

BASIC

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Contents

How to use BASIC	5
Personal progress record	7
Basic repentance	9
Basic faith	39
Basic forgiveness	67
Basic baptisms	95
Basic living	119
Basic prayer	147
Basic bible	175
Basic eternity	203
Basic money	235
Basic church	263

How to use BASIC

BASIC is an amazing resource that will help transform your spiritual life.

BASIC represents the culmination of over 10 years of study, pastoral care and teaching new believers the basic Christian teachings and practices. Over these years we have seen hundreds of people born again, grow in their relationship with Christ and personal identity as a Christian, get set free from addiction, receive emotional and physical healing, receive deliverance and go on to serve Christ successfully in their areas of calling.

BASIC covers the basic Christian teachings or doctrines outlined in Hebrews 6:1-3 and the basic Christian practices outlined in Acts 2:42. Hebrews 6 identifies the six foundational Christian teachings as repentance, faith, baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection from the dead and eternal judgment. Acts 2:42 tells us that the early Christians were fully committed to prayer, the word, fellowship and breaking bread together. BASIC covers each of these things in detail. It helps you understand them and encourages you to apply them in your own life to grow spiritually stronger.

BASIC has two main parts. The first part is a lesson. This lesson is designed to be taught by a small group leader who is a mature Christian and has a good understanding of the Gospel. Each lesson will give you a great introduction to the main aspects of that truth. The first lesson, for example, is on repentance. This teaching will give you a clear understanding about exactly what repentance is and isn't, help you overcome some of the common barriers to repentance and help you apply what you are learning by making the choice to repent.

The second part consists of daily studies where the topic that was introduced in the lesson is broken down in more detail. Each study is an interactive worksheet that is designed to help you go over the truths that you learnt in the weekly lesson and gain a fuller and more complete understanding of the topic. The studies include extra reading, personal reflections and action points. We strongly encourage everyone to do both the lessons and the studies so that they get the most out of this course.

There are several reasons that we have included daily studies. Firstly, we understand that learning is a process. We need to go over what we have learned to fully understand it and make it part of our lives. Secondly, we want to give each student a solid understanding of the truth. We want you to be well-grounded in the basic Christian teachings so that you are unable to be moved by the many false

and unbalanced ideas that are out there. The weekly lessons give you a good introduction to each of these truths but we need to wrestle with these truths to fully understand and apply them. The daily studies will help you to wrestle with these foundational truths. Thirdly, we want to encourage people to get into the habit of daily devotion where they make a set time every day to seek God, pray and meditate on the Bible. We don't want you to do a course so that you can say that you have done it. We want you to become spiritually disciplined and step up in your pursuit of Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith.

We have also included a personal progress record for you on the next page to record your progress. You can use this chart by ticking off the lessons and the daily studies as you complete them. You can either do this by yourself or get an accountability partner to check that you have done each worksheet and sign each study off on your personal progress record each week.

I am certain that if you come to this resource with an open and willing heart that God will use it to transform your life. I pray that this will be the start of an exciting adventure for you that will take you deeper into Jesus Christ and His amazing purposes.

Much love,
John Faiz

BASIC – my progress

Week	Topic	Class	Devotionals						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Basic repentance								
2	Basic faith								
3	Basic forgiveness								
4	Basic baptisms								
5	Basic living								
6	Basic prayer								
7	Basic Bible								
8	Basic eternity								
9	Basic money								
10	Basic church								

BASIC

repentance

Basic repentance

God loves you and wants to have a close relationship with you. Repentance is the doorway into this exciting relationship that will change your life forever. In this lesson you will learn about how to obtain peace with God and build your relationship with Him.

A closer look at the words

The Hebrew word for repent is shub and the Greek word for repent is metanoēō.

Vine's Dictionary says that shub means "to return or go back, bring back." It notes that "the basic meaning of the verb is movement back to the point of departure."

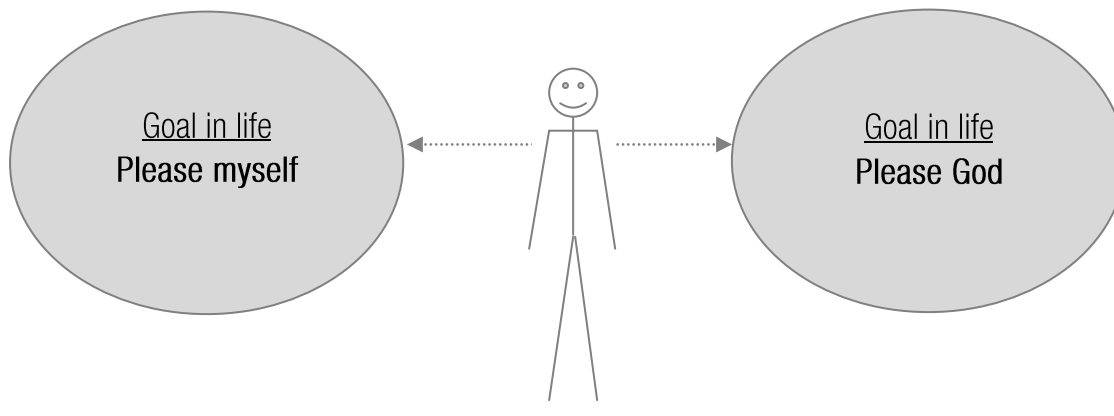
Shub is used 1,339 times in the Bible. The first time the word shub is used is in Genesis 3:19, where God told Adam that he and Eve would "eat bread till you return [shub] to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return [shub]." From this passage we see that shub simply means to return or go back.

Vine's Dictionary says that metanoēō means "to change one's mind or purpose." Metanoēō comes from the two Greek words meta meaning change and noeō referring to the mind. Metanoēō therefore literally means to change our mind and refers to a change in purpose.

Metanoēō is used 34 times in the Bible and it always refers to a change for the better and always, with only one exception, refers to turning away from sin to God.

Repentance

Change in purpose



Repentance is a change in our purpose. It is a decision to turn away from a selfish life that is all about me to live to please and obey Jesus. In this way repentance is a fundamental change in the motive behind all that we do.

Repentance is a choice

Acts 17:30-31 (NIV) In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.

God commands everyone to repent. If God commands everyone to repent then it must be something that everyone is capable of doing.

We may feel like we can't repent but the truth is that repentance is a choice that we are capable of making.

We must turn away from all sin

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (NIV) Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:19-21 (NIV) The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Repentance is a decision to turn away from all sin to live a life of faith and obedience to Jesus Christ. If a person is still deliberately holding onto one sin then it shows that they have not fully committed themselves to Jesus Christ and that their heart is not right with God.

If we fear God then we will turn away from inward and outward sins. If we fear man then we will turn away from outward sin that people can see but still tolerate inward sins that only God sees. Repentance involves turning away from inward and outward sin by making a sincere decision to live to please God.

We must make every effort

Luke 13:23-25 (NIV) Someone asked him, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?” He said to them, “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’ “But he will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’”

Jesus taught us to make every effort to enter in through the narrow gate because many people will miss out. He taught us that people would miss out because they didn't take things seriously enough. We must

understand that entering God's kingdom is not something that we can accidentally slip into. We must make a choice to seek a right relationship with God through repentance and continue to pursue Him diligently.

Why some people don't repent

What do you think might stop people from turning to God in repentance?

There are many different reasons why people don't repent. Below are three common things that hinder people from responding to God in repentance.

Some people don't feel like they can do it

Philippians 4:13 (NIV) I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Sometimes people think that they are not strong enough to overcome temptation. Sometimes they have tried to be a Christian before and failed so they aren't keen to try again.

Often what these people don't understand is that God gives us His Spirit to help us. None of us can live the Christian life by ourselves. If we could then we wouldn't need God to help us. If we focus on ourselves and our own ability then we will feel like it is impossible but if we focus on Jesus and His ability to help us then we will live with a sense that all things are possible.

1 John 2:1-2 (NIV) My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

We also need to understand that God has promised to forgive us if we sin as long as we put things right and renew our decision to please Him.

Some people feel like they are too bad for God's love and mercy

1 Timothy 1:15-16 (NIV) Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

Paul killed Christians and persecuted the church. God chose Paul to be a Christian and an apostle because He wanted to teach us that no one is too far gone to receive His mercy and grace and for Him to use to do great things.

Sometimes people think that they are too bad or have sinned too much for God to love and forgive them. This is simply not true. No matter how bad your past is, God's mercy is bigger. We can't do anything to change our past. In fact, when we think about it, focusing on our mistakes is a form of selfishness that God commands us to turn away from.

Some people think that they will be happier living for themselves

Luke 17:33 (NIV) Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.

Sometimes people think they will be miserable living for God and they don't want to repent because they want to live a selfish life. They enjoy their habits and can't see themselves happy if they are not doing them.

Sadly, people who think that it is better to live for themselves than to live for God are deceived. Living a life of love for God and love for others is the only way to experience true peace and joy in this world and to keep our life in the world to come.

Will you repent?

Acts 3:19 (NIV) Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord

God is waiting to forgive all your sins and welcome you as a son or daughter into His everlasting kingdom. All you have to do is make the choice to turn to Him in repentance. God promises to give you the Holy Spirit, to reveal Himself to you and to be with you forever once you make the choice to commit yourself to Him.





BASIC repentance

what is repentance?

day one

Repentance

Matthew 4:17 (NLT) From then on Jesus began to preach, “Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.

-  Circle the first word out of Jesus’ mouth
-  Underline what we are to repent from
-  Underline who we are to repent to
-  Circle why we are to repent

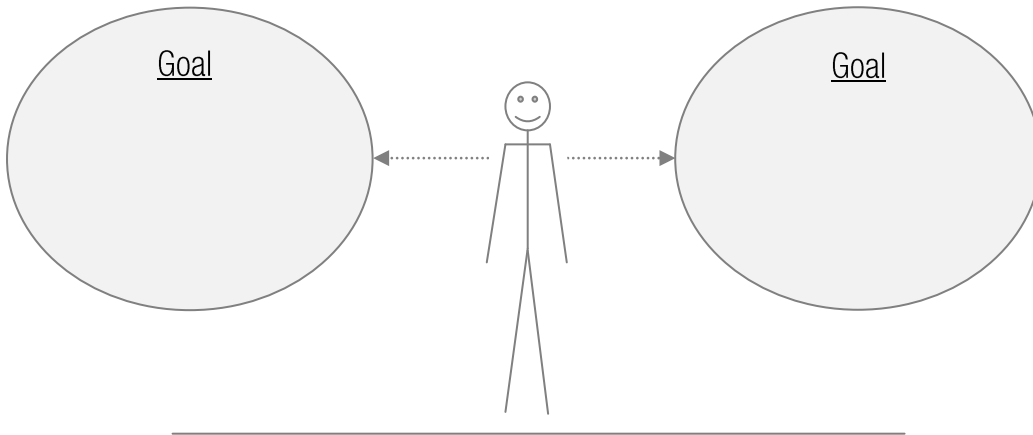
The Bible was written in Hebrew, Aramiac and Greek and it can be helpful to look at the original languages when we are trying to understand key words. The word “repent” used in Matthew 4:17 is the word metanoēō. Vine’s Dictionary defines the word metanoēō as “**to change one’s mind or purpose.**”

← Meditate

 Extra reading

Jesus told three stories in Luke 15. What can you learn about God and repentance from these stories?

Repentance



- ➔ Write the words “change in purpose” under the word repentance in the picture above.
- ➔ Write the words “please myself” in the left circle and the words “please Jesus” in the right circle.

Repentance is a change in our purpose. It is a decision to turn away from a selfish life that is all about me to live to please, love and obey Jesus. In this way repentance is a change in the motive behind all that we do.

Do you think you could use this picture to explain to someone else what repentance is?

Repentance is a **decision** while learning what God wants us to do is an ongoing **process**.

👉 Personal reflection

What do you think stops people from repenting when they hear the **Good News** that God wants to forgive them for their sins?

BASIC repentance

what is repentance?

day two

Sin

Metanoēō is used 34 times in the Bible. It always refers to a change for the better and, with only one exception, always refers to turning away from sin to God.

So what is sin?

The word sin simply means “missing the mark”. It describes the distance between where an arrow lands and the bull’s eye of the intended target.

Romans 3:23 (NIV) ...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

1 John 3:4 (NIV) Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.

Romans 3:23 describes sin as falling “short of the glory of God” and 1 John 3:4 defines sin as breaking God’s law. Sin is our failure to live up to God’s perfect law.

We have all broken God’s perfect standard, in motive, thought or action. Repentance involves turning away from all those things that we know displease God to do our best to please Him.

 Extra reading

Read the following passages and think about what they tell you about sin.

- ➔ Ezekiel 18:20
- ➔ Romans 6:23
- ➔ 1 John 3:4

Three things that sometimes cause people to miss out

Lack of confidence

Sometimes people are afraid that they won't be able to live the Christian life. They don't think that they are strong enough to overcome temptation. Sometimes they have tried to be a Christian before and failed so they aren't keen to try again.

We must understand that God gives us His Spirit to help us when we make the choice to live to please Him. If we look at ourselves then we will think it is impossible but if we look to God we will see that all things are possible.

We also need to understand that God has promised to forgive us if we sin as long as we put things right and renew our decision to please Him.

1 John 2:1 (NLT) My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous.

 Extra reading

God is incredibly merciful. He continually reassures us that He will forgive us if we sin provided we get back up and renew our commitment to Him.

➔ 1 John 1:9

➔ Psalm 103:1-3

← Memorise

 Circle why the apostle John wrote this letter

 What reassurance does the Bible give us if we do sin?

 The Bible calls Jesus our **advocate** (someone who speaks for us on our behalf). Underline what it says Jesus does if we sin.

 Does this encourage you?

Shame

Sometimes people think that God won't forgive them because they are too bad.

We must understand that we can't do anything to change our past. In fact, when we think about it, focusing on our mistakes is a form of selfishness and that God requires us to turn away from. No matter how bad your past is, God's mercy is bigger!

Selfishness

Luke 17:33 (NLT) If you cling to your life, you will lose it, and if you let your life go, you will save it.

Sometimes people just don't want to give up old habits. They think that they will be miserable living for God and they don't want to repent because they want to live a selfish life.

Sadly, people who think that it is better to live for themselves than to live for God are deceived. Living a life of love for God and love for others is the only way to experience true peace and joy in this world and to keep our lives in the world to come.

Application

 Personal reflection

Have you made a decision to repent?

 Meditate

If not, then what would stop you from repenting and receiving God's forgiveness and life today?

↑ Prayer point

If you have decided to repent then pray that God will help you in your new walk. If you are stuck then pray that God will help you overcome whatever it is that is holding you back.

You can use this prayer to help you if you're not used to praying:

Father, I commit my life to you today. I don't want to live for myself anymore. I want to live to please You. Please forgive me for ignoring and disobeying You and help me in this new life. I ask this in Jesus Name. Amen.

BASIC repentance

being sorry

day three

Godly sorrow

The Bible talks about two different types of being sorry. It calls one type godly sorrow and the other type worldly sorrow. We will look at the difference between these two types of sorrow in this study.

2 Corinthians 7:10 (NLT) For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death.

 Underline the results of godly sorrow

 Underline the results of worldly sorrow

Godly sorrow is being sorry because we have hurt God and damaged our relationship with Him. When we are sorry because we have hurt God then we will turn away from sin. This is good because it leads to salvation.

Godly sorrow is all about God while worldly sorrow is all about us. Worldly sorrow is when we are sorry because we are not getting what we want. We may feel desperate and broken when we are stuck in worldly sorrow but it has no power to change our lives because it doesn't lead to a change in heart or purpose.

← Meditate

 Extra reading

Read the following passages about godly sorrow:

- ➔ Psalm 34:18
- ➔ Isaiah 66:1-2
- ➔ Matthew 5:4

Have you ever been broken because you have dishonoured God?

Did this sorrow result in a change of heart and lifestyle?

Peter

Luke 5:4-8 (NLT) When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, “Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish.” “Master,” Simon replied, “we worked hard all last night and didn’t catch a thing. But if You say so, I’ll let the nets down again.” And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking. When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, “Oh, Lord, please leave me—I’m too much of a sinner to be around You.”

📖 Circle what Peter did after he saw the miraculous catch of fish

📖 Underline what Peter said

📖 Circle the one word that describes how Peter saw himself

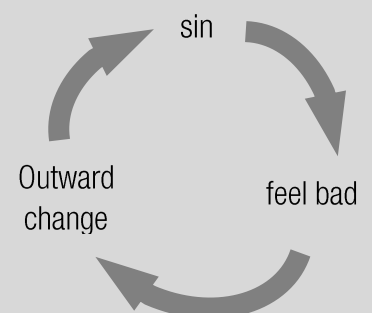
When we see Jesus for who He really is we see ourselves for who we really are. Often this is an overwhelming experience. The Bible calls this experience godly sorrow and likens it to being **crushed**. This kind of sorrow is good because it humbles us and brings us near to God, who loves us.

📖 Extra reading

We can learn about the difference between worldly sorrow and godly sorrow when we compare Israel’s first two kings.

- 1 Samuel 15
- 2 Samuel 11-12
- Psalm 51

Worldly sorrow cycle



Godly sorrow

“God, I’m sorry
I’ve let You
down!”

“I don’t want to
loose my
relationship
with You God!”



Worldly sorrow

“I’m sorry
because I don’t
want to be
punished”

“I’m sorry
because I don’t
want to
miss out”

Application

👉 Personal reflection

Have you made a decision to repent?

If not, then what would stop you from repenting and receiving God's forgiveness and life today?

🙏 Prayer point

If you have decided to repent then pray that God will help you in your new walk. If you are stuck then pray that God will help you overcome whatever it is that is holding you back.

BASIC repentance

putting things right


day four

Putting things right

2 Corinthians 7:10-11 (NLT) For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death. Just see what this godly sorrow produced in you! Such earnestness, such concern to clear yourselves, such indignation, such alarm, such longing to see me, such zeal, and such a readiness to punish wrong. You showed that you have done everything necessary to make things right.

← Meditate

Last study we looked at the difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. We learnt that godly sorrow is being sorry for offending God and damaging our relationship with Him and that it leads to a change in purpose and salvation. We also learnt that worldly sorrow is being sorry because we are not getting something selfish that we want and that it leads to spiritual death.

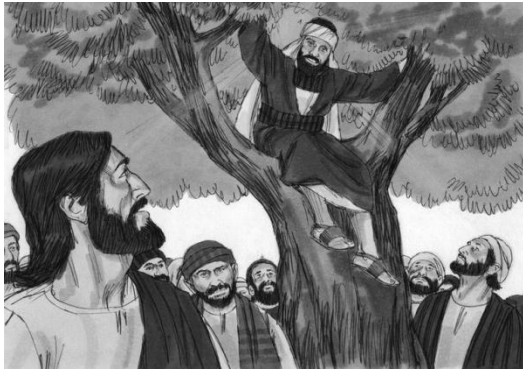
 Circle all the things that godly sorrow produced in the Christians that Paul is talking to

 Underline what Paul encouraged them for in the last sentence

When people repent they want to do everything they can to make things right. We can see this when we look at the story of Zacchaeus in the Bible.

Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1-10 (NLT) Jesus entered Jericho and made His way through the town. There was a man there named



Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd.

So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way. When Jesus came by, He looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. “Zacchaeus!” He said. “Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.” Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. But the people were displeased. “He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner,” they grumbled. Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, “I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!” Jesus responded, “Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.”

Jesus is never one to miss the individual in the crowd. Many people were crowding around Jesus but Jesus noticed Zacchaeus. Jesus knew that Zacchaeus was a bad man but He loved him and asked to stay at his place.

 Underline what Zaccheaus said to Jesus


God’s heart is to seek and save lost people. God didn’t wait for us to reach out to Him. God sent His only Son Jesus to reach out to us and He is still reaching out to people today in many different ways. When God’s love is in us then we will reach out to others too.


 Extra reading

How do these passages encourage us to do everything we can to make things right?

- Matthew 5:9
- Romans 12:18
- Hebrews 12:14

Getting our hearts right with God is a **decision** but putting things right with other people and rebuilding damaged relationships is often a **process**.

 Jesus said that Zaccheaus showed himself to be a true son of Abraham – circle what Zaccheaus did that showed his genuine faith

 Underline why Jesus came into the world

Zacchaeus had become rich by forcing people to pay more tax and keeping the money for himself. Zacchaeus was so moved by Jesus' love for him that he decided to do his best to put things right. He couldn't change the past but he made a decision to give away half of everything that he owned to the poor and repay people four times what he had stolen from them.

Jesus saw that Zaccheaus had a new heart. Jesus said that Zaccheaus was a true son of Abraham and that this was proof that he had received God's gift of salvation. Jesus said that He had come to help people just like Zaccheaus.

When people make a decision to respond to God's love they often experience the same desires to help the poor and put things right that Zaccheaus did. These desires are good and are a sign that God is working in our lives.

Application

 Personal reflection

Are there things in your past that you would like to put right?

We can't change the past but we can do our best to put things right with the people that we have hurt. We can apologise to people that we have wronged and do our best to return or repay what we have stolen.

While making things right is a humbling thing to do it is one way that we can show our love for God and our neighbours.

We encourage you to make a list of people you want to put things right with and then go and do it.

You may want to talk to your pastors if you are unsure how to go about putting something right.

↑ Prayer point

Take some time to pray that the Holy Spirit will show you anyone you need to put things right with and give you and courage and wisdom you need to do this well.

BASIC repentance

Jesus is lord

day five

Jesus Christ is Lord

Jesus Christ is both Lord and Saviour. The word **lord** simply means ruler or boss and refers to Jesus' authority while the word **saviour** simply means one who saves and refers to Jesus' willingness and ability to help us.

 Personal reflection

It has been said that “**Christ is either Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all.**”

What do you think this means?

Do you agree?

The rich young man

Mark 10:17-31 (NIV) As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall

 Extra reading

What do these passages tell us about lordship?

- ➔ Matthew 7:21-23
- ➔ Luke 6:46

 Meditate



**not murder,
you shall
not commit
adultery,
you shall
not steal,
you shall
not give
false
testimony,
you shall
not defraud,
honor your**


father and mother.” “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!” The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.” Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!” “Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the Gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”





Jesus taught that it is hard for rich people to enter God’s kingdom. This should alarm us. We might not be used to thinking of ourselves as rich but if we have food and running water then we are rich by global standards.

 Personal reflection

Why do you think Jesus said it was hard for rich people to enter God’s kingdom?

What do you think Jesus meant when He said that many who are first will be last?

 Circle what the rich young man called Jesus

-  Circle how Jesus felt about the man
-  How many things were keeping this man out of God's kingdom?
-  Is it hard or easy for rich people to enter God's kingdom?
-  Underline what would have happened if the rich man obeyed Jesus

Jesus is more than a good teacher

Jesus was walking down the road and a rich young man came running up to Him. The man was desperate. He knelt down and asked Jesus what he needed to do to be saved. He said "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus replied by saying "Why do you call me good? No one is good—except God alone".

Part of this man's problem was that he saw Jesus as a good teacher rather than as Lord and God. Jesus was trying to help this man see that He was more than a good teacher. Jesus was trying to help this man see that He is God.

Application

 Personal reflection

If we see Jesus as a good teacher how might we receive His words?

If we see Jesus as God how might we receive His words?

If we see Jesus as a good teacher then we will receive His word as advice to consider but if we see Jesus as Lord then we will receive His word as a command to obey.

BASIC repentance

Jesus is lord

day six

Mark 10:17-31 (NIV) As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’” “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!” The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.” Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!” “Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the Gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

← Review

Let's look at what else we can learn from Jesus' conversation with this rich young man.

In our last study we learned about the rich young ruler. We learned that Jesus is more than a good teacher who gives us advice to consider. We learned that Jesus is God who gives us commands to obey.

Jesus tells us the truth because He loves us

The Bible says that Jesus looked at the rich young man and loved him.

While Jesus' response to the rich young man might seem hard, we must remember that Jesus told him straight *because* He loved him. Jesus tells us the truth because He loves us.

One thing can keep us out of God's kingdom

Mark 10:21 (NIV) Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

Jesus saw that the rich young man loved money. Jesus told him to go and sell everything that he had and give the money to the poor because He wanted him to become free from loving money and put Him first.

Jesus desires and deserves to be first in our lives. Jesus will accept anyone who comes to Him, but we must come to Him on His terms not on our terms. Jesus' terms are that we put Him first.

We can do many things for Jesus but if we are refusing to surrender **one thing** then it shows that we are refusing to love God with all our hearts.

Jesus **loved** the rich young ruler even though he walked away. Jesus **loves** everyone but we must make a choice to put Him first to receive eternal life.

 Personal reflection

Would you really sell everything you have and give the money to the poor if Jesus wanted you to?

Jesus was trying to give the rich man eternal treasures

Jesus told the rich young man to give everything he had away because He was trying to bless him with eternal treasures.

We all have a choice. We can either live for this life or we can live for the life to come. If we live for this life then everything we build in this life will be destroyed when this life is over. If we live for eternity then everything we build will remain when this life is finished and we will enjoy eternal rewards.

Application

 Personal reflection

Are you willing to do anything Jesus asks you?

Have you made the decision to surrender everything?

If not, then what would stop you from surrendering all to Jesus today?

 Prayer point

If you have decided to surrender then pray that God will help you in this. If you are struggling then pray that God will help you overcome whatever it is that is holding you back.

Surrendering to Jesus Christ as lord is the single most important decision anyone can ever make in this life

BASIC repentance

God's kindness

day seven

God's kindness

Romans 2:4 (NIV) Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

← Meditate

 Circle the three things mentioned in this passage that lead us towards repentance

The word **contempt** means to despise or consider worthless. Paul challenges the Romans for not appreciating God's kindness, tolerance and patience and explains that it is God's kindness that leads us towards repentance.

What does the Bible says moves us to turn to God in repentance?

- (a) God's judgment and the fear of hell
- (b) God's kindness
- (c) Understanding what repentance is

 Extra reading

What does this passage tell us about the motivation behind a life of love and obedience towards God?

➡ 1 John 4:19

An adulterous woman


Adultery is sleeping with someone else's spouse

John 8:3-11 (NIV) The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."


 Extra reading

What is Jesus trying to teach us in this story?

➔ Luke 7:36-47

 Underline what the Law of Moses said should happen to this woman who was caught in the act of adultery

 Underline what Jesus said to this woman

 Circle the parts that show that Jesus didn't condemn this woman

John 8 tells us a story of a woman who was caught in the act of adultery. The Pharisees brought this woman before Jesus and accused her. They told Jesus that the Law demanded that she be stoned and watched to see what He would say. Jesus defended this woman and then told her that He didn't condemn her. Jesus showed her mercy and told her to go and leave her life of sin.

We are just like this woman. We may not have committed adultery but we have all sinned and fallen short of God's standard. The Law judges us. It stands over us and reminds us that we are guilty and deserve

death. The Law condemns us but Jesus shows us kindness. Jesus is kind, patient and tolerant towards us and it is this kindness that makes us want to leave our life of sin and follow Him.

Application

Personal reflection

Take some time now to meditate on God's kindness, patience and tolerance towards you.

It is important to make a habit of taking time to regularly thank God and experience His fresh love towards you. As you do this it will keep you from becoming hardened and self-righteous.

Prayer point

Psalms 103:1-5 (NIV) Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

The Bible tells us to praise God and to remember His goodness towards you. Spend some time now and thank God for everything that He has done for you.

Extra reading

Meditate on the following passages about God's goodness

- ➔ Lamentations 3:22-23
- ➔ Psalm 145:8-9
- ➔ Matthew 7:7-11

Self-righteousness is a form of pride. It is where we think that we are righteous and don't need God's mercy.

The word **praise** simple means thank. When the Bible tells us to bless or praise God it is telling us to thank Him.

BASIC

faith

Basic faith

Reviewing repentance

In our last lesson we learned about what repentance is and we were encouraged to apply this truth in our lives. We learnt that repentance is a choice to turn away from all sin and to commit ourselves to Jesus Christ. We learnt that it is an inward change in purpose where we put Jesus first and live to please Him even when it means denying ourselves and upsetting others. We learnt that repentance is a decision that anyone can make and that God forgives and accepts us the moment that we make this choice. In this lesson we will look at what faith is.

Repentance and faith go together

Mark 1:14-15 (NIV) After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the Good News of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the Good News!”

Repentance and faith go together. In some ways they are like two sides of the same thing. They are like two spokes on a bicycle, they both move together at the same time. Repentance is the decision to turn away from sin while faith is the decision to commit ourselves to Jesus and His will.

Faith

The Hebrew words for faith used in the Bible are the noun 'emunah and the verb 'aman. The Greek words for faith are the noun pistis and the corresponding verb pisteuō.

The word 'emunah is used 49 times and the word 'aman is used 110 times in the Bible. The word 'aman is first used in Genesis 15:6, where it is said that Abraham “believed ['aman] in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness”.

The word pistis is used 244 times and the word pisteuō is used 250 times in the Bible. Vine's Dictionary says defines faith as “firm persuasion”. When faith is used in the Gospel it simply refers to a wholehearted commitment to Jesus Christ and His will.

It is easy to see how repentance and faith work together when we understand what faith is. Repentance emphasises turning away from sin while faith emphasises our commitment to Jesus and His will.

We are saved by faith not works

Romans 4:4-7 (NIV) Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.”

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV) For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

The Bible teaches us that salvation is **by grace through faith** and that it is not obtained through doing good works. This is one of the main themes of the Bible. God looks at our hearts and He accepts us the moment that we make a decision to turn away from sin and commit ourselves to Him.

The Bible teaches us that we are saved by faith alone and not by our faith and our works. If we are saved by our faith and our works then salvation becomes something that we have to work for and is no longer a gift.

The moment that people commit themselves to Jesus and His will their hearts become right with God, they receive forgiveness and they go from death to life. They receive God's forgiveness as a free gift without doing anything to deserve it. Eternal life is not something we have to work for or earn but something that we receive as soon as and as long as we are committed to Jesus and His will.

It follows that faith results in obedience to the will of Christ and in good works. When a person commits themselves to Jesus they want to live differently. Our good works are the fruit or result of true faith. Our good works are not the *cause* of our salvation but the *evidence* of salvation.

Faith and grace

Acts 15:11 (NIV) “We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved”

God's grace is one of the central teachings of the Bible. It is so central that the Gospel is even called the “Gospel of God's grace” (Acts 20:24).

Grace is the Greek word *charis* and simply means gift. Grace, in a general sense, refers to everything that God gives us as a gift. It refers to all of God's undeserved mercy, favour, blessings and promises.

When we study the way that the word grace is used and defined in the Bible we see that grace specifically refers to the influence of the Holy Spirit on our hearts and its reflection in our lives. God's grace is His supernatural power that transforms our lives.

Titus 2:11-14 (NIV) For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

The Bible says grace teaches us to live holy lives. This doesn't mean God's grace gives us a teaching in an intellectual way but that grace moves and influences us to live a holy and godly life. God's grace stirs and moves us to willingly obey.

Faith and obedience

James 2:22-24 (NIV) You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

Faith and obedience are inseparable. We see this when we look at the Greek words. The word obey (peitho) actually comes from the root word believe (pisteuo). James touches on this when he says that the faith in our hearts is shown through our obedient actions.

Matthew 7:21-23 (NIV) "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

Jesus said that many people will come to Him on Judgment Day expecting to be received and instead be rejected. Jesus explained that these people will call Him Lord with their mouths but they won't be submitted to Him in their hearts. He explains that it is only those who do God's will that will inherit eternal life.

Some people get confused between faith and works and faith and obedience. The Bible teaches us that we don't earn our salvation by our works but that we receive it as a gift by faith. It's pure grace! It also teaches us that true faith and obedience go hand in hand so that it is only those who have genuine faith and actually do God's will that will be saved.




BASIC faith

what is faith?

day one

Mark 1:14b-15 (NLT) Jesus went into Galilee, where He preached God's Good News. "The time promised by God has come at last!" He announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!"

⇐ Meditate

-  Underline all of Jesus' words in this passage
-  Circle what the Bible calls Jesus' message
-  Circle the two things that Jesus told people to do

Repentance and faith go hand in hand. They are like two spokes on a bicycle wheel that both turn at the same time or like two sides of a coin that can't be separated.

The words **faith** and **believe** come from the same Greek word *pistis* and mean the same thing. Faith is the **noun** (naming word) and the word believe is the **verb** (doing word).

Faith is a decision


Faith, like repentance, is a decision.

While this might seem overly simple, it's an important starting point. We know that faith must be a choice because it is something that God requires us to do to be saved.

Jesus and the apostles sometimes told people to repent and believe and other times they just told people to repent or just to believe. One of the things that this tells us is that repentance and faith imply each other.

Faith is believing Jesus is who He says He is

John 8:23-24 (NLT) Jesus continued, “You are from below; I am from above. You belong to this world; I do not. That is why I said that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I AM who I claim to be, you will die in your sins.”

 Underline what Jesus said the Pharisees needed to do to be saved from dying in their sins

Matthew 16:13-17 (NLT) When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” “Well,” they replied, “some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.” Then He asked them, “But who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “You are blessed, Simon son of John, because My Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being.

 Underline the first question Jesus asked His disciples

 Circle their responses

 Underline the second question Jesus asked His disciples

 Circle Peter's response

 Underline who Jesus said had revealed this to Peter

Peter said that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. The word Messiah or Christ means *anointed one* and is the title given to the saviour that God promised to send into the world.

 Extra reading

Jesus makes 7 I am statements in the Gospel of John. Find out what Jesus said about Himself.

➔ John 6:35

➔ John 8:12

➔ John 10:9

➔ John 10:11

➔ John 11:25

➔ John 14:6

➔ John 15:1

Christ is the Greek word christos which literally means anointed one

Application

 Personal reflection

Do you believe that Jesus is who He says He is?

Why do you believe this?

 Prayer point

Take some time to pray and thank God for leading you to the truth about who Jesus is and what He has done for you.

BASIC faith

what is faith?

day two

Stop doubting and believe


John 20:25-31 (NIV) So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.” A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Doubt is different from ignorance. Ignorance is where we don't know the truth and doubt is a decision to reject the truth.

 Personal reflection


Why do you think some people chose to reject the truth?

The term Gospels refers to the first four books of the New Testament. The word **gospel** simply means good news and refers to the good news about Jesus Christ.

 Jesus told Thomas to “stop _____ and _____ “

 Underline what Thomas said after Jesus said this to him

 Underline who Jesus said were blessed

 What things are recorded in the Gospels so that we will believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son?

 Circle what we need to (do) to have life


Jesus' disciples told Thomas that Jesus was alive but Thomas doubted. Thomas said that he would have to see Jesus with his own eyes and touch the nail holes in His hands and scars in His side to believe that Jesus was alive.

Soon afterwards Jesus came and appeared to His disciples. Jesus told Thomas to touch where the nails had pierced His hands and the spear had pierced His side. Jesus then rebuked Thomas for His unbelief. Jesus told Him to stop doubting and believe.

John tells us that Jesus did many miracles and says that these miraculous signs were written down for us so that we would believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son. John also tells us that if we believe that Jesus is who He says He is then we will experience His life and that this life will change our lives.

Jesus is the Christ

Acts 17:30-31 (NIV) In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.

 Underline the proof that God has given us that Jesus is the Christ who will judge the world

Romans 1:1-4 (NIV) Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the Gospel of God—the Gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.


 Extra reading

What do these passages say about doubt?

- Mark 11:23
- James 1:6-7
- Revelation 21:8

↩ Meditate

↩ Meditate

 Circle the thing (God did) to show the world that Jesus was His Son

God showed the world that Jesus was His Son by raising Him from the dead.

Jesus' resurrection is the greatest proof that He is God's Son. Many different people have come and claimed that God had sent them and that they were God's messengers but all of these people died and were buried. Jesus is the only person who has been raised from the dead to live forever.

God raised Jesus from the dead and appeared to many eye witnesses so that we would know for sure that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son.

Application

 Personal reflection

Do you believe that Jesus is God's Son and that God raised Him from the dead?

 Prayer point

Take some time to pray and thank God for sending His Son to die on the cross for you.

 Extra reading

We can read about Jesus' resurrection in all four of the Gospels

-  Matthew 28
-  Mark 16
-  Luke 24
-  John 20


BASIC faith

what is faith?

day three

Faith is believing in Jesus and what He has done for us

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 (NIV) Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the Gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this Gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures

 Circle the three key points of the Gospel message

Paul said that we are saved by believing the Gospel message. He summarised the Gospel message as Jesus died for our sins, was buried and was raised to life on the third day.

↩ Meditate

 Extra reading

What do these passages tell us about the relationship between **faith** and **obedience**?

- ➔ Ephesians 5:6
- ➔ Hebrews 4:6
- ➔ Hebrews 11:8


Faith is committing ourselves to Jesus and His will

We can't believe the message that Jesus is Lord and Saviour and walk away and do our own thing. If we really believe in Jesus and His words then we will apply His words in our lives.

If our faith doesn't change the way that we live then it shows that it is not real faith at all.

James 2:14-17 (NLT) What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well"—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.

 Circle how people show their faith

 Circle the two words that James uses to describe faith that doesn't change the way we live

Application

 Personal reflection

Have you made a decision to fully commit yourself to Jesus and His will?

If not, then what would stop you from doing this today?

 Meditate

 Personal reflection

Why do you think James writes to the church to say that faith without works is dead and that it has no power to save them?

⬆ Prayer point

Take some time to pray and ask God to help you live a life of faith in Him.

BASIC faith faith and works

We have learnt four key points about what faith is in our studies so far. Fill in the blanks in the sentences below.

Faith is a d _____

Faith is b _____ Jesus is w ____ He says He is

Faith is b _____ in Jesus and w ____ He has done for us

Faith is c _____ o _____ to Jesus and His will

⇐ Review

In the next two studies we will look at the difference between **faith** and **works**.

Faith and works

Romans 4:3-8 (NLT) For the Scriptures tell us, “Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.” When people work, their wages are not a gift, but something they have earned. But people are counted as righteous, not because of their work, but because of their faith in God who forgives sinners. David also spoke of this when he described the happiness of those who are declared righteous without working for it: “Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sins are put out of sight. Yes, what joy for those whose record the LORD has cleared of sin.”

⇐ Meditate

The word **righteous** means **innocent or blameless**. God is holy and will punish the unrighteous. We must be righteous to have peace with Him.

- 📖 Underline why God counted Abraham as righteous
- 📖 Underline the places where it says that people are not counted as righteous because of their works
- 📖 Circle the places where it says people are counted as righteous because of their faith

We have all sinned and become unrighteous or guilty before God. Romans 4 picks up on this and talks about two ways of trying to become righteous. It calls one way *faith* and the other way *works*.

Works involves trying to be right with God by what we do

Romans 4:5 (NLT) But people are counted as righteous, not because of their work, but because of their faith in God who forgives sinners.

One of the central messages of the Bible is that we are saved by faith not by what we do.

If a person sins even once then they become unrighteous. No amount of good works can change this. We have all sinned and we are powerless to become innocent by what we do. When Jesus died on the cross He paid the price for our sins so that we could become righteous through faith in Him.



Ephesians 2:8 (NLT) God saved you by His grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

- 📖 Circle the parts that says salvation is a gift from God

We are either saved by **faith alone** or by **works**. Saying that we are saved by faith and works is another way of saying that we are saved by works. Our good works are not the **cause**, they are the **result** of salvation.

↩ Memorise

The word translated as **grace** is the Greek word *charis*. Grace simply means gift. It refers to everything that God gives us and is used especially to refer to the gift of the Holy Spirit and the way He changes our hearts.

-  Why can't we boast about being saved?
-  How do you feel knowing that God saves people when they believe in Jesus?

God saves people when they believe. Salvation is a free gift. It is not something that we work for or earn.

Application

-  Personal reflection

Have you made a decision to stop trying to be right with God by what you do and simply believe?

-  Prayer point

Take some time to pray and ask God to help you enter into His rest of faith.

Salvation by faith doesn't mean that we can continue to live in sin. Faith involves committing ourselves to Jesus and His will and it follows that this will result in obedience.

BASIC faith

faith and works

day five

In our last study we learned about two ways of trying to have a right relationship with God. We learned about **faith** which is based on believing in Jesus and we learned about **works** which is based on doing good deeds. We will look at how works leads to self-righteousness and spiritual death in this study.

Works involves self-effort and leads to self-righteousness

Galatians 3:3 (NLT) How foolish can you be? After starting your Christian lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?

 Underline how the Galatian Christians were trying to become perfect

We can't follow Jesus in our own strength and ability. We need the Holy Spirit to help us each step of the way.


When we believe in Jesus we receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit changes us and produces the life of Christ in us. He fills us with love, joy and peace and causes us to walk in God's ways. We can't live the Christian life by our own human effort. We can only live this life by faith in Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.

← Meditate

Self-righteousness is a form of pride. It is where we think that we are righteous and don't need God's mercy.

Romans 4:5 (NKJV) says "**to him who does not work but believes...**". We must stop trying to be right with God by works before we can enter into true faith.

Luke 18:9-14 (NLT) Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: “Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: ‘I thank You, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else. For I don’t cheat, I don’t sin, and I don’t commit adultery. I’m certainly not like that tax collector! I fast twice a week, and I give You a tenth of my income.’ “But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, ‘O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.’ I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”


 Underline who Jesus was telling this story to

 Circle how the Pharisee saw himself

 Circle how the tax collector saw himself

The Pharisee thought that God would accept him because of what he was doing. The tax collector, on the other hand, had lived a bad life and didn’t have any good works to trust in. He came to God and asked for mercy and received it because of his faith. The Pharisee did many good things but missed out because he tried to be right with God by works while the tax collector received God’s blessing by faith.

We must stop trying to be right with God by what we do before we can receive it by faith.

 Personal reflection

Have you ever tried to fix your relationship with God through works?

 Meditate

People who become self-righteous tend to look down on others and see them as not as good as them. This is the **opposite** of a Christian spirit where people see others as better than themselves.

Application

Personal reflection

Have you made a decision to stop trying to be right with God by what you do and simply believe?

Prayer point

Take some time to pray and ask God to help you enter into His rest of faith.





BASIC faith

faith and grace

Faith and grace

Ephesians 2:8-10 (NLT) God saved you by His grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.

⇐ Memorise

-  Circle what God saved us by
-  Circle when we received this salvation
-  Underline the part that says salvation is a free gift
-  Underline why God has created us anew in Christ Jesus

Salvation is **by grace through faith**. In our last study we looked at how salvation is not something we work for and earn. In this study we will look at what grace is and what the Bible means when it says that we are saved by God's grace.




Grace means gift

The Greek word translated as **grace** in the New Testament is the word charis. Charis simply means gift. Charis is used to refer to anything

Strong's Dictionary of New Testament words defines grace as *"the divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in the life"*

and everything that God freely gives us. Charis is also used specifically to refer to the gift of the Holy Spirit and the way the Holy Spirit changes our minds and hearts.

Titus 2:11-14 (NIV) For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

-  Circle what grace offers people
-  Underline what grace teaches us
-  Underline why Jesus gave Himself for us

Titus says that grace teaches us to live holy lives. This doesn't mean that grace gives us a teaching in an academic way. It means that grace influences us. Grace is the Holy Spirit's influence on our hearts that changes the way we live. Grace produces the life of Christ in us and causes us to live like Jesus lived.

Titus also says that Jesus gave Himself to **redeem** us. The word redeem means to buy something. We use this word today when we talk about redeeming vouchers or coupons. We trade them in for something. When Jesus died on the cross He paid the price for our sins and purchased us for Himself.

Grace saves us from punishment


Colossians 2:13-15 (NIV) You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away.

 Extra reading

What does the word grace refer to in these passages?

-  1 John 1:16
-  Romans 3:24
-  Romans 12:6
-  2 Corinthians 9:8

 Meditate

 Extra reading

What is the Good News called in this passage?

-  Acts 20:24

 Personal reflection

Have you ever had a time when the Holy Spirit touched you and afterwards you wanted to make better choices?

Then God made you alive with Christ, for He forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. In this way, He disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by His victory over them on the cross.



Circle why were we spiritually dead



Underline how God cancelled the charges against us



Circle the two words that describes what happened to the spiritual rulers and authorities when your sins were nailed to the cross

Sin separates us from God and results in spiritual death. When we sinned we became guilty before God. It was like we had a death sentence hanging over our heads. We sinned against God and we couldn't do anything to fix it. God loved us and sent His Son Jesus to pay for our sins. God nailed the charges that were against us to Jesus on the cross and Jesus paid them all in full. When Jesus did this He made a way for those that come to Him to be forgiven. If we believe in Jesus then we have been set free from the death penalty that we deserve because of our sin.

⇐ Meditate

The devil tries to use our sin to accuse and condemn us. Jesus disarmed the devil when He dealt with sin on the cross.




BASIC faith

faith and grace

day seven

Grace saves us from the power of sin

Ezekiel 36:25-27 (NLT) "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols. And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put My Spirit in you so that you will follow My decrees and be careful to obey My regulations."

-  Circle every time God says (I will) in this passage
-  Underline everything God promises to do
-  Double underline the outcome of God's work in us

Grace sets us free from the **punishment** and the **power** of sin. When Jesus went to heaven He sent the Holy Spirit to be with us forever. The Holy Spirit fulfils Ezekiel's prophecy in our lives.

God's grace changes us from the inside out. It changes us so that we no longer want to worship idols, it gives us a new heart that is tender and responsive to the truth, and it makes us want to carefully obey God's will.

We can never be set free from the power of sin through trying harder to be holy. We must come to God through believing in Jesus Christ and allow Him to change us. When God changes us then we love

← Meditate

 Extra reading

Is grace something we receive once or is it something we can keep receiving?

- James 4:6
- Acts 4:31

 Extra reading





Living under grace doesn't mean we can keep on sinning. In fact, the opposite is true. When we live under grace we will be free from the desire to sin.

- Romans 6:14-18
- Jude 1:4

what's good and right and we hate sin. We don't have to try to, we just do. This is how God's grace sets us free from the power of sin.

We can come to God when we are at our worst and receive grace

Hebrews 4:16 (NLT) Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

-  Circle the attitude that we are to approach God's throne with
-  Circle what we can expect to receive and find when we approach God
-  Underline when we should approach God's throne of grace
-  What do you think it means when it says "in our time of need"?

God encourages us to come to Him in our time of need to receive all the forgiveness and help we need. It is easy to come to God confidently when we are doing well. It is much harder to come to God confidently to ask for forgiveness and help to change when we have sinned. Yet this is exactly what God is telling us to do in this passage. God wants us to come when we are struggling or if we have sinned and freely receive His forgiveness and grace to overcome sin.

Acts 11:23 says "When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad..." One of the things that this tells us is that grace is something that we can see in people's lives.

← Meditate

 Personal reflection

What's so amazing about grace?

Application

Personal reflection

Is there anything specific that you need God's help with in your life right now?

Prayer point

Take some time and pray for God's grace in your life and wait on Him expecting to receive.

BASIC

forgiveness

Basic forgiveness

Reviewing repentance and faith

In our first two lessons we learned about repentance and faith. Repentance and faith are the first two Christian teachings and it is important that we understand and apply them in our lives. It is important that we understand exactly what they are so that we are not shaken by the many different false and unbalanced teachings that are out there. It is also important that we are applying them in our lives so that we can walk with God and build a solid personal relationship with Him.

In our lesson on faith we learnt that faith is the decision to commit ourselves to Jesus and His will. We learnt that we are saved by faith and not by works, meaning that God accepts us the moment we fully commit ourselves to Him and that salvation is not something that we have to work for. This is an amazing truth that keeps us free from serving God out of guilt and fear. We also learnt that true faith will always produce obedience and that now that we have been forgiven we must continue to walk in faith and obedience.

In this lesson we will look at how God wants us to heal our hearts and how we can stay mentally and emotionally free through the power of forgiveness.

Wholeness

Often when people come to Christ they come with brokenness and pain from the past caused by all kinds of things. We can look happy but inside have painful wounds caused by things like abuse, broken relationships, broken promises, failures, death and loss, disappointments, divorce, injustices, etc. Unless these mental and emotional wounds are healed, they will build up, leaving us feeling extremely weary and burdened.

It is important that we identify these areas of brokenness and allow God to heal us so that we are free to move forward in faith.

God wants to heal us

Psalms 23:1-3 (NIV) The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Luke 4:18-19 (NIV) "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV) "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

God reassures us throughout the Bible that He is good and that He wants to heal us from the trauma and pain of the past. Psalm 23 describes God as a loving shepherd who cares for us and restores our souls. In Luke 4 Jesus said that one of the reasons God sent Him was to heal the brokenhearted and bring freedom to those who were suffering. Likewise, in Matthew 11:28-29 Jesus invited those who were feeling tired and burdened to come to Him and receive rest for their weary souls.

Signs that you may have a wounded soul

The first step for us to receive God's healing and become whole is to identify any soul wounds that we might have from the past. The following are some signs that you have a wounded soul.

Sign # 1 – you feel hurt about something that happened in the past

One of the best indicators that you have a soul wound is that you still feel hurt by something that has happened to you in the past.

Sign # 2 – you often feel emotionally tired and drained

Soul wounds are like dead weight in our lives. If you have been to the gym you will know you can lift a certain amount of weight. Let's say you can bench press 70kgs easily. When people get a soul wound it is like adding another 10kg to the bar. Soul wounds can build up in our lives and leave us feeling weary, tired and burdened unless we know how to deal with them.

Sign # 3 – you tend to overreact to small things and get irritated by people's innocent mistakes

Soul wounds are like natural wounds. If someone brushed up against your arm you probably wouldn't think anything of it. However, if you had a cut on your arm and someone brushed up against it then you would experience severe pain and probably react strongly. This is what soul wounds are like. When people brush up against them we can feel severe pain and tend to overreact.

Sign # 4 – you are haunted by bad experiences and memories of the past

People who experience soul wounds are often tormented by bad memories in their past and can even experience reoccurring nightmares. Sometimes people try and block out these painful memories but they are awakened through things like hearing an old love song or smelling a certain perfume.

We have to deal with the root of the problem

Imagine you had a tree in your garden that was producing poisonous fruit and you wanted to get rid of it before it did some serious damage. You could go and pick the fruit off and throw it out but then you would have to do that all over again after a few months. The best way to permanently deal with the bad fruit is to kill the root.

Many people struggle with poisonous fruit in their lives. Things like anger, hate, shame, insecurity, fear, lust, depression, addictions and unresolved grief are all bad fruit. When we try not to do these things we are often only picking the fruit. This may work for a while but eventually the fruit grows back. After doing this for a while we can get frustrated and discouraged and lose hope that we will ever change and be free. If we want to deal with bad fruit in our lives then we need to deal with the root of the problem.

Hebrews 12:15 (NIV) See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

Bitterness is a root that can begin to grow in our lives to trouble us and defile many people through its influence in our lives. If we have a poisonous root of bitterness in our lives then we must deal with this through forgiveness.

Identifying soul wounds

Bitter roots are easy to identify. If you can think about something that happened in the past and you still feel upset or sad about it in some way then it is a sign that there is still a root of bitterness in there somewhere.

Case histories

The following are case histories of people who had wounded souls and are now healed.

“I was continually ridiculed by my father and told I was useless and would never amount to anything in life. Today I feel worthless even though I have a good job.”

“When I was a child at school my parents were poor and I had to wear ugly old clothes and other kids teased me. Today, I have a sense of inferiority around wealthy people and I feel irritated by them.”

“I was sexually abused by a parent when I was a child. Today I find it hard to trust authority figures and I suffer from sexual problems.”

“My partner committed adultery and I find it difficult to trust him. Also I suffer mood swings of anger and depression.”

“When I was a child, I was beaten daily by my parents. Often I was blamed for something I didn’t do and beaten for it. Today I suffer anger and violence problems, and I don’t feel any love or respect for my parents.”

Every one of the people above has experienced healing in these areas.

Exercise

Take a moment and write down any bitter roots in your life on a scrap piece of paper. Be specific about who did what and how you felt as a result. It is important that you’re totally honest as you complete this part of the exercise. Remember, your Heavenly Father sees everything and His heart towards you is not to punish you but to set you free.

Forgive

Matthew 6:14-15 (NIV) For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Matthew 18:21-22 (NIV) Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Our Father loves us and wants to heal us but we have to choose to forgive people for their wrongs against us before He will heal us. God is merciful, but He is not unfair. He always requires us to forgive.

There are no exceptions.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a choice to release people from our judgment. When we forgive someone we make a decision to release them and not to hold their wrong against them anymore.

The following are some truths about forgiveness:

- ❖ Forgiveness is not denying the facts of what happened
- ❖ Forgiveness is not saying that what the person who hurt you did was okay
- ❖ Forgiveness is a decision that we are capable of making no matter how we feel
- ❖ Forgiveness releases *us not them* – they will still have to answer to God for their actions

Receiving God's healing

Here is a guideline process that will help you to forgive those people who have hurt you.

1. Imagine the person is in front of you
2. Tell that person how you felt about what they did – be honest
3. Choose to release them
4. Bless them and pray for them

Warning

Offence is one of the most common ways that Satan takes believers out. The word offence is the Greek word *skandalon* which refers to a baitstick that a hunter would use to trap small animals. When the Bible uses the word offence it is drawing on a powerful picture. It is telling us that offence is the devil's bait to bring us into captivity.

We must get good at discerning when we are offended and make a decision to quickly forgive. We will all have many opportunities to take offence in our marriages, families, church family, workplace and our friendships. We must be alert and careful we do not let the root of bitterness grow in our lives and defile us and others through our lives.

BASIC forgiveness

God heals

day one





The LORD is our shepherd



Psalms 23:1-6 (NIV)

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides

me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

-  Circle what David calls God
-  Why do you think David calls God his shepherd?
-  Underline all the things that God does for us
-  Circle where it says that God restores our souls

God is our Good Shepherd who cares for us. He watches over us, provides for us, protects us, feeds us, leads us and heals us.

⇐ Meditate

 Personal reflection

Has there ever been a time when you felt hurt?

How did you deal with this?


God wants to heal us and invites us to bring our pain to Him and receive healing.

Psalm 23 says that God restores our souls. Our soul is the part of us that thinks and feels. When the Bible says that God restores our souls it is saying that God heals us mentally and emotionally so that we can make better choices.

Jesus our saviour

Luke 4:18-19 (NKJV) “The spirit of the lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

 Underline the things that Jesus was anointed and sent to do

 Circle who Jesus was sent to heal

Luke 4 tells us about Jesus mission. It tells us that Jesus was sent to save us and that part of this salvation includes healing our broken hearts.


We must forgive those who hurt us

Matthew 6:14-15 (NIV) For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

 Underline what will happen if you forgive people who hurt you

 Personal reflection


How do you feel knowing God is watching over you as a loving shepherd?

 Extra reading

Acts 1:1 tells us that the Gospels recorded all that Jesus began both to do and teach. The implication here is that Jesus is continuing His mission by the Holy Spirit through the church.

God wants to heal you and then send you out to help others

 Memorise

 Underline what will happen if you don't forgive people who hurt you

Jesus taught us that we must always forgive.

God loves us and wants to heal us but we must make a choice to forgive others before we can receive God's healing power in our lives.

Unforgiveness is one of the main things that stops people from receiving God's healing power in their lives

Application

 Personal reflection

Is there anyone that you need to forgive?

 Prayer point

Make a choice to forgive anyone you need to, ask God to forgive you for holding onto this offence and then ask God to heal and restore your soul.

BASIC forgiveness always forgive

day two

The unmerciful servant

Matthew 18:21-22 (NIV) Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

← Meditate

 Underline Peter’s question

 Circle how many times Jesus told Peter to forgive

 What do you think Jesus was trying to tell Peter?

Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive someone who wronged him and asked Jesus if he should forgive up to seven times. Peter is trying to be generous but he is still thinking about things from a very human perspective. Jesus challenges him by saying not seven times but seventy-seven times.

Jesus then goes on to tell Peter a story to show him that God expects us to always forgive.

Matthew 18:23-35 (NIV) “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his

Jesus told us many stories about what the kingdom of heaven is like to teach us how things work in God’s kingdom. God wants us to learn how His kingdom works so that we can grow up to become mature sons who know and do His will.



children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. “The servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant’s master took

pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”

The word **talent** in this story refers to a large amount of money. Ten thousand talents is a picture of a debt that is too big for the servant to ever repay. A **denarii**, on the other hand, was a small amount of money that was about one day’s work.

Jesus told many stories or parables to give us a picture of a spiritual truth. The last sentence in each parable is usually the main point that Jesus is making.

- 📖 Circle the two main characters mentioned in the first sentence of this story
- 📖 Who do you think the king represents and who do you think the servants represent?
- 📖 Underline all the words that the servant spoke in this passage
- 📖 Double underline all the words that the king or master spoke in this passage
- 📖 Circle what the master did to the servant after he refused to show others the same mercy that he had received
- 📖 Double underline the sentence that explains the point Jesus is making with this story


God is **merciful** and **just**


Jesus gives us a picture of what God's kingdom is like in this story. When we sinned against God we created a debt that we couldn't pay. When we repented God forgave us. We now have a choice. We can go and show others the same kindness that God has shown towards us or we can go and be unloving and unmerciful.

Jesus warns us in this story that if we refuse to forgive others then God will hold this against us and hand us over to be punished.

God always requires us to forgive

Matthew 6:14-15 (NIV) For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

 Underline what our Father will do if we forgive people who hurt and wrong us

 Underline what our Father will do if we do not forgive people who hurt and wrong us

Jesus was very clear with us that if we do not forgive then God will not forgive us and accept us into His eternal kingdom.

Application

 Prayer point

Thank God for His mercy towards you and ask Him to help you to watch over your own heart and help you to forgive those who hurt and wrong you.

 Memorise

 Personal reflection

Sometimes when people are offended they look for people who will feel sorry for them and tell them what they want to hear. We should both be and chose the kind of friends who will tell us what we need to hear.

Have you ever been hurt and gone to someone who you knew would make you feel okay about holding onto your offence?

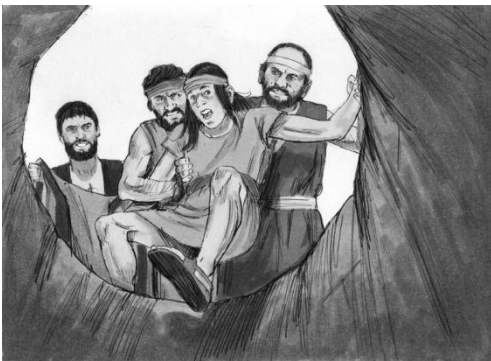
What does 2 Timothy 4:3 say about this?

BASIC forgiveness

God is at work

day three

Seeing what God is doing



Genesis 50:19-20 (NKJV) Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in

order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

You can read the whole story of Joseph in Genesis 30:24-50:6

📖 Circle the one word that describes what Joseph's brothers meant things for

📖 Circle the one word that describes what God meant the same thing for

Joseph's brothers became jealous of him, threw him into a pit and then sold him into slavery. Joseph was sold as a slave in Egypt and worked hard as a slave. Joseph was then falsely accused and thrown into a harsh Egyptian prison. Joseph had a gift of interpreting people's dreams and he helped interpret two prisoners' dreams. One of them promised to remember him but forgot about him once he was released.

We can either get **bitter** or **better**

While it should never happen, sometimes our spiritual brothers and sisters in the church may betray us or let us down. We must guard our hearts against becoming bitter towards the church or other Christians and continue to walk in love and humility.

About 13 years after Joseph was sold into slavery God arranged things to take him from the prison to the palace and make him the second most powerful man in Egypt.


Joseph's brothers were afraid when they met him years later because they knew they had done something terrible to him and that he had the power to take their life. Joseph told them that even though they intended to hurt him that God used their sinful actions for good to send him ahead of them to save many people's lives.

Joseph gives us insight into how we can keep our hearts from becoming bitter by trusting in God's goodness and His plan for our lives. We must understand that no one can take us out of God's will for our lives except ourselves and that God will cause everything to work together for our good if we love and follow Him.


God will use bad things for our good

Romans 8:28 (NIV) And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

 Circle the words all things

 Underline how God uses all things for those who love God

James 1:2-4 (NIV) Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

 Circle what the testing of our faith produces in our lives


 Extra reading

What does **Romans 8:28-39** tell us about our victory in suffering?

 Extra reading

What does the Bible tell us about suffering from these passages?

- Romans 5:5-3
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-7
- 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

 Underline what perseverance through hardship produces in our lives

 Circle the kind of attitude we are to have towards trials

God is not the cause of evil but God is so amazing that He can make the evil that people do to us work for good in our lives and set us up for great blessing.

When we look at the life of Joseph we see that God used the evil that his brothers did towards him to develop godly character in his life and position him to have great influence.

One of the ways that we can stay free from becoming offended by the way other people treat us is by looking past the person and seeing what God is doing in our lives.

Application

 Prayer point

Ask God to help you understand His will in suffering and to help you to be thankful for the pain that God allows to come into your life.

“God, what are you trying to teach me?”

This a great question to ask God when we are going through trials because it helps us look past people and tune into what God is doing




BASIC forgiveness

gossip

day four

Root of bitterness

Hebrews 12:15 (NIV) See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

-  Circle what we are to make sure no one misses out on
-  Circle the words bitter root
-  Underline what a root of bitterness produces

When people don't deal with offence they become bitter. This bitterness is like a root that begins to grow up to trouble them and defile others.

When people hold onto bitterness it troubles them by bringing hurt, revenge, hate, negativity, depression, anger, etc into their lives. This bitterness then begins to work through them and defile the people that they are associated with. The bitterness that is in their hearts comes out of their mouths, sometimes in hidden ways, and begins to destroy faith, hope and love.

We see this happen in groups all the time. Someone gets offended with someone else and then instead of dealing with this issue in their own hearts they talk to someone else about it. When they do this they poison the other person and are sowing seeds of negativity, hatred, suspicion and division. The Bible calls this gossip and slander.

↩ Meditate

 Personal reflection


How do you think bitterness troubles the person who is bitter?

How do you think bitterness defiles many?

The word *slander* is the Greek word *diabolos* which is the same Greek word that is translated as devil. When people slander they are doing the devil's work.

Slander


Mark 7:20-23 (NIV) He went on: “What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean.’ For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man “unclean.””


 Circle where slander comes from

 Circle what slanders makes us

Slander comes out of people’s hearts. If we want to avoid gossip and slander then we need to keep our hearts right towards God and one another. If we get offended, hurt or disappointed and don’t deal with it then it will come out of our mouths and defile the people we are connected to.

Ephesians 4:31-32 (NIV) Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

 Circle what we are to remove from our lives

 Underline what we are to do

← Meditate

Vine’s Greek Dictionary defines slander as finding fault with others and spreading criticism

← Meditate

Application

↑ Prayer point

Ask God to give you discernment and keep you from slandering others.




BASIC forgiveness

remain under

day five

Go to the person

Matthew 18:15-17 (NIV) “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.


-  Underline the first thing we should do if another Christian brother sins against us
-  Underline what we are to do after that if the matter is not resolved
-  Underline what we are to do if the matter is still not resolved

Jesus gave us clear instructions about what to do if someone in the church wrongs us. Jesus tells us that the *first thing* we should do is go and talk to the person just between the two of us.

Unfortunately many people reject this wisdom and prefer instead to talk to their friends about how they have been wronged. When people do this they are disobeying Jesus and unintentionally causing trouble and division within the church.

In yesterday’s study we learnt that if bitterness is in our hearts then it will come out of our mouths. If we have unresolved issues in our

⇐ Meditate

 Personal reflection

Why do you think people sometimes do not go directly to the person who has wronged them and deal with the issue?

hearts towards other people then they will come out of our mouths and this will create suspicion, criticism and division.

One of the reasons people don't go and talk to people face to face to deal with things is because they are timid. Following Jesus requires us to deal with our fears and to be completely honest and humble. God wants us to be straight up with one another. We are not to avoid issues to keep the peace. We are to deal with issues so that we have true peace and unity.

Enduring hardship

Hebrews 12:7 (NIV) Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?

God tells us to endure hardship and to receive it as discipline in our lives.

The Greek word "endure" is the word *hupomonay*. *Hupomonay* comes from the two words *hupo* meaning under and *monay* meaning remain. When God tells us to endure hardship He is encouraging us not to run away from difficult things and telling us to remain under hardship so that it can work for us in our lives.

The reason God tells us to remain under hardship is because when we are going through hardship we often want to run away. God tell us to "remain under" so that the hardship so that He can use the hardship to shape our character. If we run away then we are avoiding the real issues and we will stay immature.

God doesn't want us to disconnect ourselves or run away from our church family if we experience conflict. If we do this then we will miss out on growing up and stay immature. God wants us to remain under and allow Him to teach us how to respond in selfless love and humility.

 Extra reading

 Matthew 5:9

Jesus said blessed are the *peace-makers* not blessed are the *peace-keepers*.

Why do you think peace-makers will be called God's children?

 Meditate

Endure literally means
"remain under"

Some people go from church to church whenever they get offended or hurt. This is an immature pattern that will stop them from growing up and dealing with the things in their own lives that need to change.

Application

Make a decision that you will not run away from conflict or disagreements but that you will work through them and that you will not be moved by hardship but by what God says.

 Extra reading

 Acts 20:24

What did Paul say he would not be moved by?

Why did he refused to be moved by these things?

BASIC forgiveness


loving one another

day six

Galatians 5:14 (NIV) The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

← Memorise

 Circle what is summed up in a single command


 Underline what that single command is

Romans 13:8-10 (NIV) Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

← Meditate

 Circle the debt that we are to fulfil

 Underline what you have done if you love your fellowman

 Underline the one rule that sums up every command

The whole law can be fulfilled in the single command to love our neighbour as we love ourselves.

If we love our neighbour as we love ourselves then we will forgive them if they hurt us. If we love our neighbour as we love ourselves

then we will also be considerate. We will make sure that our lives are not a stumbling block to other people and that we don't unnecessarily offend people or cause them to fall.

Some Christians have the attitude that they can do things however they want to because God doesn't say anything about it in the Bible. If we genuinely love people then we will willingly give up our rights and freedom so we don't become a stumbling block or cause offence to others who may be weaker than us in some areas.

Application

📌 Personal reflection

What are some things that you might be free to do as a Christian that you wouldn't do because they could send people the wrong messages?

📌 Prayer point

Ask God to help you to be considerate towards others and make your life one that inspires and helps rather than hinders others from following Jesus.

📖 Extra reading

Paul talks about loving our neighbour and not becoming a stumbling block in **1 Corinthians chapters 8 and 10**.

BASIC forgiveness


easy prey

day seven

1 Peter 5:8 (NKJV) Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

← Meditate

 Circle the two attitudes we are to have

 Underline why we are to have these attitudes

God tells us to be **sober** (i.e., self-controlled) and **vigilant** (i.e., alert, watchful) because the devil is looking for people that he can devour. Some Christians have an attitude that the devil is nothing and that they don't need to concern themselves with him at all. This is not the attitude that God tells us to have. We are to be sober and alert, not casual and complacent.

If we are **casual** then we will become a **casualty**

God tells us that the devil is looking for those whom he can devour. If the devil is looking for those he can devour then there must be those he can and those he can't devour. When we look at lions in the natural environment we see that they go after 3 types of animals. In the same way the devil looks for these 3 types of Christians to devour.

1. Weak

Lions look for weak animals. They look for the very young and the very old because they know that these types of animals are weak and easy targets.

In the same way the devil looks for spiritually weak Christians. He looks for Christians who are spiritually weak because they don't read their Bibles, pray or go to church.

2. Wounded

Lions look for wounded animals. They can smell blood and take note of the wounded so that they can take them out.

The devil does the same thing. He looks for wounded Christians. The devil can smell offended Christians and he goes after them because they are easy targets.

3. Wandering

Wandering animals are the third group that lions prey on. Lions watch for animals that stray from the pack because they are unprotected when they are out in the open by themselves.

The devil does the same thing. He knows that Christians are unprotected when they wander from their pastor or shepherd that is called to watch over them and when they wander from the church.

Action

 Personal reflection

Would you say that your attitude is sober and alert?

 Prayer point

Ask God to help you to develop a sober and alert attitude and to protect you from familiarity and a casual attitude.

The word **pastor** simply means **shepherd**

 Extra reading

What do these verses tell us about the importance of staying connected?

- ➔ Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
- ➔ Hebrews 10:24-25
- ➔ Hebrews 13:17

BASIC

baptisms

Basic baptisms

Reviewing healing

In the last lesson we looked at how we can receive God's healing power through forgiveness. We learnt about how unforgiveness can destroy our lives and about how God always requires us to forgive. We also learnt that we must be alert and on our guard because the devil will try and destroy our faith in Christ through offences.

In this lesson we will learn about baptisms.

Baptism

The word baptism comes from the Greek work baptizo which means to immerse, to dip or to submerge.

Water baptism

Water baptism is a symbolic act that represents an inner transformation that has taken place in a believer's life. The act of being submerged under water and then coming up again is symbolic of dying, being buried and then being raised to life.

Romans 6:3-5 (NIV) Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

This passage tells us some important things about baptism.

It tells us that we are baptised in Christ Jesus. Some people teach that we are baptised into a certain church, denomination or movement but this is a human tradition. The Bible teaches us that we are baptised into Jesus Christ.

This passage also relates baptism to death, burial and resurrection. It says when we are baptised we are baptised into Jesus' death, that we are united with Him in burial and we are empowered by the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead to live a holy life.

Death

2 Timothy 2:11-13 (NIV) Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

Death is the first symbolic act in water baptism. Death is symbolic of our choice to repent (i.e., turn away from all sin to live to please God). When we repented we experienced a kind of death to ourselves and this world. That old way of life is now dead!

You only bury dead people not alive people. People must have made the choice to repent before they can be baptised.

Some people encourage people to baptise infants and very young children. When we understand that baptism is about repentance then it doesn't make sense to baptise infants and children who do not understand right from wrong or repentance.

Burial

Romans 6:4 (NIV) We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Burial is the second symbolic action in water baptism. When a person goes under the water it is symbolic of being united with Christ in burial. The Bible teaches us that if we are united with Christ then we will also be raised with Christ.

If you have ever buried someone close to you then you will know that this part of the service is very impacting. When we lower someone into the ground there is a deep sense of finality because we know that we will never see their body again. When a person is lowered into the water of baptism it is also a very significant action. We are making a statement that we will never see that old sinful man or woman again.

Resurrection

Romans 8:10-11 (NIV) But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

Resurrection is the third symbolic aspect of water baptism. When a person comes up out of the water it is symbolic of living in God's resurrection power. Our sins have been washed away by the blood of Jesus and we have received the Spirit to live a holy life.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Death and burial would be depressing without the resurrection. Baptism is a celebration of the new life Jesus has given us through the Holy Spirit. When we repent we receive the same Spirit that raised Jesus

from the dead. The Holy Spirit reveals God to us in a personal way. He also helps us in our weakness and teaches us how to live a life that pleases God.

Have you been water baptised?

Mark 16:15-16 (NIV) He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the Good News to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV) Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Jesus told His followers to tell people they must turn to God and be baptised for the forgiveness of their sins. Jesus wants all of His followers to be baptised and it is an important step to take as soon as we can after we have repented.

Your pastor or teacher will let you know when the next baptisms are happening so that you can enrol if you would like to get baptised.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Acts 1:5-8 (NIV) For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” So when they met together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Jesus told His followers to wait in Jerusalem for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told them the Holy Spirit would come on them and they would be empowered to live a life of supernatural purity and power. When people are baptised in the Holy Spirit they are literally clothed with power from on high. They are immersed in the life and the power of the Spirit.

It is important to note that receiving the Holy Spirit is an event and also that we can receive more and more of God's Spirit as we walk with Him.

The Holy Spirit

When Holy Spirit comes into our lives He brings

- ❖ A new awareness of God in our lives - John 16:13-16
- ❖ Experience of God's love, joy and peace - Galatians 5:22-23, Romans 5:5, 14:17
- ❖ A desire to do what's right - Philippians 2:13
- ❖ Spiritual power - Acts 1:8, 10:38, Romans 8:11
- ❖ Revelation of truth - John 14:25-26, 1 John 2:27
- ❖ Insight into what God has done for and freely given us - 1 Corinthians 2:12

We receive the Spirit by faith

Luke 11:11-13 (NIV) "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Anyone can receive the Spirit and be born again. It only takes the smallest amount of faith. Jesus reassures us of our Father's willingness to give us the Holy Spirit in this passage.

Receiving the Spirit

The Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts can be imparted by physical touch. When believers who are filled with the Holy Spirit lay hands on people they can release the Spirit into their lives.

Acts 19:1-6 (NIV) While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?” “John’s baptism,” they replied. Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

Laying hands on people is the most common way we have seen Christians receive the Holy Spirit. Your teacher will now ask you whether you have received the Holy Spirit and will pray for anyone who wants to receive Him.

BASIC baptisms

water baptism

day one

The word that the Bible uses for baptism is the Greek word baptizmo. Baptizmo simple means to immerse or submerge.

The Bible talks about three different types of baptism. It talks about baptism in water, baptism in the Holy Spirit and baptism in suffering. We will look at water baptism in this study.



Mark 1:1-8 (NLT)
The beginning of the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead

of you, who will prepare your way”—“a voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’” And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not





Some religious movements sprinkle people on the head with water. When we look at the Greek word baptise and how people were baptised in the Bible we see that God intended people to be fully submerged in water.

We will look at the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the next session

⇐ Meditate

worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Water baptism and Spirit baptism are two different events

-  Underline the baptism that John the Baptist preached
-  Underline what the people did before they were baptized by John
-  Circle what John baptized people (with)
-  Circle what John said Jesus would baptize people (with)



This passage tells us about two baptisms. It tells us about the baptism in water and the baptism on the Holy Spirit. Water baptism is about repentance and is for the forgiveness of our sins. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is about being empowered to live a holy life and serve God effectively.

Once we have made a decision to repent God wants us to be baptised as a step of obedience. When we are baptised in water we are making public announcement that we have decided to follow Jesus.

God's promises

Mark 16:15-16 (NLT) And then He [Jesus] told them, “Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone. Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned.”

↩ Memorise


-  Circle what will (happen) to anyone who believes the Good News and is baptised
-  Circle what will (happen) to anyone who refuses to believe the Good News

 Personal reflection

Peter told “every one of them” to be baptised.

Do you think Jesus wants every one of a His followers to get baptised or only some of us?

Acts 2:37-39 (NLT) When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

 Underline what Peter and the apostles told those people who were seeking God to do

 Circle what Peter said would happen if they did this

Jesus told His followers to go and preach the Good News to everyone. Jesus told them to tell people they must believe the Good News and be baptised. The apostles started to do this in Acts 2 and the people who heard them were convicted. They asked the apostles what they should do. Peter told them to repent and be baptised so that they could receive God’s forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Application

 Personal reflection

Have you been water baptised?

If not, is this something that you would like to do?

⇒ Action




Get in touch with your pastor or teacher who can help you take the next step of water baptism if you haven’t already done so.

BASIC baptisms

water baptism

day two

Romans 3:6-8 (NLT) Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined Him in His death? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. Since we have been united with Him in His death, we will also be raised to life as He was. We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with Him.

-  Circle how we are joined with Christ Jesus
-  Underline what happens if we are united with Jesus in His death
-  Underline when we were set free from the power of sin

Baptism is a picture of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. God promises us that if we share in Christ's death and burial then we will also share in His resurrection.

Death

The first part of baptism is death. When Romans 6 talks about dying it

← Meditate

Jesus never told people to baptise people into a religious denomination or movement. When we are baptised we are baptised into Jesus Christ and we become part of His body the church, which includes every true believer.

 Extra reading

What else did Jesus say about dying to ourselves?

- ➔ Luke 9:23
- ➔ John 12:24
- ➔ 2 Timothy 2:11

is not talking about physical death. It is talking about dying to our old selfish, sinful lives.

When we repent we experience a kind of death. We die to ourselves, sin and the things of this world. We no longer find enjoyment in sin but find life in Jesus and obedience to His commands.

Burial

The second part of baptism is burial. When we go under the water it is symbolic of burial.

If you have ever lost someone close you will know that the moment at the gravesite where we lower the body into the ground is very powerful. When we bury someone's body it hits us that we will never see this person again in this life. In the same way when we go under the water of baptism we are making a statement that our old life is gone.

Resurrection

The third part of water baptism is being raised to life. When we come up out of the water it is symbolic of how we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a new life.

The Holy Spirit fills our lives as we empty ourselves. God comes and lives in us and makes us full of love, joy and peace. He enables us to live a life of supernatural purity and power.

Jesus introduced two main ceremonial or symbolic acts under the New Covenant—
water baptism and
communion.

BASIC baptisms




baptism in the Spirit

day three




Acts 1:4-7 (NLT)
Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised,

as I told you before. John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?" He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

-  Underline the two baptisms Jesus talks about in this passage
-  Circle what Jesus said the disciples would (receive) when the Holy Spirit came upon them
-  Underline what Jesus said the baptism in the Holy Spirit would empower people to do

⇐ Meditate

 Personal reflection

Why do you think Jesus told His disciples not to leave Jerusalem until they had received the baptism in the Holy Spirit?

 Extra reading

Compare what Peter was like before and after he received the baptism in the Holy Spirit

➔ Luke 22:54-62

➔ Acts 2:14-41

 Personal reflection

When the Holy Spirit was poured out in Acts 2 the people thought the disciples were drunk. Why do you think people thought they were drunk?

Jesus told His disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit because He would give them supernatural power. We need the Holy Spirit to serve Jesus and fulfill the Great Commission.

When we read on in Acts 2 we see that after the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples they preached with conviction and many people responded and they did supernatural signs and wonders.

Application

↑ Prayer point




If you haven't received the Holy Spirit then ask God to baptise you in the Spirit. If you have then ask God to fill you afresh today and take some time to wait on Him expecting to receive.

The Holy Spirit was first given to the disciples in Acts 2. When we read Acts 4:23-31 we see that the disciples were refilled with the Holy Spirit. We need to constantly be refreshed and refilled with the Holy Spirit.

BASIC baptisms

the Spirit is God

1 John 5:7 (NKJV) For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.

-  Circle who the three are who bear witness in heaven
-  Underline the part that says that they are three
-  Underline the part that says that they are one

God is three individual people who live in perfect oneness. The Bible refers to these three people as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. All three are equally God. We call this truth that God is three and one **the trinity**. This word trinity comes from the words tri meaning three and unity meaning oneness.

The Holy Spirit is one of the three members of the trinity, along with God the Father and God the Son.

When we talk about the baptism in the Holy Spirit we are talking about being immersed in God the Holy Spirit. This is a very powerful reality.

Application

⬆ Prayer point

If you haven't received the Holy Spirit then ask Jesus to baptise you in the Spirit. If you have then ask Jesus to fill you afresh today.

↩ Meditate

 Extra reading

What do the following passages tell us about who the Holy Spirit is and what He does?

- ➔ John 16:13-16
- ➔ Galatians 5:22-23
- ➔ Acts 10:38
- ➔ 1 John 2:27
- ➔ 1 Corinthians 2:12

BASIC baptisms

baptism in the Spirit

day five

How to receive the Holy Spirit

Luke 11:11-12 (NLT) “You fathers—if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.”



Circle what even sinful fathers know how to do



Underline who Jesus says the Father will give the Holy Spirit to

Jesus reminded us of God’s goodness and told us that He will give the Holy Spirit to **everyone who asks**. We can come to God confidently and ask Him to give us the Holy Spirit.

Acts 19:1b-5 (NLT) Paul traveled through the interior regions until he reached Ephesus, on the coast, where he found several believers. “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” he asked them. “No,” they replied, “we haven’t even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” “Then what baptism did you experience?” he asked. And they replied, “The baptism of John.” Paul said, “John’s baptism called for repentance from sin. But John himself told the people to believe in the one who would come later, meaning

← Meditate

The Holy Spirit is God. He is the ultimate gift.

← Meditate

Jesus.” As soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied.



Circle what Paul did before the Holy Spirit came on the believers at Ephesus



Circle the two things the believers started to do when the Holy Spirit came on them

Paul laid hands on the believers and they received the Holy Spirit. This tells us that the laying on of hands is one of the ways people receive the Holy Spirit.

Application

🏠 Prayer point

Ask your teacher to lay hands on you to receive the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was first given to the disciples in Acts 2. When we read Acts 4:23-31 we see that the disciples were refilled with the Holy Spirit. We need to constantly be refreshed and refilled with the Holy Spirit.

BASIC baptisms

baptism of suffering

day six

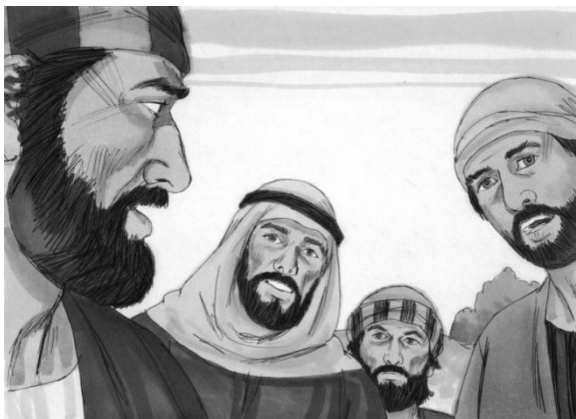
Luke 12:50 (NLT) I have a terrible baptism of suffering ahead of Me, and I am under a heavy burden until it is accomplished.

⇐ Meditate

📖 Underline the words baptism of suffering

Jesus talked about a third baptism in this passage. He had already been baptised in water and in the Holy Spirit and talked about being baptised in suffering. Being baptised in suffering refers to undergoing seasons of great suffering and hardship and is one of the ways that God shapes our character and prepares us to serve Him.

God works humility into our lives through the baptism of suffering




Mark 10:35-40 (NLT) Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came over and spoke to Him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want You to do us a

favor.” “What is your request?” He asked. They replied, “When You sit on Your glorious throne, we want to sit in places of honor next to You, one on Your right and the other on Your left.” But Jesus said to them, “You don’t know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of suffering I am about to drink? Are you able to be baptized

⇐ Meditate

with the baptism of suffering I must be baptized with?” “Oh yes,” they replied, “we are able!” Then Jesus told them, “You will indeed drink from My bitter cup and be baptized with My baptism of suffering. But I have no right to say who will sit on My right or My left. God has prepared those places for the ones He has chosen.”

 Underline what James and John asked Jesus for

 Jesus responded to this question with a question - underline what Jesus asked them

Jesus connected suffering with **honour**.

James and John asked Jesus to give them places of honour in God's eternal kingdom and Jesus asked them whether they could suffer in the same way that He would suffer. Jesus was telling them that the reason that God was lifting Him up and had given Him the name above every name was because He was willing to humble Himself and become obedient to the point of dying on the cross. Jesus was saying that if they want God to honour them like God honoured Him then they must be willing to suffer like He was willing to suffer.

Jesus taught us that suffering is part of life in a world that has been corrupted by sin and being obedient despite suffering and persecution is one of the ways we show our love for God.

Application

📌 Prayer point

Ask God to help you endure suffering with hope, patience and joy.

In the world talented or hard working people are often honoured. In God's kingdom people who are obedient despite suffering are honoured.





BASIC baptisms

baptism of suffering

day seven

God uses suffering to develop our character

Romans 5:3-4 (NLT) We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation.

-  Circle what the Bible says we can do when we run into problems and trials
-  Underline why we can rejoice when we run into problems and trials
-  Circle what endurance develops
-  Circle what godly character strengthens

James 1:2-4 (NLT) Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

-  Circle how the Bible says we should consider troubles

⇐ Memorise

The word **endurance** used in these two passages is the Greek word *hupomonay*. *Hupomonay* comes from two words, *hupo* meaning under and *monay* meaning remain. This word simply means **remain under**.

⇐ Meditate

One of the reasons God tells us to **remain under** suffering is because when we are going through it we want to run away from it. God wants us to remain under hardship and allow it to have its perfect work in our lives.

 Underline when our endurance has a chance to grow

 Underline what happens when endurance is fully developed


God uses suffering to develop our character. Suffering tests our faith. It gives us an opportunity to show our commitment to Jesus by following Him even when this brings pain into our lives.

Suffering can either make us bitter or better. We can become disappointed with God for not doing what we wanted Him to do and offended with people for hurting us or we can trust that God will cause everything to work together for our good. When we trust God we allow injustice and suffering to set us up for God's blessing in our lives.

God promises us victory in our suffering

Romans 8:35-39 (NLT) Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean He no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

 Circle some of the (trials) that we may face as believers

 Circle what the Bible says is (ours) despite problems and trials

 Personal reflection

What are some of the trials you may face following Jesus?

One of the ways we can stay humble in suffering is by **asking God what He is trying to teach us** personally

 Extra reading

➔ Hebrews 12:1-13

What encouragement does the book of Hebrews give us when we are going through suffering?

 Personal reflection

What do you think unbelievers think when they see Christians endure suffering and injustice with joy, patience and hope?



Underline where the Bible says that nothing will ever be able to separate us from God's love

We will all experience all kinds of troubles in this life but God reassures us that He is with us and that He is for us. God doesn't always rescue us from our problems but He does promise us overwhelming victory in the end. We can face problems, persecutions, needs and pain with great hope because we know that God loves us and that not even death can separate us from this love.

Application

🕊 Prayer point

Ask God to help you endure suffering with hope, patience and joy. Now take some time and pray for your Christian brothers and sisters who are being killed for their faith and suffering all over the world.

BASIC

living

Basic living

Reviewing baptisms

In the last lesson we learnt about baptisms. We learn about water baptism which is when a person gets submerged in water as an outward sign of their repentance and faith in Jesus. We learnt that this is an important act of obedience that Jesus requires all of His followers to make. We also learnt about baptism in the Holy Spirit which is where God pours out His Spirit into our lives. We learnt that we all need the Holy Spirit to live a holy and overcoming life.

In this lesson we will look at love, which is described as the greatest virtue and the basis of the Christian life.

Walking in love

Matthew 22:36-40 (NIV) “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Jesus taught us that the whole law can be summed up in the two commandments to love God with everything and to love our neighbours as we love ourselves.

The first commandment

Jesus taught us that the first commandment is to love God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength.

Is loving God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength 30, 60 or 100 percent?

Is loving God with all 100 percent some of the time or 100 percent all of the time?

When Jesus tells us that the first and greatest command is to love God with everything He is talking about giving our 100 percent best to God 100 percent of the time. This love for God is the greatest thing that we can do and the basis of the Christian life.

A closer look at love

It is important that we have a right understanding of love. When Jesus says that the first and greatest command is to love God with everything He is using the Greek word *agape* which refers to *God's selfless love*.

We must understand that God's love is different to worldly love. When many people talk about love today they are referring to warm feelings or temporary infatuations. When Jesus talks about love He is talking about a selfless love that is expressed through passion, obedience, commitment and sacrifice.

1 John 3:16 (NIV) This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.

Jesus' sacrificial life and death is the perfect definition of love. When Jesus gave His life for us on the cross it was an act of love. Jesus willingly suffered and endured crucifixion by sinful people to pay for our sins because He considered us better than Himself. This is what real love looks like.

Loving God and putting Him first

Luke 14:26-27 (NIV) “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

Jesus teaches us that we must hate our father and mother, wife and children and brothers and sisters if we want to follow Him. Hate is such a strong word. Some people don't even use the word hate because it is so strong and Jesus tells us that we have to hate the people closest to us and even our own lives if we are going to even think about being His disciples!

Matthew 10:37-38 (NIV) “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Matthew 10:37-38 is similar to Luke 14:26. Jesus makes a strong comparison in this passage. He says that our love for Him must be far greater than our love for our parents and our children.

What Jesus is saying in these two passages is that He must be first in our lives. We must love Jesus more than we love ourselves and more than we love anyone else. Jesus is saying that we must put Him first and do His will even when this means that we suffer and other people are offended or upset with us.

Love and obedience

John 14:15-24 (NIV) “If you love me, you will obey what I command... Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

Jesus teaches us that love for Him is expressed through obedience to His commands. When people truly love Jesus then they will obey His commands. Likewise, if people don't love Jesus then they won't keep His commands.

When we truly love Jesus then we will not compromise His word for any reason. While we don't look for suffering and persecution, we would rather be persecuted, suffer and even die than compromise God's commands.

1 John 2:3-6 (NIV) We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

Obedience to Jesus' commands is the evidence that our relationship with God is genuine. Anyone can say that they know God but it is only those who keep His commands that have genuine faith and truly know Him.

The second commandment

Mark 12:28-31 (NIV) One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

Jesus taught us that the second commandment is like the first commandment. He said that the second commandment is to love our neighbour as we love ourselves.

John 15:12 (NIV) My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

We have already learnt that Jesus tells us to express our love for Him through our obedience to His commands. In this passage we see that Jesus says that His commands are all about loving one another.

Galatians 5:14 (NIV) The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

James 2:8 (NIV) If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right.

Paul picks up on Jesus’ teaching in his letter to the Galatians and says that the whole law is fulfilled in the single command to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. James says the same thing in his letter to the church and calls this commandment the royal law.

Loving people no matter how they treat us

Matthew 5:43-48 (NIV) “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Jesus teaches us that we are to love no matter how they treat us. Jesus teaches us that we are to love those who hate us, use us and persecute us. He says that if we only love those people who love us then we are no different to everyone else. He also says that if we love people with a selfless love then we are God’s true sons who show that we have His heart and nature.

When Jesus says that we must love our neighbour as we love ourselves this doesn’t mean that we must put ourselves in harm’s way. If someone is dangerous then it is good to protect ourselves. What Jesus is saying is that we must always forgive, pray, have goodwill and be kind to others irrespective of how they treat us.

Loving our neighbour as we love ourselves

Luke 10:25-28 (NIV) On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” He answered: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

God’s love flows out towards everyone and Jesus’ command to love forces us to cross economic, cultural, religious and other human barriers.

Jesus’ simple command to love our neighbour as we love ourselves is a radical statement. Jesus is saying that we are to show the same concern for other people as we do for ourselves. This command has a massive impact on what we do with our lives and how we spend our energy, time and money. If we are committed to outliving this then we be as focused on other people’s needs as we are on our own and we will treat them in the same way that we would like to be treated.

Staying within these two commandments

Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV) “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Jesus tells us that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. When Jesus is referring to His yoke He is referring to His law. What Jesus is saying here is that His commands and His way of life are not burdensome. The yoke of other people’s expectations and the yoke of false religious teachings are heavy and burdensome but Jesus’ yoke is easy. Jesus’ yoke can be summed up in the two commandments to love God with everything and to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. When we walk within these two commandments then we are keeping our hearts right before God and staying on the path that leads to eternal life.


Staying within Jesus two commands is like driving within your lane. When we are driving a car on the road we are safe as long as we stay on our side of the road. If we cross over the line and start driving on the wrong side of the road then we are heading for a head on collision. As long as we stay within Jesus' two commands then we will stay spiritually safe and enjoy God's love and grace. If however we chose to live outside these commands then we are rebelling against God and are bringing His righteous judgment on ourselves.

BASIC living

putting God first

day one

Luke 14:25-35 (NIV) Large crowds were travelling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’ “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple. “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

 Jesus makes three “If anyone does not do this he cannot be my disciple” statements in this passage. Underline these three statements.

Jesus talks about what it means to be His disciple in this passage.

⇐ Meditate

The word **disciple** is the Greek word **mathetes**. **Mathetes** comes from the word **math** which means learn. A **mathetes** is literally a learner and refers to someone who follows or adheres to someone else’s teachings.

Notice that Jesus is talking to a large crowd in this passage. Some people read passages like this and think that it is just for certain groups of people within the church like leaders. Jesus was talking to people who had been following Him on their terms in this passage and telling them what they needed to do to become true Christians.

Three times Jesus uses the phrase “If anyone does not do this he cannot be my disciple”. These three statements all describe basic requirements for anyone who wants to follow Jesus.

We will look at these three terms in more detail in the next two studies and show how they relate to the first commandment to love God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength.

Term # 1 – We must love Jesus more than anything or anyone else

Luke 14:26 (NIV) “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.

Imagine being in this crowd and hearing Jesus say these words to you. Hate those closest to you. Hate your mum and dad. Hate your wife. Hate your children. Hate you brothers and sisters.

Hate is such a strong word. Some people don’t even use the word hate because it is so strong and here is Jesus telling people that they have to hate the people closest to them and even their own lives if they are going to even think about being His disciples.

At this point you may be wondering what you have got yourself into! You may be thinking, “I thought following Jesus was about love?” And “Doesn’t the Bible say that we must honour our parents and love our wives? How do you hate and honour or hate and love at the same time?”

These are all great questions. Let’s look at a few passages to help us understand what Jesus is saying here.

Following Jesus is the most exciting adventure. It is worth giving our lives to!!!

Jesus is not someone that we can tack onto the side of our lives. We must make a decision to put Jesus first if we are going to follow Him.

← Memorise

It is always important to let the Bible interpret the Bible. We get a fuller picture of the truth when we line passages up against other passages.

Matthew 22:35-40 (NIV) One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Jesus taught that the greatest commandment is to love God with all our hearts, all our souls and all our minds. This is a *radical love*. He then said that the second is like it, to love our neighbour as ourselves. When we love God with everything then our love for each other comes from this.

Matthew 10:37-38 (NIV) “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

 Underline what Jesus says about people who put others before Him

Matthew 10:37-38 is similar to Luke 14:26. Jesus makes a strong comparison in this passage. He says that our love for Him must be far greater than our love for our parents and our children.

Now we can bring this context into Luke 14 to help us understand what Jesus is saying. We see Jesus using this word hate. It’s a strong word, even an offensive word, and we don’t need to soften it. Jesus is saying that we must put Him first and obey Him even when this means offending and hurting other people and even ourselves.

Jesus’ statements 2,000 years ago are very relevant for us today. We live in a generation where people idolise their children, marriage, sex,

↩ Meditate

👉 Personal reflection

Would you use the term *radical love* to describe your relationship with Jesus?

↩ Meditate

Our past achievements or good works never qualify us to be worthy of Jesus. Our *hearts* of love and loyalty towards Jesus make us worthy in His eyes.

relationships, family and friends. Jesus speaks into this and says that if we want to follow Him then we need to put Him first.


Application

⇒ Personal reflection

Following Jesus means putting Him first in our lives—before our parents, children and closest friends, even before ourselves.

Have you put Jesus first in your life?

If you haven't then you can make a decision to put God first right now.

 Personal reflection

It's easy to say that we put Jesus first but it is another thing to do it. Sometimes it can be hard to discern whether Jesus is first in our lives. Our answers to the questions below can help us discern where our hearts are truly at.

What do I get most excited about?

What do I spend the most time pursuing?

What do I do when obeying Jesus means offending or hurting others?

What do I do when obeying Jesus means not getting what I want?

BASIC living

putting God first

day two

Luke 14:25-35 (NIV) Large crowds were travelling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’ “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple. “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Jesus talks about what it means to follow Him in this passage.

In our last study we learnt about how Jesus requires all of His followers to put Him first. We learnt that we are to put Jesus before our parents, children and closest friends and even before our own lives. In this study we will look at the other two things Jesus requires anyone who wants to follow Him to do.

← Review

True love isn't based on our emotions. It is a selfless interest in someone else that is shown through our actions.

Term 2 – We must turn away from a selfish life

Luke 14:27 (NIV) And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

 Underline what Jesus said we must do to become His disciple

If we want to follow Jesus then we must carry our cross.

When Jesus said that we must “carry our cross” He wasn’t referring to us wearing a silver necklace around our necks. He was inviting us to come and die. The only time a person would carry a cross was if they were a convicted criminal condemned to die. A cross beam would be lifted onto the condemned man’s back for him to carry through the town on the way to his death. If you are carrying a cross then you are a dead man walking. This is the picture that Jesus gives to people who want to follow him.

We have to die to become a Christian.

We have to die to our dreams, plans, hopes, desires, opinions and ideas. That’s why Jesus, in the verse before this, said that we have to “hate even our own lives”.

The heart of our problem as people is that we are selfish. Jesus doesn’t pull any punches. He speaks straight into the heart of our problem and says that we must deny ourselves. When He invites us to follow Him He invites us to turn away from a self-centred life.

Term 3 – We must give up everything

Luke 14:33 (NIV) In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

⇐ Meditate


 Extra reading

➤ Matthew 16:24-25

➤ John 12:23-25

➤ 2 Timothy 2:11

⇐ Memorise

 Underline what Jesus said we must do to become His disciple

There really is no good way to soften this statement. Jesus requires us to give up everything we have for Him and His mission.

Some Christians have this idea that there are some people like pastors and overseas missionaries who are called to give up their whole lives while the rest of us have the option of living in excess, comfort and ease if we want. Almost as if there are some people who are called to live for eternal interests while others are called to live for the things of this world. This is totally unbiblical.

Jesus says that if we don't give up everything then we can't follow Him. Jesus is saying that we can't just pray a prayer and tack Him on the side of our lives. He is saying that if we want to follow Him then we need a complete overhaul of our lives. We need to make a choice to fully submit to His lordship and live to please Him not ourselves.

Application

⇒ Personal reflection

Have you responded to Jesus on His terms?

Jesus will accept anyone. He isn't interested in how colourful our past is or how messed up we are. He isn't concerned about how successful, educated or rich we are. Jesus will accept anyone, provide we come to Him on His terms.

Many people respond to Jesus on their terms and then wonder why things don't seem to be working the way Jesus said they would.

BASIC living

all in

day three

Mark 12:28-31 (NIV) One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

⇐ Meditate

The greatest command is to _____ the Lord my God
with _____ my _____ and with _____ my
_____ and with _____ my _____
and with _____ my _____.

⇒ Personal reflection

Is loving God with ALL your heart 30%, 60% or 100% of your heart?




Is loving God with ALL your heart 100% of your heart most of the time or all of the time?

Jesus taught us that the first commandment was to love God with everything and that the second commandment was to love our neighbour. While these two commandments are inseparable in that we express our love for God by loving our neighbour it is important that love God first and then love others.

Loving God with everything is not merely an ideal to aim towards or a good goal. It is a command that God both empowers and requires every believer to do in order to be part of His kingdom.

First love

Revelation 2:4-5 (NIV) Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

-  Underline what Jesus held against these Christians
-  Circle the three things that Jesus tells these Christians to do
-  Underline the warning Jesus gave these Christians

Jesus rebukes these Christians for forsaking their first love.

One of the things that we can learn from this is that we must not let anything get in the way of our relationship with Jesus. We can be busy doing God's work and still forsake our first love. If this happens it is time to remember what it was like when we were spiritually alive, repent and do the things that we did when we first gave our lives to Jesus.

People pleasing and compromise

When people love God first then they will not compromise to fit in and be accepted by people. When they love God first then they will obey God and hold to Jesus' teachings even when others persecute them, reject them and abuse them.

When people love people more than God then they will side with people even when this means offending God. When people love people more than God then they will compromise the truth to please people.

← Meditate

We must not allow our works to blind us from the true condition of our hearts. We can be busy serving God and still lack a loving relationship with Jesus.

 Extra reading

What warning does Jesus give us against compromise in these passages?

- ➔ Matthew 7:21-27
- ➔ Matthew 24:12
- ➔ Matthew 10:28
- ➔ Revelation 3:15-16

We must put Jesus first and keep Him first in our lives if we are going to follow Him.

Staying fresh

When people love God with all their hearts they will be filled with God's love and they will serve people out of the overflow of God's love in their life. These people will find it natural and easy to serve people even when they get nothing back from it because they are living out of Christ's life within them.

One of the reasons that people begin to dry up spiritually is because they stop giving their best to Jesus. When people stop loving God with all their hearts, souls, minds and strength then they will begin to dry up and find it difficult to serve people, especially when they don't get anything in return for their generosity.

Application

⇒ Personal reflection

Do you love Jesus passionately?

Are you hungry to know and please Jesus?

Burn out happens when people try and operate on empty. Our first priority is to stay full.

We are supposed to grow in passion and love not just in knowledge.

BASIC living

love and obedience

day four

John 14:15-24 (NIV) “If you love me, you will obey what I command... Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

 Circle what Jesus (said) we will do if we love Him

 Underline what the person who does not love Jesus will do

Jesus teaches us that love for Him is expressed through obedience to His commands. When people truly love Jesus then they will obey His commands. Likewise, if people don't love Jesus then they won't keep His commands.

When we truly love Jesus then we will not compromise His word for any reason. While we don't look for suffering and persecution, we would rather be persecuted, suffer and even die than compromise God's commands.

1 John 2:3-6 (NIV) We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

⇐ Meditate

 Extra reading

What does Jesus command?

We are to obey all of Jesus' teachings. There are two sets of laws mentioned in the Bible. The **Law of Moses** and the **Law of Christ**. The Law of Moses is all the laws that God gave to Israel through Moses and is part of the Old Covenant that has become old or obsolete. The Law of Christ are Jesus' teachings and these commands are what we are to obey as followers of Jesus today.



We can learn Jesus' commands in the Gospels.

What does Jesus say about His words?

➤ Matt 7:21-29

➤ Matt 28:20

➤ John 12:47-48

-  Underline how we know that we have really come to know God
-  Circle what a person is if they say that they know God but then do not do what God commands

Obedience to Jesus' commands is the evidence that our relationship with God is genuine. Anyone can say that they know God but it is only those who keep His commands that have genuine faith and truly know Him.

Galatians 5:14 (NIV) The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbour as yourself."

All God's commandments are summed up in the single command to love each other as we love ourselves. Selfless love for one another is the biggest indicator that we have been born of God and know Him personally.

↩ Memorise

Loving our neighbour as we love ourselves sums up God's perfect standard. Like the first command, it is not merely an ideal to aim towards or a good goal. It is a command that God both empowers and requires every believer to do in order to be part of His kingdom.

 Extra reading

People often make following Jesus something that it isn't. They get distracted by special days, foods and other Old Testament rituals or human traditions that have nothing to do with following Jesus. Following Jesus is about love.

➔ 1 Corinthians 13:13


What three things remain?


Which is the greatest?

BASIC living

loving our neighbour

Mark 12:28-31 (NIV) One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

 Underline what Jesus said the most important commandment is

 Underline what Jesus said the second most important command is

One of the teachers asked Jesus what the most important commandment in the law is. Jesus told him that the most important was to love God with everything and to love our neighbours as we love ourselves. The teacher asked Jesus for one commandment and Jesus gave him two commandments. One of the things that this tells us is that loving God is inseparable from loving our neighbours.


← Meditate

We can't say that we love God who we can't see if we don't love our neighbour who we can see

Loving our neighbour as we love ourselves

It is important to take the time to consider what it means to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. Loving our neighbour as we love ourselves means more than liking people and having good feelings about people. If we love our neighbour as we love ourselves then we will forgive them, consider them and what they want and share what we have with people even when it means that we go without what we might like.

Matthew 7:12 (NIV) So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

 Underline what Jesus tells us to do in this verse

 Circle what this single statement summarises

Jesus tells us to do to others what you would have them do to you.

When we truly love people then we will treat them how we would want to be treated if our places were swapped. If we truly love them then we will give, share, serve, listen, respect, be patient, honour, etc people.

Application

⇒ Action

Make a wholehearted committed to always live by Matthew 7:12.

⇐ Memorise

Notice that Jesus doesn't tell us to do what is **reasonable** but to do to others **what you would like them to do to you** if your places were reversed

BASIC living

loving our neighbour

day six



Luke 10:25-37 (NIV) On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” He answered: ““Love the Lord your God with






all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the

← Meditate

Priests and Levites were people who worked in the temple. They were like modern day pastors and church leaders.

Samaritans were outsiders. They were people who didn't know God and weren't part of His special people.

law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

-  Underline what Jesus told this man to do to inherit eternal life
-  Circle the three characters in this story
-  Samaritans were outcasts in this time and many Jews looked down on them. Why do you think Jesus chose the Samaritan to be the loving person in this story?
-  Underline what the Samaritan did
-  What do you think Jesus was trying to teach this man and also us in this story?

When the teacher of the law came to Jesus and asked Him what he needed to do to inherit eternal life Jesus told him that he must keep the commandment to love God with everything and love his neighbour as he loves himself. When the man heard this he tried to justify himself by asking Jesus who his neighbour was. Jesus told him a story about a Good Samaritan to teach him that we are to love everyone.

The story of the Good Samaritan shows us what love looks like. It shows us that love looks like selfless kindness. In Jesus' story the priest and the Levite were two spiritual people yet they both walked past a man in need while an outsider showed him kindness. Jesus was trying to teach us that true spirituality isn't about our religious activities but that it is about caring for one another.

Application

 Prayer

Ask God to give you supernatural compassion and then make a choice to respond to the needs that He shows you as you are able to.

 Personal reflection

Who do you relate to most in this story?

 Extra reading

 Amos 5:21-24

What was God rebuking these people for in this passage?

What can we learn from it today?


BASIC living


love is...


day seven

1 Corinthians 13:1-7 (NIV) If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

↩ Meditate

 Underline what a person is like who can speak well but doesn't have love

 Underline what a person is if they can prophecy and has faith that can move mountains but doesn't have love

 Underline what a person gains if they give everything away to the poor but doesn't have love

 Circle the words that describe what love is like

 Extra reading

Compare 1 Corinthians 13:1-7 with Romans 12:9-21.

This passage shows us what love looks like.

When we read this passage it also tells us something about the nature of God because God is love. It tells us that God is patient towards us, kind and generous, that He is not self-centred or self-absorbed, that He is respectful, that He is selfless, that He is slow to anger and that He forgets our sins when we repent. It tells us that God doesn't take sides between people but that He is for everyone and sides with the

 Personal reflection

Do you see God like this?


What stands out to you about this description of God's nature?


truth. It also tells us that God always protects, trusts, hopes and perseveres.

When we read this passage it also tells us what the true Christian life looks like.

Colossians 3:12-14 (NIV) Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

⇐ Meditate

 Circle the things we are to put on or clothe ourselves with as believers

 Underline how we are to forgive and think about what this means

God wants us to walk in compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience and to love one another from our hearts. He also wants us to bear with one another and learn to be merciful just like He is merciful towards us.

Application

↑ Prayer

Ask God to help you walk in His nature and thank Him that He has given you the Holy Spirit to help you do this.

BASIC prayer

Basic prayer

Reviewing basic Christian lifestyle

In the last lesson we learn about the first and greatest command to love God with everything and the second command to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. We learnt that love for God is passionate devotion that involves putting Jesus first and obeying His commands. We learnt that Jesus' commands are to love one another and that the whole law can be fulfilled in the single word to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. We also learn that God's command to love our neighbours is about treating people with love even when we are mistreated and having an equal concern for everybody.

In this lesson we will look at what prayer is and why it is so important.

Prayer

Prayer is not a boring ritual or a dead religious activity. Prayer is an exciting conversation with our amazing living God. Prayer is simply communicating with God. It involves listening and talking to God.

Jesus is our example

Jesus is our example in all things. He showed us the kind of life that we were created to live. When we study Jesus' life in the Gospels we see that Jesus modelled a life of prayer.

Mark 1:35 (NIV) Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

Matthew 14:23 (NIV) After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone...

Luke 6:12 (NIV) One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.

When we look at Jesus' life we see that Jesus prayed without ceasing in the sense that His life was a constant conversation with God and we also see that Jesus regularly turned aside to spend time alone with God in prayer. We see that Jesus spent long periods of time in prayer and that His ministry came directly out of the close relationship that He had developed with God in prayer. We also see that Jesus always made time for prayer, even when He was extremely busy.

Do you follow the example that Jesus has set for you in prayer?

If Jesus prioritised time in prayer, do you think it is important for you?

Our lives are busy and we have to make time for the things that are important to us. If we don't make time to be alone with God and pray then other things will creep in and we will be inconsistent in prayer.

Different aspects of prayer

Listening

Jesus knew who God was, who He was, what His purpose was, what He was supposed to say and do and what was going to happen in the future all because He learned to listen to our Father.

Luke 10:38-42 (NIV) As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Martha was busy running around doing things while Mary was still and sat at Jesus' feet to listen to Him. When Martha asked Jesus to tell her sister to help her Jesus told her that Mary had chosen the most important and better thing. One of the things that we can learn from this story is that our first priority is to be still and listen to Jesus.

God will reveal amazing things to you when you take time to listen to Him. As you build your relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit you will learn to discern God's voice with greater clarity.

Take some time now and listen to what God is saying to you.

Confession

Proverbs 28:13 (NIV) He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

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

Confession helps us stay clean, humble, open and grateful towards God.

God empowers us to live free from sin through the Holy Spirit but He is also merciful to us if we do sin. If we sin God requires us to put things right through confession and repentance.

Thanksgiving

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18 (NIV) Pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Praise or thankfulness is a powerful thing. God and other people do many things for us and if we are not careful we can begin to take these things for granted. When we thank God we are honouring Him and we are taking the focus off ourselves and onto God and other people. We are also cultivating a humble and happy attitude and keeping ourselves free from depression, negativity and complaining.

Worship

Psalms 29:2 (NIV) Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.

The word worship means to adore, be in awe of, bow down, honour, reverence, and surrender.

Worship can involve any action, not just singing. In fact, the first time the word worship is used in the Bible it is used to refer to how Abraham went to sacrifice his son on the altar as an act of sacrificial obedience to what God told him to do. When we worship God we are expressing our heart towards Him for who He is and for what He has done.

God sings over us and He loves it when we express our love for Him through singing. When we read through the Bible and especially the Psalms we see that lifting our voices in praise and worship to God is one of the most repeated commands in the whole Bible.

Requests

Philippians 4:6-8 (NIV) Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

God is our loving Father and He wants to provide for all of our needs. Some people don't like to bother God with their needs but God tells us to come to Him with these needs. God wants us to pray about everything. Nothing is too big or too small for Him. God wants us to come to Him and ask for whatever we need instead of getting worried and stressed out about things.

Warfare

Luke 10:17-19 (NIV) The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.

When we receive Jesus as Lord we receive spiritual authority over Satan. This means that demons must do what we tell them to do when we speak to them in Jesus' name.

When we look at the way that Jesus lived we see that prayer sometimes involves speaking to demons and circumstances. Jesus has given us authority to rule over demons, sickness, curses and circumstances using our words.

Praying successfully

James 5:16-18 (NKJV) The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

Prayer is powerful. Successful prayer is more about our heart and attitude than the words that we use or the length of our prayer time. Prayer that moves God comes out of a life of reverence and a heart of faith.

Step up don't give up

Luke 18:1-8 (NIV) Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'" And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

Perseverance is part of the nature of faith. Faith doesn't give up, it steps up. Faith doesn't shrink back. Faith keeps pressing and pressing and pressing until it gets breakthrough.

God doesn't always answer our prayers in our timeframe. We live in a microwave generation where many people expect everything straight away and get frustrated when they have to wait for things. God answers some things instantly and requires us to persevere for other things. We must be prepared to persevere in prayer until we get the blessing.

Praying together

Matthew 18:19-20 (NIV) “Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”

Jesus taught us that there is special power in agreeing together with other Christians in prayer. When you pray with other Christians as you have the opportunity and at church prayer meetings you are accessing God’s power over your life, church and city in a whole new dimension.

Fasting

Matthew 6:16 (NIV) “When you fast...”

Jesus said when you fast not if you fast. One of the things that this tells us is that fasting is a normal part of the Christian lifestyle.

Fasting is where we deny ourselves food or something else for a period of time to seek God. When we fast we are starving our human desires. As our human desires grow weaker we are better position to overcome temptation and hear what God is saying.

Sometimes when we are trying to tune into a radio station and we haven’t got it quite right the static drowns out the sound of what is broadcasted. Fasting is like cutting out the static noise so that we can hear God more clearly and obey Him with less resistance.

Conclusion

Matthew 6:6 (NIV) But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Prayer and fasting are powerful spiritual activities. Jesus taught us that our secret life with God is the source of our spiritual power in life. He taught us that our Father will openly reward those who breakthrough in private through prayer and fasting.





BASIC prayer

too busy not to pray

day one

Mary and Martha

Luke 10:38-42 (NIV) As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

-  Circle the names of the two sisters in this passage
-  Underline what Martha was doing
-  Underline what Mary was doing
-  Circle how many things Jesus said were needed

Jesus loved Mary and Martha and He visited them with His disciples. When Jesus arrived Martha was busy doing all the preparations but Mary chose to sit at Jesus feet and listen to Him. Martha became frustrated with her sister because she left her to do everything and she complained to Jesus about it. Jesus told Martha off for being so uptight about everything and then explained that Mary had chosen to do the one thing that was important, to sit at His feet and listen to Him.

← Meditate

Prayer is our most exciting invitation. How excited would you be to meet with a very famous person? Jesus invites you to draw near to Him every day in prayer.

Martha is a picture of a Christian who is always busy serving but neglects their personal relationship with Jesus. Mary, on the other hand, is a picture of a Christian who prioritises time alone with Jesus waiting on Him and receiving His word.

No amount of good works can take the place of a personal relationship with Jesus. Jesus saved us because He loves us and wants us to become His friends. Jesus has good works for us but these good works must come out of the overflow of our personal relationship with Jesus.

Sometimes people think that they are too busy to pray but the truth is that we are too busy not to pray. We must learn to make time for Jesus and take time to sit at His feet in prayer.

Application

⇒ Personal reflection

Are you more like Martha or Mary in this story?

⇒ Action

We encourage everyone to make a set time everyday to wait on God in prayer where you can listen to what He has to say to your personally and share your heart, cares and your needs with Him.

Would you like to do this?

Write down the time that works best for you: _____

 Extra reading

What promise does God make to those who wait on Him?

➡ Isaiah 40:28-31

People who are consistent
in the basics stay
spiritually strong

BASIC prayer

teach us to pray

day two

Luke 11:1-4 (NIV) One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.” He said to them, “When you pray, say: ““Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.””

 Underline the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray

 Circle the (first word) in this prayer

 Circle the (first request) in this prayer

Jesus' disciple came to Him and asked Him to teach them how to pray. Jesus answered them by teaching them how to pray. Let's break this prayer down carefully to understand what Jesus was saying.

When Jesus told the disciples to pray “Father, hallowed be your name” He was teaching them how to approach God. Jesus was telling them that God is our Father and that we are to approach Him as sons approach a father. God is not an angry ogre waiting for us to step out of line so that He can bash us with a big stick. God is a loving Father who wants to protect and provide for us. When Jesus said “hallowed be your name” He was reminding us to approach God with a deep sense of reverence and respect. God is our loving Father but He is also the King and Judge of all creation and as such we are to approach Him with the utmost respect.

Jesus taught the disciples to pray for God's kingdom to come. Matthew 6:10 gives us a fuller account of this prayer. Matthew

↩ Meditate

The word hallowed simply means holy, set apart or sacred

 Personal reflection

What do you think the Bible means when it says that God is our Father?

 Extra reading

➔ Romans 11:22

What does this verse tell us about having a balanced view of God?

records Jesus as saying “your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” One of the things that this tells us is that God’s kingdom is about God’s will being done. When we are praying for God’s kingdom to come then we are praying that everything will come under God’s reign and that what He wants will be done.

Jesus taught the disciples to ask for God’s will to be done before they asked for what they needed. God wants us to ask Him for everything we need and He promises to provide for us but He requires us to seek His kingdom first and put His will first in our lives. When we put God first in our lives then everything else comes into place.

Jesus then taught the disciples to ask God to meet their daily needs. God is a loving Father and He wants to meet all our needs. God doesn’t want us to worry about anything but to pray about everything. Nothing is too big or too small for God. We are to bring all our needs to God in prayer.

Jesus doesn’t encourage the disciples to ask for more than they need. Following Jesus is not about getting bigger and better things or living for this world. Following Jesus is about living a life of love for God and for others. Jesus never promises to fulfil all our selfish desires and personal ambitions but He does promise to meet all our needs and to bless us so that we can be a source of blessing in the world.

Jesus taught the disciples to ask God to forgive them even as they forgave others. We can learn two things from this. We can learn that God is merciful and that if we sin we are to bring this to God and ask for His forgiveness so that we can move on without guilt or shame. We can also learn that we must forgive and that if we don’t forgive then God will not forgive us. If we pray but hold onto offences and resentment then we can’t expect God to answer our prayers or show us mercy.

Jesus finished this model prayer by teaching the disciples to ask God not to lead them into temptation. We are to ask God to protect us from the things that will try and drag us back into our old life of sin. We must make a decision to follow Jesus but we can’t live the Christian life on will power alone. We must ask God to help us overcome.

 Extra reading

What promise does Jesus give those who seek His kingdom first?

➔ Matthew 6:33

➔ Luke 9:24

 Extra reading

➔ 1 Timothy 6:6-11

What does Paul say we should be content with?

What does Paul say about the desire to be rich?

We got all this from 4 verses!
We can learn a lot when we take the time to break passages down line by line like this and ask God to show us what it means.

Application

↑ Take some time to pray now using the Lord's prayer as a model to guide you.





BASIC prayer

teach us to pray

In our last study we learned about how Jesus' disciples came to Him to ask them to pray and how He began to teach them. Jesus began by giving them a model prayer and straight afterwards told them this story to help them understand how they were to pray. We will look at this in this study.

Luke 11:5-10 (NIV) Then he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.’ “Then the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man’s boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs. “So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

⇐ Meditate

-  Circle **what** Jesus calls the person in the story
-  Circle **when** the man went to visit his friend
-  Underline what the man said to his friend
-  Circle **why** the man will get up and give his friend what he needs

Jesus told the disciples a story about two friends. In this story one friend has a visitor and doesn't have any food to give this visitor. It's very late. All the shops are closed and everyone he knows is in bed and he has nothing to give this man. So he goes next door to his friend, wakes him up and asks for some food to give to his guest. The guy doesn't want to

wake his household up. He tries to get rid of him but the friend persists. In the end the friend gets up and gives him what he needs. He doesn't do it because of his love for the guy but because of his bold persistence.

Jesus told this story to teach the disciples about the nature of prayer. Jesus was teaching them that this attitude gets results. Jesus was teaching them that they must learn to boldly persevere in prayer and that if they do this then they will break through with God and receive everything that they need.

Jesus went on to say "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened." Jesus was teaching them that God will give them what they need but they must learn to persevere in prayer.

God wants us to **step up**
not to **give up**

Do you know of anyone who
has seen God move because
of their **bold persistence**?

Application

⇒ Personal reflection




Is there anything that you have stopped believing and praying for that God wants you to persevere in?

BASIC prayer

the power of praise

day four

Acts 16:23-26 (NIV) After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose.

-  Circle all the bad things that happened to Paul and Silas in this passage
-  Circle the two things that Paul and Silas did in response to these trials
-  Underline what happened while they were praying and praising God

Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown in prison for telling people about Jesus. Imagine that! Being beaten then thrown into the innermost part of a terrible dungeon with all sorts of criminals, having your feet chained up so that you couldn't even move, then spending hours waiting with no hope of justice.

What would you do in a situation like this? Give thanks, of course! That's what Paul and Silas did. They prayed and sang praises to God!

Notice what happened at the midnight hour. God moved suddenly. He looked down from heaven and made an earthquake. The prison was shaken and everyone was set free.

⇐ Meditate

The word **praise** simply means to give thanks. The command to praise God is one of the most repeated commands in the whole Bible.

 Personal reflection

How do you feel after you have connected with God through praise?

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NKJV) In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you

⇐ Memorise

God wants us to praise Him when we walk through painful and unfair situations. When you pray and thank and praise God during your “midnight hour” God can turn it around. Nothing has the power to lift depression, anxiety and negativity and bring deliverance into a difficult situation like praise!

The Bible tells us to **give thanks** to God in every circumstance. We may not be able to thank God **FOR** the situation but we can thank God **IN** the situation.

Application

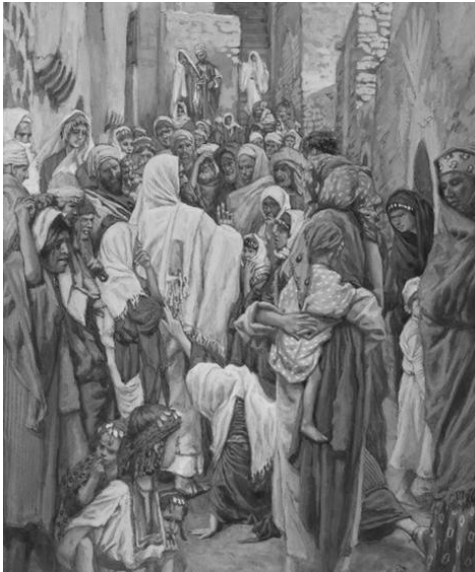
↑ Prayer

Spend some time and thank God for everything that He has done for you lately. After that sing a song to God declaring His praise. (You can make one up if you can't remember one.)

BASIC prayer

praying in faith

day five



Mark 5:24-34 (NIV) So Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she

grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?” “You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, “Who touched me?”” But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

Mark 5 tells us about a woman who had some kind of menstrual problem who had been bleeding for 12 years. Back then when a woman had a

← Meditate

📖 Extra reading

➡ Mark 11:22-24

➡ James 5:15

How do you know praying in faith is powerful?

period she was considered unclean for a minimum of seven days or as long as she had her period. A woman like this who had a constant flow of blood was considered constantly unclean.

This woman hears that Jesus is passing through but the crowds are so big that she has no way of getting to Him. The Bible says that the crowd was so big and so hard out that they were almost crushing Him and were crowding and pressing against Him. This is a big problem for a woman who isn't allowed to touch anyone! She decides to press through secretly while Jesus is walking and touch the hem of his robe because she believed that if she could just touch Jesus she would be healed.

When she got to Jesus she reached out and touched the hem of His robe and immediately she felt power come from him and dry up the flow of blood. This woman who had spent all that she had on doctors and instead of becoming better she had become worse was instantly healed!

As she starts to crawl away Jesus stops and says "Who touched me?" After Jesus insisted the woman came trembling and fell at Jesus' feet. She explained her situation and how she was healed when she touched Him. Jesus said "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."

When we look at this woman we see a picture of what faith looks like in a person's life. It is an encouraging story because if we can imitate her faith then we can access God and if we can access God then we have everything we need.

(1) Faith looks like knowing

Mark 5:28 (NIV) ...she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed."

The first thing we see about this woman is that she knew that if she touched Jesus she would be healed.

It was a big deal for this woman who had been bleeding for 12 years. She was physically restricted from living a normal life. She couldn't do the things that most normal people could do because under the Jewish law she was unclean. She was also socially restricted and considered an outcast of society. She would have been excluded from her family and friends. She was unable to marry and unable to participate in the things that everyone else was doing.

 Personal reflection

Think about what you have been praying for. Would you describe your attitude as **wanting** or **knowing**?

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV) Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see

Faith isn't just hoping something will happen. Faith isn't just wanting something to happen. Faith isn't just praying something will happen. Faith is KNOWING a something will happen.

(2) Faith is aggressive

When we look at this woman we see someone who is willing to push through every barrier. We see someone with an aggressive attitude.

Imagine what would have happened if the woman in Luke 8 had a different kind of attitude. Imagine if she had of felt sorry for herself, blamed God for her problems or said there's nothing I can do about it I might as well not even try! We definitely wouldn't be reading about her now. She didn't have a defeated, passive, self-pity attitude. She had an aggressive attitude. She pushed through every obstacle. She seized her opportunity.

(3) Faith is desperate

This woman was willing to do whatever it took.

Many people want to see God move in their lives but the big question is whether they want to see Him move enough. When people are desperate they will do whatever it takes. We will never see God move unless we are willing to push past inconvenience. We will never see God move unless we are willing to get outside of what is comfortable.

Personal reflection

Would you say that you have an aggressive attitude when it comes to doing and praying for God's will to be done?

Extra reading

Can you see these same three qualities of faith when David defeated Goliath?

➔ 1 Samuel 17

Application

⇒ Personal reflection

Faith is the basis of our relationship with Jesus and the basis of our prayers. We receive from God *because we have faith*.

Make a decision to imitate this woman's faith when you engage with God and pray. Make a decision to be sure and certain in response to what God has said, to have an aggressive attitude and to be desperate for God to move in your life.

↑ Prayer




What is one thing you need from God? Imitate this woman's faith.

BASIC prayer

warfare

day six

Luke 10:17-20 (NIV) The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

-  Underline what the seventy-two disciples said when they returned from their outreach
-  Underline what Jesus said that He had given the disciples
-  Underline what Jesus told them to rejoice about

Warfare is a type of prayer.

As Christians we are involved in a spiritual battle and we need to learn to fight. One of the ways that we fight is through prayer. Jesus has given us authority over the devil and his demons but we must learn to use this authority. We must learn to identify when we are under spiritual attack and how we are to overcome this.

Jesus has given us authority over demonic spirits and if we tell them to do something in Jesus' name then they will submit to us. Let's say we are under attack from a spirit of fear. We know that God wants us to do something but we feel we are coming under a paralyzing fear and we discern that this is a spirit of fear. Once we have discerned this we can begin to pray into it. We can say something like "I command this spirit of fear to leave and I break your power over my life in Jesus' name!"

⇐ Meditate

You can be the strongest person in a fight but you won't win unless you fight back

 Extra reading

We only have authority if we are under authority. We must submit to God before we can rule over the devil.

- Acts 19:13-17
- James 4:7

As soon as we do this the spirit of fear will have to leave and the feelings of fear will lift off our lives.

When we read through the Gospels we see that Jesus came across many demonic spirits. These spirits are still on the earth and they are afflicting many

people today with temptation, sickness and curses. Jesus wants us to use the authority and power that He has given us to set people free from demonic oppression.

Application

↑ Prayer

Ask God to give you the gift of discerning spirits and teach you to rule over demonic spirits.

 Extra reading

➡ Acts 10:38

Why did Jesus come?

What does this tell you about the Christian life?



BASIC prayer

intercession

day seven

Exodus 17:10-13 (NIV) So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

⇐ Meditate

-  Circle the names of the three men that went to the top of the hill
-  Underline what Aaron and Hur did that brought Israel victory over their enemies

We see four main characters in this story. We see Moses, Joshua, Aaron and Hur. Each of these people played an important role and were all necessary for God's people to be victorious over their enemies.

Joshua was the general leading the battle on the field. Moses was the overseer who prayed and interceded for them. Aaron and Hur were the two men who lifted Moses' hands when he got tired so that they could continue to breakthrough.

We see the power of lifting our leaders' hands in this story. Our leaders are human like us and sometimes they grow tired and weary. God doesn't want us to criticise our leaders for their weaknesses but to support them by lifting their hands in prayer and looking after them.

 Extra reading

➔ Acts 9:17-19

Ananias gives us a picture of the power of prayer. Jesus could have healed Saul when He appeared to him on his way to Damascus but He chose to move through Ananias. God wants to partner with us in prayer.

practically. When we come together to do this then God will strengthen them and we will be able to continue to move forward and advance God's kingdom.

1 Timothy 2:1-4 (NIV) I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.



Circle the four things that we are to do for everyone



Circle the two types of people that we are to especially pray for



Underline why we are to do this

The Bible urges us to pray for people, especially those that God has placed in authority over us. We are to pray for our leaders so that we can live quiet and godly lives and so that people will respond to the Good News about Jesus Christ.

Application

↑ Prayer

Take some time now and pray for your pastors and other leaders that God has placed in authority.

⇐ Meditate

Intercession means to intervene through prayer. When we intercede for people we are standing in the gap between them and God and between them and bad things to bring life and peace,

Praying for our leaders blesses them and us. When we pray for our leaders we keep our hearts open towards them and can receive the best from them.

BASIC

bible

Basic bible

Reviewing prayer

In our last lesson we learnt that prayer is an important part of our lives and essential for developing a strong relationship with Jesus Christ. We learnt that prayer is simply listening to and talking to God. We learnt that there are many aspects of prayer including listening, thanksgiving, singing, confessing sin and asking for help. We learnt that we can release spiritual power through our words to rule over demons and circumstances. We also saw that we can shape history through prayer and fasting.

In this lesson we will learn about the importance of the Bible and how to read it for all its worth.

God's word is spiritual food

Matthew 4:4 (NIV) Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

1 Peter 2:2 (NKJV) As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby

God's words are food for our spirit man. Whether we live or die spiritually depends on whether we hear from God and obey Him. It is vital that we are constantly hearing what God is saying to us.

What would happen if you didn't eat for a week?

When believers stop listening to God and obeying what He is saying to them then they grow spiritually weak. They lose their inner strength to resist temptation and live self-controlled and holy lives.

Staying full of God's word

What would happen if you stood on an empty aluminium can?

What would happen if you stood on an aluminium can that was full of fizzy drink?

Why would the empty can get crushed and the full can remain intact?

We can stand on a full can without it crushing because the pressure on the inside is greater than the pressure on the outside. Just like that aluminium can, we are all weak in our humanity. Our strength comes from the power of the One who lives in us. When our lives are full of God's word then we are strong and able to withstand the pressures of the outside world without being crushed. If we stop hearing from God and His word is not in us then we are easily buckled by life's circumstances. We need to hear and obey what God is saying to us to be spiritually strong.

The Bible

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

2 Peter 1:19-21 (NIV) And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy

never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The Bible contains God's very words. The Holy Spirit inspired holy men to write these words down and they were brought together and put into a book by the early church. The Bible is full of God's words so it makes sense that it is one of the main ways that God speaks to us today.

How we got the Bible

The Bible is made up of 66 books written by 40 different people across thousands of years.

After Jesus and the first apostles died, there were a lot of different rumours and opinions going around about who Jesus is and what He said. The early church fathers came together in about 400 AD and discerned which writings were inspired by God and which ones were not. They did this to give God's people a clear standard on what was truth.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls between 1946 and 1956 shows us that the manuscripts that we have today are very reliable copies of the original papyrus scrolls that were written thousands of years ago.

The two testaments

The Bible is organised into two parts called the Old and the New Testament. The word testament is another word for covenant, which refers to an agreement based on mutual promises. There are two main biblical covenants, the Old and New Covenants. The Old Covenant or Law was the agreement that God made with Israel at Mount Sinai through Moses. It consists of the law, promises, punishments and priesthood that God gave the Israelites. The New Covenant is the agreement that God made with Man through His Son Jesus Christ. The New Covenant consists of the law, promises, punishments and priesthood that God gave Man through Jesus Christ. It includes a full revelation of God, the forgiveness of sins and God's laws put in our minds and written in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

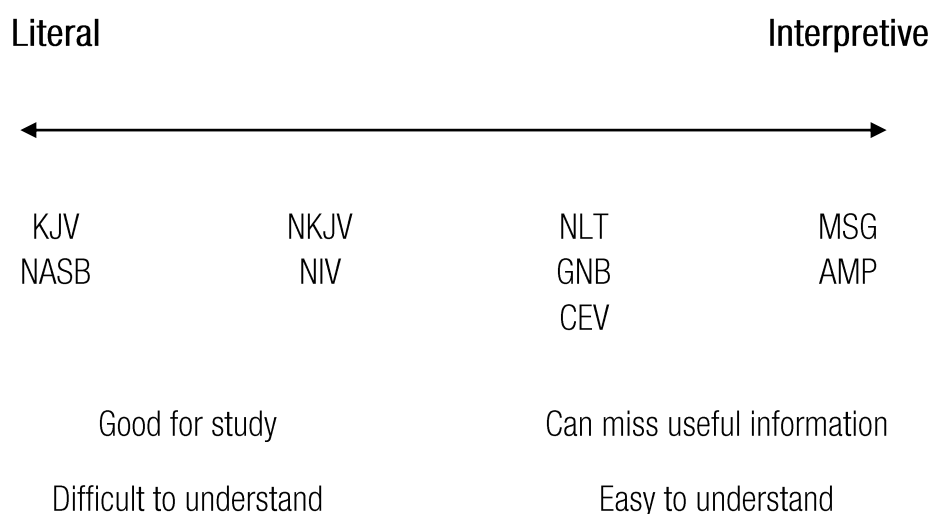
When God made a New Covenant with mankind He made the first one old and obsolete. One of the things that this means is that while all Scripture is inspired by God and useful to help us grow in our faith, there are some things that we read about in the Old Testament like animal sacrifices, temple worship, sacred days and other ceremonial things that God does not ask the church to keep today.

Choosing a version

Many new Christians wonder which version of the Bible they should use. This is understandable. After all, there are over 450 different translations.

There is no simple answer to this question because each version has different benefits. Some translations are more literal. These translations are more word-for-word translations of the original languages. These translations are useful for in-depth study but they can be a bit difficult to understand for people, depending on our reading level.

Other translations are more interpretive. These translations try to capture the meaning of the text and put it in a way that is easy to understand for everyday life. They can be easier to read and useful for people with a lower reading ability but they tend to be more biased and can miss key aspects of the text.



In short, it is best to choose a version that suits your reading level and purpose. This might mean that you need more than one Bible for different purposes. If you have access to a computer and the internet, you can also download great free bible study tools (e.g., e-sword, you version, etc).

Reading the Bible

Reading the Bible can be an intimidating thought for new believers, especially those who didn't do so well at school. The following things will help you to read your Bible for all its worth.

Prepare your heart

Isaiah 44:18 (NKJV) They do not know nor understand; for He has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their hearts, so that they cannot understand...

When it comes to the Bible, we understand with our hearts not with our heads. This means that you don't have to be a rocket scientist to get what God is saying, you just have to have a good heart!

The first and most important thing that we can do to help us get the most out of the Bible is to prepare our hearts by cultivating a hungry and willing attitude.

2 Thessalonians 2:10-11 (NIV) They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie

When it came to the Bible, the Pharisees were the most educated people around and yet they totally missed what God was doing. It isn't our knowledge of the Bible that will keep us free from deception, but our hunger and love for the truth.

If we love the truth then we will be free from deception. However, if we love our own will more than the truth then we will find a way to get what we want, even within the “will of God.”

Meditate on it

Psalms 119:99 (NIV) I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes.

Psalms 1:1-2 (NIV) Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

Joshua 1:8 (NIV) Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

The Hebrew word for meditate used in these passages is *hawgar*, meaning murmur, ponder, imagine, mutter, speak, study, talk, utter.

What would happen if you didn't chew your food before you ate it?

a. You will choke on it

God's Word is food for your spirit man. If you only speed read it and don't “chew over it” in your mind then you will choke on it. If you don't meditate on the word and receive revelation then it will end up killing you and others because you will lack understanding and will tend to make a mess of things.

b. You won't digest it properly

If you don't meditate on the word then you will miss out on the understanding that you need to fully absorb the word and make it part of your life. God has promised that He will personally put His laws in

our minds and write them on our hearts. When we take time to meditate on God's word and hear from Him personally then we receive both the knowledge and the grace to obey.

c. You will miss out on the flavour

If you don't meditate on the word then you will miss out on the spiritual life and power that is released as you meditate on it. If all we are doing is receiving sound teaching from our church then we will dry up spiritually. We must develop a personal relationship with God where we hear from Him personally. When we hear from God personally it brings spiritual life.

God will give you insight and spiritual life as you meditate on the Bible.

Embrace every word

Matthew 4:4 (NIV) Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Jesus said that we live off every word that God's speaks. If we are going to grow strong and become mature then we need to embrace the whole Bible and not just the parts of it we like. We can't just focus on all the parts that talk about how God is loving, forgiving and kind, we also need the parts that talk about how God is holy, stern and just. Likewise, we can't just read and accept God's promises and ignore His warnings. We need the whole Bible to live a holy and victorious life.

Study it

2 Timothy 2:15 NIV Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

It takes a lot of time and effort to develop a biblical perspective. If we want to learn to see things from God's perspective then we need to be committed to studying the Bible ourselves and learning off those who are further down the track than us. God will bring questions up in your heart and if you are serious about your relationship with Him then you will search these questions out in the Bible.

Apply it

Matthew 7:24-27 (NIV) “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

James 1:25 (NIV) But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

If we study the Bible and then don't do it we have missed the whole point! God promises us that we will be blessed as we obey.

Conclusion

God spoke and the universe was created. He said “Let there be light and there was light!” God's words are creative power and they have the power to change our lives. The Bible is full of mind-blowing promises, sobering warnings and amazing wisdom that will transform your life.


BASIC bible

good soil





day one

Mark 4:3-20 (NIV) “Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times.” Then Jesus said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” ...Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? The farmer sows the word. Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop-- thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown.”

← Meditate

 Circle the four different types of soil

 Circle what the seed represented

-  Underline what kind of heart the wayside represented
-  Underline what the stony soil represented
-  Underline what the thorny soil represented
-  Underline what the good soil represented

The first and most important thing that we can do to help us get the most out of the Bible is to prepare our hearts.

In this story, Jesus identified four different types of people with four types of hearts. He described these people like different types of soils.

Soil	Inner life	Outer life
The wayside or path is hard ground	This soil represents an <u>unbeliever</u> with a hard, unwilling heart who is happy living for himself and isn't interested in the truth.	People like this are deceived. They cannot clearly see the truth because Satan steals it from them.
The stony ground is soil that is soft in places but hard and stony in other places.	This soil represents the <u>half-hearted believer</u> who has surrendered some areas of his life to Jesus but who refuses to surrender everything. These people are "almost Christians".	People like this often come to church and show interest in Jesus and His ways. They get excited about the messages that are preached on Sundays. However, they haven't fully surrendered and easily fall away when people give them a hard time or things get tough.

Do you know people who are heard-hearted? These people many not listen to our preaching but they are powerless against our prayers.

Soil	Inner life	Outer life
The thorny ground is fertile soil that has been sown with good and bad seed.	This soil represents the <u>distracted believer</u> who receives the Word of God but is also focused on worldly, temporary things.	The distracted believer comes to church and shows interest in Jesus and His ways. He often even lives a good life but he is more committed to his own entertainment than to God's purposes. He is unfocused and undisciplined and not like Jesus in his attitudes or sacrificial lifestyle.
The good soil is fertile soil that is sown with good seed	This soil represents a <u>faithful and fruitful believer</u> who is willing and lives focused on Jesus and His plan for his life.	Faithful believers give God their best. They are committed to helping build God's church and to extending Christ's reign on earth. Jesus separates these people into three levels based on how successful and productive they are in the kingdom.

Distraction is a major issue for Christians in the West today where there are so many things that compete for our attention.

A Christian is someone who loves God with 100 percent of their heart 100 percent of the time. 30, 60 and 100 fold refer to different levels of fruitfulness.

This parable shows us that the condition of our heart will determine how well we understand and outlive the Word of God.

Application

 Personal reflection

Which type of soil do you identify with and why?

What choices do you need to make to become more productive?

BASIC bible

types and shadows

The Bible uses many symbols. If we don't understand this language or the symbolism involved then we will find it difficult to understand many parts of the Bible.

A symbol is something that is used to stand for or represent something else. For example, God uses a symbol in 1 Corinthians 6:19 when He says that our bodies are "the temple of the Holy Spirit." He is making a symbolic connection between Solomon's Temple, which was the dwelling place of God in the Old Testament, with our bodies, which are the new dwelling place of God. Another example of this kind of symbolic language is from Matthew 5:29 when Jesus speaks of plucking out our eye if it causes us to sin. He is talking symbolically about taking radical action on the things within us that cause us to sin so that we can enter eternal life.

There are many other symbols throughout the Bible. There are symbolic:

- ❖ Objects
- ❖ Creatures
- ❖ Actions
- ❖ Numbers
- ❖ Names
- ❖ Colours
- ❖ Directions
- ❖ Places


The Bible is full of types and shadows. Moses is a type of Jesus Christ, the great prophet and mediator of the New Covenant. Animal sacrifices are a type of Jesus Christ, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Solomon's temple is a type of the church, the new dwelling place of God's presence.

 Extra reading


- ➔ Genesis 1:24-31
- ➔ Revelation 13:16

What does the number 6 represent and how do we know this?

Colossians 2:16-17 (NIV) Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

 Circle the word shadow

 Circle the things that are shadows

 Underline the reality or substance of these shadows

Colossians 2 says that the law with its regulations was set aside when Jesus died on the cross. It goes on to explain that many of the things that were part of that law were shadows of a reality that is found in Christ.

The whole idea of shadows is an important concept to grasp. An object creates a shadow. The object is the reality and the shadow is the form or outline of this object. What the Bible is saying here is that there are many things that were introduced to represent a reality that would be revealed later on in God's plan of salvation. These objects are referred to as shadows because they gave people a picture of something that would be more fully revealed later on.

Application

 Prayer

Ask God to give you insight and understanding of the symbolic parts of the Bible.

 Meditate

 Extra reading

 Hebrews 9

What does Hebrews 9:9 call the things of the levitical priesthood?

How long does Hebrews 9:10 say these things were in effect for?




BASIC bible

God's word is truth

day three

2 Peter 1:19-21 (NIV) And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

⇐ Meditate

-  Underline what the words of the prophets (the Bible) are referred to in the first sentence of this passage
-  Underline what we must understand above all when it comes to the Bible
-  While men wrote the Bible, underline how we know that the Bible never came from man


God's word is **truth**

God used holy men to write the Bible so that we would have a light that shines in a dark world. Even though God used humans to write the Bible, it never came from Man. The Holy Spirit inspired these men and is the author of the scriptures.

The word "God-breathed" is the Greek word theopneustos which comes from the two words theos meaning God and pneo meaning to breath hard. The KJV and NKJV translate this word as "given by inspiration of God"

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


⇐ Memorise

 Circle the things that scripture is useful for

 Underline the word thoroughly

 Circle what the Bible equips us for

Isaiah 8:20 (NKJV) To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.

 Underline what the Bible says about people who speak something contrary to the scriptures

The Bible is the standard of truth. If what we think or what someone else says conflicts with the Bible then it is not truth.

God won't say one thing in the Bible and then tell you another thing by His Holy Spirit. He won't tell you to take something that doesn't belong to you because the written word says "thou shall not steal". He won't tell you that it's okay to sleep around or get drunk because His written word tells us not to do these things. If you feel God is telling you to do something that contradicts His word then you need to recognise it's not the Spirit of God leading you.

Application

↑ Prayer

Ask God to give you insight into the written word so that you can discern his will more accurately.

Thoroughly means completely or fully

One of the ways that we can test whether something is true or not is to line it up with the Bible



BASIC bible

growing up

day four

1 Peter 2:1-3 (NKJV) Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

⇐ Meditate

-  Circle the things that we are to lay aside
-  Circle what we are to desire so that we can grow up

We get born again into God's kingdom as babies and we need the pure spiritual milk of God's word to help us grow. God's word is nourishment for our spirit and it contains the spiritual nutrients that we need to grow strong and healthy.

When a baby is born it is natural for it to crave milk. In the same way when someone is born again it is natural for them to have a hunger for God's word. As we grow we should stay hungry for God's word so that we can continue to grow in wisdom and grace.

One of the signs that someone is physically sick is that they lose their appetite. Likewise one of the signs that someone is spiritually sick is that they lose their appetite for God's word.

2 Timothy 3:14-15 (NIV) But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

⇐ Meditate

-  Underline what the holy scriptures are able to do

Paul writes to his spiritual son Timothy and encourages him to persevere and continue in the things that he has learned. He then reminds him that he has known the scriptures from infancy and that these scriptures are able to make him wise for salvation through faith in Jesus.

The Bible is an amazing book. It contains the very words of God and is able to make us wise for salvation. The Bible tells us all about Jesus and points us to Jesus so that we can have faith in Christ and be saved.

Acts 20:32 (NIV) “Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

← Meditate

 Underline what the word of God’s grace can do

God’s word is powerful. It has divine power to build us up and give us an inheritance amongst those who are saved. It is able to make us strong and fill us with faith, hope, courage and confidence for the future.

Application

↑ Prayer

Ask God to increase your hunger for His word.




BASIC bible

precious promises

day five

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

⇐ Meditate

-  Underline what God's divine power has given us
-  God's power gives us everything we need for _____ and for _____
-  Circle what enables us to participate in God's divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world

The Bible contains the most amazing promises but they won't help us unless we know them.

This is a very encouraging and empowering passage. It tells us that God has already given us everything that we need to live a full, victorious and holy life. It also tells us that God's promises are what enables us to live in this victory. It says that God's very great and precious promises enable us to participate in God's very nature and to escape the corruption that is in the world because of people's selfishness.

One of the reasons that the Bible is so important is because it is full of such amazing promises to help us. God has given us promises to help us get through whatever we are going through in life. The Bible is full of promises to help us if we are struggling with temptation, if we have just sinned and feel guilty, if we are physically sick, if we don't have

enough for the bare essentials of life, if we are worried about the future, etc. God has made so many amazing promises in the Bible that we can take hold of through faith.

1 Corinthians 10:12-13 (NIV) So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.



Underline the two promises in this passage that God gives people who are being tempted

The Bible is full of very great and precious promises. This is just one example of two of God's amazing promises.

Knowing God's promises enables us to stand in our time of need. They give us confidence to come to God and receive everything that we need to help us live a victorious and holy life.

Application

⇒ Action

What is one area that you are struggling with personally?

What promise can you hold onto to help you through this?

⇐ Meditate

Often God gives us **promises** instead of **answers** because He wants us to exercise our faith and grow

Ask your pastor or teacher if you don't know any relevant promises




BASIC bible

the nature of the word

God gives us different pictures to explain what His word is like and to help us understand how important it is to us. We will look at four of these pictures in this study.

Rain and snow

Isaiah 55:8-11 (NIV) “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

-  Circle the two things that God’s word is like
-  Underline why God compares His word to rain and snow
-  Underline what God’s word accomplishes

⇐ Meditate

 Personal reflection

Rain goes into the earth while snow sits on the earth and slowly melts.

Why do you think God uses these two different pictures?

God compares His word to rain and snow. Rain and snow comes down from heaven, nourishes the earth and makes things grow and produces all kinds of fruit and life. In the same way God's word come down from heaven, makes things grow spiritually and produces spiritual growth and life.

Imagine what would happen to the earth if there was no rain or snow. Rain and snow are essential to keep things alive on earth. When it stops raining for a season then we call this a drought. When there is a drought then nothing can grow and things start to die. This is exactly what happens to people who stop hearing from God personally. When people loose connection with God and stop hearing His voice regularly they begin to dry up spiritually, stop growing and begin to die.

A lamp and light

Psalm 119:105 (NIV) Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.



Circle the two things that God's word is described as

God calls His word a lamp and a light because it enables us to see where we are going.

Imagine trying to walk from your house to the supermarket in absolute darkness. Now imagine trying to walk in very dim light. It would be almost impossible walking in complete darkness and very difficult in darkness. When people become distant with God and stop hearing from Him personally then they begin to live in darkness. When this happens people can't see where to go. They loose the ability to discern God's will for their lives. These people loose their way spiritually and start to make choices that lead them and their families into destruction.




God's word is **essential** for our spiritual life

⇐ Memorise

Many people live in spiritual darkness without even realising it.

A mirror

James 1:22-25 (NIV) Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

-  Underline the warning that God gives us in this passage
-  Circle the thing that God's word is like
-  Why do you think God compares His word to a mirror?

God describes His word as a mirror because it shows us our true condition. When we look into God's word it shows us things in our lives that we need to change to look more attractive spiritually. God's word exposes our pride and selfishness so that we can clean ourselves up.

God warns us in this passage not to be hearers who don't do. It is important to take time to listen to Jesus, read the Bible and listen to preaching, but we must remember that the goal of all of this is that we will put what we are learning into action. If we hear the truth but don't apply it then we are like someone who looks in the mirror, sees that they have some gravy on their face and food stuck between their teeth, and then goes off without cleaning themselves up and forgets all about it. God's word is like a mirror in that it shows us what we need to do so we can look our best.

⇐ Meditate

Looking into the mirror can be a shocking experience! It confronts us with reality. If we are wise then we will take in what we see and make the changes that we need to. If we do this it will save us eternal embarrassment.

A sword

Ephesians 6:17 (NIV) Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

 Circle what God's word is called in this passage

God describes the spiritual armour that we are to wear in this passage. Out of all the armour the sword is the only attacking weapon that is listed. One of the things that this tells us is that God's word is what we are to use to attack our enemy.

When the devil attacked Jesus in the wilderness Jesus defeated him by speaking God's word to him. Jesus didn't quote pop psychology, worldly wisdom or His own opinion. Each time Jesus said "It is written..." and the devil submitted to Him. There is tremendous power in God's word when we speak it to the spiritual forces of darkness that try to hinder God's will from being done.


Application

 Personal reflection

How does understanding about what God's word is like change the way you see it?

How will understanding these truths change the way you live?

 Meditate

 Extra reading

You can read about how Jesus used the written word to defeat the devil in Matthew 4:1-14


BASIC bible


understanding

day seven

Matthew 13:14-15 (NIV) In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.”

⇐ Meditate

 Circle what had happened to these people’s hearts to stop them from being able to receive the truth

 Complete the statements:

We see with our _____

We hear with our _____

We understand with our _____


One of the things that we can learn from this passage is that we understand with our hearts.

Worldly wisdom says that we understand with our minds but God teaches us that we understand with our hearts. While it is good to have a sharp mind this will not help us receive God’s word and spiritual truth. We need a good heart to understand spiritual truth.

A good heart is a
willing heart

The natural mind

1 Corinthians 2:11-16 (NKJV) For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For "WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD THAT HE MAY INSTRUCT HIM?" But we have the mind of Christ.

 Underline what the natural man does not receive and why he can't receive these things

 Double underline what the spiritual man does

While study and meditating on God's word is very important, we must understand that we can't understand spiritual truth through our natural man. God's word is a mystery that must be revealed to us by the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes people's education can be a stumbling block to them. When people are educated they can become self-reliant and think that they know how to learn and study. If these people are not careful they will study God's word and learn what it says without receiving from Jesus personally. When people rely on their natural ability to learn God's word they end up having theories about what God thinks, says and does. When people rely on the Holy Spirit to teach them and receive God's word by faith they know the truth of God's word and have strong convictions. These people become spiritually powerful and end up doing great things for God.

↩ Meditate

We must learn to humble ourselves before God and ask Him to reveal His word to us. One of the ways that we can do this is by asking the Holy Spirit to teach us before we read the Bible.

 Extra reading

➔ Proverbs 3:5-6

What are we told not to do here?

Ezra

Ezra 7:10 (NKJV) Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.



Circle the three things that Ezra did

Ezra was a great teacher who helped the Israelites return to God and rebuild their nation. When we study Ezra's life we see that he did three things. The first thing that he did was prepare his heart. The second thing that he did was obey God's commands. The third thing that he did was teach others to obey God's commands.

Ezra gives us a pattern when it comes to God's word. He shows us that the first thing that we need to do when it comes to God's word is prepare our own hearts. As we have already seen in the parable of the sower and in this study, we must get and keep our hearts right if we want to discern God's will. Ezra also shows us that the next thing we need to do is apply God's word in our own lives. It is great to be excited about God's word but we need to remember that we must live God's word in our own lives before we try to teach others. It is only when we consistently outlive God's word in our own lives that we have authority to teach others.

Application

🕯 Prayer

Ask God to reveal His truth to you and give you spiritual discernment so that you can know Him and His will better.

↩ Meditate



Personal reflection

Can you see how this study relates to the first study about the parable of the sower?

BASIC

eternity

Basic eternity

Reviewing the Bible

In the last lesson we learn about the importance of the Bible and how to read it. We learnt that the Bible is an inspired and sacred book that contains God's words. We learnt that we can receive spiritual life and direction through preparing our hearts, meditating on the Bible and applying what God shows us. We also learnt that it takes time and effort to develop a biblical perspective and that we must embrace the whole Bible to grow strong and become mature.

In this lesson we will learn about eternal judgment and the important of developing an eternal perspective.

Life on earth

Ecclesiastes 7:2 (NIV) It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart.

James 4:14 (NIV) Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

God reminds us over and over again that life is both fragile and short and encourages us to take this to heart.

What is 25 divided by infinity?

What is 70 divided by infinity?

It doesn't matter whether you live 25 years or 70 years, it is all ZERO in light of eternity! Where and how you spend your forever will be determined by this zero time that you have on earth. It is therefore extremely important that we learn to live with an eternal perspective where we are more concerned with the things that are eternal rather than the things that will only last a few moments.

Life immediately after death

We don't need to guess what will happen to us after we die. God clearly explains what happens to us when we leave this world in the Bible so that we can face the future without fear.

Your body

Ecclesiastes 12:7 (NIV) ...and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

Your body can't live without your spirit. The moment your spirit man leaves your body it will start to decompose. The Bible calls this place where your body goes after death the grave (the Hebrew word ebooraw and Greek word mnaymion).

Your soul

After death, your soul will go to one of two places—hades or heaven.

Hades

Hades (Hebrew word sheol and Greek word hades) is the temporary home for dead sinners that are waiting for Judgment Day. Sinners are kept in hades to wait for judgment in the same way that criminals are kept in remand. Hades is an actual place of torment and suffering. Jesus referred to this place often and described it most fully in Luke 16.

Luke 16:22-26 (NIV) “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell [hades]¹, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’ “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’

From this account we can see that hades is a real place, that it is a place of torment, that the people who go there are fully conscious and have all their senses and that there is no escape.

Heaven

Heaven (Hebrew shamayim and Greek ouranou) is the temporary resting place of dead saints. Heaven is a paradise of perfect righteousness, peace and joy.

¹ The Greek words hades and gehenna are both translated as hell in many translations but they are different Greek words that refer to different places. Revelation 20:14 says that on Judgment Day death and hades will be thrown into the lake of fire, which tells us that they must be different places.

Judgment Day

John 12:46-50 (NIV) I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. “As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”

Romans 14:10 (NIV) You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat.

Hebrews 9:27 (NIV) Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment...

Revelation 20:11-15 (NIV) Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

On Judgment Day, God will call every person to give an account for what they did with the life that He gave them. While there is no one who has always done what is good, the Bible tells us that some will be shown mercy. It tell us that those that did wrong but then repented and lived a life of faith in and obedience to Jesus Christ will be shown mercy, while those who rejected Christ will be shown no mercy.

1 Corinthians 3:12-15 (NIV) If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will

bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

Jesus will open the book of life on Judgment Day and whoever's name is not found written in the book of life will eternally be rejected to hell. Those who have washed themselves in the blood and made themselves clean will then give an account for their lives and Jesus will then examine what we have done for Him in this world. Jesus will then give us eternal rewards based on the quality of our works. If what people do is done out of a pure heart of love and obedience to God then they will be rewarded but if it is done out of compromise and mixed motives then it will be destroyed although they may be narrowly saved.

Eternity

People will be sentenced to one of two places on Judgment Day—the lake of fire or the new earth.

The lake of fire

The word that Jesus used most often in the Gospels to refer to the lake of fire was the Greek word gehenna. Gehenna was an actual place just east of Jerusalem. It was a deep gorge or pit. It was first mentioned in the Bible in connection with idol worship (2 Chronicles 28:3). Then it became a burial site or crematorium (Jeremiah 7:31). Later it became a place where the garbage of Jerusalem was dumped and burned (according to the writings of Josephus). Gehenna's fires were kept constantly going to burn all of the filth and rubbish. When Jesus talked about Gehenna, He obviously wasn't referring to the physical location outside of Jerusalem. Gehenna is a prophetic shadow of the great garbage dump of the universe. This is obvious by the way that he talks about its eternal fires (e.g., see Mark 9:45).

Sobering facts about the lake of fire

1. It is punishment

The purpose is not correction or discipline but punishment (Matthew 25:46; 1 John 4:18).

2. It is final

The sentence given on Judgment Day is final. There is no probation, no parole, no second chances, no hope. People's fate is determined while they are on earth, once they die that's it (Philippians, 3:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:13; Revelation 22:11).

3. It is everlasting

Ezekiel 8:18 (NIV) Therefore I will deal with them in anger; I will not look on them with pity or spare them. Although they shout in my ears, I will not listen to them."

Eternal death, like eternal life, goes on forever (Matthew 25:46). It is the end in the sense that it is final but it will go on forever. Even though people will cry out to God for mercy He won't show any mercy after Judgment Day.

4. People will burn there forever

Hell is a place of perpetual burning and torment (Jude 1:7; Hebrews 10:26-29; Matthew 13:30; Mark 9:48). Imagine you were cast into a kiln or an oven or an open fireplace. Imagine you knew you were in there for 15 minutes. Imagine after one minute you knew you had another 14 minutes. How unbearable would that be? People in Gehenna will burn 24 hours a day, seven days week, for eternity. They will know that they must suffer it forever and will be utterly powerless to do anything about it.

5. People will be covered in maggots

Jesus said that the “worm” (literally maggot) will not die (Mark 9:44).

6. It will be beyond people’s ability to endure

Jesus said that there will be weeping or wailing and gnashing of teeth there (Matthew 13:42-50; Luke 13:28), indicating that it will be a place of unbearable agony and torment. Some people say that if they go to hell then they will bear it as well as they can, but the fury of God Almighty will be far beyond any human ability to endure (Matthew 21:44; Ezekiel 22:14).

7. It will be eternal separation from God

The reason hell will be so bad is that it will be separation from God. The absence of light is darkness. The absence of heat is cold. The absence of God is hell. God doesn’t need to create hell; it is simply the place where He is not present (2 Thessalonians 1:9, “from” can be translated as “away from”; Matthew 25:41, “Depart from me...”; Matthew 8:12, i.e., “outer darkness”; Jude 1:13).

New heavens and earth

2 Peter 3:12-13 (NIV) ...as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

Revelation 21:1-5 (NIV) Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from

their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

The new earth is the final destination of all those who love Jesus Christ.

An eternal perspective

2 Corinthians 4:18 (NIV) So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

This world and everything in it is passing away but God promises us that those people who do the will of the Father will live forever in a new earth. God is good and He doesn't want anyone to go to hell. He wants all to be saved and He paid the ultimate price so that we could be with Him forever. God has reached out to you and now He is sending you to go and reach out to others.






BASIC eternity

keeping perspective

day one

2 Corinthians 4:18 (NIV) So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

⇐ Memorise

-  What do you think the term “fix our eyes” means in this passage?
-  Underline what we are not to fix our eyes on
-  Circle what we are to fix our eyes on
-  Underline why we are told not to focus on what is seen
-  Circle why we are to focus on what is unseen

What we focus on tends to become more and more important to us

God tells us to focus on what is unseen because what is unseen is eternal.

Many things compete for our attention in this life. We must make a deliberate choice to focus on things that have eternal value if we are going to live a life of eternal significance.

List some things that have temporary significance

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Some examples include:

1. Our physical appearance
2. How much money we have
3. How popular we are

List some things that have eternal significance


1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____


People who are focused on temporary things develop a **worldly spirit**. These people may believe in Jesus but they easily get caught up in the things of this world and become unfruitful.

People who are focused on eternal things live set apart and holy lives. These people think about heaven and hell often and as a result they are motivated to do their part to fulfil the Great Commission. These people don't get distracted by worldly things because they know these things only have temporary value. They endure suffering, hardship and persecution well because they know that these things are temporary. They don't live for this world and they don't value worldly possessions or comforts because they are living for true and lasting eternal treasures and rewards.

Colossians 3:1-2 (NIV) Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

 Circle what are we to set out hearts on

 Circle what we are to set our minds on

 Underline what we are not to set our minds on


God doesn't want us to live focused on our own desires, comforts, possessions, position, popularity, careers, families, appearance, etc. God wants us to live focused on eternal, heavenly things. Focusing on

Some examples include:

1. Our character
2. How much money we have given
3. How hard we have worked for God's kingdom

 Extra reading

 James 4:4-5

 1 John 2:15-17

What do James and John say about having a worldly spirit?

The truth about eternity is one of the most powerful things to help keep us free from a worldly spirit

 Meditate

and valuing eternal things is a key to living a happy, free and fruitful life.

Application

Personal reflection

Would you say you are more focused on temporary, worldly things or eternal things?

Prayer

Ask God to help you stay free from worldly concerns and to help you stay focused on Jesus and His kingdom.

Action

What things do you need to get rid of to be more focused on what God has called you to?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Make a decision to change today.

Extra reading

Hebrews 12:1

This passage compares the Christian life to a race.

What two things does it tell us to get rid of?

Why are we to get rid of these things?

What do you think weight refers to and how might it be different to sin?

BASIC eternity


hades

day two

Luke 16:19-31 (NIV) “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’ “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’ “He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’ “Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’ ““No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ “He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

⇐ Meditate

Some people say that this is a parable but Jesus never uses real people in any of His parables. He uses terms like a Levite, a sower, a younger brother, etc.

 Read the first five sentences again and circle everything we know about the rich man


 Read the first five sentences again and underline everything we know about Lazarus

We can learn several things about the rich man and Lazarus. The most obvious thing about the rich man was that he was rich. He was rich, he dressed in the best clothes and he lived in luxury. Lazarus, on the other hand, was the poorest of the poor. He was a beggar, was covered in sores and was hungry. He was so poor and miserable that the dogs came and licked his sores.

Jesus tells us that the rich man died and went to Hades while Lazarus died and went to heaven.

When we look at this passage we can see that the rich man had no genuine respect for God or love for his neighbour. Lazarus was carried and put outside this rich man's gate every day. If the rich man loved his neighbour then he couldn't have walked past this poor man every day and done nothing. If he loved him as he loved himself then he would have given him something. If he loved him then he would not have kept his money to himself. He would have shared everything that he had with him. He would have sacrificed some things so that they could both share a good quality of life.

The Bible doesn't tell us that the rich man did anything bad other than neglect this poor man who was outside his house. This story is a very relevant story for us in the West today. Most people in the West are very blessed and very rich by global standards. It's easy for us to focus on our own lives and neglect the poor in our city and on our global doorstep. This story is a good wake up call for those who have more than enough for themselves. It reminds us to have genuine love for our neighbours and to put our Christianity into action by caring for the poor.

 Go back to Luke 16 and underline everything you can learn about what Hades is like from this passage

Jesus gives us the fullest description about what Hades is like in this passage. He tells us that Hades is a real place, that the people who go there are fully conscious and have their human memory intact, that there is no escape, relief or hope, that it is a place of unbearable

If we love our neighbour **as ourselves** then we will be committed to equality. If we don't share what we have then it shows that we don't have God's love in us.

 Personal reflection

Would you say that you love others as you love yourself?

Is this reflected in what you do with your money and possessions?

You might not be used to thinking of yourself as rich but if you have food, clean water and any money in your bank account at all then you are rich by global standards.

Hades is a place that is beyond our ability to imagine

suffering and torment and that the people who go there are constantly burning alive in a fire that never goes out.

2 Corinthians 5:11 (NIV) Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others.

When we understand what hades and the lake of fire are like then this motivates us to want to reach out to people. When we understand what hell is like it wakes us up and demands that we live for the great cause of the Gospel. It brings urgency into our lives. When we understand that people are dying without Christ and going to hell it makes us want to stop wasting our time with worldly things that have no value and dedicate our lives to the Gospel. It makes us want to sacrifice so that we can give to resource the church to reach the world. It makes us want to be more than a church attender. It moves us to get involved in serving and doing what we can to reach out to lost people. It stirs us to seek God for how He wants us to be involved in reaching out to people.

Application

⇒ Action

What commitments would you like to make in light of God's love for the world and the reality of eternal punishment?

⇐ Meditate

Thinking about hades and hell often is good for us. It helps us stay focused on the great cause of the Gospel.

BASIC eternity

eternal rewards

day three

2 John 1:8 (NKJV) Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.

⇐ Meditate

 Circle the words full reward




God is a good God and He wants to reward us for the way that we have served Him and His kingdom. God's will is that we receive a full reward for our service.

The words "full reward" in this passage imply that not everyone will receive a full reward for their work. Some people will receive no reward, some people will receive a part reward and others will receive a full reward.

We can't do anything to earn God's forgiveness. Salvation is a free gift that we receive when we believe in Jesus Christ. When the Bible talks about eternal rewards it is referring to how God will reward His servants for what they have done for Him once they have come into His kingdom.

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 (NIV) By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

⇐ Meditate

-  Circle the word that describes how each person should build
-  Underline what will be tested
-  Circle what the builder will receive if their works are tested and approved

The phrase **“the Day will bring it to light”** is a reference to Judgment Day, where every person’s works will be exposed and tested.

Paul uses the picture of a builder and a building in this passage. He describes himself as a wise master builder. Paul tells them that he has laid a foundation and that each person should be careful how they build on this foundation because God will examine and test what they have built. He tells them that God will test the quality of what they have built on Judgment Day.

Everything we do for God will be tested on Judgment Day. If what we do comes out of pure motives of love for and obedience to God then what we have built will survive and we will be richly rewarded for these good works. If, however, what we do is contaminated by the desire to be recognised, selfish ambition, competition, compromise, etc then what we have built will be exposed and destroyed. If we repented and got our hearts right with God before we died then we may be saved but we will have nothing to show for our life and ministry and will not receive any reward for our dead works.

If we want to receive a full reward for our work for Jesus and His kingdom then we need to be careful. We need to be careful to keep a pure heart that isn’t contaminated by mixed motives and to be obedient to His word.

Application

-  Personal reflection

Would you say that you are careful about what you do for God and that what you do for God comes out of pure motives?

 Extra reading

 Malachi 1:6-14

What was God’s response to these people who offered Him second best?

How do you think this relates to 1 Corinthians 3:10-15?

Jesus often said **“many who are first will be last and many who are last will be first”** in the Gospels. When Jesus said this He was referring to how many people who appear to be successful in this life will be last in eternity while others who appeared to be unsuccessful in this life will be first.

↑ Prayer

Ask God to reveal any mixed motives or areas of disobedience in your life so that you can correct these things.


BASIC eternity

the gospel

day four

2 Corinthians 5:11 (NIV) Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others.

← Meditate

 Circle what happens when people know what it is to fear the Lord

Understanding eternal judgment and the fear of the Lord motivates us to reach out to people. We understand that there is coming a day when every person will stand before God and give an account for their lives. While there is no one who has always done the right thing, those people who humbled themselves before Jesus Christ will be declared righteous because of their faith and rewarded for what they have done for Jesus and His kingdom on earth. People who have never heard the Gospel and those who have heard it and rejected the truth will be punished for their sins without mercy. These people will be thrown into the lake of fire with the devil and his demons to suffer unbearable torment for eternity.

If we truly understand the Gospel it will move us to dedicate our whole lives to reach out to others. We simply can't believe the truth of eternal judgment and continue to live for temporary, worldly things. This is what Paul is talking about in 2 Corinthians 11:5, where he says that his understanding of God's judgment moves him to try and persuade others.

 Extra reading

➔ Joel 2:1-2

➔ Joel 2:31

What does Joel call Judgment Day?

Why do you think he refers to it like this?

What would you think of a fireman who heard the fire alarm go off but refused to respond to the call because he was half way through a game on his xbox?


What would you think of a parent who watched their own child fall into an open fire and did nothing to try and save her?

What would you think of someone who saw a blind man walking towards a cliff and did nothing to warn him?

What would you think of someone who found an endless supply of water in a desert and kept it to himself while he watched others die of dehydration?

Christians who know the truth about eternal judgment and don't reach out to others with God's message of love and hope are more selfish than any of the people above. If we truly believe the Gospel then we will go to extreme lengths to reach the lost.

 Extra reading

 Hebrews 11:7

What does it say about the way that Noah worked to build the ark?

Why do you think he did this?

When we understand the judgment that is coming on the world because of disobedience then we will move with fear to build the church and reach out to the lost.

Application

 Personal reflection

How motivated are you to reach out to others with the Gospel?

⇒ Action

The following are some things that you can start to do to reach out to others:

- Pray for God's work regularly
- Give financially to your local church
- Get involved in serving in your church
- Share your testimony with others
- Think about hell and God's love for the lost often

Put a tick next to each box that you want to make a commitment to do.

The Gospel is the greatest
cause that we could give
our lives to






BASIC eternity

eternal hope

day five

Revelation 21:1-5 (NIV) Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

⇐ Meditate

-  Circle the two things that the apostle John saw in his vision
-  Underline the part that talks about the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven as a bride prepared for her husband
-  Underline the part that talks about how God will dwell with us
-  Underline the part that says God will comfort us by wing every tear from our eyes
-  Underline the part where God promises no more death, mourning, crying or pain

 Extra reading

➡ Revelation 21:1-22:5

This passage tells us about what heaven and the new heavens and earth are like.

As believers we have an amazing eternal hope. God promises to purge the heavens and the earth and to create new heavens and a new earth. God is currently tolerating sin because He wants to give people


a chance to repent and be saved but at that time He will act quickly to remove everything from His kingdom that is offensive. God will create a perfect world of righteousness, peace and joy for those who love Him and keep His commands.

2 Peter 3:12-13 (NIV) ...as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

 Circle the words look forward and looking forward

As believers we are looking forward to Judgment Day because God will remove everyone who practices sin and create a new order of things based on righteousness. This hope is like an anchor for our souls that helps us stay focused, set ourselves apart and endure suffering.

1 John 3:2-3 (NIV) Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

 Circle what people who have an eternal hope do

God has given us amazing promises. In this life we are God's beloved children but in the life to come God has something even great for us. God promises to transform us more fully into his image and likeness.

When we understand the indescribable things that God has planned for us it motivates us to set ourselves apart and devote ourselves to Christ. Staying focused on our eternal hope is one of the ways that we can stay motivated to live holy lives.

⇐ Meditate

 Extra reading


➔ Hebrews 6:19

What does this passage liken hope to?

⇐ Meditate

Romans 8:18 (NIV) I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

 Circle the two things that Paul compares in this passage

 Double underline the greatest of these two things

When we understand the glorious hope that we have as believers it brings everything into perspective. Our eternal hope puts out temporary suffering and pain in perspective. It enables us to rejoice in our suffering because we know that these things are working for us an eternal weight of glory.

Application

 Personal reflection

Take some time to re-read Revelation 21:1-22:5 and imagine what heaven and the new heavens and earth are like.

How does it make you feel knowing that God has prepared all this for you?

← Meditate

 Extra reading

➡ Hebrews 10:34

How did these believers respond to people taking their possessions?

Why did they respond like this?




BASIC eternity

judgement day

God will judge the world in righteousness on Judgment Day. In the next two studies we will look at exactly what we will be judged for on Judgment Day.

Jesus

John 3:16-18 (NIV) For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

-  Circle **why** God gave His one and only Son, Jesus Christ
-  Underline what will happen to whoever believes in Jesus Christ
-  Underline what condition people who do not believe in Jesus Christ are in right now

God will judge us based on our response to Jesus Christ on Judgment Day. God loved us and sent Jesus to pay the price for our sins. People who receive Jesus will be accepted on this basis while people who

Many people spend a lot of time and energy planning and preparing for their retirement but little time planning or preparing for eternity. Jesus talked a lot about eternity because He wants us to be fully prepared on Judgment Day.

← Meditate

reject Jesus are guilty of rejecting God and will be rejected for this.

Jesus' words

John 12:44-50 (NIV) Then Jesus cried out, "Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. "If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day. For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."



Circle what Jesus came to do



Underline what Jesus said will judge people on Judgment Day

Jesus told us that the words that He spoke will judge us on the last day. God will examine each of our lives against Jesus' teachings. God will compare what Jesus taught with what we have done. If our lives line up with Jesus' commands then we will be accepted but if our lives don't line up with Jesus' commands then we will be rejected.

Some people think that God will overlook their little sins (e.g., white lies, illegal downloads, driving illegally, grudges, etc). God looks at our hearts. If we are deliberately disobeying God in any area of our lives then it shows that we have not truly submitted ourselves to Jesus as Lord.

Hebrews 10:26-31 (NIV) If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging


Jesus came the first time as a lamb but He is coming back as a lion. He came the first time as saviour but He is coming back as king and judge.

↩ Meditate

Some people think that God will judge the world based on the Ten Commandments but the Bible doesn't say this. It says that God will judge the world based on whether we have accepted or rejected Jesus and His words, which is a might higher standard.

fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

⇐ Meditate

 Underline what will happen to people who receive and know the truth but then deliberately continue to live in sin

If we love Jesus and keep His commands then we can face the future without fear. If we are deliberately disobeying Jesus in any area of our lives then it shows that we have not genuinely submitted to His lordship and that our hearts are not right before God.

Application

 Personal reflection

Is there anything that you need to put right with God?

Take some time now and examine your life as closely as you would if you were preparing for Judgment Day tomorrow. Be completely honest and thorough.

BASIC eternity

judgement day








day seven

Matthew 25:14-30 (NIV) “Again, it [the kingdom of God] will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ “The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ “Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed?

⇐ Meditate

Jesus’ story illustrates the concept of stewardship. God owns everything and He has entrusted things to us as stewards. As stewards we are responsible to manage what He has given us well. We are also accountable for how we use what we have been given.




Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. “So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

-  Circle what the king entrusted to his servants
-  Underline why the king gave some servants more than others
-  Underline what each servant did with what they have been entrusted
-  Circle what the master came back to do
-  Why do you think Jesus said that the king returned “after a long time” in this story?
-  Underline what the master said to those servants who had been busy and multiplied what they had received
-  Underline what the master said to the servant who didn’t use what he was given and instead buried it in the ground

Jesus told this story to illustrate our responsibility as servants and how each of us will be called to give an account for what we have done with what we have been given.


God has given each of us something. Some are given more and others are given less but we are all given something. Jesus will require each of us to give an account for what we have done with what we have been given on Judgment Day. If we have been faithful and wise with our opportunity, resources, influence, etc and multiplied what we have been given then we will be rewarded for our stewardship. If we have used what God has given us for ourselves and wasted His resources then we will be punished as wicked, lazy and worthless servants.


Matthew 25:31-46 (NIV) “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

-  Underline what Jesus will say to the righteous on Judgment Day
-  Double underline what Jesus will say to the wicked on Judgment Day
-  Circle who eternal fire was prepared for

⇐ Meditate

The only difference between the sheep and the goats is what they did and didn't do

 Circle where the righteous will go

 Circle where the wicked will go

On Judgment Day we will be judged for what we did and didn't do. If we genuinely love Jesus then we will love people. We will not keep what we have for ourselves and our families but we will share what we have and look after the poor, broken and needy. Jesus will examine our works on Judgment Day and reward us for everything that we have done for others.

If we reject Jesus and His command to love one another then we will be punished for a selfish, loveless life. If we have neglected the poor, needy and broken then it shows that we don't really know God and that His love does not live in us.

When we read this account we see that eternal fire was prepared for the devil and his angels. God has given us His Son so that everybody can be part of His kingdom and He is long-suffering and patient with us in the hope that every person will repent and be saved.

Application

 Personal reflection

What are some things that God has entrusted to you to steward?

How does this concept of stewardship affect how you see and manage what you have?

Do you think that God will commend you for how you have been managing what He has given you at the moment?

 Prayer

Make a commitment to God to use what He has given you with integrity and wisdom for His purposes.

BASIC money

Basic money

Reviewing eternity

In our last lesson we learnt about the importance of developing an eternal perspective and what happens after we die. We learnt that those who repent and believe in Jesus will inherit the new earth that God is creating for those who love Him. We also learnt that those people who disobey the Gospel will be eternally rejected into a place of suffering. We learnt that hell is a real place of unbearable and eternal torment and that God wants us to do everything that we can to reach out to lost people who are living in sin.

In this lesson we will look at what the Bible teaches us about wealth and material possessions so that we can manage these things in a way that pleases God.

Wealth and material possessions

Sometimes people think that God doesn't really care about something as worldly as money. The truth is that God absolutely cares what we do with our money. Jesus talked a lot about money. About 15% of His recorded teachings are on money, which is more than both heaven and hell put together.

In this lesson we will learn about what God says about wealth and material possessions and how He wants us to manage what we have.

Money is important because it's one of the biggest gods in the world today

Matthew 6:24 (NIV) “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

Jesus said that we can't serve two masters.

Jesus statement here is a simple fact. Someone or something has to be first in our lives and their can't be two firsts. We can't obey two different voices at the same time.

What's interesting about this statement is that Jesus said “You can't serve God and money.” Jesus could have chosen any number of things. He could have said “You can't serve God and Man” or “God and fear” or “God and lust” but He didn't. He said “You can't serve God and money” because He recognised that money is one of the main gods in people's lives.

Money is without a doubt one of the biggest gods in our nation. Just think about how many decisions people make based on money, how many marriages split up over money, how many arguments there are over money, all the crime that happens over money, all the lies people tell to get more money, etc. Money or, more accurately, the spirit behind money, is unquestionably a great force in the world today and something we need to overcome if Jesus is truly going to be the lord of our lives.

Some churches don't want to talk about money because they don't want it to be an issue for people. If we take this approach we are leaving one of the biggest giants in our world unchallenged. In fact, we have already lost because we are letting the spirit behind money tell us what we can and can't talk about. We need to deal with this issue head on like every other issue.

When Goliath challenged Israel in 1 Samuel 17:8-9 he said “Choose a man and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us.” It is the same with the giants we face today. If we master them then they will be subject to us but if they master us then we will serve them. We either master money or money will master us.

Money is important because it is one of the biggest gods in our nation.

Stewardship

Matthew 25:14-30 (NIV) “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them...””

Jesus told this parable to illustrate the principle of **stewardship** and emphasise our responsibility to manage what we have been given honestly and skilfully.

The Bible is clear that God owns everything. When we acknowledge that God owns everything, then we understand that what we have is not really ours. It belongs to the Lord.

The word “steward” simply means “kaitiaki,” “trustee” or “manager.” As stewards we are required to be faithful and wise in caring for property and money that belongs to another person. It is not acceptable for a manager to be wasteful or to use property and money for a purpose other than those which the original owner intended.

God has not given up His **ownership**. He has entrusted the **management** of His assets into our care.

How does this understanding of stewardship affect the way that you see your money and possessions?

What else are we responsible to steward?

As stewards our first response should be to find out what Jesus wants us to do with our money and material possessions.

Investing into eternal things

Matthew 6:19-21 (NIV) “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Jesus teaches us to live for eternity and not to store up treasures here on earth.

Imagine that you got a job for the New Zealand embassy working in Australia for 3 months. You were paid \$10,000 a week but because you were working for the New Zealand government part of the deal was that you could only keep what you deposited into your NZ bank account. You couldn't bring anything back with you when the 3 months were finished.

What would you do?

If you were wise then you would live as cheaply as possible and put as much as you could into your NZ bank account.

This is exactly what Jesus is saying here. Jesus is telling us that whatever we put into this life will be destroyed when this life is over. He is telling us that we must not store up our possessions here on earth because this life is temporary but that we must store it up in heaven.

When we look at many Christians today it seems that they are living for this world and building their lives as if this world was permanent. I believe that the failure to see life from an eternal perspective is one of the biggest reasons for the misuse of money and possessions by the church today.

Loving our neighbours as we love ourselves

Luke 12:33 (NIV) Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

Jesus teaches us to sell our possessions and give to the poor. Jesus' teaching on money and material possessions is difficult for many people to accept today, especially for the rich who are used to living in excess and luxury.

We need to understand Jesus' heart behind this command to sell our possessions and give to the poor. If we don't understand God's heart behind this instruction then we will tend to either dismiss it as something that applied only to those disciples back then or to a select group of people who are called to live like this today or we will reduce it to a legalistic rule.

1 John 3:16-18 (NIV) This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

1 John 3:16-18 explains what Jesus was talking about in Luke 12:33 and gives us insight into God's heart behind this command to sell our possessions and give to the poor.

Jesus taught us that the first and greatest commandment was to love God with everything and that the second commandment was to love our neighbour as ourselves. Jesus taught us that everything that has to do with the way we should live is based on these two commandments. John picks up on this and says that if we really love our neighbour as we love ourselves then we will be as concerned for them as we are for ourselves. He explains that if we have this kind of selfless love in our hearts then we will not live in excess and luxury while our neighbours are struggling with the basics of life. We will freely and generously give and share what we have.

1 John 3:16-16 challenges our materialistic culture. It also blows a hole in the "prosperity Gospel" that teaches us that God wants us to have bigger and better things so that we can live in greater comfort and excess while people are dying and going to hell and dying of starvation.

If we are buying things that we don't need when there are people who have never heard the Gospel, people are going without the basics of life, women and children are being sold into sexual slavery, little children are being abandoned by their parents, people are going in and out of prison, etc then can we honestly say that we love our neighbours as we love ourselves?

Acts 2:44-47 (NIV) All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 4:34-35 (NIV) There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

When we read about the early church in Acts we see that they took Jesus' command to sell their possessions and give to the poor literally. We see that they gave the money to the church leaders to care for the poor and needy among them. They shared everything that they had and no one claimed that anything was their own.

When we look at the early Christians we see that it is radically different to the way that many Christians live today. Today many Christians are accumulating more and more possessions and living in comfort and luxury. Today many Western Christians are moving in the exact opposite direction to the early church!

Church finances

One of the questions that often comes up for people when we talk about money is how much we should give to the church.

The short answer is that we should it is a personal decision how much we decide to give to church and we should give what we want to give. Under the Law God told the people to set aside the first ten percent and bring this to the temple. The Bible refers to this ten percent as the tithe and established tithing to provide for the Levites who He had called to leave regular work to serve the people in spiritual things, to provide for the poor and to provide for the strangers. When we look at the New Testament we see that Jesus and the apostles taught the importance of giving to the church to provide for our spiritual leaders, the poor and the lost but we don't see them teaching a minimum, set amount for us to give. If we genuinely love God, love the church, love the lost and are passionate about the mission then we will want to give what we can as worship and to help others. We will want to give way more than ten percent of our income.

We all have something to give and we encourage everyone to start giving a set amount to the church that they belong to.

Jesus watches what we do with our money

Mark 12:41 (NIV) Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury.

Mark tells us that Jesus sat down by the offering container and watched what people gave. Jesus does the same thing today. He watches what we do with our money and what we give. In fact, when we read the Gospels we see that Jesus watches what we do with money to see whether He can trust us with the true riches of His kingdom (see Luke 16:10-12).

Giving is central to our worship

Genesis 22:5-6 (NIV) He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.” Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife.

Genesis 22:5 is the first time the word “worship” (Hebrew “shawkwah”) is used in the Bible. When Abraham said that he was going to worship God he wasn’t referring to singing a slow song or praying. When Abraham said that he was going to worship he was referring to an offering. He was talking about how he was going to give God the thing that was most dear to him.

We have to understand that giving our money is central to our worship. Singing, dancing and praying are all important aspects of our worship but so is giving our money. When we take up an offering during the service it is not an interruption to our worship it is an important aspect of our worship. We are doing something way more powerful than paying the church’s bills—we are worshiping the King of kings and the Lord of lords with something that has more weight than our words.

BASIC money

avoiding extremes


day one

It is important that we have a complete and well-balanced understanding on money. If we don't have a complete understanding on money and possessions then we can fall into one of two extremes. We can fall into what you might call the poverty Gospel or the prosperity Gospel. We will look at these two extremes and at the truth in this kingdom.

Poverty Gospel

2 Corinthians 9:8-11 (NIV) And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

 Underline what God is able to do


 Circle the part that says God wants us to have enough money to abound in every good work

 Underline what God will do to the sower's seed

← Meditate

This passage is about money and giving to the church. When we look at the context it refers to giving as sowing and money as seed.

 Circle in what ways we will be made rich

 Underline why we will be made rich

Some people think that it is holy or spiritual to be poor. This idea is completely unscriptural. God is good and He wants to bless us. God wants to bless us and to make us a source of blessing in the world.

How can we feed the hungry if we don't have any money?

How can we clothe the naked if we don't have any money?


How can we help send people to go and preach the Gospel if we don't have any money?

If we are content with enough for ourselves and our families then it shows that we are selfish and unloving. God doesn't want us just to think about ourselves and our families. He wants us to catch His heart for the poor, broken and lost and work hard so that we have something to give.

The Poverty Gospel is not the Good News at all. It emphasises sacrifice, self-denial and simplicity but it undermines God's goodness, kindness, grace and love.

Prosperity Gospel

Luke 12:33 (NIV) Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

 Underline what Jesus told His disciples to do

It is not more spiritual to be poor. God wants us to have more than enough or ourselves so that we can fund His work.

 Extra reading

➡ Deuteronomy 28

Is poverty described as a blessing or a curse?

↩ Meditate

Why do you think Jesus told them to do this?

Some people think that it is spiritual or holy to be wealthy. This idea is also completely unscriptural. God is a loving Father who wants to provide for all of our needs but He doesn't want us to live a excessive, selfish life while other people are struggling, oppressed, dying before their time and going to hell. God wants us to use what He has given us responsibly to reach out to a broken world with His love and hope.

1 John 3:16-18 (NIV) This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

 Underline what true love looks like

 Underline what we ought to do as believers

If God's love lives in us then we won't live in luxury and excess while others are suffering. If God's love lives in us then we will deny ourselves to give whatever we can to help others less fortunate as ourselves. We won't get caught up in temporary, worldly comforts and entertainment. We will share what we have so that there is equality.

The Prosperity Gospel is not the Gospel. It emphasises God's goodness and desire to bless us but undermines our responsibility to love others as we love ourselves, stewardship, sacrifice and self-denial.

It is not spiritual or holy to be poor and it is not holy to be wealthy. True spirituality is about love and using all we have to help others.

⇐ Meditate

A half-truth can be more dangerous than an outright lie

Gospel truth

The truth is that God wants to give us money and possessions but He doesn't want us to keep everything for ourselves. He wants us to use what He gives us for His kingdom. If we truly love God then we won't live in excess and self-indulgence while others are suffering and living without hope. If we truly love God and love our neighbours as we love ourselves then we will sacrifice, deny ourselves and live simply so that we can help others.

Application

⇒ Action

What do you have that you can give to help others who are struggling in your community or overseas?

It is one thing to learn about giving and talk about it as if it was a theory but another to go and do it. What are you going to do to put these truths into practice?

God wants our lives to be a constant flow of blessing where we are constantly giving and receiving.

BASIC money

hard for rich people

day two

Matthew 19:16-26 (NIV) Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?” “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments.” “Which ones?” he inquired. Jesus replied, “‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,’ and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’” “All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?” Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

⇐ Meditate

👉 Personal reflection

Jesus told this man that if he sold his possession and gave the money to the poor that he would be perfect.

Do you think it is possible to be perfect?

Why / why not?

In what sense is it possible?

📖 Underline what Jesus told this rich young man to do to become perfect

📖 Why do you think Jesus said this?

📖 Circle the kind of people that Jesus said find it (hard) to enter God's kingdom

Why do you think it is hard for rich people to be saved?

Luke 14:33 (NIV) In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

Jesus requires us to give up everything to follow Him. It doesn't matter whether we have \$5 or \$5 million dollars. Jesus requires us to dedicate everything to Him and to His kingdom if we are going to be His disciple. When people have nothing this is relatively easy to do but when people have a lot of money and possessions they find this difficult because they feel like they are giving up so much more.

Application

⇒ Action

Ask God what He wants you to give and then go and do what He tells you.



Personal reflection

Does Jesus talk about money and possessions as a blessing or a barrier in Matthew 19:16-26?

Do you normally think about money and possessions as a blessing or a barrier?



Memorise

BASIC money

tithing

day three

The word *tithe* literally means *ten percent*.

The Old Testament practice of tithing refers to people bringing ten percent of their increase to God's house. People were to take their income or the increase of their flocks and gardens and take one tenth of this and give this to the priests. The priests would then use this tithe to support themselves and their families and to look after the strangers and the poor.

God introduced tithing for three main purposes. It was to support the priests who served the people in spiritual things, to look after the strangers and to care for the poor among them.

Tithe means ten percent

Tithing and the New Covenant

Understanding what the Old and New Covenants are and how they work is very important. If we don't understand the nature of covenant and how the two main biblical covenants work then we will find it difficult to discern which commands God wants us to keep today and which ones have become old or obsolete.

Very simply, the Old Covenant is the agreement that God made with Israel through Moses at Mt Sinai. The Old Covenant consists of the laws, promises, punishments and priesthood that God gave Israel through Moses. The New Covenant is the agreement that God makes with believers through His Son Jesus Christ. The New Covenant consists of the laws, promises, punishments and priesthood that God gave Man through Jesus.

The word **covenant** and **testament** are translations of the same Hebrew and Greek words and mean the same thing. A covenant or testament is *an agreement between two or more parties that is based on mutual promises*.

Contact us at legacycentre@yahoo.co.nz to order a free study on the covenants.

When God established the New Covenant He made the first covenant old and set it aside. This means that the entire set of laws, promises, punishment and priesthood that God gave to Israel through Moses has become obsolete. If we want to know which commands God wants us to keep today we only need to look at what Jesus and the apostles taught. When we look at what Jesus and the apostles taught we see that they affirmed some things, ignored some things and changed others things under the New Covenant.

Jesus and the apostles never taught people that they should tithe under the New Covenant, which means it is not something that God requires people to do today.

Old Testament teachings on tithing still have relevance for us today

While Jesus and the apostles never affirmed tithing under the New Covenant they affirmed the principles behind tithing. When Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything that he had God was showing us the principle of giving financially to those who give to us spiritually, a truth that we see throughout the New Testament scriptures. When God told the Israelites to set apart the first tenth God was showing us the principle of first fruits, of putting God first in our finances and giving our first and our best to God and His work. When God told the Israelites to bring their tithe to the storehouse to provide for the Levites, the stranger and the poor He was showing us the importance of giving to the church so that the church can support their pastors and other staff, reach the lost and care for the poor. It is important to note that while Jesus and the apostles never affirmed a set amount that we are to give to the church, they did affirm the importance of taking financial responsibility for God's work and giving to the church.

Hebrews 8:13a (NIV) By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete

Obsolete means outdated, superseded or not used any more

BASIC money

giving to the church

day four




There are many reasons why we should give to the church. We will look at one reason in this study and two others in the next study.

Supporting church workers

1 Corinthians 9:7-14 (NIV) Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the Gospel of Christ. Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the Gospel should receive their living from the Gospel.

Jesus loves the church and wants us to share this love for and commitment to the church


⇐ Meditate

-  Circle what those who have sown spiritual seed among us should receive from us
-  Underline the words right of support
-  Underline what the Lord has commanded regarding preachers

Our first reason to give to the church is to support those people that God has called out of regular employment to serve us in spiritual things (i.e., pastors and paid church staff). While we are all priests under the New Covenant, God has called certain people to leave regular employment to serve the church in spiritual things and He has ordained that these people should receive their living from the church.

Paul teaches the church about their responsibility to provide for their leaders financially in this passage. Paul refers to the Law to show them how it is right for the church to provide for those God has called out of regular employment to serve them in spiritual things. Paul teaches them that if their leaders serve them in spiritual things then they should serve their leaders in natural things. He teaches them that just as the Levites were provided for from the temple so too our spiritual leaders should be provided for through the church and that our spiritual leaders' work is the church and therefore it is right for them to be paid from the church.

1 Timothy 5:17-18 (NIV) The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages."

-  Circle what the elders who lead the church well are worthy of

Paul uses the Law again in this passage to teach the church that it is right for us to provide for those who serve us in spiritual things and watch over our souls. Paul says that the elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of "double honour." This word "honour" used in this passage is the word *timē*, which refers to value, a price paid or esteem and honour. When we look at the context of this verse we see that it is an obvious reference to wages.

← Meditate

Paul teaches us that we honour our leaders when we give financially to the church to provide for their needs and likewise it is true that we dishonour God and our leaders if we withhold our giving from the church.

When we connect giving to the church to provide for our spiritual leaders with honour it brings us into a powerful spiritual reality. Honour unlocks God's favour and blessing over our lives and enables us to receive. When we honour someone we place weight on them. When we honour our pastors we place weight on them and their words, which enables God's word that comes through their ministry to have an effect in our lives.

One of the ways that we can keep our hearts open to receive from those God has sent to us is by sowing into their ministry financially.

Application

⇒ Action

What can you give to your church?

Set aside an amount that you want to start giving to your church and be consistent in your giving. As you give you will begin to see God move in your life and church in a whole new way.

If the devil can stop the church from giving financially to their pastors then he will hinder its pastors from being effective and stop the people from receiving from their ministry.

 Extra reading

 2 Chronicles 21

What happened when the people brought their tithes into the house so that the priests were released to serve in their calling?

BASIC money

giving to the church

day five

There are many reasons why we should give to the church. In the last study we looked at how we should give to support those God has called to leave regular employment and serve us in spiritual things. In this study we will look at how we should give to the church so that the church can reach the lost and care for the poor.

Reaching the lost

Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV) Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

 Underline what Jesus commissioned the church to do

Our purpose as the church is to make disciples of every nation. The second reason to give to the church is to reach the lost.

God’s strategy for discipleship is to plant local churches that make strong disciples. When the Holy Spirit sent Paul and Barnabas out He sent them out to preach the Gospel, make disciples and build strong local churches. God’s strategy to disciple the nations involves being

← Meditate

 Extra reading

➡ 2 Peter 3:9

God is broken-hearted over the many people who are heading towards eternal suffering in hell. God wants us to do whatever we can to save as many as we can.

sent from the local church to preach the Gospel and to establish churches.

We need to build strong financially if we are going to take the Great Commission seriously. We can't over-spiritualise everything. We need to break through spiritually through prayer and fasting but we also need to break through financially through applying God's word to our lives and giving.

We must understand that there is a battle going on for finances. The devil wants to keep the church poor and to rob us from the resources that we need to fulfil the Great Commission. We need to understand this fight and how finances work in God's kingdom so that we can help lead a financial release.

Caring for the poor

Luke 12:33 (NIV) Sell your possessions and give to the poor...

Jesus teaches us to sell our possessions and give to the poor. Jesus' teaching on money and material possessions is difficult for many people to accept today, especially for the rich who are used to living in excess and luxury.

We need to understand Jesus' heart behind this command to sell our possessions and give to the poor. If we don't understand God's heart behind this instruction then we will tend to either dismiss it as something that applied only to those disciples back then or to a select group of people who are called to live like this today or we will reduce it to a rigid and legalistic rule.

1 John 3:16-18 (NIV) This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material

When we understand the Great Commission then we will give everything we have to reach out to the lost

⇐ Meditate

We must not reduce Jesus command to a rigid and legalistic rule. Wealth and material possessions are not bad and having them is not wrong. What is wrong is to lack true love and live a selfish life while others around us are suffering.

possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

1 John 3:16-18 explains what Jesus was talking about in Luke 12:33 and gives us insight into God's heart behind this command to sell our possessions and give to the poor.

Jesus taught us that the first and greatest commandment was to love God with everything and that the second commandment was to love our neighbour as ourselves. Jesus taught us that everything that has to do with the way we should live is based on these two commandments. John picks up on this and says that if we really love our neighbour as we love ourselves then we will be as concerned for them as we are for ourselves. He explains that if we have this kind of selfless love in us then we will not live in excess and luxury while our neighbours are struggling with the basics of life. We will give and share what we have.

Application

⇒ Action

What can you give to your church?

Set aside an amount that you want to start giving to your church and be consistent in your giving. As you give you are partnering with others God has called to be part of your church to reach the lost and care for the poor.

⇐ Meditate

 Extra reading

 Acts 4:36-37

The early Christians laid the money at the apostle's feet for them to distribute. Church leaders are called to direct the affairs of the church and part of this involves managing the church finances and making decisions about where the money should go.

BASIC money

sowing and reaping

day six

2 Corinthians 9:6 (NIV) Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

← Meditate

 Circle the words sows and reap

 Underline what will happen to the person who sows sparingly

 Underline what will happen to the person who sows generously

Paul refers to money as **seed** in this passage.

Paul talks about the law of sowing and reaping in this passage.

Paul is talking to the Corinthian church about giving to the church so that it can help look after another church that is struggling in this passage. He wants to encourage them to be generous and so he reminds them about this law of sowing and reaping. Pauls reminds the that they can't outgive God and tells them that if they sow sparingly then they will reap sparingly and if they sow generously then they will reap generously.

 Extra reading

➡ 1 Chronicles 4:10

Why did Jabez ask God to bless him?

It's not necessarily selfish to want God to bless and enlarge us. It all depends on what we do with this blessing.

What would you think of a farmer who didn't sow any seed but expected a great harvest?

What would you think of a farmer who sowed but didn't expect a harvest?

When we give we are sowing into the vision of the church, which is to extend God's kingdom on the earth. When a farmer sows seed he is not sowing into what is but into what will be. He is planting seed because he expects a harvest. When we sow we are giving because

we want to resource the church to bring in a harvest. We are sowing in faith and hope.

Sowing and reaping is an important financial principle. When we give we should give in the hope that God will bless us and enlarge us to be able to be a greater blessing.

Luke 6:38 (NIV) Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

 Circle what Jesus tells us to do

 Underline why Jesus tells us to do this

We determine the amount that we will receive in life by what we choose to give. If we give a little then we will receive a little but if we give a lot then we will receive a lot.

Application

⇒ Action

Make a decision what you would like to give to God's work. We encourage you to give a set amount consistently rather than a one off so that you give as much as you can and so that giving becomes part of your lifestyle.

← Meditate

 Extra reading

➡ Mark 12:41-44

The story of the widow's mite tells us that the size of our giving is measured by the size of the sacrifice.

BASIC money

materialism

day seven


Acts 2:44-47 (NIV) All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

⇐ Meditate

These two passages are summaries of how the early church lived.

Acts 4:34-35 (NIV) There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

⇐ Meditate

 Underline the parts of this passage that talk about what the early church did with their money and possessions

When we read about the early church in Acts we see that they took Jesus' command to sell their possessions and give to the poor literally. These Christians gave the money to the church leaders to care for the poor and needy among them. They shared everything that they had and no one claimed that anything was their own.

When we look at the early Christians we see that it is radically different to the way that many Christians live today. Today many Christians are accumulating more and more possessions and living in comfort and

In many ways the Book of Acts gives us a model of what a Spirit-filled church looks like. One of the defining characteristics is the way people shared everything and looked after one another practically.

luxury. Today many Western Christians are moving in the exact opposite direction to the early church!

If we are buying things that we don't need when there are people who have never heard the Gospel, people are going without the basics of life, women and children are being sold into sexual slavery and little children are being abandoned by their parents then we can't honestly say that we love God or our neighbours as we love ourselves.

We can't ignore the needs of people suffering around the world through poverty, human slavery, sex trafficking and injustice and call ourselves Christians. If we love God and we love people then we will do what we can to help others.

Application



Personal reflection

What stands out to you about these first Christians?

Compare your life to the Christians in the Bible?

Does anything need to change?

We live in a very materialistic world. We are constantly bombarded with advertising telling us that we need bigger and better things to be happy. People are rated by what they have and can afford. If we are not careful this kind of thinking can creep into our Christianity and shape the way we think in subtle ways.

BASIC church

Basic church

Reviewing money

In our last lesson we learnt about God's perspective on wealth and material possessions. We learnt that God has not given up His ownership but has entrusted His possessions to us to steward or manage and that on Judgment Day we will give an account for what we have done with what we have been given. We learnt that God wants us to manage what we have responsibly and wisely for His purposes. We learnt that God does not want us to store up treasures for ourselves here on earth but to store up treasures in heaven by giving. We also learnt that if we love our neighbours as we love ourselves then we will share what we have.

In this lesson we will learn about the church.

The church is the people not the building

It is important to note from the start that the word church refers to the people and not the building. The word church is used 166 times in the New Testament to refer to a group of Christians and to the event of gathering together as an assembly.

Why so many churches?

How many tribes is the nation of Israel made up of?

How many Churches are there in the Bible?

God made different local churches to reach different people who live in different areas in a different way. Although the Church is made up of all true Christians past, present and future throughout the world, there are many thousands of different Churches in different locations with different styles, gifts, callings and focuses. Church is like a huge family, even though there are different members in the family with different personalities and ages, we are still all part of the one family. God is our Father and we are all brothers and sisters in Christ.

Jesus is building His church

Matthew 16:18 (NIV) I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Jesus is building His church and this church is victorious over the forces of Hades.

Jesus uses the Greek word **ecclesia** in this passage which is translated as **church**. When Jesus used this word to describe what He was building He was drawing on a concept that would have been familiar to His listeners who were living under Roman rule.

When the Romans conquered another nation one of the first things that they did was chose a group of local people. These local people were chosen to be part of the ecclesia, which literally means “called out ones.” The Romans taught these locals how to be Roman citizens. They taught them Roman beliefs, values, laws, customs and culture. Once these locals had been taught Roman ways they were then established as ecclesia or the governing body in that territory. One of the reasons this strategy was so effective is because it used local people to enforce Roman rule over other local people in a conquered area.

When Jesus said “I will build my ecclesia” He was making a powerful statement. Jesus has conquered the spirit of the world and chosen a group of people to be His ecclesia. He calls us out of the world, teaches us about His kingdom, and then sends us into the world to establish His kingdom rule.

Ecclesia is a powerful concept that gives us insight into the nature and purpose of the church and our lives as members of the church. It helps us see that the church is more than a social group or place where we learn God’s will. The church is a group of people who have been hand-picked by God to establish His kingdom on the earth.

Different names for church

The Bible uses many different names to describe the church. Each of these names illustrates a different aspect of our nature and purpose.

Name	Aspect being emphasised
Church	We are called out and then sent in Our purpose is to extend God’s kingdom on earth We are a missional community
The Body	Jesus Christ is the Head Connectedness Interdependence Unity in diversity We belong to each other We act on Christ’s behalf in the world
Family of faith	We are connected to all believers through the same Father We are made up of different spiritual generations We love each other as brothers and sisters
The Bride	We are devoted to Christ We have a privileged relationship with God We are preparing ourselves for our ultimate union
The House	We carry the literal Presence of Jesus God is shaping us and fitting us together
The Vineyard	Christ is the source that sustains us God expects us to bear fruit

The importance of church

Psalms 92:13-14 (NKJV) Those who are planted in the house of the LORD Shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing...

The Bible says that being planted in the church is a key to our growth and progress in life.

What do you think being planted means?

Today there are some Christians who say that you don't need to go to church to be a Christian. It is true that you don't need to go to church to get saved. We are saved through faith in Christ not our commitment to church. Yet this doesn't mean that attending church isn't important for us as believers. Getting involved in our local church is extremely important for our spiritual growth and success as a believer.

Hebrews 10:25 (NIV) Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

The idea that we don't need to go to church is a completely unscriptural idea. The Bible says that we should stay connected to the church through regular attendance at church meetings so that we can encourage other believers and be encouraged ourselves.

God puts the lonely in families

Psalms 68:6 (NIV) God sets the lonely in families...

What would happen to a baby that was born and left out in the cold?

Christianity isn't just about believing, it is also about belonging. Father God doesn't want us left out in the cold like an orphan. He has prepared a spiritual family for us so that we have a place to belong that will help us grow strong and healthy.

Iron sharpens iron

Proverbs 27:17 (NIV) As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

What would happen to a hot ember that shot out of a fire?

There is life in connection. We can lose our edge and grow cold if we isolate ourselves just as an ember can grow cold outside the fire. God doesn't want us growing cold. He wants us to stay on fire for Him through fellowship with other passionate believers.

We are stronger together than we are by ourselves

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (NIV) Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!

What would happen to a finger that was dislocated or cut off completely from the body?

God is a team and He works through teams. We can do more together than we could ever do by ourselves. God doesn't want us to dislocate ourselves or cut ourselves off from the rest of the body. He wants us to stay connected and learn to cooperate with His team so that we can reach this world with His amazing Good News.

There is protection in connection

Proverbs 18:1 (NKJV) A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; he rages against all wise judgment.

What would happen to an animal that wandered from the pack?

Coming under godly leadership that can watch out for our souls and planting ourselves in a church doesn't mean that we will never fall away, but there is protection in belonging to a church community. We have mature leaders who can watch out for us and people know us and they can encourage, help and correct us when we need it. Staying connected to a church where God's word is preached also protects us from the many false and unbalanced doctrines out there that can undermine our faith. Father God wants us to stay connected and protected.

Connecting people to the church

Matthew 16:18 (NIV) I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Jesus loves the church, He died for the church and He is building the church today to be a source of blessing in our city and world.

It makes sense that we connect people to Jesus and to the church and not just to ourselves and our ministry. The church was here before you and I were born and it will be here long after we are gone. If we only connect people to ourselves and our ministry then people would get scattered and lost if we fell away from God, moved city or died. God wants us to build smart. He wants us to have long-term results and it is therefore important that we connect people to Jesus and to His church.

Making a long-term commitment

If we are going to help build a strong church then we need to make a long-term commitment to working together as a local church to fulfil God's vision.

The churches that are making the biggest impact for Christ in our nation and the world are those who have a team of people who have been around for a while. The reality is that it takes time for people to catch God's vision, to become family and to form a strong team.

Staff turnover is a problem in any organisation. Churches where people are only weakly committed to the vision struggle to do anything significant for their city because they continually have to re-establish a kingdom culture in the House and retrain people for ministry.

In saying this, it is not a sin to leave one church and go to another church. God does send people from one church to another to fulfil His purposes. If we do move churches then it is important to make sure that we are following God and not leaving to try and run away from our problems or because we got offended with someone and are too childish to work it out. It is also important that we leave with honour. We encourage you to get counsel from your pastors if you are making a major life decision like moving city or church.

BASIC church flourishing

day one

Psalms 92:13-14 (NKJV) Those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing...

← Memorise

↑ Circle who will flourish

Flourish means to thrive, grow and be successful in life

God's plan is for us to be planted in a church.

One of the things that we see in the West today is many Christians who go from church to church without making a commitment to put their roots down somewhere. God wants us to make a commitment to being part of a church where we can grow together, pray together and serve together.

Hebrews 10:25 (NIV) Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

📖 What does this passage tell us not to do?

📖 Why does it tell us not to give up meeting together?

Another thing that we hear amongst some people today is the idea that you don't have to go to church to be a Christian. While it is true that you don't have to go to church to get saved, it is also true that God wants us to be part of a church family. The idea that we don't

Jesus loves the church. Don't allow people who are critical of the church to speak into your life.

have to go to church is unbiblical and is often promoted by people who have issues with church. Jesus loves the church tells us not to forsake gathering together as a church family.

Some reasons why it is important to be planted in a good church family

There are many reasons why it is important to be planted in a good church family. Here are four reasons why God wants us to be part of a church.

(1) We are under mature people who will watch out for our souls

God calls and anoints certain people to watch over the church. God calls these people **pastors** or **shepherds** because they are called to feed the church the word and protect us from spiritual attack.


What would happen to a sheep that strays from their shepherd?

Staying close to our pastors and receiving their teaching, instruction and correction is one of the ways that we stay can stay spiritually safe and healthy.

Planted people prosper

Spiritual attack can come in many different forms. One of the main ways that the devil attacks believers is through false doctrine and lies. Staying connected to a good church that teaches the Bible is one of the ways that we can protect ourselves from false doctrine.

 Extra reading

 Hebrews 13:17

What does this passage say that our spiritual leaders do for us?

How does it tell us to respond to them?

(2) We can grow spiritually

What two things does a person need to do to become a brain surgeon?

1. _____

2. _____

If someone wants to become a brain surgeon then they need to do two things. They need to go to medical school and study brain surgery. They also need to practice under the supervision of an experienced brain surgeon.

In the same way we need two things to become a mature Christian. We need to develop our own personal relationship with Jesus through prayer, studying the Bible and obedience. We also need to connect to allow other more mature Christians to speak into our lives.

(3) We can encourage one another

How do you feel after you have spent time with other believers who are as passionate about Jesus as you are?

Jesus made a commitment to be present whenever His people come together around Him. Gathering together as a church and fellowshiping together with other believers who are on fire is one of the ways that we stay spiritually strong.

The church is a centre for discipleship

Part of God's plan for growing us involves us connecting to a more mature Christian who can help speak into our lives.

 Extra reading

 Ephesians 4:11-14

How do these five ministry gifts help us as believers?

(4) We can do more together than we ever could by ourselves

Jesus told the church to **go and make disciples**.

When we read the Gospels we see that Jesus always sent His disciples out in twos. God is a team and His plan is for us to work together as a team. This team is called the church.

Many Christians love Jesus and want to serve Him but they try and fulfil their calling by themselves because they don't understand God's design. God is not going to use independent Christians to change the world. God's plan is that we work together in unity to reach out to the world with His love and hope.

If we are serious about fulfilling the Great Commission to go and make disciples of every nation then the best place to start is to get involved in our local church. As we serve the church and give financially the church will be resourced and equipped to take the Gospel to the world, make disciples and plant churches.

Application

⇒ Action

We encourage everyone to make a decision to get involved in their church. One of the ways that you can do this is by going to your pastors and asking them where they think the best place for you to serve is. Go with a humble and willing heart to help wherever you are needed the most.

When we understand God's heart for the lost then we will get fired up to reach out to people. When we understand God's strategy then we will make a commitment to giving and serving as part of our church.

There are many gifted and called Christians who are not connected to a church who are doing small things when they could connect with a church and do something much greater.





BASIC church

one body

day two

1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (NIV) The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

← Meditate

-  Underline the parts that talk about how we are all part of the one body
-  Underline how God has arranged the parts of the body
-  Circle what the parts of the body that we might think are less valuable actually are
-  Underline what each part of the body should have for one another

1 Corinthians 12 is a great insight into the nature and function of the church. This amazing passage emphasises five key characteristics of church life.

Truth # 1 – we have one head

Colossians 1:15-18 (NIV) He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Jesus is the head of the church.

Church is all about Jesus. We are as community of people who exist because of Jesus and for Jesus.

Jesus is the head, lord, owner, chief shepherd and saviour of the church.

It's all about JESUS!

When people become focused on certain gifted people they have missed the point. God doesn't want the church to be man-centred. God wants the church to be Christ-centred.

 Extra reading

➔ 1 Corinthians 1:10-13

What was happening in this church?

How did Paul address it?

Truth # 2 – we all belong to Jesus and to one another

Romans 12:4-5 (NIV) Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Following Jesus isn't just about believing; it's also about belonging.

When we become part of a church family we need to start thinking differently. We need to start thinking less about me and more about us.

We live in a world that is plagued by individualism. Individualism is the belief that I am a free individual and therefore I have the right to make whatever choices I want to regardless of how those choices impact on other people around me. This worldly philosophy emphasises our rights and ignores our responsibilities. We have to die to this way of thinking if we are going to follow Jesus. Jesus commands us to live a life of love where we lay down our rights and consider others better than ourselves. Part of this involves becoming part of a church, which is a Christ-centred community.

Truth # 3 – we are called to unity in our diversity

God's plan for us is that we will become one with Him and one with each other.

Oneness is not conformity. It's not about everyone doing the same thing and losing our unique personality. Oneness is about loving each other and learning to function as a team.

⇐ Meditate

Christians are not church avoiders, church attenders, church shoppers or church hoppers. We are church **members**. Becoming part of a church requires us to die to ourselves and our own selfish pursuits and consider the good of the family.

Truth # 4 – we are all absolutely necessary

Ephesians 4:16 (NIV) From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

1 Corinthians 12:22 says that we are “indispensable” and Ephesians 4:16 tells us that the body grows “as each part does its work.”

God wants everyone to be involved in serving one another and working together to reach out to the world with His love and hope. God doesn't want us to be attenders or spectators. He wants us to identify what our unique gifts are and use them to serve. God wants us to get involved through giving financially, serving together, praying together and sharing together.

Truth # 5 – we are called to cooperation

Even the world recognises that we can do more together than we ever could by ourselves. We are called to be a team. We work together to bring God's kingdom to earth.

The word church is used in the Bible to refer to both the universal church and the local church. The universal church refers to every born again believer. As believers we are connected to every other believer throughout the whole world. We are part of the same kingdom and share the same hope, Lord, faith, baptism, God and Father. As such we are to see and treat every other Christian as our brother and sister. The local church, on the other hand, refers to specific gatherings or communities of believers. As a local church we are connected to one another. God has specifically joined us with these believers to learn, share, pray, grow and serve together.

⇐ Meditate

If you are not involved in your church then you are actually **hindering** the church from growing and reaching the world.

We need to get competition out of our hearts. We are not here to prove anything and we are not here to compete with other churches or Christians. We are here to help people. If we don't get competition out of our hearts then we will end up bringing division into the church and hindering the Gospel.

Application



Personal reflection

How does this idea that we are a body affect the way you are going to live?

Do you think about what's best for your church family when you are making decisions?




BASIC church conflict

day three

Conflict is a given in any close relationship. It will happen. It's not about having no conflict; it's about dealing with conflict in a godly and mature way. Jesus gives us some instruction about how conflict should be handled in the church.

Matthew 18:15-17 (NIV) “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

↔ Meditate

-  Underline what we should do if our brother or sisters sins
-  Underline what we should do if they don't listen to us
-  Underline what we should do as a last resort of they still don't listen to us when we take one or two other mature people with us

Jesus only mentions the word church twice in the Gospels.

Once is in Matthew 16:18 where He talks about how the church He is building will be victorious. The other time is in Matthew 18 where Jesus talks about how to deal with conflict in the church.

We can learn five important things from this passage.

(1) Don't argue about small issues

Jesus says **“If your brother or sister sins...”**. It is important to note that He is talking about sin issues in this passage. He is not talking about small or disputable issues. It's amazing what some people argue about in churches. People get upset and offended with all sorts of small and petty things. Some people complain because the music is too loud while others complain because it is not loud enough. Others get offended because they did something and the pastor didn't notice or because they church isn't doing the things that they think it should. Jesus isn't talking about small or disputable matters in this passage. Jesus expects us to get over ourselves and our preferences and overlook minor offences.

(2) One on one

Jesus says that the first thing that we should do is go to the person and sort the issue out personally. Gossip is a serious issue in any group and it is very destructive to relationships and community. When people gossip they can cause second hand offences where people take offence on behalf of others. One of the ways that we can avoid gossip is by doing what Jesus says here and going to the person that we have the issue with and dealing with it straight away. Another thing that we can do to shut down gossip within a church community is to refuse to listen to it. Gossip only exists because someone is willing to listen.

(3) It's about reconciliation

Jesus says that if we go to our brother and they listen to us then we have won them over. It is not about winning an argument it is about winning a brother. When we go to our brother we are not to go to prove a point or to be right. We must go with the heart and goal of reconciliation and unity.

Don't get caught up in worldly dramas. Stay focused on God's heart and the great eternal drama.

 Extra reading

 Romans 14:1-13

What are some disputable matters that Paul refers to in this passage?

What does he say about these disputable matters?

 Extra reading

 Philippians 2:3

What does this tell us about a Christian spirit?

(4) Take one or two others

Jesus says that if we go to our brother but they refuse to listen then we should get someone to mediate. A mediator is an objective, neutral person who can help bring peace. A mediator is not your best friend who will take your side. He or she is someone who is mature who can help bring an outside and unbiased perspective.

(5) Tell it to the church

Jesus says that if mediation still doesn't work then we should bring the issue to the church. When Jesus says to bring this issue to the church He is not referring to making a public announcement on a Sunday morning about your issue with someone. When Jesus talks about bringing something to the church in this context He is referring to bringing this issue to the leaders of the church who can make a decision on the matter.

Jesus says that if people refuse to repent after this then we are to treat them as an unbeliever. We are to see them as unsaved and officially exclude them from fellowship. One of the things that this tells us is that God consider unity so important that at times leaders must exclude people so that the church can advance the Gospel.

Application

 Personal reflection


Have you followed this process of dealing with conflict in the past?

What do you think would stop people from doing what Jesus says here?

 Extra reading

We see Paul following this process in Acts 15 where certain Pharisees who had joined the church started to teach false doctrine. Paul ended up bringing this issue to the elders of the church who made a judgment that was published throughout the church.

 Extra reading

 Titus 3:10-11

What does this passage tell us about God's heart on unity?

BASIC church




putting people out

day four

1 Corinthians 5:1-13 (NIV) It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth. I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked man from among you.”

Putting people out of the church is often referred to as excommunication. It is the most severe form of church discipline.

⇐ Meditate

-  Underline what Paul said these believers should have done to person who was sexually immoral
-  Underline why Paul said they should have put this person out of the church
-  Circle the people that we are not to associate with

A believer was sleeping with his step mother and Paul writes to this church telling them how they should deal with this situation. Up until now these Christians have been doing nothing and Paul rebukes them for their lack of response. By tolerating this kind of thing in the church they are allowing hypocrisy to spread throughout the church and this man to continue in sin. Paul tells them that they need to put this person out of the church so that he will come to his senses and repent and so that a healthy fear and respect for God will come back into the church.

Putting people out of the church is a last resort and should be done by elders who are spiritually mature. There are several things to understand when it comes to putting people out of the church.

(1) It applies to people who say they are Christians but are deliberately living in sin

Paul specifically says that this applies to people who call themselves Christians. Putting people out of the church doesn't apply to people who are interested in Jesus and attending church. People are not part of the church just because they come along to church meetings. People become part of the church once they make a commitment to follow Jesus Christ.

It is also important to note that we are not to put people out of the church if they sin or a struggling with sin. It doesn't matter how many times we fall if we get back up, put things right and renew our commitment to live for Jesus. Paul is talking about people who refuse to repent in this passage and live in sin while claiming to be Christians.

Sometimes people who have a very emotional or worldly idea of love think that putting people out of the church is unloving. Often people who think like this are thinking more about this person's feelings or reputation than their eternal wellbeing.

The Bible is not talking about people who fall and then get back up but those who deliberately persist in sin

1 Corinthians 5:9-10 (NIV)
I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral...

(2) It is a form of discipline

Putting people out of the church is not a form of punishment it is a form of discipline. The purpose is that these people will come to their senses and repent so that they can be saved and restored to fellowship.

(3) God calls us to judge the church

Paul explains that we are to judge the church. We must understand that there is a righteous and an unrighteous judgment. Unrighteous judgment is judgment that comes out of a critical spirit or judgment that is based on our own opinions and traditions rather than God's word. Righteous judgment is where we speak the truth in love to bring correction and life.

Application

📌 Action

It is important to support our leaders if they make a decision to put someone out of the church. Often leaders are in a difficult situation where they can't share all the details behind their decisions. At times like this we need to pray for our leaders and trust God to lead them in these difficult decisions.

📌 Pray

Take some time now and ask God to empower and guide your pastors to lead with courage, integrity and wisdom.

Everything we do as a church is to help people. Sometimes this means putting people out.

📖 Extra reading

➡ Galatians 6:1

Who does Paul say should restore those caught in sin?

1 Corinthians 3:1-3 tells us that "spiritual" people are mature people who have Christ's character and nature in their lives.

Decisions like putting people out of the church are normally made by spiritually mature pastors. We will look at pastors in the next study.

BASIC church

pastors

day five

We see two main roles when we look at the structure of the church in the New Testament. The Bible calls these roles elders and deacons. In the next two studies we will look at who elders are and what they are called to do and in the last study we will look at deacons.

Pastors

The words elder and overseer or bishop both refer to the same person (see Acts 20:17-35). The word elder is the Greek word *presbuteros* and literally means “more mature.” This word refers to the character of the person. The word overseer is the Greek word *episkopi* and literally means “to watch over.” This word refers to the responsibility or function of the person.

Elders are sometimes referred to as pastors because they are responsible to shepherd or pastor the church (see 1 Peter 5:1-5).

Responsibilities

While we will look at the responsibilities of pastors in more detail in the next study, it will be helpful to have a brief idea of what these people are called to do. Essentially pastors are responsible for church

It is important to note that every church will be structured differently. While God has given us a pattern in the Bible there is not set way that every church should be structured.

Pastor and shepherd mean exactly the same thing

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A team

When we look throughout the New Testament we see that the word elder is almost always used in the plural (i.e., it is almost always elders and not elder).

One of the things that this tells us is that God's pattern is for churches to be overseen by a team of elders or pastors. While there is some evidence for an order within this team based around calling, maturity and gifting, God's pattern is for a team of people to oversee the church and not just one couple or man.

Qualifications of pastors

The Bible clearly outlines the qualifications or prerequisites for anyone who wants to serve as pastor.

John 21:15-17 (NIV) When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep.



Underline what Jesus asked Peter before He sent him to pastor people

As a church grows we should ask God to raise up a team of pastors to share the responsibility and watch over the church.



Personal reflection

Why do you think God raises up a team of people to oversee the church?



Meditate

Peter had denied Jesus three times and then went back to his old life.

When Jesus came to restore Peter He asked him the same question three times. Jesus said, "Peter do you love me?" When Peter said "Yes" Jesus then sent Peter to pastor His sheep. One of the things that this tells us is that loving Jesus is the single criteria for pastoral ministry.

Jesus asked Peter whether he loved Him more than people. If we love Jesus more than people then we will serve Jesus but if we love people more than Jesus then we will compromise what Jesus wants to please people.

When we study Paul's teachings on leadership we see that he breaks down what Jesus was saying to Peter here and describes what this love for Jesus looks like in a pastor.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 (NIV) Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

When we look through the biblical prerequisites for pastors we can see that all of the things have to do with the character of a pastor with the one exception that a pastor must be able to teach.

As a church grows we should ask God to raise up a team of pastors to share the responsibility and watch over the church.

 Extra reading

Compare 1 Timothy 3:1-7 with Titus 1:5-9

The Bible encourages us to go for it if we want to be an overseer. Talk to your pastors if you sense a call to pastoral ministry so that they can help equip and train you for this.

Pastors' wives

Titus 2:1-5 (NIV) You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

The Bible refers to men as elders and their wives as elder's wives. While the Bible doesn't specifically say that elders must be men or that women can't be elders, they indicate that the responsibility for eldership rests on the man and that, if he is married, he serves in this calling with his wife (see Luke 6:13-16, 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:5-9).

Pastor's wives, like their husbands, must be women of godly character.

Application

↑ Pray

Our pastors carry a big responsibility. It is therefore important that we pray for them and their families regularly and honour them for their work by looking after them.

Take some time now and pray for your pastors and the pastors in your city and nation.

The word translated as "older women" in this passage is the feminine form of elder (Greek presbutis)

⇐ Meditate

BASIC church

pastors

day six

1 Peter 5:1-5 (NIV) To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

⇐ Meditate

 Underline all of the things that Peter tells elders to do

Peter appeals to the elders to shepherd or pastor God's flock which is among them. One of the things that this tells us is that elders are pastors.

The word shepherd and pastor mean exactly the same thing

Four main responsibilities

Paul's two letters to Timothy and his letter to Titus are often called the "pastoral letters" because they were written by Paul to two young church leaders he was mentoring to instruct them how to lead the church (see 1 Timothy 3:14-15). When we study these letters we see four things that Paul consistently told these leaders to give themselves

to. By far the most repeated instruction in these letters is to study and teach God's word. When we consider what Paul is saying to Timothy and Titus in these letters it gives us some insight into the role of a pastor.

(1) Teaching the word

2 Timothy 4:1-4 (NIV) In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

Teaching God's word is a big part of the role of a pastor. There are at least 19 different times in these three letters where Paul tells these two emerging pastors to teach God's word.

Pastors care for the church and help us grow by studying, modelling and teaching God's word to the church. Pastors are also responsible to speak into and correct false doctrines and to correct and rebuke people who are living in error.

One of the ways that we can respect our pastors' calling to teach the word is by keeping a spirit of humility and staying teachable and open to correction.

God's word is very sacred. The Bible says that God has exalted His word above His name! God's word is not something that we should take lightly.

⇐ Meditate

(2) Prayer

1 Timothy 2:1 (NIV) I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone...

Pastors are responsible to watch over the church and pray for us. Pastors discern God's will, cover the church and provide spiritual protection through their powerful prayers.

One of the ways that we can get behind our pastors is by releasing them from as many things as possible so that they can give themselves to prayer and the word. Everyone benefits when we support and release our pastors like this.

(3) Modelling the truth

Titus 2:7-8 (NIV) In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

Pastors are mature spiritual fathers who are a model or pattern for what a mature believer looks like. Pastors help us understand the truth by showing us what this looks like lived out in everyday life.

God has given us our pastors as models for us to imitate. One of the ways that we grow is by watching our pastors and imitating the way that they live

← Meditate

📖 Extra reading

➡ 1 Samuel 12:23

What did Samuel say that he would be doing if he stopped praying for God's people?

← Meditate

👉 Personal reflection

The word **example** used here is the Greek word *tupos*, which means pattern, stamp or mould. Our pastors are a pattern that we are to imitate.

Do you imitate your pastors?

Do you imitate their faith, boldness, love for the church, hospitality, generosity, etc?

(4) Ruling

1 Timothy 5:17 (NKJV) Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and doctrine.

Pastors are responsible to **govern** or **rule** the church.

Pastors are given authority by God to direct the affairs of the church and bring things into order. God expects us to respect the authority that He has placed on their lives by submitting to them and doing what they ask. When we honour our pastors like this we honour God, promote unity in the church and receive the best from them.

Application

↑ Prayer

When we understand what pastors are called to do we can see that it is no simple task. It is therefore important that we pray for our pastors, keep a supportive attitude towards them and honour them for their work by looking after them.

Take some time now and pray for your pastors.

⇒ Action

What can you do to support and bless your pastors practically?

⇐ Meditate

👉 Personal reflection

How does knowing what your pastors are called to do change the way you see them?

BASIC church leaders

day seven

When we study church structure we see that God has ordained pastors and deacons as the two main leadership roles within the church. We see that pastors are responsible for overseeing the church. We can summarise their role and responsibilities as direction, doctrine and discipline. We also see that deacons are responsible for supporting and releasing pastors by nurturing relationships and managing areas within the church.




Deacons are often referred to simply as leaders in many churches. It is not important what words we use as much as whether we are basing what we are doing on the Bible.

The seven

Acts 6:1-7 (NIV) In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on

← Meditate

them. So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

-  Underline why the apostles decided to appoint seven leaders in the church
-  Circle the requirements for these seven people
-  Underline what happened immediately after these seven were appointed and the apostles were released to focus on prayer and the word

Acts 6 gives us one of the best insights into the nature and role of deacons. While this passage doesn't specifically mention that these seven were deacons, it is generally accepted that they functioned as deacons and were forerunners to this official position.

Acts 6 gives us insight into why this leadership role was created. When we study this passage we see that as the early church grew there was a breakdown in organisation that caused certain groups within the church to get overlooked. This breakdown resulted in complaints and division. When this issue was brought to the apostles, they refused to be distracted from their primary responsibilities of the word of God and prayer. They took responsibility for this by directing the church to choose men whom they could appoint to take care of this business.

When we study this passage we see that deacons were appointed for three reasons:

- (1) Support and release elders to focus on the ministry of God's word and prayer
- (2) Take care of some of the practical aspects of church leadership
- (3) Be peacemakers who promoted and protected unity in the church

The word **deacon** literally means to serve. Leadership is about serving.

When we understand the role of deacons we see why people often simply refer to these people as leaders

Qualifications

1 Timothy 3:8-13 (NIV) Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.



Circle the requirements for deacon leaders

Leaders, like pastors, must be people of godly character. Like pastors, they must manage their families well and their wives must be holy and godly women.

Application

↑ Pray

Our leaders are a key part of the life of a church and we should honour them for their work. We should also pray for them that God would give them strength and wisdom to do what He has called them to do.

Take some time now and pray for your leaders.

God always places more importance on a leader's character than He does on his or her gifting