

ADULT CONNECTION



NEW BELIEVER CURRICULUM



The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

A Note From Our Pastor

Congratulations upon beginning your new journey as a follower of Jesus Christ which is the most important decision that you will ever make. We will commit to pray for you daily and help you to grow in your walk with Christ as your new family. As a new believer, you should read the Bible and pray every day in addition to fellowshiping with other followers of Christ regularly. This five-week Bible study will give you an overview of your new life and, perhaps, answer some of the questions you may have. In addition, it will provide you with some critical tools to help you mature, teaching you to set aside time to spend with God each day.

Although the material in this packet has profitable information, the resource which is most essential to you is the Bible because it contains no errors and is the sole source of truth which we should use to evaluate our lives. The Bible should always be consulted first; all other books are supplemental and should be evaluated based upon biblical principles. As you go through this study, you will begin to learn how to read and apply the Bible in your own life.

The resources in this packet will not answer all of your questions, so we encourage you to join a **Connect Class** on Sundays where you can meet with other believers and hear God's word explained clearly and applicably. If you have not already found a Connect Class, please e-mail info@fbcfw.org or call **(817) 485-7711**, so that we may assist you. On Sundays, see one of our First Impressions team members at the door so that they can direct you. In addition, if a question arises during your study and you would like to ask one of the pastoral staff, please e-mail mikeneal@fbcfw.org, so that one of our pastors may help you find an answer.

-Blessings
Pastor Don



HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

Before you begin working through the pages of this material, a brief explanation is in order so that you can know how to use this resource most effectively. This is a five-week study in which you should devote a period of time to spend with God in Bible study and prayer every day. Each week you will spend time reading the Bible and answering questions about what you have read. If at any point during this study you get behind or feel overwhelmed, do not give up! Work at your own pace and seek help from the staff or another mature believer. It may feel overwhelming at points, but God desires quality time with Him rather than quantity, so please work at your own speed and seek to understand the material, not just finish it.

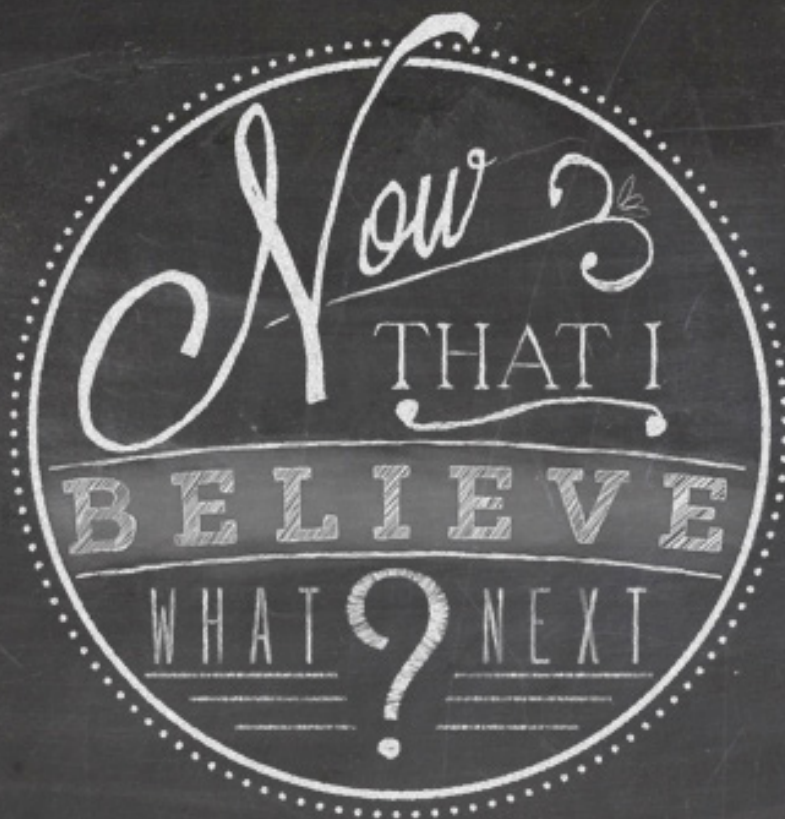
Now that you have become a Christian, daily Bible study and prayer should become an integral part of your life. This Bible study will teach you how to read the Bible and pray through a series of weekly lessons. After completing this book, you should begin studying on your own in addition to the teaching you receive at church. We would suggest that you begin by reading the Gospel of John. If you have questions along the way, please ask your Connect Class teacher, a lay leader in the church, or one of the pastoral staff. We would also suggest that as you study you do not jump randomly throughout the Bible, but seek to read entire books from beginning to end in order to understand the context of what God has said to His people.

As a new Christian, you may not be familiar with how to navigate the Bible. Like secular books, every translation of the Bible has an index with all sixty-six books listed. If you do not know how to find a book, use the index to locate the page number on which it begins. Each book is divided into chapters and verses. References will look like this: **Ephesians 2:8-9**. After the name of the book, **Ephesians** in this case, the first number, **2**, refers to the chapter and the **8-9** refer to the verses. If you still have trouble, please find someone who can assist you.

The Bible is divided into two sections called Testaments: the Old and the New. The intent of both is the same: God describes His plan and purpose for the salvation for mankind. The Old Testament looks forward to a Messiah who would come to bring

salvation to the world and the New Testament describes how that Messiah came and finalized God's plan of salvation—that Messiah being Jesus. The Old Testament has thirty-nine books and the New Testament has twenty-seven which you can find listed in the index at the beginning of the Bible.

Each day you will answer a series of questions based on God's Word. Before you begin, pray that God would open your mind so that you may be able to understand His Word. Read the passages slowly and several times until you can clearly understand what God is saying. Using the Bible only, you will then answer the questions. A summary at the end of each day will also ensure that you have understood and answered the questions correctly. We would suggest using the following translations: the New King James Version, the English Standard Version, or the New American Standard Version.



Understanding Salvation

Focal Verse:

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

John 3:16

Week One—Day One: The Need for Salvation

The purpose of this first week of study is to help you better understand the transformation which has occurred in your life by examining passages in the Bible which reinforce God’s plan of salvation. Through the Bible, you will learn why we all need to be saved, the source of salvation, its method, its permanence, its purpose, and its result. Throughout the week, you will read and interact with the Bible alone—for this is God’s Word and the sole source of our understanding about salvation. The Bible is the ultimate source of authority because it contains no errors and is God’s Word to mankind, so anything we read must be interpreted in light of the Bible.

Key
Question

Why do I need salvation and from what do I need to be saved because I am generally a good person who has never committed a crime and treats people with respect?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) Using **Romans 3:9-23**, describe why each of us needs salvation.

2) What does it mean to “sin” (**Romans 3:9**) and not to be “righteous” (**Romans 3:10**)?
*Hint: Read **Romans 3:11-12** to understand what these words mean.*

3) After reading **Isaiah 59:2**, how does sin affect our relationship with God?

4) According to **Romans 6:23**, what is the penalty for our sins, in other words the “wages” that we must pay?

Summary

We need a Savior because we all have sinned and no one is morally perfect. To sin simply means that we rebel against God's authority and make wrong choices by participating in evil rather than good. Although many of us may consider ourselves to be good people, we still fall short of God's standards (**Romans 3:23**). For example, Jesus teaches that if we have ever hated someone then we have committed murder in our hearts or if we have looked at the opposite gender lustfully then we have committed adultery in our hearts (**Matthew 5:21-22 & 27-28**). Every one of us has lied at some point; we all have disobeyed our parents. If we have done any of these evil things even once, it means that we are not good enough to have eternal life (**James 2:10**). Even though we may have done some good things in our lives, our "best" works could never be good enough to save us.

To be unrighteous means that we stand before God as guilty of our sins. This is like standing before a judge who affirms that we have broken the law and declares us guilty. The judge does not make us guilty, but we have become guilty by participating in evil; the judge merely sentences us for the crime that we have committed. In life, God is our Judge in this same way. Consequently, our sin separates us from Him who is perfect and able to judge fairly, thereby requiring that we pay the penalty for our sins—death.

Week One—Day Two: The Source of Salvation

The Bible clearly states that there is only one way to have a relationship with God—even though the world may claim there are many. Today, you will be reminded of the sacrifice of the One who made eternal life possible and paid the penalty for our sins.

Key
Question

Because there are so many religions in the world today, how do I know which one is right? Aren't there many ways to God and eternal life in heaven?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) Write **John 14:6** in the lines provided. According to Jesus' words, who provides the only way to have a relationship with the Father and eternal life in heaven?

2) Based on **Philippians 2:6-11**, describe who Jesus is and what He did so that we might have a relationship with God and spend eternity with Him in heaven.

3) According to **Romans 5:6-11**, for whom did Jesus die and why did He die for them (**5:6-8**)? From what does Jesus save us (**5:9**) and what does He give us (**5:10-11**).

4) After reading **1 Corinthians 15:1-8**, what happened to Jesus after He died on the cross and was buried?

Summary

Although the world may tell us there are many ways to God, the Bible emphatically states there is only one way for us to have a relationship with Him. One of the most quoted verses from the Bible states, “God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (**John 3:16**). In yesterday’s study, you were reminded that we all need a Savior because we have sinned and done evil. From the very beginning, God knew that we couldn’t save ourselves, so He sent His Son to die on our behalf and save us.

Jesus, who is both God and man, was the only perfect sacrifice who could remove the sin of the world. Although He experienced temptation and emotions just as we do, He never once sinned, so He could be that perfect sacrifice (**Hebrews 4:15-16**). As God in human form, Jesus humbled Himself by becoming a servant to pay the penalty for our sin by dying on the cross (**Philippians 2:6-8**). Without Jesus’ death on the cross, we would have no sacrifice for our sins and we would be hopelessly separated from God for eternity.

According to **Romans 5:6-11**, Jesus died for each of us—even though we were His enemies and we rebelled against Him, He loved us so much that He died in our place. Because God is perfect, He cannot tolerate sin and must punish it; therefore, when Jesus paid the penalty for our sin, God removed His wrath against us and now sees us through the blood of Christ, allowing us to spend eternity with Him. After Jesus died and was buried, the story does not stop there, but rather God raised Him from the dead so that He might be the guarantee that we will spend eternity in heaven.

Week One—Day Three: The Method of Salvation

Now that we have seen that Jesus Christ is the sole source of salvation and no other way exists to spend eternity with God, we must learn how we can begin this relationship with Him. The world asserts that being a member of a particular church or religion, being baptized, following certain rituals, or doing good deeds can earn salvation. However, the Bible states that we cannot attain salvation by doing any of these things.

Key
Question

How can I have eternal life? Am I able to spend eternity with God if I am a good person or if I do good works?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) How does **Romans 6:23** describe salvation (eternal life)?

2) After reading **Ephesians 2:8-9**, how would you respond to someone who makes the claim that we must do good works in order to be saved?

3) What does it mean that we are saved by grace? How would you define grace? Hint: **Romans 6:23** would be a great way to define grace.

4) What does **1 John 1:9** & **Romans 10:9-10** say that we must do in order to be saved?

5) What does **Acts 3:19** say we must do in order to be saved? What does it mean to repent?

Summary

The Bible clearly attests that we can only inherit eternal life by having a relationship with Jesus Christ. On our own, we can do nothing to inherit eternal life as it is a free gift from God (**Romans 6:23**). One does not pay for a gift nor does he work for it, but rather it is freely given. The gift in this case is a relationship with Jesus which leads to eternal life. Once we were dead in our sins, but through Christ's death on the cross we can have eternal life and be made alive with Him (**Ephesians 2:1-4**). Therefore, there is nothing that we can do to earn salvation—we cannot do enough good works to inherit eternal life (**Ephesians 2:8-9**). Salvation is dispensed because of God's grace—that is receiving a gift that we do not deserve.

In order to receive this gift, we must accept it by confessing our sins; confessing simply means that we communicate to God that we are sorry for sinning against Him and ask for forgiveness (**1 John 1:9**). In addition, after we confess, we must repent of our sins (**Acts 3:19**); to repent means that we stop living in continual sin and turn back to God. Although we still will make mistakes at times, we no longer live continually in sin. Finally, we are to give Jesus first place in our lives (**Romans 10:9-10**). God should be the most important person in our lives—so that we desire to spend time with Him through prayer and Bible study each day. After we are saved, God helps us by sending His Holy Spirit to guide and direct us, so that we may persevere to the end of our lives in serving and worshiping God.

Week One—Day Four: The Permanence of Salvation

After establishing that salvation is a gift of God given on account of His grace, the Bible demonstrates that we can have assurance of salvation in our lives which no one can ever take from us. Even though we do not become perfect and sinless after we are saved, the Bible teaches us that once we are saved we cannot lose our salvation even if we stumble in sin from time to time.

Key
Question

If I sin, can I lose my salvation?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) How does **1 John 5:11-13** affirm that we can be certain and know that we have eternal life?

2) What assurance does Jesus give to His “sheep” (i.e., those who have a relationship with Him) in **John 10:28-29**?

3) According to **Romans 8:38-39**, what can separate us from the love of God?

4) Based on **Jude 24**, what is God (i.e., the pronoun He in this verse) able to help us do?

Summary

When we accept the salvation offered through Jesus' sacrifice, we can have assurance that we have eternal life and should not have any doubt that we could lose it. In **1 John 5:11-13**, John writes this letter so that we might know that we have salvation. We do not need to guess or assume or even wonder if we are saved, but we can know with confidence that God has saved us through His Son. John states plainly that He who has the Son has eternal life—remember we invite Jesus, the Son, into our lives through confession, repentance, and by making God the priority in our lives.

Once we invite Jesus into our lives, He lives there permanently and will never ever leave us or abandon us; there is nothing that we can do to make Him love us any less—just like a parent who loves his child unconditionally. Because of the Father's love for us and the greatness of His power, nothing can take the eternal life that He gives us away from us (**John 10:28-29**). There is nothing that we can do or say or have happen to us that can cause us to lose the eternal life that we have inherited (**Romans 8:38-39**). Although we are still capable of sinning and will still stumble from time to time, we should not live in a lifestyle characterized by sin; therefore, God is the one who provides the way and the power for us to live a holy life (**Jude 24**) and He is the one who is able to help us to overcome temptation and to persevere until the end (1 Corinthians 10:13). There is no need to fear losing salvation, rather there is every need to celebrate the security and transformation that God gives in our lives.

Week One—Day Five: The Result of Salvation

When we ask Jesus to become our Savior and accept the gift of salvation that He offers, Jesus transforms us from what we once were and guides us to become more and more like Him every day. This lesson will help you to understand what that change looks like and how it requires us to participate.

Key
Question

What should my life look like after I am saved?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) How does **2 Corinthians 5:17** describe our life after we have been saved?

2) How does **Romans 6:1-7** describe how we should live after we are saved?

3) In **Romans 12:1-2**, how are we to be transformed and from what are we to be transformed?

4) If we are to follow Jesus, what does He tell us in **Luke 9:23-26** that we must do?

Summary

Although many of you may not be hardened criminals or people whom society would consider “bad,” we will all experience radical transformation when we accept Jesus’ gift of salvation. Before our salvation, our lives were self-centered and focused on meeting our own needs; however, after salvation, we focus on serving God by how we serve and relate to others. The Bible tells us that this old, selfish lifestyle which is characterized by sin passes away. Therefore, **2 Corinthians 5:17** tells us that we have become a “new creation” and all the old habits and desires have passed away. We now desire to please God and be obedient to Him rather than merely pleasing ourselves.

No longer do we live in continual sin, even though from time to time we may still sin, such as getting angry or saying harsh things to others. Instead, we put the “old” person, that is our old habits, to death so that we no longer participate in them (**Romans 6:1-7**). Every year, many people make New Year’s resolutions, but few people have the resolve to keep them; however, God enables us to live these holy lives because He sends His Spirit to guide us and remind us of His teaching (**Romans 8:1-4**). The Spirit reminds us that we no longer live according to our old standards, but we live according to our new standards in Jesus. We should constantly seek to conform our thinking to God’s, and be set apart from the world whose thinking leads to destruction (**Romans 12:1-2**). We are to renew our minds constantly by thinking on things which are above (**Philippians 4:8**).

Finally, Jesus’ statement that “if anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” means we must surrender totally to the Father. In **Galatians 2:20**, Paul sheds light on Jesus’ teaching: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” We are no longer to live in our old, sinful ways, but we are to live in Christ which is characterized by holiness and complete surrender.

Week One—Day Six: The Purpose of Salvation

Now that you have learned about the transformation that salvation brings, and the requirement for us to live holy lives with the help of Spirit, we must understand the purpose of our salvation. In addition to receiving eternal life, we are also saved to participate in good works and service.

Key
Question

For what purpose am I saved? Is the only reason that I am saved so that I can have eternal life and not be cast into hell?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) After reading **Ephesians 2:10**, describe the purpose of salvation.

2) Read **Matthew 25:34-40**. What implications can you draw from Jesus' teaching in this passage about the purpose of our salvation?

3) In **Leviticus 19:2**, what does God command Moses to tell Israel? How does this command relate to **Ephesians 5:1-2**?

4) According to **Galatians 5:22-25**, what are the characteristics by which we are to walk daily?

Summary

The primary purpose of salvation is that we can become more like Jesus through our obedience to God as well as our service. God desires us to represent Him to others by being holy like Him (**Leviticus 19:2**). In order to be holy like God, we must follow His example in Jesus Christ, which means that we must pattern our lives after Him (**Ephesians 5:1-2**). We do that in two ways: 1) we walk according to God's standards and 2) we do good works and serve others throughout our lives.

Throughout Scripture, God has given us characteristics by which we ought to live. Although only nine of them are listed in **Galatians 5:22-25**, there are many other characteristics that you will find as you continue to read God's word. These characteristics listed in Galatians should be present daily in our lives: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." The purpose of salvation is that we can show others the transformation that God has brought to our lives.

In addition, we are to do good works for God so that He might be glorified or praised through them. **Ephesians 2:10** notes that doing good works is an integral part of our lives after we are saved. Jesus Himself outlines some of these good works in **Matthew 25:34-40** where He teaches His disciples to meet the basic needs of others by feeding, clothing, and taking care of them. Jesus Himself came as a servant, so how much more should we also be a servant just like Him (**Mark 10:44-45**)?

Week Two



Understanding Prayer

Focal Verse:

... pray without ceasing, ...

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Week Two—Day One: *The Form of Prayer*

The purpose of this week is to help you understand what it means to pray and how we ought to pray. Jesus taught His disciples how to pray by giving them a model prayer (**Luke 11:1-13**). Prayer, simply stated, is a conversation with God which requires no technical language or form to offer. Prayer can occur at any time and in any venue, but should always be from a sincere heart. This week you will learn how to pray (the form), when to pray (the time), what to pray (the focus), and for whom to pray (yourself and others). Although there is no one specific form or type of prayer, Jesus does give His disciples a model prayer as well as some guidelines which they should follow. As you go through this lesson, you should realize that God is more interested in the sincerity of our hearts than He is with the content and wording of our prayers.

Key
Question

How am I to pray? Should I use special forms or special and technical language when I pray?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) What does Jesus teach His disciples about prayer in **Matthew 6:5-6**?

2) How does Jesus say that we should **NOT** pray in **Matthew 6:6-7**?

3) According to **Matthew 6:10** in what way should we pray? (Hint: Focus on the second sentence.)

4) What does **James 1:6** say about how we should ask for something when we pray?

5) What do **Hebrews 4:16** and **1 John 5:14-15** say about the attitude with which we ought to pray?

Summary

Every time that we pray, we should have a sincere heart and pray earnestly—not like a hypocrite who does it to show off (**Matthew 6:5-6**). We do not need to use big words or repetition when we pray, but rather we need to give thanks and make requests to God with sincerity. Hypocrites pray with big words and fancy forms so that others can hear them praying and give them glory for the knowledge and eloquence with which they pray (**Matthew 6:7-8**). Although praying in public in church is not wrong, God expects us to pray daily when we are alone with Him so that we can express our inmost desires to Him.

As we learned in last week's lesson on salvation, our desires have changed and we have become a new creation in Christ. Because of this change in desire, we should pray according to God's will and not the former desires by which we once lived (**Matthew 6:10**). God wants the best for us. Because He knows history from beginning to end, we should pray according to His will for us.

Therefore, when Scripture states that we can receive anything for which we ask, we must ask according to God's will. If God says "no" to something that we ask, we must not think that we do not have enough faith or we have done something wrong—rather we need to ask whether or not we were praying according to God's will. Finally, when we pray according to God's will, we can pray with boldness and confidence (**Hebrews 4:16 and 1 John 5:14-15**). Therefore, we should have confidence and not doubt when we pray, but rather pray expectantly for God to answer (**James 1:6**).

Week Two—Day Two: The Time of Prayer

The Bible features many different types of prayers by different people at different times in their lives. We will not be able to cover all the different types of communication with God in this brief lesson, but the most-important aspect we can learn is to be in a constant attitude of prayer and thanksgiving.

Key
Question

When should I pray? Is there a specific time? Should I pray just before meals or just before I go to bed?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) According to **1 Thessalonians 5:17-18**, when or how much are we to pray?

2) In **Luke 18:1-8**, how often does Jesus teach His disciples to pray?

3) Read **Daniel 6:8-22**. How often did Daniel pray? Where did he pray? In what position did Daniel pray?

4) Spend time in prayer thanking God for your salvation; thank Him for loving you so much that He sent His Son to die for your sins; thank Him that you can communicate your needs to Him at any time and for any reason.

Summary

The Bible tells us in numerous places that we are to be in a constant attitude of prayer (**1 Thessalonians 5:17 and Luke 18:1**). We can pray to God at any time and for any reason; we can pray silently as we drive down the road; we can pray for people who we know need a relationship with Jesus while we are visiting and talking to them; we can pray silently in church when others are leading us in prayer.

We do not need to wait for a formal time where we bow our heads and kneel on our knees and even lift up our hands—certainly we can pray in this posture like Daniel did three times a day (**Daniel 6:8-22**), but bowing our head and kneeling is not a prerequisite for prayer. The most-important principle that we can learn from Daniel is that he prayed daily and nothing, not even a law passed by the king, would discourage him from praying.

Week Two—Day Three: The Focus of Prayer: Praise and Thanksgiving

The Bible clearly teaches that prayer is communication with God and, therefore, praise and thanksgiving should always be directed toward Him. God is gracious and merciful to us in many ways; consequently, we should offer praise and thanksgiving unto Him alone. Our prayers should always begin by thanking God for who He is and what He has done.

Key
Question

Who should be the focus of our prayer?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) To whom does Jesus tell the disciples to pray in **Matthew 6:9**? What does the word “hallowed” mean?

2) For what two things does Paul say that we should pray in **Colossians 4:2-4**? With which one of the two does Paul begin?

3) According to **Philippians 4:6-7**, how should we make our requests and petitions made known to God?

4) Read **1 Chronicles 16:34** and **Psalms 7:17**. For what reason should we give thanks to God?

4) Spend time in prayer, but before you do list some of the things that God brings to mind for which you can be thankful.

Summary

When we pray, we should always begin by thanking God for who He is and what He has done. Teaching His disciples how to pray, Jesus says that we must give praise and thanks to the Father. The word “hallowed” means holy which is actually praise directed toward God for His goodness (**Matthew 6:9**). Prayer should never become merely a list of requests in which we seek God to meet our needs or the needs of others. Too many times as we grow in our walk with God, we forget to give Him thanks for who He is. For instance, we should give God thanks for His love and righteousness (**1 Chronicles 16:34 and Psalm 7:7**). Although these are just two examples of how we should give God thanks, there are many more reasons that can be listed here. In just the few minutes that you pondered why you can be thankful in question five above, you probably thought of several different ways. Remember to give God thanks in everything!

Week Two—Day Four: The Requests of Prayer: Forgiveness, Strength, and Wisdom

After giving God thanks, we should pray for our spiritual needs. Although we cannot list all our spiritual needs in this lesson, it will acquaint you with some of the areas for which we should pray: forgiveness (to be forgiven and help to forgive others), strength, and wisdom.

Key
Question

How should I pray for my needs? What type of requests should I make known to God?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) Read **Matthew 6:10-15** and **1 John 1:9**. According to these verses, for what things are we to pray?

2) How does **1 Corinthians 10:13** relate to the model prayer you read above in **Matthew 6:10-15**?

3) If you have a decision to make, what does **James 1:5-6** say that we should do?

4) According to **1 Chronicles 16:11**, for what should we pray? What does it mean to seek the face of the Lord?

5) In what areas do you need to ask God for forgiveness, strength, and wisdom? Be specific as God brings these areas to mind and write them here.

Summary

After we praise God for who He is and what He has done, then we should pray for our spiritual needs. First, we need to ask God for forgiveness for anything which we have done wrong (**Matthew 6:12 and 1 John 1:9**). Because sin separates us from God, we need to confess our sin and ask for forgiveness to be able to enter God's presence confidently. Not only should we ask for forgiveness, but we need to ask for assistance in avoiding temptation. We should ask God to help us overcome temptation so that we do not sin against Him because only He can strengthen us through His Spirit to battle temptation (**1 Corinthians 10:13 and Matthew 6:13**).

Second, we need to pray for our attitude with other human beings. We should desire others to see Christ's attitude in us. When we are wronged by others, we need to forgive them just as God has forgiven us (**Matthew 6:14-15**). Therefore, we need to ask God to help us love others and be in a position to meet their needs as well.

Third, we need to pray to ask God for strength to do His will. In **1 Chronicles 16:11**, when the text reads that we should "seek His face evermore," it merely means that we should seek to know God and His will for our lives. We should always pray to God for strength to do that to which He has called us. Not only should we pray for strength, but we should also pray for wisdom to help us to know what God would have us to do (**James 1:5-6**); without strength and wisdom from God, we are doomed for failure.

Week Two—Day Five: The Requests of Prayer: Physical Needs

As we learned yesterday, we can pray that God would meet our spiritual needs; yet, we can also pray that He would meet our physical needs with which He is equally concerned. Physical needs can include everything from food, shelter, clothing, and our health. Even though God knows what we need even before we ask it, He still desires us to pray because it demonstrates that we depend upon Him.

Key
Question

How should I pray for my physical needs?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) According to **Matthew 6:11**, for what are we to ask God?

2) Read **Matthew 6:25-34**. What does God promise about meeting our physical needs? What should our response be?

3) Read **Luke 11:5-13**. What does Jesus say that God's attitude is toward meeting our physical needs?

4) Spend time in prayer thanking God for meeting your physical needs. If you have any needs, list them here and spend time praying for them.

Summary

God desires us to pray for any of our physical needs that we may have: food, shelter, clothing, health, or anything else (**Matthew 6:11**). God does not want us to worry about anything, but rather trust in Him wholly to meet our needs. If we seek God and place Him first in our lives, then He will give us what we need and take care of us even better than He does the rest of creation (**Matthew 6:25-34**). God is not angered or frustrated when we ask Him to meet our physical needs; rather He responds with joy because it shows that we trust Him. If we as humans know how to give good gifts to one another even, how much more would God who is the Giver of everything good give these things to us when we ask (**Luke 11:5-13**)?

Week Two—Day Six: The Inclusiveness of Prayer: Praying for Others

Although we should ask God for the things we need, our prayers should not be self-centered. Rather, they ought to include praying for the needs of others. As you read the Bible, you will find many other ways we can pray for others.

Key
Question

How can I pray for others?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) According to **James 5:15-16**, what are two ways that we can pray for others?

2) Read **Ephesians 6:18-20** and **Colossians 4:2-4**. In what ways does Paul ask others to pray for him?

3) According to **1 Tim 2:1-4**, in what way are we to pray for others?

4) Spend time praying for others. What needs has God brought to your mind? List them here.

Summary

When we pray for others, we can pray for them much like we do for ourselves. We can pray for their spiritual needs as well as their physical needs, such as those in our community who are sick. We still need to pray that God's will be done in every situation so that He may be glorified (**James 5:15-16**).

Moreover, we need to pray that others, as well as ourselves, will share the good news of Jesus Christ and the salvation that He offers. Paul earnestly desires both the Ephesians and Colossians to pray for him so that he may speak the message of Jesus boldly and accurately (**Ephesians 6:18-20 and Colossians 4:2-4**). Furthermore, we need to pray that leaders around the world would have wisdom which comes from God and they might not hinder the spread of the gospel (**1 Timothy 2:1-4**).

These are only a few of the ways that we can pray for others. As you seek God and His wisdom, He will be faithful to reveal more ways that you can pray not only for yourself, but those around you. All we need to do is to be faithful to converse with God every day through prayer with a sincere heart.

Week Three



Understanding Community

Focal Verse:

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

Ephesians 2:19

Week Three—Day One:
The Purpose of the Church—To Worship God

Now that you have a relationship with Jesus you have become a member of a larger community known as the church; you must begin to understand that the church consists of everyone who has a relationship with Jesus and has received salvation. Although every believer is a member of the church at large, God places individual believers in local communities in which they are to worship, grow in their faith, participate in service, and spread the gospel—that is the news about the salvation Jesus offers. This week you will learn what your role in the church is and how to participate actively in the local church in order to grow, fellowship, and minister with other believers.

Key Question What does it mean to worship God? Do we worship God only when we are in church singing songs on Sunday?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) Read **Exodus 20:3-7**, **Matthew 6:33-34**, and **22:36-40**. What do these verses say about the place that God should have in our lives and about our relationship to Him?

2) Read **Matthew 22:36-40**, **Psalms 8:1-8**, and **John 14:15** and explain how they instruct us to worship God.

3) Why does Paul praise God in **Ephesians 1:3-14**?

4) After reading **Romans 12:1-2** and **Ephesians 5:19-21**, describe the ways that we can praise and worship God.

Summary

The Bible clearly instructs us to give God the priority in our lives above everything else—our family, our friends, our jobs, our hobbies, and our interests. The first three of the Ten Commandments, in **Exodus 20:3-7**, state that we are not to place anything in our lives before God. If we place the pursuit of money first in our lives, it becomes an idol. If our families come before God and distract us in our relationship with Him, then they have become an idol. We are to honor and respect God in every way and spend time daily with Him through prayer and reading Scripture. In addition, Jesus tells us that we are to seek God first, live righteously and trust wholly in Him—for this reason we have nothing to fear (**Matthew 6:33-34**).

According to **Matthew 22:36-40**, worship means that we must love God with all our being—that is our hearts, souls and minds. When we love God, we want to honor and obey His Word (**John 14:15**) and we want to imitate and pattern our lives after His holiness so that we represent Him well (**Ephesians 5:1-2**). For this reason, our love for God is also displayed in how we love each other (**1 John 4:19**); we ought to love others more than ourselves and care for their needs more than our own (**Philippians 2:1-4**). The Bible tells us that we are to praise God for who He is (**Psalms 8:1-3, 7-9**) and we are to praise Him for what He has done for us (**Psalms 8:4-6**). We should praise God as Creator because His majesty, holiness, and glory far exceed our own. The universe displays the wisdom and power of God through the creation of the stars, galaxies, planets, animals, and plants. As the crown jewel of His creation, God loves mankind so much that even when we rebelled against Him, He sent a Savior to rescue us from certain death; God's plan from the very beginning was to bring every spiritual blessing, namely salvation and eternal life, to mankind (**Ephesians 1:3-4**).

When we think of worship, we often think of songs and music, but worshiping God involves so much more. We can worship God through our lifestyle of service dedicated to Him; we worship God by serving others and pointing them to a relationship with Him (**Romans 12:1-2**). Although we worship God through our service, we can still worship Him through songs of praise and by being in a spirit of worship when we fellowship with other Christians (**Ephesians 5:19-21**).

Week Three—Day Two:
The Responsibility of the Church—Tell others about Jesus
(Evangelism and Missions)

As a new believer, you may not realize that we have some responsibilities which God has commanded us to fulfill. Wherever God places us physically and whatever circumstances in which we may be, we need to tell others about Jesus and how to have a relationship with Him. Evangelism is the act of sharing the good news about Jesus with others: Jesus, who is God, came to die for our sins. After he died and was buried, on the third day God raised Him from the dead. If we confess our sins and turn from our sinful lifestyle, God will forgive us and we can have eternal life with Him. God expects us to be on mission for Him telling others in Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas, and around the world about His Son.

Key
Question

Am I required to share what I believe with others?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) According to **Matthew 28:19-20**, what did Jesus command His disciples to do?

2) Based on **Romans 10:14-17**, how does faith, that is salvation, come? What is implied by asking these rhetorical questions in these verses?

3) Read **Acts 1:8**. Who gives us the power to share the gospel (good news of Jesus' death and resurrection)? Where are we to share this good news?

4) In **Luke 14:16-24**, Jesus tells a parable, a common story with a moral lesson. Who did the man tell his slave to invite? What did he do when they made excuses? What happened to those who rejected the invitation? What does this mean for those of us when we are sharing the gospel?

Summary

Before Jesus returned to heaven after His resurrection, He commanded all His followers, including those of us living today, to share the gospel—that is the good news of the salvation that He brings through His death and resurrection (**Matthew 28:19-20**). As we are going through our daily lives, we are to be conscious of opportunities to share the gospel every day. We are to share the gospel with everyone from every nation; we are to start in our own hometown, Fort Worth, and then share the gospel to the rest of the world (**Acts 1:8**). We are to share the love of God in our workplace, in our neighborhoods, in our schools, in the store, on the street, and wherever we are.

We are not the ones who save people nor are we the one who convicts them, that is make them feel bad for their sins. Rather, the Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the power to share the gospel (**Acts 1:8**). The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the words to say, as well as, He allows us to learn and recall Scripture to use while witnessing.

Romans 10:14-17 explains that salvation (i.e., faith) comes not through our own words, but through the words of Scripture. The rhetorical questions imply that we all have been sent to take the Bible to the world so that they are able to hear how to have a relationship with God the Father through Jesus.

In **Luke 14:16-24**, Jesus tells a story about a man who invited people to a party; yet, those whom the man invited at first made excuses and rejected the invitation. As a result, others were invited in their place and the former lost their place at the party. In this story Jesus is talking about those who refuse to accept the invitation for salvation; if they reject the invitation, they will forfeit their place in heaven and be sentenced to eternal separation from God in Hell. People make all kinds of excuses for rejecting the gospel: I am not a bad person, there are many ways to get to heaven, I don't believe in God, or I want to have fun and am not ready to have a relationship with Jesus. The slave, however, was not to become discouraged and cease inviting others, but he was to continue to go to the people and beg them to come to the party—in other words, we are to continue to invite people to have a relationship with Jesus regardless of their response; those who accept will have eternal life with Him and those who reject will be sentenced to eternal separation.

Week Three—Day Three:
The Equipping of the Church—Training & Mentoring Others
(Discipleship)

The church helps us to grow in our faith, but the church is not solely the one responsible for your personal growth—you alone are accountable. God has placed the church here to help us to learn more about Him and to equip us to serve Him so that we can disciple others who are new to the faith. Today, you will learn about discipleship and how the church helps you to grow and how you can eventually become a mentor to others.

Key
Question

How do I grow in my faith and what does the Bible say about teaching other people as I grow in my faith?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) Read **Hebrews 5:12-14**. What does God expect us to do based on these verses? What does the Bible mean when it says that we ought not to be taking milk, but we should be on solid food?

2) **Titus 2:2-14** describes how older, more mature Christians ought to teach the younger, less experienced Christian. Who do you know in our church that can mentor you? What are some of the things that **Titus 2:2-14** mentions that ought to be taught?

3) What does **Ephesians 4:11-16** explain the job of a pastor or leader in the church is? How does Ephesians portray that we ought to grow in our faith?

4) Based on **Deuteronomy 6:1-12**, who has the primary responsibility for teaching children the principles of God's Word? What are some of the things that are to be taught?

Summary

God expects us to grow in our faith by praying, reading His word daily, and fellowshiping with other believers who are mature in their faith. The author of Hebrews states that we are not to remain as little children, but like any child we are to put behind our childish ways and grow in our faith. No one stays an infant who drinks only milk—which would be quite odd to us—but rather every infant progresses from milk to solid food (**Hebrews 5:12-14**). In the same way as Christians, we are to seek a deeper understanding of God's word and move from a simple, elementary understanding to a more intimate and complete understanding as God reveals Himself to us. In the church, we call this discipleship in which we not only receive teaching, but we also use what we have learned to teach others. Here at FBCFW, we have various activities that assist in becoming disciples and advancing our knowledge: Connect Classes (Sundays), Connect Groups, Adult Bible Study (Wednesdays), and many other activities that are scheduled on a quarterly or yearly basis. You should join these discipleship classes in order to grow in your faith so that you may become mature and eventually teach others just as you have been taught.

Not only do we learn through scheduled discipleship classes in the church, but we also learn through mentorships. Older, more experienced Christians in the church are to teach younger, newer Christians how to live (**Titus 2:2-14**). Experienced Christians should teach younger Christians not only the Word and what it says about conducting our lives, but they should also lead by example. As Christians, we are to grow constantly in our faith and seek to live holy lives that please God so that we may teach others and point them into a relationship with Jesus.

In addition, parents are to teach their children. The responsibility of teaching children lies with the parents, not primarily the church. The church supplements the parent's teaching (**Deuteronomy 6:1-12**). Parents are to teach their children to love God, respect Him, and obey that which He has commanded us in His Word. God, as Father, models how we are to raise and discipline our children; therefore, we ought to pattern our parenting after His character (**Hebrews 12:5-8**). Even if you are not yet a parent, you must now begin preparing your life for this monumental responsibility that God will give you in the future if you have children.

As we have seen, teaching comes from various sources in the church: 1) parents, 2) mature Christians, and 3) discipleship classes. In the church, the pastor and staff are not the ones who do all of the work; they are not paid to be the only ones who serve in the church, the only ones who tell others about Jesus, or the only ones who reach

out to the community, which is a common misconception of many people who attend church today. Instead, the pastor and staff are to teach and equip members to serve in the church, share the gospel, and reach out to the community (**Ephesians 4:11-16**). In other words, every member in the church has a job to do and a gift to use so that the church can function to accomplish that to which God has called us (we will learn more about gifts and service in the lesson tomorrow). Growing in your faith is your responsibility, but you need to use the resources which God has given you here through this local body of believers to help you.

Week Three—Day Four:

My Role in the Church—Participating by Serving

God expects every member of the church to play an active role in serving others which in turn glorifies and honors Him. Each member of the church has a gift and he or she is responsible for using that gift to glorify God. Today, you will learn about how God has equipped you to serve in the church.

Key
Question

What is my job in the church?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) Read **John 13:3-17**. What does Jesus do for His disciples (followers)? Why does He do this (**John 13:15**)? What does this mean for us?

2) After reading **Mark 10:35-45**, why does Jesus correct James and John? What does He tell them the true sign of greatness is? Why does Jesus say that He, the Son of Man, came to earth?

3) What does **1 Peter 4:10-11** say that each Christian has been given and how are we to use what we have been given?

4) Using **1 Corinthians 12:4-31** who is gifted in the church? Why does God gift individuals in the church? Describe how members in the church work together.

Summary

Jesus leads His disciples by an example; He serves His disciples by washing their feet so that they would have a pattern to follow. Even though Jesus is God, when He came to earth, He came to serve rather than be served and to give His life as a ransom for many (**Mark 10:45**). In the same way, God expects us to demonstrate our love for Him by serving one another. **1 Peter 4:10-11** states that every member of the church has been given a gift to use to benefit the community. As a result, there is no such thing as an inactive Christian who only comes on Sundays for Bible study and worship; rather, Christians are actively serving through the church to meet the needs of the community and help it grow.

1 Corinthians 12:4-31 also shows that there are many different gifts that make up the body and each one of them is as important as the other; just like in our bodies every part has a function whether it can be seen or not by the naked eye. The heart is just as important as the lungs and the lungs are just as important as the brain which is just as important as the eyes or hands; we need all the parts of our body to function at 100%, but if even one part of the body doesn't function correctly the whole body becomes sick. The church also needs people to use their various gifts in love to serve God by serving others. **1 Corinthians 12** does not contain a list of all the gifts, but it does give an overview of the different types of gifts: teaching, serving or helping, sharing the gospel in other languages, giving, etc. We need all of these gifts to function according to the purpose that God has given the church. The main purpose of the gifts is to glorify God and grow His Kingdom by introducing others into a relationship with Jesus Christ; for this reason, although there are many gifts, there is one purpose to which we have been called.

Week Three—Day Five:
The Outlook of the Church—Serving in the Community

We live in a modern world in which one's self is the most important person; many people are selfish and look out only for their own interests, but the Bible teaches that we are to look to the interests of others and serve others more than we are to look at our own. We are to place God first in our lives, but then we are to serve others joyfully through which God is honored and glorified. This lesson will teach you what it means to serve the community around us—both in the church and outside the church.

Key
Question

How should I relate to the community around me as a Christian?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) What does **Philippians 2:1-4** state that our attitude should be toward others in the church?

2) Read **Matthew 25:34-40**. What does Jesus say that we ought to do for the community around us?

3) In **Acts 3:1-21**, what do Peter and John do for the lame man that they meet on their way to the temple? Even though we may not see healing in quite this same way in our ministry, what do they do after they heal the man in **3:13-20**?

Summary

Although many people are self-centered in today's society, God tells us that we ought to look out for the interests of others more than our own. When we serve others and take care of them, we are in actuality serving the Lord (**Philippians 2:1-4**). When we think about the needs of others more than our own, then we are unified in our purpose and we can work toward advancing the Kingdom of God.

We are not only to look out for the interests of others within the church, but we are also to look for opportunities to serve those outside the church in the community around us. Jesus, in teaching His disciples, instructs them to look out for the physical needs of others in the community. We are to feed the hungry, clothe the poor, and generally take care of the needs of others who we identify as the least in our society (**Matthew 25:34-40**).

Yet, when we are meeting the physical needs of others, we must also meet their spiritual needs. In other words, we need to introduce them into a loving relationship with Jesus. What difference does it make if someone has a house, clothes, health, or money if they do not have a relationship with Jesus? Earthly possessions like money fade away, but life with Christ is an eternal possession and worth more than any silver or gold that we can have here on earth. When Peter and John heal the lame man near the temple, they don't merely heal him physically, but they also present the good news about Jesus who died for him and through whom he can have eternal life (**Acts 3:1-21**). When we meet the physical needs of others, we must be sure to tell them the gospel so that they might know how to have eternal life.

Week Three—Day Six:
The Requirement of the Church—Being Good Stewards

Most of us make a very meager salary today in comparison to those who are wealthy, but nonetheless God expects us to give a portion of our money back to Him to support His work and advance His Kingdom. Today, you will learn what it means to tithe and give an offering. Now that you are a new believer and member of this church, you will receive offering envelopes in the mail monthly so that you can give your tithes and offerings for God’s glory and His work in FBCFW.

Key
Question

Why does the church teach that I should give money to God?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) Read **Malachi 3:1-12**. If we fail to give God our tithes, to what is it equated?

2) What kind of offerings were the people giving in **Malachi 3:1-12**? What does this say about the type of offerings that we should give?

3) What does God promise in **Malachi 3:1-12** if we give our tithes?

4) What does **2 Corinthians 9:6-7** say about our attitude when we give our offerings?

5) How did the Macedonians give in **2 Corinthians 8:1-9**? How does this apply to us?

Summary

Being a steward means that we care for all the possessions and things that God has placed in our trust; although stewardship involves more than mere money, God does expect us to give our tithes and offerings back to Him for His glory. The tithe, when instituted in **Genesis 14:18-24**, literally means one-tenth. In this passage, Abram gives Melchizedek one-tenth of everything (monies, livestock, and possessions). This would be akin to tithing on our gross income, that is the income we receive before taxes, as opposed to the net income which is after the government collects the taxes. Technically we are to give a minimum of 10% of everything that we earn per year, including gifts, inheritance, dividends, and interest from various types of accounts. Jacob also makes a vow to tithe one-tenth of all God gives him in **Genesis 28:18-22**. When constituting the Law through Moses, God commands the giving of a tithe from the first-fruits of the land and from all the produce that the people collect every year (see **Deuteronomy 14:22-29; Deuteronomy 26:12-14; Numbers 12:44**). Tithing is mentioned in the New Testament in **Hebrews 7:1-10** which refers to the offering given to Melchizedek from Abram. In addition, Jesus states the tithe should not be given legalistically, but with a right heart; in **Matthew 23:23**, Jesus does not annul the tithe, but condemns wrongful and arrogant giving. Because God has allowed us to have a job and trusted us with possessions, we must trust God with our finances and give a portion back for His work and His glory.

Offerings, on the other hand, are freewill and above the required 10% of the annual tithe. These are offerings for special projects in the church, such as building campaigns, missions, or those in need. Many passages in the New Testament refer to these offerings—they do not replace the tithe, but supplement it (**1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9; James 1:27; 1 Timothy 5:1-16**). For the offerings, we are to give willingly and joyfully according to what God has purposed us (or lead us) to give. We are to give cheerfully according to that with which God has blessed us. When giving tithes and offerings, too many people think about what they do not have rather than how God has blessed them; therefore, they often never give because they only see their lack; however, we are to give and use the resources with which God has entrusted us. Give joyfully and cheerfully and it will bless you to be able to participate in the work of the Lord.



Understanding How to Study the Bible

Focal Verse:

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15

Week Four—Day One: The Author of the Bible

As you know from the introduction, the Bible is divided into two sections, the Old and the New Testaments, and consists of 66 books penned by various human authors through divine inspiration. God used human authors to record His Word to His people in specific languages of the time: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek; today, the Bible has been faithfully and accurately translated into English and other languages around the world for people to read for themselves. In addition to the various languages of the Bible, God has also spoken through the cultural circumstances of the period to reach His people and communicate His message with them in a way that could be clearly understood (**Hebrews 1:1-4**). Since the Bible is the Word of God and comes directly through His inspiration, it contains no errors and is entirely true. Therefore, we can trust it and we must do what it says. This week you will learn how to study God's Word more effectively and a little more about its contents. This is only a simple study to give you the basics, so feel free to ask the staff for further clarification if there is any principle that you do not understand.

Key
Question

Did God or men write the Bible? Why does the Bible have human authors listed?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) Who does **2 Timothy 3:16** say inspired the writing of the Bible?

2) Who does **2 Peter 1:19-21** say inspired men to write the Bible that is the prophecies or Word of God contained therein? When we interpret the Bible who helps us?

3) In **Exodus 34:27**, who does God use to write the first five books of the Old Testament? Even though this person wrote down these books, who is technically the author?

4) What does **Hebrews 4:12** call the Bible?

Summary

God used the personality and the hands of men to write His Word; God inspired the Prophets in the Old Testament to speak a word of warning (e.g., “the word of the Lord came to . . .” such as in **Isaiah 38:4**) to the people, urging them to repent or face the consequences of judgment. God used men to record His Word for His people and it never becomes out of date. Its message still applies to people today when rightly understood according to the original context. For example, **2 Timothy 3:16** demonstrates that every chapter and verse in the Bible, that is every Scripture, is inspired by God; if man would have written the Bible on his own, it would be riddled with errors and fraught with problems. However, God took great care to inspire men to record His Word carefully and accurately by inspiring them through His Holy Spirit. **2 Peter 1:19-21** also notes that the Holy Spirit gives us correct interpretation of the Word as well. In both the Old and New Testaments we can see that the Bible is the Word of God (**Hebrews 4:12**) which was given to human authors like Moses, Paul, Peter, and the Prophets to name a few so that they might guide us along the correct path (**Exodus 34:27**).

Week Four—Day Two: The Accuracy of the Bible

Although the Bible never explicitly claims to be “without error,” it does claim to be God’s truth; therefore, we can deduce that if it is God’s Word then it must be in line with God’s character. If God cannot lie and does not deceive people, then His Word must be truthful and accurate. As a result, we can say that God’s Word is incorruptible, infallible, and inerrant.

Key
Question

Does the Bible have errors in it? Does it still apply today even though it was written more than 2000 years ago?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) Read **Numbers 23:19**, **Titus 1:2**, and **Hebrews 6:18**. What do all these verses say about God’s character? If this is true, what can we infer about the Bible?

2) Read **Psalms 139:1-4**, **Psalms 147:5** and **Hebrews 4:13**. What do these verses say about God’s character? If this is true, then what can we imply about the Bible from these verses?

3) What does **Psalms 119:160** say about God’s Word? What do **John 17:17** and **2 Timothy 2:15** call God’s Word?

4) **Hebrews 4:12** states, “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” What does this verse mean? What does it mean that the Word of God is “living and powerful?”

Summary

Throughout Scripture, God has an impeccable character when compared to the rest of mankind who is unrighteous and self-serving. God, in contrast, is righteous, fair, holy, and loving. Because of His character, God cannot lie nor does He deceive people as can be seen through **Numbers 23:19**, **Titus 1:2**, and **Hebrews 6:18**. If God cannot lie and does not deceive people, then it follows that His Word must also be true and accurate. God's wisdom is also infinite; He knows history from beginning to end. For this reason, God is not surprised or distracted by human events, but rather He knows what will happen even before it happens. We can observe God's omniscience, that is He knows everything, in **Psalms 139:1-4**, **Psalms 147:5** and **Hebrews 4:13**. God knows everything about us; He knows what we are going to say and do even before it happens. If this is true, then His Word will be true and accurate because God knows human history and events even before they happen and He already has a plan for the course of history and is surprised by nothing.

At many points, the Bible refers to itself as the Word of truth (**Psalms 119:160**; **John 17:17**; **2 Timothy 2:15**). If God cannot lie and He knows everything that will happen, then His Word undoubtedly contains truth and is accurate. Since the Bible is inerrant and infallible, then it is also relevant for today. **Hebrews 4:12** calls the Bible "living and powerful." If something is living, then it is dynamic and relevant for today; the times may have changed and some of the cultural practices may have changed, but the principles behind God's Word are still relevant and true for today. For example, God from the very beginning of time designed marriage to be between one man and one woman for life—any other cultural practice, including divorce and immorality, violates God's design. This is just one example among many that we could list to demonstrate that God's Word still applies to us today.

Week Four—Day Three: The Purpose of the Bible

The Bible contains God’s plan for salvation through Jesus and helps us to understand how to have a relationship with Him so that we might have eternal life in Heaven. In addition, the Bible also provides us with a pattern for living; thus, it teaches us how to honor God by living holy lives.

Key
Question

How do we know what truth is? How do we judge what our life should be like?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) From **Psalms 119:9-16**, what can you learn about the purpose of the Bible?

2) From **Psalms 119:105-106**, what can you learn about the purpose of the Bible?

3) According to **2 Timothy 3:15-16** what are the four things that the Bible helps us to do?

4) How does God’s Word function in **John 12:48**?

Summary

If the Bible is God's Word and is completely true, then we ought to live by what it says and our lives should be judged by its standards. **Psalm 119:9-16** tells us that we ought to internalize God's word—that is to know it by heart—so that we are able to apply what it says so that we do not sin against God (**verse 11**). The Bible, therefore, informs us what is pure and holy and what our lives ought to look like; for this reason the Psalm asks, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word" (**verse 9**). Every one of man's standards is imperfect and we cannot judge our lives by the imperfect standards of other humans; however, God's standards are perfect and they enable us to have a perfect measuring line by which to judge our lives and actions. This is why **John 12:48** notes that the Bible is the standard by which we are judged; therefore, Jesus says, "the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day."

The Word of God guides us and helps us to make our decisions (**Psalm 119:105-106**). At night without the aid of artificial light from a streetlight or flashlight or even the natural light of the moon and stars, staying on a path becomes difficult if not impossible. Even if we were on the path, without light we would not see any obstacles in our way. It would be like wandering through the house in pitch darkness groping for the walls, doorways, and furniture. Although we may know the layout of our home, sometimes unexpected obstacles like shoes or a chair out of place cannot be seen and we stumble and stub our toe or even fall. The Bible guides our lives so that we can see our path and we can avoid the life choices that cause us to stumble and fall.

God's Word also describes God's plan of salvation. The entire Old Testament points to the coming Savior, that is Jesus Christ, who died on the cross so that those who believe in Him, confess their sins, and repent may have eternal life (**2 Timothy 3:15**). In addition to describing God's plan of salvation for everyone, the Bible also convicts, i.e., makes us feel bad about our sin, it corrects us, and it teaches us the right way that we ought to live (**2 Timothy 3:16**).

Week Four—Day Four: The Application of the Bible

Every part of the Bible is applicable for today. Although customs and technology may change, the principles outlined in God’s Word remain valid and useful for teaching. God’s Word is not just another book that we should read, but we should practice its principles in our lives; therefore, it’s basically an instruction manual for how we live our lives. This week you will learn principles about how to read and apply God’s Word to your life.

Key
Question

Even though some of the Bible seems old fashioned and out-of-date, do I still need to live by its principles?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) How does **John 8:31-32** say that we ought to apply the Bible or the Word of God?

2) Read **2 Timothy 3:15-17**. How does **verse 17** state that we ought to apply the Word of God?

3) What does **2 Timothy 2:15** state about handling the Word of God?

Summary

If we have a relationship with Jesus, then our obedience to His Word marks us as His disciples (**John 8:31-32**). Moreover, in order to know how to obey Jesus we must study the contents of His Word. Our obedience not only marks us as His disciples, but it also shows how much we love Him (**John 14:15**). When we understand the Bible, then we are able to participate in the good works which God has called us to perform (**2 Timothy 3:17**). These good works are not the cause of our salvation, but they are a result of our salvation and our growth in the Lord. Finally, **2 Timothy 2:15** states that we are to study God's Word so that we can rightly apply it. If we don't study it on a daily basis and seek the Holy Spirit's help in understanding it through prayer, then we will never know the contents and we will never know whether or not we or others are rightly applying it.

Reading the Bible within its context, that is both the historical and literary, is of utmost importance. A passage does not mean whatever the reader wishes to read into it, but rather it means what God intended to inspire the writer to pen in the text. Although some advocate that you can merely throw open the pages of the Bible and start reading anywhere, this is a dangerous method because it can lead you to distort the meaning of Scripture. For example, this method was practiced in a counseling seminar that I attended several years ago. Submitting to the teacher, I opened my Bible randomly to the book of Isaiah and the first text that I read was “there is no hope for you.” Imagine if you are seeking counseling and stressed thinking of taking your life and the first thing that you read is “there is no hope for you.” God never intended us to open His Word randomly, but to read it in its context. This lesson will teach you why context is important.

Key
Question

Why is it important to read Scripture within its context?

Study the Word (The Bible)

Read Luke 15:1-32:

In order to study God’s word correctly as we are commanded in **2 Timothy 2:15**, we need to follow a few principles that will help us.

1. Never start reading in the middle of a passage; read what comes before and after the passage (in this case what comes before and after **Luke 15**).
2. Look for dialogue:
 - a) who is talking,
 - b) what are they talking about, and
 - c) what is the point of their dialogue.
3. Look for repeated words or phrases as you read through the passage.
4. Look for figures of speech and determine what they mean within the context of the passage.

Study the Word (The Bible)

Read Ephesians 5:1-6:9:

Using the same method as outlined yesterday, summarize the main sections of the passage. In addition to the steps that you performed yesterday, also complete the following steps:

1. Look for the actions of God compared to the actions of man.
2. Look for comparison and contrast.
3. Look for cause and effect.
4. Identify the commands in the text—this is the most important because these are the things that we ought to be doing.
5. Look for repeated words.
6. Look for figures of speech and identify what they mean.
7. Identify the main point(s) of the passage.



OUR EXAMPLE

Understanding Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Focal Verse:

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:4

Week Five—Day One: The Reason for Baptism

During His earthly ministry, Jesus taught His disciples that the church must observe two practices that will remind them of what He has done for them. First, He institutes baptism as a way of reminding Christians about the death and burial to their old way of life and their being raised to walk in a new life—just as He Himself died, was buried, and raised again. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, not because He had need of forgiveness for His sin, for He was perfect and sinless, but as an example of obedience for us to follow. If you have not been baptized scripturally, that is being immersed or placed fully under water after you were saved, not as an infant who was unaware, then please contact one of the pastoral staff for more information at **(817) 485-7711**. This week you will learn that baptism has no power to save, but only symbolizes the inner change that has occurred when Jesus came to reside within your heart.

Second, on the night before His crucifixion, Jesus taught His disciples to take the Passover Meal, which we call the Lord's Supper so that they would remember what He had done for them. Like baptism, the Lord's Supper cannot save us, but it does remind us of Jesus' horrific death on the cross whereby He shed His blood so that we might be saved. Like baptism, the Lord's Supper is only a reminder of what Jesus has done for us and it has no special power to save. This week you will learn what the Bible says about these two ordinances or practices: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Key
Question

Why and when should I be baptized?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) According to **Mark 16:16**, when should we be baptized?

2) According to **Acts 8:26-38**, when was the Ethiopian Eunuch baptized? What had happened to him along the road before he was baptized?

3) Based on John the Baptist's message in **Matthew 3:11**, what does baptism symbolize in our lives? What is the difference between John's baptism and Jesus' baptism?

4) Baptism is a public profession of what change has occurred within us. In **Acts 2:41**, what happens to these people after they are baptized?

Summary

Baptism is the public symbol of our inward change in Jesus; the act of baptism itself cannot save you, but is only merely a reflection of the change that Jesus has begun within you. According to Scripture, we are baptized only after we have come to a realization that we are sinners and have confessed our sins and repented, asking Jesus to take first place in our lives (**Mark 16:16**). For example, the Ethiopian Eunuch in **Acts 8:26-38** is not baptized before he understands what it means to have a relationship with Jesus; on the contrary, Philip explains the Scriptures to him, the Ethiopian is saved, and only then does he seek to be baptized.

Although we will talk about the symbolism behind baptism tomorrow, we can understand from **Matthew 3:11** that it signifies the outward repentance or turning from one's sin. John the Baptist states that Jesus will come and He will baptize in a different manner with the Holy Spirit and fire; what John means is that Jesus changes the heart and the inner desires which a water baptism cannot do. Water baptism is only a symbol of that inward change; a relationship with Jesus changes the heart.

In Acts, baptism is also the way to show that we belong to the community of God, the church. When 3000 people were saved on the day of Pentecost in **Acts 2:41**, the text notes that 3000 souls were added to the church that day. Although baptism shows outwardly that we belong to the church, it does not save us as we will see on day three.

Week Five—Day Two: The Meaning of Baptism

As we have been stressing this week, baptism is only a symbol of what has happened to us inwardly. Baptism cannot save, but it does remind us of the work of Jesus who can. Today, you will learn what baptism means along with when we should be baptized.

Key
Question

What does baptism mean? When should I be baptized?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) Read **Romans 6:4-11**. According to **Romans 6:4**, what does being raised from the water in baptism symbolize? What does this say about the way our lives ought to look after we begin a relationship with Christ?

2) According to **Romans 6:5-7**, what does being placed under the water during baptism symbolize?

3) Based on **Romans 6:8-11**, of which promise does baptism remind us?

4) Read **Acts 10:47**, **Acts 16:30-33**, and **Galatians 3:25-27**. When were all these people baptized?

Summary

The Bible clearly demonstrates that salvation comes through the shedding of Jesus' blood on the cross by grace—not through works or religious practices like baptism or participating in the Lord's Supper. If you rely on baptism or the Lord's Supper to help you to have eternal life, your faith is misplaced and you have no hope. (Please review week one if you need further clarification.) Throughout the New Testament, baptism symbolizes our spiritual death to sin; when we are plunged under the water, it symbolizes that we have died to our old way of life and we no longer live according to our old, sinful desires (**Romans 6:5-7**). When we are raised out of the water, it symbolizes that we have been raised to walk in a new way of life through which we try to become more and more like Christ each day (**Romans 6:4**). Therefore, we have put to death our old way of life and we walk in holiness in our new way of life. Consequently, baptism reminds us of God's promise to give us eternal life just like He raised Jesus to have eternal life in Heaven (**Romans 6:8-11**).

The Bible portrays baptism as occurring once one has a relationship with Jesus as his or her Lord and Savior. We call this believer's baptism because we must be saved prior to baptism for the symbolism to have meaning.

The Bible never specifies that we must be baptized as an infant without knowing why we are being baptized, but rather we are baptized when we are capable of making a decision to follow Jesus or not (**Acts 10:47**, **Acts 16:30-33**, and **Galatians 3:25-27**). We don't need to be baptized repeatedly. First Baptist will only ask you to be baptized again for two reasons: 1) you were not a believer when you were baptized the first time, such as infant baptism or 2) you were not baptized by being immersed or totally placed under water, which is a scriptural requirement for baptism. If you have any questions about these requirements or have not been scripturally baptized, please contact one of the staff by calling the church office at the number listed on day one of this week.

Week Five—Day Three: The Misunderstanding of Baptism

One of the most misunderstood practices of the church is baptism; some denominations erroneously teach that baptism is required for salvation; however, as you will learn today, we can have eternal life and go to heaven without being baptized. With that being said, however, we need to realize that baptism is a public profession of our faith and a sign of obedience to the Lord, so we must be scripturally baptized if our health and circumstances permit.

Key
Question

Do I need to be baptized to go to heaven?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) In **Luke 23:32-43**, what does Jesus say to one of the thieves on the cross? What does this statement say about the need for baptism in order for us to go to heaven?

2) According to **1 Peter 3:18-22**, what or who saves us? What is baptism unable to do according to this text? What does the text say about the symbolism of baptism? Read this carefully or you will misunderstand what is being said.

3) Read **Galatians 1:6-12**. Before answering questions on this text, in your own words based on what you have learned so far in this study, explain the gospel in very simple terms.

4) If someone tells you that you are saved either through good works, by being baptized, or by taking the Lord's Supper, based on **Galatians 1:6-12** what should you say?

Summary

As Jesus hung on the cross between two thieves, one of the thieves sought forgiveness from Jesus and asked Him for eternal life; Jesus granted one of them eternal life and said today he would be with Him in paradise, or Heaven (**Luke 23:32-43**). Baptism by immersion in water would have been impossible for the two as they hung there dying on the cross; yet, Jesus promises the thief eternal life. By implication, baptism is not a prerequisite for salvation, but rather it's a mere sign of obedience when we are physically capable of being baptized. If one cannot be baptized, however, it does not mean that he cannot go to Heaven.

In addition, **1 Peter 3:18-22** demonstrates that salvation comes through the death of Jesus whereby He shed His blood for our sins (**3:18**). Baptism cannot remove sin from our lives—Peter here says that it is “not the removal of the filth of the flesh”; thus, it is only a symbol “of a good conscience toward God” (**3:21**). Baptism itself does not save and it cannot wash away one's sins; if people are not saved when they enter the water all they have done is had a physical bath. Salvation comes only through Jesus Christ of which baptism is only a symbol.

The gospel is simple: We need a Savior because we have all sinned and we are all disobedient to God's commands; therefore, our punishment is death. We cannot save ourselves because the penalty requires a perfect sacrifice in our place. As a result, God loved us so much that He sent His Son to die in our place. Consequently, we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ when we ask forgiveness for our sins and turn from our wicked lifestyle. When we turn from our evil deeds and make Jesus the first priority of our life, then God will be faithful to save us and give us eternal life. Any other teaching than this, including that baptism or works saves, is erroneous and a false gospel and should be wholly rejected (**Galatians 1:6-12**).

Week Five—Day Four: The Reason for the Lord's Supper

Today you will learn about the Lord's Supper and why we should participate in it and of what setting it reminds us. You will also learn who should participate in the Lord's Supper; we will learn more about the symbolism behind this ordinance on day five.

Key
Question

Why should we participate in the Lord's Supper?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) In **Matthew 26:1-2**, what does Jesus say is about to happen to Him?

2) In **Matthew 26:17-30**, with whom does Jesus eat the Passover?

3) In **Matthew 26:26-28**, what two things does Jesus do in these verses?

4) In **1 Corinthians 11:23**, who commands us to participate in the tradition of the Lord's Supper?

Summary

We participate in the Lord's Supper as a reminder of Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross; this is why Jesus takes the bread and breaks it and drinks from the cup (**Matthew 26:26-28**). These are only symbolic actions to remind us of what Jesus did for us; there is no power for salvation in them and they do not literally become the blood and body of Jesus as some denominations teach. They merely serve as a reminder about Jesus' brutal death on the cross and His blood shed for us (**Matthew 26:1-2**). Only Christians should participate in taking the Lord's Supper; Christ shared the Supper with His disciples. For this reason, local churches should celebrate the Lord's Supper within their community in an intimate setting whereby only members of that church participate. We are to participate in the Lord's Supper not because it's human tradition passed along, but because Jesus Christ has commanded us to do so in remembrance of Him (**1 Corinthians 11:23**). Tomorrow you will learn more about the symbolism and how to prepare for receiving the Lord's Supper.

Week Five—Day Five: The Meaning of the Lord's Supper

Because of what it symbolizes, the Lord's Supper is to be taken seriously with the utmost respect and reverence. We must know what each of the parts symbolize and the importance behind them. This lesson will teach you what the symbols mean and how to prepare and to participate in the Lord's Supper.

Key
Question

What does the Lord's Supper mean? Is there any significance behind the bread and the cup?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) Read **1 Corinthians 11:20-34**. What does the bread represent (**11:23-24**)? What does the cup represent (**11:25-26**)? How does this relate to the historical event about which you studied yesterday?

2) What must we do prior to participating in the Lord's Supper in **1 Corinthians 11:28**? What does this mean?

3) What happens if a person drinks or eats the Lord's Supper unworthily in **1 Corinthians 11:27-29**?

Summary

The Lord's Supper recalls the historical event of the death of Jesus on the cross. The two elements that are most significant to the Lord's Supper are the bread and the cup. The bread is broken just like Jesus' body was beaten and mangled for our sake; although He did not have any broken bones, Jesus' body was abused and battered beyond recognition as a man. Jesus suffered a slap to the face, punches to the face by soldiers, whippings, soldiers spat upon Him, they plucked His beard, and they placed a crown of thorns on His head. He was then forced to carry His crossbeam to the site of the crucifixion where He was nailed on a cross through His wrists and feet. To ensure He was dead after hanging on the cross for a while, a soldier pierced Jesus' side with a spear all the way to the heart causing blood and water to flow out. This battering is what the breaking of the bread symbolizes.

Moreover, Jesus experienced much blood loss during this event; the cup represents Jesus' blood poured out for our sins. At the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus sweat drops of blood; when He was being whipped He suffered tremendous blood loss from lacerations on His back, the crown of thorns bruised Jesus' temple and caused blood to flow from His forehead, the nails through the hands and feet caused additional blood loss on the cross, and finally the spear to the side brought forth both blood and water. Jesus shed His blood and poured out His life for us.

Therefore, the Lord's Supper is to be taken seriously. We are to examine our lives before we take it and make sure that we confess any sins that we may have committed. Moreover, we need to focus on the cost of our salvation which is Jesus being so brutally slain so we must put all other things out of our mind and focus solely on our relationship with Him. If we eat in a manner unworthy of the Lord's Supper, God will judge us and punish us; God wants us to take it seriously and remember Jesus' sacrifice every time we participate in it.

Week Five—Day Six: The Old Testament Connection with the Lord's Supper

Today, you will learn how the Passover in Exodus foreshadows the physical death of Jesus upon the cross. Both offer deliverance—the Passover in Exodus from physical enslavement to Egypt and the sacrifice of Jesus in the New Testament from spiritual bondage to sin. Through the blood of Christ, we receive life and do not have to face the second eternal death whereby those who have no relationship with Jesus are separated from God forever.

Key
Question

What is Passover and where is it found in the Old Testament?

Study the Word (The Bible)

1) In your own words, explain what God tells Moses and the children to do for Passover in **Exodus 12:1-28**.

2) What animal did the children of Israel kill to use its blood? Read **John 1:29**. Relate this to the Passover.

3) The Passover helped Israel to remember their deliverance from Egypt by God. How does this relate to Jesus in **Romans 6:17-23**?

Summary

The Passover commemorates God's deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt which they had endured for 430 years. God sent Moses to tell the Pharaoh to let the people go, but he refused despite great signs and plagues that accompanied the message. Therefore, God told Pharaoh that if he refused, every first-born child would be killed in Egypt that night. As a result, God told the children of Israel to kill a sheep and smear the blood above and on the side of the door and then death would not befall that house when God passed over. The blood, in a sense, spared them from suffering the penalty that Egypt would suffer. In the New Testament, Jesus becomes this Passover lamb who takes away the sin of the world (**John 1:29**). Although we may face a physical death in this life, God will give us eternal life and we will not suffer that second eternal spiritual death that others will endure. Just like Israel who was delivered from physical slavery here on earth, Jesus delivers us from the slavery which we have to sin; no longer does sin have a hold on us and no longer can death affect us, but we have the free gift in God of eternal life in Jesus (**Romans 6:17-23**).

Week Five—Day Seven: The Nature of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

1) What examples from Scripture helped you to understand baptism and the Lord's Supper more fully?

2) What did the Holy Spirit reveal to you out of this text as you read it and how does it help you to recall what you have learned this week?

This concludes your five-week study. Your journey is just now beginning and we pray that you will continue reading and studying your Bible, praying, and fellowshiping with others in the church through various activities and Bible studies. Now that you have finished, begin reading the Gospel of John at a reasonable pace so that you may continue to grow in your faith. As always, we will continue to be by your side as you grow should any questions or needs arise.