



CHURCH MACKAY

CHRISTIAN ESSENTIALS

PART 1



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**NEXT
STEP**
what's yours?

Contents

Page

Forward

Good News Message Presentation

The Bible - What is it and where it's from - facts and observations

Born Again - What Does It Mean?

First of All ... Pray! - Four basic categories

Adoption - Becoming a part of God's family

Building the Right Foundation - six Christian foundational doctrines in Hebrews 6:1-3.

Water Baptism - A natural step with spiritual implications

It's Who I Am - Because of Salvation

Repentance from Dead Works

What is Sin?

Faith ... the God Kind

Translations Used:

New King James Version

NKJV

New Living Translation

NLT

Good News Bible

GNB

The Voice

(VOICE)

Forward

The purpose of Christian Essentials is to examine the Gospel (Good News) message presentation, what does it mean to be born again and the foundational principles of your Christian faith.

On completion of this study you will be able to share with others your Christian belief, from the Bible and your own personal experience.

You don't really know something until you are able to express it in your own words and explain it in such a way that someone else will also understand.

After you have been born again you need to learn what being a Christian really means. You need to know what you believe, that is, who is this Jesus you believe in, who the Bible says you are now you've received salvation, why you believe these truths and the benefits that are now yours.

In the first two booklets you will be given a basic teaching on the doctrines that form the foundations of your faith. This is not a comprehensive presentation of all scripture dealing with these six pivotal issues but is designed to lay a foundation from which you can build a strong faith. These foundational doctrines are recorded in the letter to the Hebrew church as he encourages them to continue their development towards completeness.

Hebrews 6:1 *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of **repentance** from dead works and of **faith** toward God, 2 of the doctrine of **baptisms**, of **laying on of hands**, of **resurrection of the dead**, and of **eternal judgment**. NKJV*

Doctrine - a rule or principle that forms the basis of a belief, theory, or policy.

You are very special in God's eyes and so He has sent the Holy Spirit to assist you as you seek to know Him. Why not pray right now and ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand what you are about to study?

GOOD NEWS MESSAGE

Your life on earth is a journey, but one day it will end. Where will you spend eternity?

Don't Know

Not Sure

In Mark's New Testament Gospel we find Jesus said, "*Go into all, the world and preach the Good News to everyone.*" Mark 16:15 *NLT*

Paul, the Apostle, tells us in his letter to the church in Rome, "*This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight.*" Romans 1:17 *NLT*

God loves you and he wants you to experience forgiveness, healing and eternal life.

John, the Apostle, records part of Jesus' teaching, "*For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.*" John 3:16-17

Sin has separated you from God and broken your relationship with him.

"When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned." Romans 5:12 *NLT (Paul's letter)*

"Well then, should we conclude that we Jews are better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin.

As the Scriptures say, no one is righteous not even one.”
Romans 3:9-10 NLT (Paul’s letter)

Your sin and broken relationship with God lead only to death and certain judgement.

“And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment” **Hebrews 9:27 NLT (Letter to the Hebrew church. It’s uncertain who the writer was.)**

*“In flaming fire, bringing **judgment** on those who don’t know God and on those who refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with eternal destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power”* **2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 (Paul’s letter to the church in Thessalonica)**

Jesus Christ lived his life without sinning and His death on the cross was the only way God could pay for and cancel out the penalty for our sin, guilt and shame.

“But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God’s sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God’s condemnation.”
Romans 5:8-9 NLT (Paul’s letter)

Jesus made us right with God by paying the debt we accrued with our past, present and future sin, thus opening the way for God’s forgiveness to flow to us through His grace.

For it is by God’s grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God’s gift, so that no one can boast about it. **Ephesians 2:8 GNB (Paul’s letter to the church in Ephesus)**

When you trust Jesus Christ and receive Him as your Saviour, you receive forgiveness for your sins, are spiritually reborn (born again John 3:3 NKJV) and start your new life. That means, God has wiped all records of your past sins.

In the New Testament letter to the Hebrew church we're reminded of what God spoke through the Old Testament Prophet Jeremiah, "And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins. **Hebrews 8:12** NLT; **Jeremiah 31:31-34**

So now, even if you have already, place your faith in Jesus, let us pray and honour Him as your saviour? Let's pray!

"Dear Jesus, I know that I have sinned and need your forgiveness. I choose to turn away from my sin. Please forgive me! I ask you to come into my life. I accept you as my saviour and receive your forgiveness. Thank you Jesus that I am forgiven, born again and adopted into your family." AMEN

A Bible Background - Facts and Observations

It would seem there was no apparent organization to the structure of the Bible; it seems more or less spontaneous and to the eye of the casual observer, even haphazard. But that's not really how it is.

In retrospect, when we look closely, you can see that it's not at all random or haphazard, that every word works with every other word, and that all the separate documents work in intricate harmony. There was nothing accidental in any of this as the author, the Holy Spirit, inspires every scripture.

Paul, the Apostle, writes to the young Pastor, Timothy, and tells him, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness **2 Timothy 3:16** NKJV

The Bible is incredible! It may be paperback or leather bound with gold trim. It may be big or small, on your computer or phone, it really doesn't make any difference to the potential power it contains.

A striking feature in all New Testament Bible writing is that it was written in the street language of the day, the idiom [language] of the playground and marketplace.

It's God's life instruction for all mankind and at its very core is mankind's redemption through Jesus Christ. It contains God's commitment to truth, real love, covenants, forgiveness, grace, abundance, miracles and the power of eternal life.

Did you know that Christianity is the most positive, powerful, uplifting lifestyle available today?

The Bible is a composite of 66 different letters and books, 1500 years in the writing, spanning 40 generations and penned by more than 40 writers from many and varied walks of life. These include kings and peasants; businessmen, philosophers and fishermen; poets, statesmen, and scholars.

It has been called the incredible book of books.

Its author had it written in different places and in different circumstances. In the wilderness, in palaces, and dungeons inside prison walls. It was written while travelling dusty roads and on lonely islands; in peace and in war.

It was written during different and varied moods. Some wrote from the heights of joy while others wrote from the very depths of sorrow and despair. It tells of mankind at its very best and its very worst. All are shared with you in this, God's book of books.

It was written in three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe and its content was written in three languages: Hebrew, Arabic, and Greek.

It covers a multitude of different subject matter including hundreds of controversial subjects, yet with harmony and continuity from the first book of Genesis to the last book, Revelation.

It is the book of books, the book of life ... for life. It is the Holy Bible.

There's a scarlet thread of redemption that flows throughout it from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation. It's the redemptive account of the Adamic human race, that is, the lineage from Adam, the first human born of God's Spirit.

It's the truth of mankind's fall from their right standing with God (righteousness), the unfolding story of God's love and man's redemption through the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ.

You and I are loved so much by God, our father and creator, that He gave His only begotten Son Jesus, to pay the eternal price for our sin by giving up His life, nailed on a cross.

However, in paying the price, He hung on a cross, descended into hell, took the keys of hell and death and rose to eternal life, the firstborn of many who would receive salvation through Him and become new creations, children of Almighty God.

John 3:16-17; Colossians 1:21-22; Revelation 1:18

Therefore I am not ashamed of the message of the cross of Christ, the gospel, the good news of Jesus the Christ, foolishness to those who are perishing but the power of God giving salvation to everyone who believes it's truth, for the Jew first and also for you and I. **Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18**

You can't live your life to its full potential without the wisdom, knowledge and understanding found in God's word and revealed to you by the Holy Spirit.

Please Note:

In most cases, from here onwards, we will refer to different scriptures in the Bible without giving the writer's name. E.g. Mark 11:23.

The Bible is made up of two sections, one the Old Testament, that is the time before Christ's birth and the New Testament, that represents the life of Jesus Christ, his teachings and eternal impact on mankind. We may abbreviate the Old Testament - OT; the New Testament - NT

BORN AGAIN – WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

One of the amazing things that happen when you believe the gospel and receive Jesus Christ as your saviour, is you also receive an entirely new life. Your spirit receives new life and you are born again. The Bible uses many terms for this spiritual experience; born again, being saved, having our sins forgiven, a new person/creation, receiving eternal life, and/or adoption into God's family.

*12 "But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. 13 They are reborn not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God." **John 1:12-13 NLT***

BORN AGAIN

In the gospel written by the Apostle John he records a conversation between Jesus and a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader and a Pharisee. He came at night seeking wisdom from Jesus:

1 There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee.

2 After dark one evening, he came to speak with Jesus. "Rabbi," he said, "we all know that God has sent You to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with You."

3 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God."

4 "What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?"

5 Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.

6 Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.

7 So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.'
John 3:1-7 NLT

Jesus was telling Nicodemus, and you and I, that we must have a natural birth and a spiritual birth to see/perceive, and enter the Kingdom of God.

We all know how we were born in natural birth with our Mother when her water broke, but how do you have a spiritual birth?

BEING SAVED

Luke 19:10 NLT *“For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.”*

Ephesians 2:8-9 NLT *God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this. It is a gift from God; 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.*

When you receive salvation and are born again you are saved. Why can't we claim to have earned our salvation?

HAVING OUR SINS FORGIVEN

Ephesians 1:6-7 NLT *So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. 7 He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.*

How was your freedom purchased and what benefit was that to you?

Colossians 2:13-15 NLT “You were (spiritually) dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away (refer to Water Baptism study – spiritual circumcision). Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins.

14 He cancelled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.

How did God deal with your sinful nature and make you alive with Christ?

A NEW PERSON

2 Corinthians 5:17-18 NLT “This means that **anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person/new creation.** The old life is gone; a new life has begun! **18** And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task/ministry of reconciling people to him.”

How do you become a new creation and what does that mean to you?

What is the ministry of every Christian?

Ephesians 2:8 NLT God saved you by His grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God.

9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.

You were saved you by His when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a

Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us in Christ Jesus, so we can do the He planned for us long ago.

According to verse 10 what sort of life, do you feel God has planned for you?

ETERNAL LIFE

John 3:16 NLT *"For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."*

John 5:24 GNB *"I am telling you the truth: those who hear my words and believe in him who sent me have eternal life. They will not be judged, but have already passed from death to life."*

What do you need to do to receive eternal life?

First of All ... Pray!

Our goal here is not to cover every aspect of prayer in detail but to encourage you to see prayer for what it really is, connecting with your Father, Almighty God through the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus, the Christ. In doing so we are going to look at four distinct types of prayer.

The way to start the day, the way to live, your first priority prayer: "First of all pray", literally before all other things, not when you have time or as a last resort. Prayer must be your priority, God first, the first priority of every believer, is found in prayer. This is the most important activity we can engage in, connecting with God first of all, before we make any decisions that day.

How can you find time to do this?

When we pray in faith for something or someone, we open a door in the spiritual realm for God to move in the area in which we are releasing our faith. How much faith do you need? Not much!

In the Bible you find the Gospel written by Matthew, the ex tax collector who followed Jesus and became an Apostle. Matthew records Jesus telling those with Him

²⁰ "I tell you the truth, if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it would move. Nothing would be impossible."

Matthew 17:20 (NLTSE)

A mustard seed is so small it will blow out of your hand in a slight breeze, that's the unlimited power of God's faith. His faith spoke the universe into being, so we don't need very much of it to change or receive things.

Jesus said, “Only believe!” Found in the Gospel written by both Mark 5:36 & Luke 8:50

First of All Pray!

Let's look at two different Bible translations of the same scriptures. You may just understand one better than the other. They're taken from instructions given in one of Paul the Apostle's letters to the young man Timothy.

1 Timothy 2:1-6 (Complete Jewish Bible CJB)

[2:1] First of all, then, I counsel that petitions (supplications), prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all human beings [men], [2] including kings and all in positions of prominence; so that we may lead quiet and peaceful lives, being godly and upright in everything.

[3] This is what God, our Deliverer, regards as good; this is what meets his approval.

[4] He wants all humanity to be delivered and come to full knowledge of the truth.

[5] For God is one; and there is but one Mediator between God and humanity, Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah, himself human, [6] who gave himself as a ransom on behalf of all, thus providing testimony to God's purpose at just the right time.

1 Timothy 2:1-6 (the Message MSG)

¹ The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know.

² Pray especially for rulers and their governments to rule well so we can be quietly about our business of living simply, in humble contemplation. *[marked by godliness and dignity]*

³ This is the way our Saviour God wants us to live.

⁴ He wants not only us but *everyone* saved, you know, everyone to get to know the truth *we've* learned:

⁵ that there's one God and only one, and one Priest/Mediator between God and us— *[the man Christ]* Jesus, ⁶ who offered

himself in exchange for everyone held captive by sin, to set them all free. Eventually the news is going to get out.

Does reading two different Bible translations help you understand these scriptures better?

Our authority to pray rests with the authority given to Jesus and passed onto us through our total salvation. Jesus made a new Covenant (*an unbreakable contract*) with His Father, Almighty God and our connection with Jesus bought us in on that covenant also.

Types of Prayer

Your prayer time with God will fall into one or more of these categories: Thanksgivings, Petitions/Supplications, Warfare and Intercessions. Praise and Worship will invariably form part of each category so let's look at what the Bible has to say about each.

Thanksgiving

We are to flavour our prayers with thanksgiving, praise and faith towards God and grace and forgiveness towards others. Psalm 100 gives us a perfect example of how to come into the place where God dwells.

Psalms 100:1-5 (New Living Testament NLT)

¹ Shout with joy to the LORD, all the earth!

² Worship the LORD with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy.

³ Acknowledge that the LORD is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name.

The Message Bible translates this verse this way: ⁴Enter with the password: "Thank you!"

Make yourselves at home, talking praise. Thank him. Worship him. **Psalms 100:4** (MSG)

This is praise for who He is and what He has done. It is not mindlessly repeating, “I praise you! I praise you!” Thank Him for things you know He has done in your life and your family. These are always the good things. This is coming through the front gate and the front door into the living room. Prayer is a heart to mouth connection, not a head to mouth. In other words, it’s not how many words you say or how well you articulate them. It’s in the heartfelt emotion from which the prayer (connection) is made.

⁵ For the LORD is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation. (that’s you and I)

When we pray for ‘All humans, everyone everywhere’, as directed in Paul’s letter to Timothy, we give thanks for them and their lives before God. When praying for someone we must be believing for a result different to their current circumstances. This is prayer for both the prominent and the unheralded, the poor and the rich.

We need to understand also that prayer is multifaceted. To begin this study we read two translations of the same verses. This was done to give a better understanding of these scriptures. As we begin our life as a Christian we we need to understand first of all that prayer is the name given to our verbal connection with God. It’s interesting to note here also that supplication (asking) prayer puts others needs first. There’s nothing wrong with praying for your own needs but self cannot be our first option if we seek to follow Jesus’ example for life and living.

One of the most common forms of prayer is Petition / Supplication prayer:

In John's NT Gospel he records Jesus' teaching. **John 16:23-24** (The Message MSG)

²³ "This is what I want you to do: Ask the Father for whatever is in keeping with the things I've revealed to you.

²⁴ Ask in my name, according to my will, and he'll most certainly give it to you. Your joy will be a river overflowing its banks!

John the Apostle's first letter to the church. **1 John 5:14-15** (NIV)

¹⁴ This is the confidence we have in approaching God: 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 what *[the petition]* we asked of him.

What should we ask the Father for in our lives?

What authority do we have to ask?

God's will is found in His word, the Bible. It's linked to His character and so we find His will for us is expressed in love, grace, mercy, goodness, generosity, health, healing, deliverance etc. Never the opposite of these!

Jesus said, "The thief (*devil or one of his demons*) does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they *[all human beings]* may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly." **John 10:10** (NKJV)

The Jesus life is here for the asking and receiving.

Why Warfare Prayer?

The answer can be found in Paul the Apostle's letters to the churches.

Ephesians 6:10-18 (NLTSE)

¹⁰A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

¹¹ Put on all of God's armour so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.

¹² For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

¹³ Therefore, put on every piece of God's armour so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.

¹⁴ Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armour of God's righteousness.

¹⁵ For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared.

¹⁶ In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil.

¹⁷ Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

Interestingly, God's armour is put on from within. It stems from a revelation (*a truth/belief given to you by God*) of who Jesus is in you. It's put on by declaring who Jesus is, what He has done for you and who you are now in Him. It's who you are after receiving Him as your Saviour and thus receiving grace, mercy, salvation and forgiveness. Through salvation you're adopted into God's family and become a child of God, as heir and joint heir with Jesus. **John 1:12; Romans 8:15&16**

In Paul the Apostle's second letter to the church in Corinth we're told:

⁴ The weapons [*of our warfare*] we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every

thought to make it obedient to Christ. **2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (NIV)**

Actually, every time you declare what the Bible says, about who you are or the circumstances you find yourself in, if it's opposite to what you have been led to believe or contrary to the words spoken about or against you, your declaration involves you in spiritual warfare.

Then we find this in Paul's letter to the Philippian church:

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He (*Jesus*) humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.

⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father. **Philippians 2:8-11 (NKJV)**

Again in the Gospel written by John the Apostle, a biography of Jesus' life, we find Jesus tells us: "And whatever you ask in My name (*in accordance with who I am and what I do*), that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. **John 14:13 (NKJV)**

The last type of prayer we want to look at is Intercession - the action of intervening on behalf of another. It can form part of supplication or warfare prayer and is generally acknowledged as prayer that comes from deep within you.

When Dr Phil Pringle reads 1 Timothy 2:1-6, he believes Paul is not just talking about polite, respectable public praying, because he includes intercession on this list. Intercession is the deepest form of ardent prayer and cannot be done in a public place because you feel you may be seen as unusual. It's real work! It's prayer without holding back.

Prayer that doesn't rely on how you feel. That means we shouldn't act unusually or inappropriately in public places. This is the 'closet prayer' referred to in chapter six verse six of the Gospel written by Matthew, prayer done alone in a private place. Deep intercessory prayer comes with a struggle from deep within oneself and may well cause the one interceding to weep as they cry out to God. No holding back!

In Dr Phil Pringle's book, "If? The Art of Prayer" he outlines 128 different Bible passages relating to prayer.

So pray!

What is prayer?

When can we pray?

Who can pray?

What gives our prayers authority?

Adoption - Becoming a part of God's family

Ephesians 1:5 NLT *God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what He wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure.*

To be born again and become a member of God's family is the most wonderful experience a person can have. The Christian life is full of excitement and fulfilment, but it is not always easy, you will face difficulties and challenges.

You will however, be able to face whatever lies ahead with complete confidence knowing that God is with you, and that he has promised: *"I will never fail you. I will never abandon you."*
Hebrews 13:5b NLT

It feels good to be born again. When you accepted Jesus as your Saviour, you may have felt happy and excited. However don't base your Christian Life on feelings. Feelings are often unreliable and very changeable.

Your faith must be firmly founded on the word of God which never changes. Therefore develop the habit of reading and studying God's Word, the Bible, for yourself.

Group Discussion

Each person share:

This is what it is like for me being 'born again'

Memorise

John 3 *Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God."*

Building the Right Foundations

The Bible clearly states that certain doctrines should be studied before others. It's not that one is more important than the other but rather they are foundational to the others and therefore should be grasped first. As the foundations of any building are important to the integrity of the structure being erected, and any crack or fault could lead to the eventual collapse of the structure, so too, faulty foundations in our belief system could also lead to the collapse of our faith.

In fact the bible gives us a list of six such basic or foundational doctrines in Hebrews 6:1-3.

Doctrine - a body of ideas, particularly in religion, taught to people as truthful or correct; a rule or principle that forms the basis of a belief, theory, or policy

***Hebrews 6:1-3 NKJV** Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again **the foundation** of repentance from dead works and 2 of faith towards God (through Jesus Christ), of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this we will do if God permits.*

What are the six foundational doctrines given in Hebrews 6:1-3?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

You are the spiritual structure being built here.

In **1Corinthians 3:9 NKJV** you are told, “*You are God's building.*”

Ephesians 2:19&22 NKJV tells us, “*Together, we are his house ... And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself.*”

We are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

Who is the chief corner stone/flagstone of the foundations of your life?

So, not only are you personally being built as a spiritual house/being but you are also being built as God's spiritual house.

1Peter 2:4 NKJV *Coming to Him (Jesus) as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,*

1Peter 2:5a NKJV *you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house,*

In Matthew 7:24-27 your life as a believer is compared to the construction of a building. Now in the natural order of things, the first and most important feature of any permanent structure is its foundation. These foundations determine the weight and height of the building that can be erected upon it. Naturally, a small/light/weak foundation can only support a small building while a strong foundation can support a much larger building.

Jesus used a parable about houses constructed on different foundations to teach this truth.

Matthew 7:24-27 NLT “*Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. 25 Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse*

because it is built on bedrock. 26 But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. 27 When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash."

Who does Jesus say is a wise person?

Who is the wise person like and why?

The True foundational cornerstone of the Christian life is Jesus Christ himself – nothing else or no one else. Having received Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour and Lord, you have laid the first and most important part of the foundation.

In the following studies we will be looking at spiritual truths that, linked together with Jesus, form the foundation that must be firmly in place to facilitate the development of your Christian faith and the achievement of your God given destiny.

Group Discussion

Which foundation doctrine interests you the most and why?

Memorise

Act 4:12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." NKJV



Water Baptism

15 And then Jesus told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone.

*16 **Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned. Mark 16:15***
-16 NT

*Then Peter said to them, "**Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** 39 *For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."* **Act 2:38-39***

Peter emphasizes two things here, step one is your need to receive salvation and next step is part of a natural progression as you step forward into this new life connection with Jesus Christ. Both steps require physical actions and both have spiritual impact.

What are they?

What qualifies you to be baptised?

Many times people were baptised the same day.

*Then **those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.***

Acts 2:41

If someone refuses baptism then their belief is brought into question. Other relevant scriptures *Acts 8:12; Acts 8:35-39; Act 16:30-34*

The word Baptise is from the Greek word “Baptizo” and means to dip or immerse, submerge, to put into or under water so as to entirely immerse or submerge.

Water Baptism aligns you with the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When you follow the Lord’s command to be baptised, you identify with him in this way.

Let’s look at the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Colossae church:

11 When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision, the cutting away of your sinful nature.

12 For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with Him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

Colossians 2:11-12 NLT

When you accepted Christ as your Saviour you were spiritually circumcised. This spiritual circumcision is a putting off/removal of the ‘body of sins of the flesh’ - the sins you committed before you received salvation. After this takes place your next step is be water baptised. This is the logically order, and cannot be reversed. We must bury this old spiritual body as it no longer belongs with you. Baptism is the spiritual burial of ‘the transgressions and sins of the flesh/your old self’ before you received Jesus Christ as your saviour.

The water into which you are immersed is like a grave that spiritually aligns you with the burial of Christ. What His burial achieved becomes yours also. As Jesus rose from the grave in resurrection life, as a new creation, you also rise from the water to newness of life in Christ Jesus.

4 “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.

5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.

8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.”

Romans 6:4-9 NLT

When you examine the scriptures in Colossians 2:11-12 & Romans 6:4-9 the spiritual order is very clear, first receive salvation through receiving Jesus Christ as your saviour and then ‘bury by baptism’ this body that has already been put off. Circumcision is putting off; baptism is burial. These two are closely related, but not identical.

Why isn’t baptism relevant if you have not repented and received Jesus as your Saviour?

Therefore, if you haven’t been water baptised since you repented, received Jesus as your Saviour and begun a new life then don’t put it off any longer.

Group Discussion

Why isn’t being christened/baptised/dedicated as an Infant the same as the water baptism spoken of in the bible?

Salvation and Water Baptism are not the end of your journey and will not produce a change in every area of your life. You have dealt with your spirit but your mind has to be reprogrammed [renewed]. As you are doing so you have to continue to 'put off' [remove/change] old thought patterns so new thought patterns [beliefs] can take their place and structure your life.

These scriptures below relate to the above statement and are extracts from letters written to Christians.

Romans 12:1-3 New King James Version (NKJV)

12 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Ephesians 4:17-22 Living Bible (TLB)

17-18 Let me say this, then, speaking for the Lord: Live no longer as the unsaved do, for they are blinded and confused. Their closed hearts are full of darkness; they are far away from the life of God because they have shut their minds against him, and they cannot understand his ways.

19 They don't care anymore about right and wrong and have given themselves over to impure ways. They stop at nothing, being driven by their evil minds and reckless lusts.

20 But that isn't the way Christ taught you!

21 If you have really heard his voice and learned from him the truths concerning himself, 22 then throw off [put off] your old evil nature—the old you that was a partner in your evil ways—rotten through and through, full of lust and shame.

Ephesians 4:23-24 New King James Version (NKJV)

23 and **be renewed in the spirit of your mind**, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

You may choose to be Water Baptised again as an act of rededication but you can't dig up something that was dead and buried to rebury it. In other words, you will be being Water Baptised for your own reasons. The answer may well be to take responsibility for your life, ask the Holy Spirit to help you and then stop thinking and doing things that are contrary to what God's word, the Bible, teaches [says] about who you are and what now is acceptable behaviour.

Notes:

Memorise Act 2:38-39

*Then Peter said to them, "**Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."*

It's Who I Am because of Salvation

**“I am not who I used to be and I may not be who think I am
but I am who God says I am.”**

Galatians 3:26-27 New International Version - UK (NIVUK)

26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith,
27 for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed
yourselves with Christ.

What does this mean in relation to who you are now?

There are two things we must know if we are to become totally free from our past appraisals of ourselves. One is God's defining statements of who you are the other is who you think you are. Your success as a Christian hinges on you knowing who Jesus Christ is and accepting who He says you are. In the Gospel account, in the New Testament, Matthew relates a conversation between Jesus and the men who were with Him.

Jesus asks them, 15 'Who do you say I am?'

16 Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.'

17 Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon (reed) son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.

18 And I tell you that you are Peter, [rock] and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades [realm of the dead] will not overcome it.

19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be [or will have been] bound in heaven,

and whatever you loose on earth will be [will have been] loosed in heaven.'

Matthew 16:15-19 New International Version - UK (NIVUK)

Peter answers the question correctly having received a direct revelation from God himself, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' Up to this point Peter's name was Simon.

Now Jesus takes Simon to the next level. Simon has a revelation of who Jesus is but now Jesus tells Simon who Simon actually is, now that he has a true understanding of who Jesus is, 'You are Peter'. He is no longer Simon, a reed, but Peter, a rock, why?

One reason may well be that now he has the power of Almighty God to draw on ... and so do you, if you have received salvation through receiving Jesus Christ.

John 1:12-13 New King James Version (NKJV)

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, [natural birth] but of God.

Jesus goes on to say that when you realise who He is, receive salvation and understand who God says you now are then nothing and no one, will be able to halt your progress:

18 On this rock (of revelation/belief) I will build my church, and the gates of Hades [Hell realm of the dead] will not overcome it.

19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be [or will have been] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be [will have been] loosed in heaven.' **Matthew 16:18-19**

When you receive salvation through Jesus Christ you become a child of God and have access to His family riches. I believe how much you receive relates to your Christian maturity.

Romans 12:1-2 The Voice (VOICE)

1 Brothers and sisters, in light of all I have shared with you about God’s mercies, I urge you to offer your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice to God, a sacred offering that brings Him pleasure; this is your reasonable, essential worship.

2 Do not allow this world to mould you in its own image. Instead, be transformed from the inside out by renewing your mind. As a result, you will be able to discern what God wills and whatever God finds good, pleasing, and complete.

Paul urges those who read and hear his letter to respond to the good news by offering their bodies—eyes, ears, mouths, hands, feet to God as a “living sacrifice.” Paul knows well enough that sacrifices end in death, not life. But the sacrifice of Jesus changes everything. His resurrection makes it possible for those who trust in Him to become a sacrifice and yet live. But how do we live? We do not live as before, wrapping ourselves in the world and its bankrupt values. We live in constant renewal and transformation of our minds.

There will be things that you believed to be the truth about yourself and other things that do not align themselves with the Bible (God’s Word). What are three of those and what are you to do to reformat your thinking in these areas?

Repentance from Dead Works It's Not about Me!

What are dead works?

Simply put, if what you do is about building the kingdom of self and not about building God's Kingdom, it's a dead work.

These deeds and actions may include both sin and good things done for the community, even religious activities. **If your underlying motivation** is basically to make you look good or feel good and not to make Jesus look good, and to extend the Kingdom of God, then they are dead works and won't receive God's recognition. Dead works tend to separate us from God and separation from God eventually leads to death.

Col 3:17 GNB *Everything you do or say, then, should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, as you give thanks through him to God the Father.*

What do you feel would not be considered as 'Dead Works'?

To restore a relationship with God, we must repent, that is, make a deliberate choice to change our minds and turn towards God, to do our best to follow God and obey His rules for living.

Understanding Repentance

Repentance is a turning away from life without God and turning to God with a commitment to live your life with Him as the centre. It is a mind and attitude change that brings about a spiritual change in your life that, in turn, produces behavioural change.

Its basic meaning is always the same; 'to change one's mind'. It is not just an emotional decision but also a 'thought through' decision.

Many people do associate repentance with emotion, the shedding of tears etc. However, it is possible for a person to feel great emotion and shed many tears and yet never repent in the scriptural sense. They are merely sorry they were found out. **That's what's known as remorse, not repentance.**

Other people associate repentance with the carrying out of special religious rights (doing penance).

True repentance is a firm inward decision, a change of mind that results in a change in behaviour. Repentance starts inwardly with a change of mind, reaching out to God for salvation through Jesus Christ and results in an outward change of direction in your life. One in which you turn back to the original purpose for all mankind, to be connected with God and follow His plan for living this life.

What is the difference between being repentant and remorseful?

Repentance then is to turn away from your life without God and the sins it incorporated and turn to God and live His way.

Jesus said, *'Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God.'* Matthew 3:8 NLT

What does that mean to you?

In the book of Acts, a biography of the birth and activities of the New Testament church written by Luke, we find Peter the apostle's first sermon after receiving the Holy Spirit. He had this to say about repentance, baptism and the Holy Spirit:

28 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." Act 2:38-39 NKJV

What is the gift that is associated with repentance?

And Paul the apostle's message at Miletus:

20 I never shrank back from telling you what you needed to hear, either publicly or in your homes.

21 I have had one message for Jews and Greeks alike the necessity of repenting from sin and turning to God, and of having faith in our Lord Jesus. Acts 20:20-21 NLT

What happens when you repent?

What is the next step you need to take after repentance?

Any questions?

Group Discussion

Understanding what repentance is, at this point, do you believe you have fully repented?

Where will you spend eternity and why?

Memorise - 2 Peter 3:9 (KJV)

What Is Sin?

Sin is an inward spiritual attitude of rebellion towards God, which is expressed in outward acts of disobedience. We are all sinners in this way.

Unforgiven Sin is followed by three main consequences:

1. Inward spiritual death and separation from God.
2. The physical death of the body.
3. Final and eternal banishment from the presence of God to a place of darkness and torment reserved for the devil and his demons and not for humans.

Christ came to save us from our sin. Jesus, himself without sin, paid the penalty for our sin and died on the cross in our place. After which He rose victorious from the dead and ascended to Heaven, having taken the keys of hell and death. In doing so He provided for all mankind access to forgiveness and the eternal life God provides.

When you received Jesus as your Saviour, your sin was not only forgiven, it was deleted from Heaven's records and your eternal destination changed to Heaven.

Romans 5:12 NLT *When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. Adam's sin - Genesis 3:1-13*

Where Did Sin Come From?

Now you have received Jesus as your Saviour, you are a Christian. That doesn't mean you won't sin again but it does mean forgiveness for your sin is always at hand and the Holy Spirit is there to help you resist the temptation to sin.

1John 1:7 *But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

The Greek pronoun for "one another" (*allēlōn*) may refer to the two parties. John's point is that if you, as a Christian, live in the light where God is, there is mutual fellowship between God and yourself. That is, you have a relational connection with Him.

The light itself is the fundamental reality that you share with Him. Thus true communion with God is living in the sphere where your experience is illuminated by the truth of who God is. It is to live open to His revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ. As John stated, this entails you acknowledging, and dealing with, whatever the light reveals is not right in your life. (1John1:9)

It is significant that John talked of walking *in* the light, rather than *according to* the light. To **walk according to the light** would require sinless perfection and would, because you still sin, make fellowship with God impossible. To **walk in it**, however, suggests instead openness and responsiveness to the light.

John did not think of Christians as sinless, even though they were walking in the light. He made this clear in the last part of this verse when he added that **the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from every sin.** This statement is linked with the preceding one, “We have fellowship with one another.”

The statement of 1John 1:7, in its entirety, affirms that **two things are true of believers who walk in the light:**

- (a) They are in fellowship with God
- (b) They are being cleansed from every sin by the sacrifice of Jesus.

So long as there is true openness to the light of divine truth (revelation), Christians’ failures are under the cleansing power of the shed blood of Christ. Indeed, it is only by virtue of Jesus paying for our sin on the cross that there can be any fellowship between our sinlessly perfect God and us.

What is sin?

What has God provided for us to take care of our daily sin?

How can we be assured of our sins being forgiven continually?

Group Discussion

How do you know your sin has been dealt with past, present and future?

Notes:

Memorise

1John 1:8-9 NKJV *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

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