

A New Beginning
(Study Guide for New Believers)

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Introduction

God has drawn you to His free gift and you have accepted Jesus as your Savior and King. So the next question is what now? All new and seasoned Christians need to spend time in prayer and reading God's word. You may also find that many articles, commentaries, and other study materials can help you learn and grow. However, you must be careful to always backup these other materials against the Bible as it is the ultimate study guide and you are responsible for following God's word, not the words of others' interpretation or perception of its meanings.

We have created this article in an effort to help assist new Christians. It is by no means to be used to replace the Bible and is by no means an authority over the Bible. Since you will have to give account of your life to God, you will need to, read the Bible, pray for knowledge, wisdom and understanding, and ask God to send you the Holy Spirit in order to reveal to you the meaning of God's word and His direction for your life. Don't let this overwhelm you because every disciple of Christ was a lay person. They were fishermen, tax collectors, and members of the general population. God wants to be understood and if you seek Him with all your heart and soul He promises He will be found. Don't let terminology, Greek and Hebrew interpretations, or general theology overwhelm your walk with God. God wants all of us to know Him. Often times we make it too difficult when it is really simple. We can get to know God through His word.

A New Life in Jesus Christ

According to Ephesians 2:1-3 before we accept Jesus as our Savior and King we were dead in our transgressions and sins, we gratified our sinful nature following its desires, we followed ways of this world, in fact we were born into this sinful nature. For this sinful nature we were condemned to death.

Ephesians 2:1-3

- 1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,
2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the
prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of
disobedience,
3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling
the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath,
just as the others.***

According to Romans 8:7-8 when we are controlled by the sinful nature we cannot please God.

Romans 8:7-8

- 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God,
nor indeed can be.
8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.***

And other scriptures teach us that there is nothing we can do to attain salvation because Christ has already paid it all. Salvation is by grace and grace alone.

Ephesians 2:8-9

**8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,
9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.**

Repentance

We have come to realize that we are sinners. However, true acceptance of Jesus requires repentance. Repentance is basically turning from sin and turning to God.

John the Baptist preached repentance as written in:

Luke 3:2-3

2 while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

3 And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,

In Luke 15:7 Jesus began his preaching with “**Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” In Luke 24 we find that after Jesus had risen, He appeared to the disciples and “46 He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, **47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations**, beginning at Jerusalem. So, as it is written in scripture we must repent and ask for forgiveness of our sins. We must turn from sin and come to Christ.

Some want to accept Christ but Satan comes and takes the word from their heart, or they accept the word with gladness but have no roots so when difficulty arises they stumble, or others may hold onto their fleshly wants. Jesus gives us a parable concerning these issues. He also talks about other problems we may encounter when the seed which is the word of God is planted. He talks about a sower who spread seeds on different types of ground.

Mark 3:3-8

3 “Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow.

4 And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it.

5 Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth.

6 But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away.

7 And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop.

8 But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”

Mark 3:13-20

13 And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?

14 The sower sows the word.

15 And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.

16 These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness;
17 and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble.
18 Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word,
19 and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.
20 But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."

We must repent so God can forgive our sins. However this parable also reminds us that we need to be good soil, we need to hear, accept and bear fruit in order to grow in our relationship with God. Repentance is the first step but we must diligently seek to be the good soil Jesus spoke about. This is the reason we wrote this paper because all too often we are not rooted and grounded in the word of God. We need to turn from the world and follow Christ. We must not just be hearers but also doers of the word of God so we can produce fruit. So when we turn from sin (repent) our direction should be seeking the will of God at all times.

James 1:21-25

21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.
22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.
23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;
24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.
25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

Faith

Accepting Jesus as your personal Savior and King requires faith. Our faith in Jesus is a living, verbal, and acting faith. **Hebrews 11:1** defines faith as **"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"**

We have to believe that Jesus lived, died, was buried, and rose from the dead as found in

1 Corinthians 15:1-8.

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;
2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.
3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;
4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:
5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

6*After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.*

7*After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.*

8*And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.*

Putting Faith in Jesus is putting faith into a Living Being; not an inanimate object or a dead leader (Jesus' tomb is empty).

Faith in Jesus is verbal. According to **Romans 10:9** *that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.* Also in **Romans 10:13** we find that *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

Our faith in Jesus calls for action. We need to act on the truth of God's word. According to **James 2** faith and actions work together and persons faith is made complete by what he does. He gives examples in verses **20-26**

20*But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?*

21*Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?*

22*Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?*

23*And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.*

24*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*

25*Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?*

26*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

Throughout the Bible you will find examples of many people of the faith who acted upon God's truths; Hebrews 11 names several whom acted upon faith, such as; Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Moses etc . . . As followers of Christ, we are also commanded to act upon God's truth. In Matthew we find that Christians are commissioned to 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 teach them to obey everything that Jesus has commanded.

Matthew 28:19-20

19*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*

20*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

In Romans 12 we find that followers of Jesus are instructed to love all humans including our enemies, not just believers (20-21). We are to overcome evil with good.

Romans 12:20-21

20*Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*

21*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

We are also to act by offering our bodies as living sacrifices. We are to be a living example to others by not conforming to the patterns of this world, but we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds in the truths of God.

Romans 12:1-2

***I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.
2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.***

In summary, Hebrews 11:1 “***Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen***”. Our faith in Jesus is a living, verbal, and acting faith. Jesus Christ died and rose again which makes it a living faith. Our faith is verbal because we are instructed to tell others about our salvation. Also, faith requires action because faith must be accompanied with works or it is useless.

Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit **testifies** of Jesus Christ (John 15:26), **guides** us in all truth to the glory of Jesus Christ (John 16:13-14), gives us **spiritual discernment** (I Corinthians 2:10-14), and **teaches** us (John 14:26).

John 15:26

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.

John 16:13-14

***13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.
14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.***

I Corinthians 2:10-14

***10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.
11 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.
12 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.
13 These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.
14 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.***

John 14:26

26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

In **Mark 1:7-8** John the Baptist preached, saying, “**There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.**” Baptism in water symbolizes the burial of your old sinful life. The filling by the Holy Spirit was given to us by Jesus Christ.

The outpouring and filling of the Holy Spirit fulfills the prophesy found in the Old Testament book of **Joel 2:28-29** “**And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.**”

In Acts we find that on the day of Pentecost, Peter speaks to the crowd and reminding them that God had said 'In the last days, He will pour out His Spirit on all people.

Acts 2:14-18:

**14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd:
"Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you;
listen carefully to what I say.**

15 These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!

16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

**17" 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.**

18 Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

The best way we can describe the role of the Holy Spirit is the way in which God puts His laws in our heart. The Holy Spirit is the one who assists in this transformation. In Hebrews 8 that with the new covenant God makes with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah that He will put His laws in the minds and hearts of His people.

Hebrews 8:10

This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

How will or how does God write His laws in the minds and the hearts of His people through the Holy Spirit. I think Charles H. Spurgeon explains this very well in his sermon “God’s Law in Man’s Heart” Sermon No. 2506 (Spurgeon, 1897):

But, although we can read that law in the Scriptures, and see it wrought out in the life of Christ, yet it is needful that the Spirit of God should come and enlighten us with regard to it, if we are really to know what it is. Otherwise, a man may hear the Ten Commandments read every Sabbath day, and go on breaking them without ever knowing that he is breaking them; he may be keeping the letter of the commandments, and yet all the while be violating their spirit. When the Holy Spirit comes to us, he shows us what the law really is. Take, for instance, the command, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." "Well!" says one, "I have not broken that commandment." "Stay," says the Spirit of God, "till you know the spiritual meaning of that command, for whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." There is, also, the command, "Thou shalt not kill." "Oh!" says the man, "I never killed anybody, I have not committed murder." "But," says the Spirit of God, "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." When the Lord thus writes his law upon our heart, he makes us to know the far-reaching power and scope of the commandment. He causes us to understand that it touches not only actions and words, but thoughts, ay, and the most transient imaginations, the things that are scarcely born within us, the sights that pass in a moment across the mind, like a stray passenger who passes in front of the camera when a photographer is taking a view. The Spirit of God teaches us that even these momentary impressions are sinful, and that the very thought of foolishness is sin.

Later in that same sermon, Spurgeon goes on to say:

But, brethren, the law is not fully written in the heart till a man, approving the law and appropriating it to himself, feels he delights to obey it. "There," says he, "O my God, my highest happiness lies in doing as thou wouldst have me to do. I do not want any excuse or indulgence for sin, I want, above everything else, to be holy. It shall be my greatest pleasure to be pure, it shall be my perfect bliss to be perfectly holy. Thou hast so written thy law in my heart that, every time my heart beats, it seems to beat for holiness. of my new-born nature are towards right, towards truth towards goodness, towards God." This, dear friends, is to have the law of the Lord written in your heart so as to delight in it after the inward man, and to delight to practice it with the outward man, daily striving to make the entire life to be in accordance with the dictates of God's will. O brothers, is it not a wonderful thing that God shall ever make it as natural for us to be holy as once it was natural for us to be unholy, and that then we shall find it as much a joy to serve him as once we thought it a pleasure not to serve him, when, indeed, to deny ourselves shall cease to be self-denial? It shall enjoyment to us to be nothing it shall be delight to renounce everything of self and to cling close to God, and to walk in his ways. Then will be fulfilled in our experience the promise of our text, I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts."

Please, take the time to read Spurgeon's whole sermon on this subject; it is very good and I think you will find it very informative.

Did you know that as Christian's you are temples of God because the Holy Spirit dwells in you? God's Spirit lives in a believer that makes them a temple of God. Be very careful not to defile God's temple.

1 Corinthians 3: 16-17 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

As you can see, the Holy Spirit was not only written of in the New Testament but also in the Old Testament. We learn from scripture that God gives Christians the Holy Spirit as a testament to Jesus Christ, a guide in all truth to the glory of Jesus Christ, our spiritual discerner, teacher as to the heart of the law of God and He dwells within us.

Prayer

Webster defines pray as “to address God or a god with adoration, confession, supplication, or thanksgiving (2008, Webster.com)”. Prayer is used by Christians to communicate with God. Prayer is a vital part of a Christian walk with God. As in any relationship, it grows when you spend time with one another. However on the other hand, a relationship will suffer if time is not spent with each other. Please set time apart throughout your day to speak with God (pray). God desires a relationship with His people.

We break prayer into four types; adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. Let’s define them in the order they are listed:

1. Adoration is praising God for who He is, such as loving, merciful, good, gracious, etc. . . . Your list will grow through your walk with God as He reveals Himself to you each and everyday.
2. Confession is to admit your guilt. Confess your sins and sinfulness. When you don’t confess your sins you become distant from God. We are told in 1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”.

In the book of Psalms we find that when the Psalmist kept silent he felt distant and drained but then he confessed his sin

Psalm 32:3-5

3 When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah

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

Psalm 51 is a great prayer of confession.

Psalms 51:1-17

1 Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

3 for I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me.

4 against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight — That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge.

- 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.**
- 6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.**
- 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.**
- 8 Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice.**
- 9 Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities.**
- 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.**
- 11 Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.**
- 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.**
- 13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You.**
- 14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness**
- 15 O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.**
- 16 for You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering.**
- 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise.**

3. Thanksgiving is just that; giving thanks to God for all He has done. In the book of Psalms, David continually mentions his thanksgiving to God for all that He has done. God created the universe, sent His son as a sacrifice for our sins, and loves us even before we loved him. These are just a few things that we can be thankful for but when you read the Bible you will be reminded of many more.
4. Supplication is when we pray both for ourselves and for others. Many Christians and organization like keeping a prayer list. You should pray specifically, expectantly, faithfully and according to God's will.

1 John 5:14-15

- 14 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.***
- 15 And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.***

How to get started

A great way to start is by having set times that you pray. By having regular prayer times set in your daily routine you will establish good prayer habits. Eventually as your relationship with God grows, you will find that you are praying all throughout the day well beyond those set times. And ***1 Thessalonians 5:17*** tells us ***“Pray without ceasing”***.

Also, give God time when your brain is still fresh such as first thing in the morning. Yes it is good to pray before going to bed, but many times we are exhausted at this point and God deserves more than your leftovers. Leaving your main prayer time till bedtime is not a good idea, as you're likely to fall asleep instead.

We are instructed in scripture to be devoted to prayer, faithful in prayer and have patience, and to pray on all occasions. This means we should be praying during our good times and our bad times. We need to be thankful to God in all times.

Romans 12:12

Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;

Colossians 4:2

Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;

Ephesians 6:18

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—

Psalms 50:15

Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.”

The book of Luke informs us to be persistent in pray through the “Parable of the Persistent Widow”. Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

Luke 18:1

1 Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart,

2 saying: “There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man.

3 Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, ‘Get justice for me from my adversary.’

4 And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, ‘Though I do not fear God nor regard man,

5 yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.’”

6 Then the Lord said, “Hear what the unjust judge said.

7 And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?

8 I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”

In all aspects of our Christian walk, including prayer, we always want to keep to God’s will. It is easy to become selfish and think that we know the best solution, but we should not let our fleshly desires cloud our thoughts. We need to understand that God’s will is not always what we feel is the best option. In the book of Matthew we find that prior to Jesus’ capture he had prayed to His Father. Although He requested that the cup be taken from Him, He also said, only if it’s His Father’s will.

Matthew 26:39

He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”

Are there sample or model prayers for me to learn from? Yes, God has given us samples in His word. There are numerous samples in the book of Psalms. Also, Jesus gave us a model prayer which can be found in both Matthew 6 and in Luke 11. The following is from Matthew.

Matthew 6: 9-13

9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.

13 And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

One of the best ways to start praying is to visualize in you mind that you are approaching the throne of God. In *Psalms 100:4* it says **“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.”** You are entering the throne of God. First, you need to enter the gate. You have arrived and are thanking God for all his many blessings. You now can tell God how wonderful, awesome, faithful, powerful, majestic, merciful, patient, loving, kind, forgiving, and gracious He is. You are before the throne of God. Talk to him. Tell Him your desires and wishes. Since you are just beginning your journey and do not have an extensive history with God. You may feel unsure as to what you should say. The book of Psalms is great place to go to learn how to pray. Take a few minutes each day to read a Psalm or two.

Bible

The Bible is a collection of 66 canonical religious writings. These 66 books are split into two major sections. The Old Testament has 39 books and the New Testaments has 27 books. The Old Testament is a historical record starting at creation and covers the period of time preceding the birth of Jesus. In it you will find scripture recordings of the old covenant, God’s moral law, Jewish laws and traditions. Reading the Old Testament will not only help you better understand the New Testament; it will also help you to get to know and better understand God. The New Testament focuses on the new covenant and the teachings of Jesus Christ. It starts at the birth of Jesus and continues through His life and also contains historical recordings of His disciples and continuing Jesus’ teachings after His death.

There are different types and translations of the Bible. Some of the types consist of but not limited to; ordinary, application, commentary, study, and topical. Some of the translations consist of but not limited to; King James, Revised Standard, New International, New American Standard, and the Living Bible. The American Bible Society provides some guidance on “How to Choose a Bible Translation” and on “How to pick a bible for your purpose”. Please visit their website for further incite on this subject.

The Bible is full of historical situations that can be applied to your life. In your readings and studies of the Bible you will learn from historical events that happened to those in the past from both those that believed and from those that didn’t believe.

Some people think that because they have already heard the gospel and believe in Jesus Christ that they don't need to read the Bible. Let me use *John 8:31-32(KJV)* to clear this up: *31Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

It is important to develop a regular schedule for reading the Bible. You should strive to set aside time for Bible reading each day. Regular reading of the Bible helps in building your knowledge and trust in God and will strengthen you as a Christian. It is food for your spirit and helps in preparing you. In conjunction with pray, Bible reading is your main diet for spiritual growth.

Along with reading your Bible, you may find it helpful to use other Biblical readings designed to help you explore scripture and its application. RBC Ministries produces a great booklet called "Our Daily Bread" and is a great addition to your daily Bible readings. There are numerous internet sites that can also be used to help you study the Bible. However, as with all Internet searches, you must be careful that the information is obtained from trusted sources. The following list contains websites that I have found to be good sources for research.

1. <http://www.biblegateway.com>
2. <http://www.NTgateway.com>
3. <http://www.otgateway.com>

Gifts

Through His grace, God has given each of us different gifts. As written in Romans 12, we are to use our gifts and to let others use their gifts, forming one body in Christ.

Romans 12:3

3For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

4Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,

5so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

6We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.

7If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach;

8if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Pray for God's guidance in finding the right church for you. When you become a part of this church remember to use your gifts and talents to the glory of God.

Obedience

Obedience is the foundation in our relationship with God. The way in which we demonstrate our love for God is through obedience. Jesus obeyed God and told us to do the same. Jesus demonstrated the truest sign of His love for God by dying on the cross for our sins.

Prior to His death, Jesus prayed to God three times and asked that this cup pass from Him nevertheless not His will but God's will. So in complete obedience Jesus died on the cross for us (*Matthew 26: 36-44*).

Matthew 26:36-44

36 Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there."

37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed.

38 Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me."

39 He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

40 Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour?"

41 Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

42 Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done."

43 And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy.

44 So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

Then in *John 3: 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* We realize why Jesus died because God so loved the world (us) that he sacrificed his son for our sins so we could have everlasting life.

Obedience is a sign of true love. Jesus states it best in *John 14:15-31*.

John 14:15-31

15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command."

16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—

17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

19 Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

20 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

21Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.

22Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?"

23Jesus 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.

24He 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.

25"All this I have spoken while still with you.

26But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

27Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

28" You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

29I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.

30I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me,

31but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me. "Come now; let us leave.

In the Old Testament there are three types of laws, God's moral law (Ten Commandments), civil law and ceremonial law. God set forth His moral law known as the Ten Commandments. These commandments can be found in Exodus 20:1-17

Exodus 20 (The Ten Commandments)

1 And God spoke all these words:

2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

3 "You shall have no other gods before me.

4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,

6 but showing love to a thousand {generations} of those who love me and keep my commandments.

7 "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

8 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates.

- 11** *For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*
- 12** *"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.*
- 13** *"You shall not murder.*
- 14** *"You shall not commit adultery.*
- 15** *"You shall not steal.*
- 16** *"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.*
- 17** *"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."*

Some think that the sacrificial death of Jesus fulfilled Christian obligation to obey God's moral law (Ten Commandments) and that we no longer need to obey these laws. I believe we can find the answer in Matthew and in Romans.

Matthew 5:17-20

- 17** *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.*
- 18** *I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.*
- 19** *Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*
- 20** *For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

Romans 3:27-31

- 27** *Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith.*
- 28** *For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.*
- 29** *Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too,*
- 30** *since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.*
- 31** *Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.*

God spoke these Ten Commandments verbally (*Exodus 20*) and wrote them with His own finger twice (*Exodus 31:18* "When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God." *Exodus 34:1*. *1*The LORD said to Moses, "Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke.)

God put extreme emphasis on their importance. There is nothing else in the Bible written by God. The remainder of the Bible was given by God through others.

Moral laws represent God's moral character and God does not change. Will let Malachi clear this up for us: ***"I the LORD do not change . . . (Malachi 3:6)"*** That's right, God wants us to obey His moral laws "The Ten Commandments".

The civil laws were the governing laws that God gave Moses for governing Israel. As you read the Bible you will recognize the civil laws as they always mention the physical punishment for breaking them.

Ceremonial laws are found in the Old Testament and consisted of the different types of offerings; such as burnt offerings, sin offerings and trespass offerings etc. ; these were part of the Jewish religious system. The Jews were required to follow these because of the covenant God made with them, however, under the New Covenant established by Jesus' death and resurrection (***Matthew 26:28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins***) these ceremonial regulations were symbolic and great examples of the sacrifice to come.

As we find for example, most of the ceremonial regulations required the blood of male animals without defect to be acceptable to the Lord. We find that in the New Testament, Jesus is without defect and His bloodshed is the perfect sacrifice.

Final Thought

We need to be good soil. We need to make sure that the word of God is not taken from us by Satan. We must make sure that we have depth to the word of God sown in our hearts. Also we must make sure that the cares of this world does not overcome us. So we must be firmly planted in the word of God. We can do this through the Holy Spirit in faith, prayer, Bible reading, and obedience.

So, let me leave you with instruction from the book of Romans.

Romans 12: 9-13

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

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