufficient guide in all matters of faith and morals.

Does not the fact that I was baptized as an infant mean that I am saved?

Baptism is not the Savior. Only Jesus Christ can save (John 14:6).

But shouldn't people be baptized?

Those who have been born again should be baptized. There is no clear record in the New Testament of unsaved people or infants ever being baptized.

Then I am not saved by partaking of the communion service either?

No. Once again, the communion service was only intended for those who are already born again believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you mean to say that church attendance, gifts to charity, participation in the ordinances, and similar observances will not help in my salvation?

They will not help at all. The only thing that will help you is to come to Christ as a sinner, repent of your sins and trust Him as your only hope for heaven (Acts 4:12).

General Difficulties

How do I know that the Lord will accept me if I believe on Him?

He has said that He will, and He cannot lie. "The one who comes to me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37).

But doesn't it seem like a leap in the dark—this business of believing?

No, it is the surest thing in the world. Banks may fail, businesses may go bankrupt, governments may topple, and men may break their promises. But God cannot go back on His word. He has promised to save all who accept Christ by faith (John 3:18).

Could I be saved if I am not one of the elect?

The gospel isn't for the elect, but for all the world. God makes a genuine offer of salvation to any person in the world who will receive Christ Jesus as Lord. You can be saved if you will do what God says (John 3:36).

I would like to be saved, but I am afraid I wouldn't be able to hold out.

No one has the strength in himself to hold out. However, when God saves you, He gives you strength you never had before. Every believer has the Holy Spirit of God living within him. It is from the Holy Spirit that the child of God receives power to live the Christian life (Romans 8:14).

Suppose I have committed the unpardonable sin?

The unpardonable sin, according to the Lord Jesus, was saying that the miracles He performed were done in the power of the devil. Have you ever said this? If not, then you have not committed the unpardonable sin (Matthew 12:31-32). But if you die rejecting Christ, you will have committed an equally serious sin for which there is no forgiveness (Mark 8:36-37).

But trusting Christ means that I will have to give up a lot, does it not?

Christ does not come to steal, kill or destroy, but to give life and to give it more abundantly (John 10:10). An unsaved sailor once said to his Christian buddy, "I just can't face the cost of becoming a Christian." The buddy's reply was, "Have you ever faced the cost of not becoming a Christian?"

But there are so many hypocrites in the church.

Don't despise those who are real, just because some are hypocrites. Determine rather that you will be out and out for the Lord.

Sometimes I think I have believed in the Lord Jesus but have I believed in the right way?

If you have no other hope for heaven apart from Jesus Christ, if you have repented of your sins, if you made a complete commitment of yourself to Him, then you have believed in the right way.

Would it not be all right for me to postpone any decision about salvation until I am near the end of my life?

Four Scriptures answer this question.

1. "Do not boast about tomorrow. For you do not know what a day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1).
2. "He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Proverbs 29:1).
3. "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, 'I have no pleasure in them'" (Ecclesiastes 12:1).
4. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2b).

Is there no other way I can come to God except through Jesus?

There is no other way (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

Relationship and Fellowship

Do Christians sin?

Yes, Christians sin every day in thought, word, and in deed. They are guilty of sins of omission as well as sins of commission.

Should Christians sin?

No, God's will is that Christians should not sin (1 John 2:1).

When a Christian sins, does he lose his salvation?

No, salvation is the free gift of God, and once it is given, it is never taken back again (Romans 6:23).

But doesn't the penalty of those sins have to be paid?

Jesus Christ bore the penalty of those sins when He died on the Cross of Calvary. God does not require the penalty to be paid twice.

You mean, then, that a Christian is still a child of God, even though he sins?

Yes, his relationship in the family of God is eternal. When a son is born into a human family, he will always be a son of his parents. He may subsequently disgrace them by his behavior, but he is still their son. So it is in the Divine family; relationship is established by the new birth, and nothing can ever change it (John 1:12).

What does happen, then, when a Christian sins?

One thing that happens is that fellowship with the Lord is broken (1 John 1:6).

What is fellowship?

Fellowship is the happy family spirit that results from all the members having the same interests and sharing things in common. Consider the following illustration. A judge in the criminal court finds a robber guilty and sentences him to twelve months in jail. When the judge goes home that night, he finds that his little boy has been naughty. But does he sentence him to twelve months in jail? No, he no longer acts as a judge but as a father in a family. The child is still his son, even though naughty. Because of sin, the happy family spirit has been broken, and it remains broken until that sin has been confessed and forgiven. So the child is probably sent upstairs, and he remains there until he is willing to confess his wrong. The great point is that the *relationship* was not affected, but *fellowship* was. When a person is a sinner, God is his Judge. But when that person becomes saved, God is henceforth his Father.

Then you mean to say that once a person is saved, he can never be lost?

That is what the Bible says. "They shall never perish" (John 10:28). "Shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24; Romans 8:38-39; 2 Timothy 1:12; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24-25).

Cannot a person decide to be saved and later change his mind?

When a person has once committed his life to the Lord Jesus Christ, then his eternal salvation becomes the sole responsibility of the Savior (John 6:39). The Lord is honor-bound to take that person home to heaven. And because the Holy Spirit dwells in the true believer, he will never change his mind about being saved.

Does that mean that a Christian can sin all he wants and still be saved?

A true Christian will not want to sin because he has a new nature that hates sin (2 Corinthians 5:17).

But suppose a Christian goes on in willful and habitual sin?

If a person lives that kind of a life, it is certain proof that he was never truly born again (1 John 3:9-10).

Can a Christian sin and get away with it?

No, he can not. While it is true that the legal penalty of his sins has been paid once for all at Calvary, it is also true that God administers parental discipline to his erring children (Galatians 6:7-8).

How does God discipline his children?

Sometimes it is through sickness or adversity and, in extreme cases, through death itself (1 Corinthians 11:30).

Does sin in a believer's life have any other consequences in this world?

Yes. He loses his joy. His prayers are hindered. His fruitfulness is marred. His guidance becomes obscure. He suffers shame and remorse. Opportunities are neglected, and privileges forfeited. Finally, his testimony is ruined.

Does sin in a believer's life have any eternal consequences?

Yes, he suffers loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:15; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Suppose that a Christian should die with unconfessed sin?

As mentioned previously, the penalty for all a believer's sin was borne by the Lord Jesus. When he died, all the Christian's sins were future. Since he paid the complete penalty, we can say He died for the believer's past, present, and future sins.

Unconfessed sins, however, will result in a loss of reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Is it possible for a Christian to backslide?

Yes, any child of God may wander away from the Lord.

How may we guard against backsliding?

By reading the word of God, by spending time in prayer, and by maintaining fellowship with the people of God.

What is the remedy for backsliding?

The cure for backsliding is confession and forsaking of sin and, if possible, making restitution for wrongs which we have committed.

How To Know For Sure!

If I trust Christ as my Lord and Savior, what will happen inside me to tell me that I am saved?

If you mean some mysterious feeling or emotional experience, then it is quite probable that nothing like that will occur.

How then will I know that I am saved?

In a very simple way. God says He saves those who believe on the Lord Jesus. Whenever you believe on Him, you can know that you are saved because God says so (1 John 5:10-12).

You mean to say that I may not feel it in my body?

That is correct. The real act of salvation takes place in heaven. That is where the fact is recorded. When God sees your faith, He justifies you.

But shouldn't a person feel different when he is saved?

Certainly, he should, but feelings are not the proof of his salvation. A person will not really feel happy until he knows he is saved. The order is this:

- Salvation through faith in Christ.
- Assurance through the promise of God.
- Joy because of this assurance.

Then a person knows he is saved through the promises of God in the Bible?

That is the first and foremost way by which he knows he is saved (1 John 5:13).

Would you say that feelings are not a dependable guide?

The trouble with feelings is that they are so changeable. One day a person may feel he is saved, and the next, he may not.

The word of God never varies. How much better, then, to have our assurance of salvation based upon the word of God.

Is the Bible the only way by which we can know we are saved?

No, there are several others.

1. A love for our fellow Christians (1 John 3:14).
2. A new love for holiness (Romans 7:22).
3. A new hatred of sins (Romans 7:24).
4. A steadfast continuance in the faith (1 John 2:19).
5. The witness of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14, 16).

May a person be saved and not know it?

It is possible that a person may really have been born again and yet not know it, either because of inadequate teaching or because of doubts placed in his mind by Satan.

May a person think he is saved and yet not be?

Certainly, many think they are saved because of their character or works, but they are not saved at all (Matthew 7:22-23).

Is it necessary to know the day and hour of one's conversion?

No, it is not. Many people have such a distinct experience that they can tell the exact time and place.

Others may not remember when they first trusted the Savior. The important thing is to be able to say, "I know I am saved right now because my faith and trust are in the Lord Jesus Christ alone."

Do most Christians have doubts about their salvation at one time or another?

Most Christians are probably subjected to Satanic doubts some time after their conversion.

What should one do when he is plagued with doubts?

The best thing to do is to quote Scripture to answer the doubts. When Satan insinuates that the believer is not saved, the latter should quote gospel promises, such as John 5:24, which assure salvation to all who receive the Lord Jesus. Just as the Lord used the word to repel the temptations of Satan in the wilderness, so we should use the Bible to drive away his doubting lies (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10).

If I am not sure whether I have ever really accepted Christ, what should I do?

You should get it settled right now by saying from your heart, “Lord, if I have never trusted You before, I here and now receive You as my only Lord and Savior.”

Holiness

Doesn't a person have to live a holy life in order to become a Christian?

No, a sinner is not able to live a holy life until after he is saved.

Does God expect Christians to lead holy lives?

He most certainly does (1 Thessalonians 4:3; Titus 2:11-13).

Does any Christian live a life of sinless perfection?

No Christian lives sinlessly (1 John 1:8, 10). The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Person who ever lived a perfect life.

How is it that Christians can still sin after they are saved?

The reason is that the believer still has the old, evil, corrupt nature with which he was born. This is not removed at the time of conversion (Romans 7:17).

In what way, then, is the believer different from the unsaved?

The believer has a new nature which he receives at conversion. Scripture speaks of this as “the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4).

What is the difference between these two natures?

The old nature is incurably bad and continually seeks to drag the Christian down into sin (Romans 7:21). The new nature is only capable of good and seeks to lead the believer in paths of holiness (Romans 7:22).

Why did God allow the evil nature to remain after conversion?

The old nature teaches us our own nothingness and weakness and makes us continually dependent on the Lord for strength to resist temptation (Romans 7:24).

Are all Christians tempted?

Yes, all Christians are tempted (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Does a Christian ever have to yield to temptation?

No, a Christian only sins when he wants to. He has the power of the Holy Spirit living within him, and this power is sufficient to deliver from all temptation (Galatians 5:17).

What is God's attitude toward the old nature?

God saw that it was worthy of death, so He condemned it at the Cross of Calvary. He does not try to reform it, improve it or clean it up. It is utterly hopeless, and so God sees it as having been put to death when Christ died (Romans 6:6).

What should be the believer's attitude toward the old nature?

He should keep it in the place of death; that is, whenever the old nature tries to tell the Christian what to do, he should refuse to obey that which has been condemned by God (Romans 6:11-12).

What should be the believer's attitude toward the new nature?

He should feed it, cultivate it and encourage it through studying the Scriptures, spending time in worship and prayer, serving the Lord, and otherwise doing those things that are pleasing to the Lord (Galatians 5:22-23).

What, in brief, is the secret of living a holy life?

The secret is in being occupied with the Lord Jesus in worship. We become like what we worship. There is no once-for-all way of achieving holiness; it is a life-long process (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Can you give any other practical helps toward holy living?

1. Guard your thought life. You can control what you think (Philippians 4:8).
2. Make no provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14).
3. Remember that Christ lives within your body (Colossians 1:27).
4. In moments of temptation, cry to the Lord to deliver you (Matthew 14:30).
5. Keep busy for the Lord (Ecclesiastes 9:10).
6. Engage in some physical exercise (1 Timothy 4:8).

But doesn't the Christian have to keep the Ten Commandments in order to live a holy life?

1. The Scripture teaches that the believer is not under the Ten Commandments as a rule of life (Romans 6:14).
2. The purpose of the law is to make men realize they are sinners and not to make them holy.
3. The law condemns to death all who do not keep it perfectly. No one can be under the law without being under this curse.
4. Christ paid the penalty of the law which we had broken, and now the law has nothing more to say to the child of God (Romans 10:4; Galatians 3:13).

Does that mean that the Christian can go out and commit murder and adultery?

Not at all. The Christian doesn't want to do these things because of his new life. Men under law live in fear of punishment. Men under grace are constrained by love to Christ. Love is a much stronger motive than fear. Men will do for love what they would never do because of fear.

If the Ten Commandments are not the believer's rule of life, what is?

The life and teachings of Jesus are the pattern and guide for the Christian (1 John 2:6).

In what way are the teachings of Jesus different from the law?

This is answered in the fifth chapter of Matthew. The law said, "You shall not commit adultery" (Matthew 5:27). Jesus said, "Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28).

The law said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" (Matthew 5:38). Jesus said, "Not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also" (Matthew 5:39-40).

The law said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy" (Matthew 5:43). Jesus said, "Love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44).

Is it possible for men to live as Jesus taught?

Humanly it is impossible. But the Lord has given the Holy Spirit to all believers so that they will have the power to live in this supernatural way (1 Corinthians 6:19; Galatians 5:16-17).

Standing and State

If believers still sin, how can God ever take them to heaven?

All who believe on Christ are given a perfect standing before God, even if their state may be far from perfect (Colossians 2:10).

What is meant by a believer's standing?

It means the position of complete favor he has with God because He is in Christ (Romans 5:1-2). The Christian has no right or merit in himself to stand before God. His only title to heaven lies in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus. Thus God accepts us, not because of who or what we are, but because we belong to Christ (Ephesians 1:6).

How can God look upon unrighteous people as righteous?

He can do it because Christ bore the punishment of their sins in His body on the Cross (Ephesians 2:13).

Does it teach this in the Bible?

Yes, it distinctly says this in 2 Corinthians 5:21: "For He (God) made Him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Do I understand, then, that God accepts all believers because they come to Him in the Person of His Son?

Yes, that is right. Christ is man's only title to heaven.
"I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth,
In Immanuel's Land."

How long does a believer enjoy this perfect standing before God?

He enjoys it as long as Christ enjoys it because he is in Christ, accepted in the Beloved One (Ephesians 1:13-14).

What is meant by the believer's state?

This means his everyday spiritual condition here on earth. Just as his standing is what he is in Christ, so his state is what he is in himself.

Is the believer's state sinless?

No, the believer's state is oftentimes far from being what it should be (Colossians 3:8-9).

What is God's will concerning the believer's state?

God's will is that his state should grow more and more like his standing. This is a process that should be taking place continually throughout the Christian life (Colossians 3:1).

Will a believer's state ever correspond exactly to his standing?

Yes, when Christ takes him home to heaven, his condition will be as perfect as his position (1 John 3:2).

Why should a Christian want to have his state correspond increasingly with his standing?

His love for Christ should make him desire this (John 14:15).

After Salvation—What?

What is the first thing a person should do after he has trusted Christ?

Common courtesy would suggest that he thank the Lord for saving his soul (Luke 17:14-19).

Is it necessary to confess Christ to others?

Confession is not necessary to obtain salvation, but it is certainly necessary for growth in the Christian life. No one can ever expect to advance in the things of God who is ashamed of his Savior (Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Peter 3:15).

How does a person go about confessing Christ?

It is simply a matter of telling others what great things the Lord has done for you (Mark 5:19).

How long should a new convert wait until he is baptized?

Obedience should be prompt. Baptism is a lovely opportunity to publicly identify oneself with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. By this act, we are saying that we deserved to die but that Christ died for us. Therefore, when He died, we really died, because He died in our place. We witness that we likewise were buried with Him, and that we rose with Him to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-10).

Does baptism give us merit before God as far as our salvation is concerned?

No, baptism is an act of obedience to the teaching of the Lord Jesus. Those believers who die without being baptized will be unbaptized for all eternity.

How should a young convert know which church to join?

First of all, he should realize that he became a member of the true church, the Body of Christ, whenever he was saved (1 Corinthians 12:13).

In addition, he should seek to identify himself with some local church where Christ is acknowledged as Head, where the Bible is accepted as the only guide, where the two ordinances of the church (baptism and the Lord's Supper) are observed, where a good teaching ministry is carried on, and where the gospel is faithfully proclaimed.

In associating with Christians, he should feel a deep sense of responsibility to contribute to the welfare of the fellowship by loving service, fervent prayer, and sacrificial giving.

What do you consider the most important things which a Christian should do each day?

Spend time in the word of God and in prayer each day, and confess and forsake sin whenever it is allowed into one's life (Psalm 119:9, 11).

Discipleship

What does the Lord expect of one who is saved?

He expects a total commitment of that person to Himself. He expects the person to go where He leads, to do what He says, to be what He wants him to be. He expects him to forsake all he has, take up the cross, and follow Christ (Romans 12:1-2).

Is it reasonable that God should expect this?

Yes, it is the only reasonable response that a person can make to the Lord.

Doesn't a person have to think about himself?

Our chief responsibility in life is to please God. If we seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, He will see that we have some means of livelihood (Matthew 6:33).

Does that mean that I may have to go to the mission field?

It may mean that, and it may not. But it does mean that you should be willing to go (Luke 9:23-26).

But I see so many Christians who are enjoying the comforts and luxuries of the world and who do not seem to be all-out for Christ.

You must not compare yourself with other Christians. Your example is the Lord Jesus, and you must follow His steps (Luke 14:25-35).

Does Christ really expect us to "hate" our relatives?

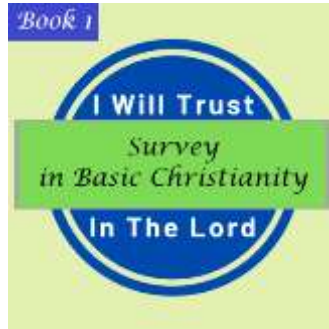
He expects our love for Him to be so great that all other loves are hatred by comparison (Luke 14:26).

Can I not acknowledge Jesus as my Savior and not as my Lord?

Scripture gives no encouragement to such an attitude. If the Lord Jesus is not worth everything, He is not worth anything.

Then salvation involves a complete surrender to Christ?

That is exactly right. Nothing short of this will do.



Survey In Basic Christianity

Appendix C

The Bridge to Life

The Navigators

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The life and ministry of Jesus Christ clearly show the purpose for which He came into this world—to bring sinful men back to God. The practical application of that great truth for a person who has never trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is to receive Him into his or her life.

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The following is a simple gospel presentation, useful for Christians to share with others. It also shows the way to Jesus Christ, whose life and ministry you have just studied, if you have never received Him as your own Savior and Lord.

The Bible teaches that God loves all men and wants them to know Him.

But man is separated from God and His love.

There is a separation “between God and men” (1 Timothy 2:5)

Why is man separated from God and His love?

It is because he has sinned against God.

“Your iniquities have separated you from your God” (Isaiah 59:2).

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Where does this separation lead?

This separation leads only to death and certain judgment.

“It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

“Those who do not know God...shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord” (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

But, there is a solution.

Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for our sins, is the way to God.

“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18).

Does this include everyone?

No. Only those who personally receive Jesus Christ into their lives, trusting Him to forgive their sins.

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12).

Each one must decide for himself whether to receive Christ.

Jesus says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me” (Revelation 3:20).

How does a person receive Jesus Christ?

Jesus said, “If you ask anything in My name, I will do it” (John 14:14)

Therefore if you pray sincerely, asking Him—

Lord Jesus, please come into my life

and be my Savior and Lord

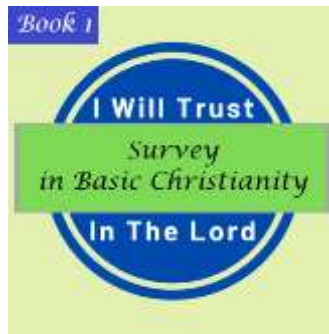
Please forgive my sins,

And give me the gift of eternal life

—He will do it now.

If you have invited Jesus Christ into your life, the Bible says you now have eternal life.

“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:11-12).



Survey In Basic Christianity

Appendix D

Memory Verses

Memory Verses For Each Lesson

Lesson 1: Your Word is Truth

2 Timothy 3:16-17 – “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Lesson 2: The Person of God

1 Timothy 2:5-6 – “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, - who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”

Lesson 3: The Likeness of God

1 Timothy 1:17 – “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Lesson 4: Understanding Man

Psalms 86:12 – “I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify Your name forevermore.”

Lesson 5: The Problem of Sin

1 Peter 2:24 – “Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed.”

Lesson 6: Considering Eternity

1 John 5:11-12 – “And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

Lesson 7: Jesus the Messiah: God’s Provision

Philippians 2:10-11 – “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Lesson 8: The Meaning of the Cross

John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Lesson 9: The New Birth

Romans 10:9-10 – “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Lesson 10: Salvation by Grace

Ephesians 2:8-9 – “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

Lesson 11: Believing on Jesus Christ

John 5:24 – “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

Lesson 12: Assurance of Salvation

John 10:27-28 – “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”

Lesson 13: Living the New Life

John 10:10b – “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”