

CHRISTIAN BASICS

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INTRODUCTION

This simple course introduces the Christian Faith. Its aim is to show what the Bible teaches. It can be used on your own, one-to-one, or in a small group with a leader.

It is important that you look up the Bible References and think about what they say, so you see for yourself the Bible's teaching.

If you are not a Christian, as you see what the Bible says there is the call to believe it and so find Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord.

If you are a Christian, it will give you an introduction to twelve basic topics and help lay a foundation which can be built upon as you read the Bible and listen to it preached.

The person who designed the course did it originally for a partially sighted young man who had recently become a Christian. It is written from the perspective of someone who believes the Bible to be the Word of God and the only authority when it comes to what we believe and how we put that into practice.

[Throughout the study additional material will be in [] so you can look it up later.]

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STUDY1 THE BIBLE

Why start here?

The simple answer is that the Bible claims to be God speaking to us. When it comes to deciding what is true we are confused by many competing claims and so we begin to doubt that there is such a thing as 'truth' - 'Isn't it all a matter of opinion,' we say.

In deciding what's true you can:

- 1) Trust your 'mind' or the scholar's mind.
- 2) Trust how people have thought or acted in the past.
- 3) Trust how you feel, what you experience.
– or a mixture of the three.

The alternative is that the truth can be revealed to you by God.

How does God reveal himself?

One view is that God can reveal himself directly via your mind or emotions.

Another is that God can reveal himself via words written down for us.

In this study I want to look at what the Bible claims about itself and why we should accept those claims as God revealing himself to us.

Look up:  2 Timothy 3:16

'All Scripture is God-breathed.'

As we think about this claim, the Bible is 66 separate books written by many different human authors, over a period of about 1500 years. Its story line is as follows:

God made the world good. The first couple of people disobeyed God and misery and death came into the world because of this sin. God promised to send a deliverer and the rest of the Old Testament develops this promise via God's agreement with his chosen people Israel.

The New Testament describes the deliverer's life (the Gospels) and the effects of his teaching (Acts and the Letters). The final book deals with God's ultimate judgement and victory over evil. When Christ returns, the final state is a new heaven and new earth, where Christ reigns and lives forever with those who have been saved by him.

If the Bible is what it claims to be, God's Word, it must be true. The reasoning is this: God is the person who made us; he does not lie. He has spoken to us via the Bible. Therefore it must be true. If the Bible claims to be God's word but isn't, then it is lying and isn't worth studying.

Look up the claims of the Bible writers

In the Old Testament (O.T.):  Exodus 34:27 Isaiah 8:1,5
[Psalm 33:4 Psalm 18:30 Psalm 19:7-11]

In the New Testament (N.T.):  2 Timothy 3:16 [2 Peter 1:19-21 Revelation 1:1-3]

Why should we believe the Bible's claims - don't other books claim the same?

The central pillar is the view of Jesus Christ concerning the Old Testament and the New.

Look up: 📖 John 14:6

He claimed to be the truth, so his view of Scripture, the Bible, is very important.

📖 Matthew 19:4 Matthew 5:17-18 John 17:12-17
Isaiah 61:1-2 with Luke 4:18-20

[See how he uses Scripture: 📖 Matthew 4:1-11 Luke 20:27-40
John 10:35]

Jesus gave these promises concerning the New Testament:

Look up: 📖 John 14:26 John 16:14

Jesus saw the O.T. as God's word and said the Holy Spirit would lead the N.T. writers into all truth. The N.T. writers saw themselves as writing God's word.

Look at Peter's view:



2 Peter 1:19-21
2 Peter 3:15-16

... Paul's view:

2 Timothy 3:15-16
1 Thessalonians 2:13

... the writer of the book called
Hebrews:

Hebrews 1:1-3

[For the way N.T writers use the O.T. see 📖 Hebrews 1:5
Hebrews 3:7 (see Psalm 95).]

Questions to think about:

- 1) Are the words important? 📖 Galatians 3:16
Application: an accurate translation is important.
- 2) Is Scripture complete? 📖 2 Timothy 3:15-16
Revelation 22:18-19 Psalm 119:105 & 130
Deuteronomy 12:32
- 3) How was it written? 📖 2 Peter 1:19-21

- 4) Other evidence given to support its claims:
 - a) Fulfilled prophecy, e.g. Isaiah 53 Psalm 22
 - b) It speaks as one book. Its story line is consistent.
 - c) It actually does what it claims – makes people wise for salvation.

If the Bible is God's word, what should our attitude be?
 📖 John 10:27 John 8:31-32 Psalm 119:9-16 Psalm 119:18

Summary

The Bible claims to be God's word, and therefore true.
 The writers saw themselves as writing God's word.
 Jesus Christ saw it as God's Word.
 Why dismiss the claims without a serious examination?
 If it is true, God our maker speaking to us, it is folly to ignore it.

STUDY 2 THE LIVING GOD

Why is knowing God important?

In the group ask this question and listen to the answers.

If you are doing this course on your own write down why it is important.

Then look up 📖 John 17:3 and see what Jesus says.

How can man know God?

- 1) We have hints God is there in :
 - a) Creation 📖 Romans 1:18-20
 - b) Our conscience 📖 Romans 2:14-15

God has made us in his image and remnants of that likeness remain. Most human beings in history have believed in 'someone greater'. Atheism requires real effort!

- 2) We know what he is like and what he expects from us by his Special Revelation, i.e.
 - a) God has spoken to us in his word.
 - b) God has come to us and spoken to us.

Look up 📖 Hebrews 1:1-3. What does it tell us about God speaking to us?

What does the Bible say God is like?

- 1) God is Spirit:
 - 📖 John 4:24
- 2) God is a Person:
 - a) He has a personal name. 📖 Exodus 3:14-15 (Why is LORD in small capitals?)
 - b) He has revealed himself in a personal form.
 - 📖 John 14:6-9

- 3) God is perfect – free from all limitations and imperfections.
 Exodus 15:11 Psalm 147:5
- 4) God is one.
 Deuteronomy 6:4
- 5) God is triune.
 Matthew 28:19
 – ‘one God, three persons each co-equal and of the same substance’

Think about what these mean. How do you cope with statements like  Exodus 3:20?

What are the attributes or characteristics of this God?

(In a group, brainstorm on a board or card; on your own, write down what God is like.)

Then look up as many of the texts you have time for and write in the attribute it speaks about.

God in relationships

God is defined in terms of a relationship, e.g. Father, Shepherd.

e.g.  Malachi 2:10 Psalm 23:1

God's qualities

e.g.  1 Corinthians 1:9 1 John 4:8-9 James 1:17 Malachi 3:6 Daniel 4:35 Psalm 139:7-10 Hebrews 4:13 Isaiah 6:3 Psalm 99:4 John 3:36 Isaiah 28:29

[Great passages to read about God:

 Psalm 103 Isaiah 40:10-31 Romans 11:33-36 1Timothy 6:15-16

Read and ponder them.

Other characteristics:

see  Psalm 145:8-9 Ephesians 1:11 Psalm 115:3 Jeremiah 32:27 Joshua 24:19 Genesis 18:25.]

How can man approach or know such a God?

We need a go-between, a mediator, and Jesus Christ is that. See  1 Timothy 2:5 Hebrews 12:18-29 Hebrews 4:12-16.

As God is so great how should Christians approach him?

[When do *you* approach him?]

Once more look up the verses and think, ‘How do I personally do that?’

e.g.  Hebrews 12:28 Psalm 145:1-2 Psalm 100 Psalm 96:4-7 2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1

STUDY 3 JESUS CHRIST

Christians are followers of Christ – he is the central character of our faith so it is important we understand who he is.

His full title is the Lord Jesus Christ, e.g.  Ephesians 1:3.

Lord	– applied in the Old Testament to God. This title is applied to Jesus in the N.T. and indicates his deity.  E.g. Psalm 97:5 Philippians 2:11 Luke 2:11 [See also Isaiah 45:22-24]
Jesus	= Jehovah is salvation. Jesus = Saviour.  Matthew 1:21
Christ	= Messiah, anointed one.  Daniel 9:25-26 Matthew 16:16

A summary of the Bible's teaching on the Lord Jesus is: he has two natures, divine and human, which concur in one Person.

The Bible teaches that Jesus is God, God the Son

Names and titles imply full deity

The O.T. title of LORD is applied to Jesus in the N.T.

e.g. 	
Numbers 21:5-7	1 Corinthians 10:9&21
Isaiah 6:1-10	John 12:37-41
[Psalm 45:6-7	Hebrews 1:8-9
Jeremiah 23:5-6	1 Corinthians 1:30]

In Isaiah 9:6 clearly the Messiah is in view but addressed as God.

He is called God

 John 1:1 Titus 2:13 [See also 1 John 5:20 Romans 9:5 Philippians 2:6 Hebrews 1:1-3 Colossians 2:9]

Attributes of God are applied to him

- First and Last (eternity)  Isaiah 44:6
Revelation 1:17-18, 22:13
- Pre-existence John 1:1
- Creator John 1:3 [Look up the rest later: Malachi 3:6 / Hebrews 13:8 Matthew 28:18 Mark 2:5-7 Acts 2:27 / Isaiah 43:14-15]

Works of God are ascribed to Christ

- E.g. 
- Life giving John 5:20-23 John 10:28
 - Judgement 2 Corinthians 5:10

Worship is given to him

 John 20:26-28 [Hebrews 1:6 Revelation 5:12 John 5:20-23]

When it comes to describing the deity of Christ, the creeds put it like this:

'Christ is consubstantial, of the same substance and essence of the Father, co-equal, co-eternal, begotten, not made.'

The Bible teaches Jesus is fully human

 John 1:14 Hebrews 2:14

He had a body like ours.
He had a rational soul.
He had human emotions.
He was born.

 Matthew 26:26-28
Matthew 26:38
John 11:33-35
Galatians 4:4

He differed in his humanity from us in that he was born of a virgin (📖 Matthew 1:20-23). He was sinless (📖 Hebrews 4:15). He was God the Son as well.

[Note: Jesus Christ was subordinate in his role as Saviour and mediator to his Father 📖 1 Corinthians 15:22-28]

[Note there have been many false teachings concerning Christ seen in Church history and still present today, e.g. Arianism (which says that God created in his own image the only begotten son) – J.W.'s hold this view. Many other '-isms' have also distorted the Bible's teaching concerning Christ.]

Why did Christ need to be God?

📖 Psalm 49:7-10. The human problem of sin means we need divine Saviour to:

- a) Bring a sacrifice of sufficient value.
- b) Bear the wrath of God and redeem men.
- c) Be able to apply the fruits of his work to men.

Why did he also need to be human?

Man sinned, therefore the penalty had to be borne by a man.

📖 Hebrews 2:14-17

Note: the formula worked out at the Council of Chalcedon AD451 is a good way of understanding the Biblical material:

Jesus Christ:

- Fully God. Equal with the Father, of the same substance.
- Fully man, having our mind, soul, flesh and blood.

The two natures concur (are together) in one person. They are not mixed together or changed by their relationship with each other, yet they are without division. Jesus Christ is *one* person, not two. When he acts, he acts as a single person.

Because Jesus Christ is who he is, he is a suitable and sufficient Saviour.

📖 Hebrews 2:14-18, 7:23-28, 9:23-28

STUDY 4 MAN, OUR TRUE NATURE

'True knowledge of ourselves destroys self confidence' – John Calvin.

How do you see man? Is he basically good, or bad? Perhaps one of the most important things we need to know is the truth about ourselves.

Man is made by God and therefore each person has dignity and worth.

📖 Genesis 1:26-27, 31

What does it mean to be made in the image of God?

This can be seen in terms of the structure of our personalities and in our relationships.

See 📖
Ephesians 4:24 Colossians 3:10 Genesis 1:27-28 James 3:9
(even fallen man has remnants of the image) 1 John 4:7-11

Even now, man, like God, has immortality and spirituality. He is able to think, has a moral sense and is creative. He is able to love.

In what ways can we apply this idea today?

📖 Genesis 9:5-6

Because we are all made in the image of God, each of us has dignity and value from the very beginning of life until its end, from conception to death. Evolutionary views of life, i.e. that man is an animal, have produced terrible brutality during the last 100 years. They still do so, e.g. abortion, euthanasia.

Man in his original state was free from death, holy, perfect, free and able to obey God's commands. 📖 Genesis 1:31 [Ephesians 4:24]

Why did all this change?

Read the conditions God set 📖 Genesis 2:16-17. See how Adam and Eve disobeyed. 📖 Genesis 3:1-24

What were the results of the fall?

- 1) Broken relationships:
 - a) Shame 📖 Genesis 3:7 – between humans.
 - b) Guilt 📖 Genesis 3:8 – with God.
- 2) The curse of God upon them 📖 Genesis 3:14-19, a broken relationship with creation.

Note the encouraging feature. 📖 Genesis 3:15

[Why is Adam's objective, historical sin important?

Adam is seen by God as man's representative head. He sinned and fell and the whole human race has been viewed as sinners since then and also inherited his corrupt nature. 📖 Romans 5:12-21]

What is sin?

It must be seen in relation to God. It is missing the mark (God's), breaking God's law, not doing as God commands, not having faith in God.

See 📖 Romans 3:23 1 John 3:4 James 4:17 Romans 14:23

Sin has the following effects on us:

- 1) We are dead spiritually
– therefore unable to respond to God.

📖 Ephesians 2:1-3 Romans 8:5-8 John 6:44
1 Corinthians 2:14

- 2) By nature we are sinners
– we have a sinful heart and therefore sin.
📖 Jeremiah 17:9 Matthew 15:16-20
- 3) All of us are sinners.
📖 Romans 3:23

Sin results in:

- 1) God's wrath 📖 John 3:36
- 2) Death 📖 Romans 6:23
- 3) Everlasting punishment 📖 Matthew 25:46
 [2 Thessalonians 1:7-10]

Sin therefore produces corruption, guilt, condemnation and death. It affects every part of our nature. Even our best works are spoiled by sin. [📖 Isaiah 59:1-4, 59:20, 64:6]. This condition is sometimes called *total depravity*.

These verses indicate how helpless and hopeless we are as sinners, and how we need God to help us if ever we are going to be saved. We are powerless but God is able. In your own time look up:

[📖 Ephesians 2:1-10 Hebrews 7:25 Mark 10:26-27]

If you see yourself as a sinner and are moved by that awareness, see what the Bible says you must do.

[📖 2 Corinthians 7:10 Acts 16:29-31 John 3:16-21]

If God has saved us we should be thankful. There is no room for boasting about ourselves.

[📖 1 Corinthians 1:27-31]

STUDY 5 GOD'S WORK IN SALVATION

The phrase, 'God saves sinners,' sums up the Bible's teaching on how God rescues those trapped by sin.

God saves. He sent Christ. He calls men to Christ. He did not just provide a way for sinners to be saved, but actually saves men and women.

An illustration of a drowning man

God doesn't just throw a life belt but lays hold of the man and pulls him into the life boat.

📖 Jonah 2:9 2 Timothy 1:8-9

Why does God save?

Is it because we are loveable? 📖 Romans 3:10-25. Obviously not! It is because he loves sinners 📖 John 3:16. And because he chooses to do so 📖 Ephesians 1:4-5. It also brings God praise and glory 📖 Ephesians 1:6.

If God plans to save will he fail?

God has both power and determination to do as he plans.

📖 Ephesians 1:11 Psalm 33:11 Psalm 135:6

Are God's plans modified by the idea of human free will?

Scripture shows that the sinner is spiritually powerless [e.g. 📖 Ephesians 2:1-10 John 6:44-45]. He is responsible for his own actions, yet because his nature is sinful, he freely chooses to oppose God. His only hope is to have a new nature.

How does God save?

He predestines some to be saved and chooses them in Christ [election] (see [Ephesians 1:5-11](#) [Romans 8:28-30](#)). [[John 17:4-12](#) [1 Peter 1:2](#)]

God could have planned to save no-one, or he could have planned to save everyone, because no-one deserves to be saved.

[Titus 1:1-2](#) [1 Peter 1:1-2](#) [1 Peter 2:8-9](#) [1 Thessalonians 1:4, 5:9](#) [Matthew 11:27](#) [[Matthew 24:22-24, 31](#) [Colossians 3:12](#) [2 Thessalonians 2:13](#)]

God chose in love to do this. He didn't foresee who would believe and then choose them.

Look at Paul's argument: [Romans 9:6-24](#). [See also [2 Timothy 1:9](#) [Romans 10:20](#) [1 Corinthians 1:27-29](#) [Romans 11:5-6](#)]

Faith in Christ which saves is itself a gift of God.

[Acts 13:48](#) [Philippians 1:29](#) [[Acts 18:27](#) [Philippians 2:12-14](#) [1 Thessalonians 1:4-5](#)]

Good works don't earn salvation but rather flow from it. [Ephesians 2:8-10](#) [[John 15:16](#)]

What should our response be to this?

See Paul's response [Romans 11:33-36](#).

Why is this doctrine useful?

- 1) It gives glory to God by removing boasting. [1 Corinthians 1:27-29](#)

- 2) It gives a basis for assurance. [Philippians 1:6](#)
- 3) It leads to praise and thanksgiving to God. [Ephesians 1:13-14](#)

Salvation therefore is based on God's choice or *election*. It depends on God's sovereign mercy. It is not man's will that is the deciding factor in who will or will not be saved. It is God's will which makes the difference. God's will determines who will be shown mercy and saved.

Some problems:

- 1) *Is man a pre-programmed robot?*
No, man is responsible for what he chooses. Because of his nature he willingly chooses slavery to sin rather than God's service. God never compels a sinner to sin. [See [Ephesians 2:1-10](#) [John 8:34](#) [Romans 6:16-23](#)]
- 2) *What hope is there then - who can be saved? How can sinners come to Christ?*
They cannot come unless God in his mercy gives life and with this new life they then freely come to Christ. [[Ephesians 2:1-10](#) [John 3:1-15](#)]
- 3) *Surely it says in the Bible, 'Whosoever will may come.'*
That is true. If someone is willing he can come to Christ and be assured Christ will not drive him away. And it is the duty of everyone to repent. [[John 6:37-40, 43-48](#) [Acts 17:30](#)]
- 4) *What should a non-Christian do - wait to be chosen or come now to Christ?*
He must come to Christ. [[Matthew 11:28](#) [2 Corinthians 6:2](#)]
- 5) *Should we preach the Gospel to everyone?*
Yes. [Look again at [Acts 17:30](#) and [Matthew 11:28](#). See [Acts 2](#) for good Gospel preaching.]

STUDY 6 CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION

These two historical events are at the centre of the Christian faith.

They were predicted by Old Testament writers and by Christ himself. [see  Isaiah 53 and Mark 8:31-32]

What moved God the Father to send Christ?

God in love was pleased to send him.

 John 3:16 and Colossians 1:19-20

Why was Christ's death necessary?

- 1) God hates sin.
 Romans 1:18
- 2) God said that sin leads to death.
 Romans 6:23
- 3) The Bible, by the sacrificial system it describes, and directly, tells us that death is necessary for sin to be forgiven.
 Hebrews 9:22 [See also Leviticus 1 and 16]

What did Christ's death on the cross achieve?

- 1) *Propitiation*  Romans 3:25
Christ's sacrificial death turned God's wrath away from those for whom he died. 'Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in his blood.' (NASV)
[See also  1 John 2:2  1 John 4:10]
- 2) *Substitution*
Jesus was a substitutionary atonement. He died in the place of sinners in order to bring them to God. *At-one-ment* – to make God and men one, i.e. to mend their relationship.

The O.T. illustration: see  Leviticus 1:4 – an animal died in the place of a sinner.  Isaiah 53:6. The O.T. predicted that the sinner's sins would be laid on Christ.

In the N.T. the idea is found in  John 1:29 1 Peter 2:24 [Hebrews 9:28].

3) *Reconciliation*

The rebellious sinner is reconciled to God who is angry with him. Friendship is restored by the death of Christ.  2 Corinthians 5:18-21 [Ephesians 2:16 Romans 5:6-11]

4) *Redemption*

A redeemer is someone who pays the ransom price to release someone held in bondage. Jesus said he had come to give his life as a ransom for many.  Mark 10:45 [Ephesians 1:7 Romans 3:24]

A price was paid to set the person free [ Romans 8:1-3 Galatians 4:4 Galatians 3:13]. Does he fail? Will God demand the price twice?

Why was Christ's death acceptable for sinners?

- a) Christ is God the Son. He is the sinless, perfect high priest and therefore the perfect mediator.
 Hebrews 9:11-14 Hebrews 7:23-28 1 Timothy 2:5
- b) He kept the law.
 Galatians 4:4
- c) He paid for the sinner who broke the law.
 Galatians 3:13
- d) He merited eternal life for the sinner.
 Romans 10:4 2 Corinthians 5:21

What did he accomplish?

He accomplished the salvation of those for whom he died. He paid the ransom price and they cannot be expected to pay again. His death is presented in the Bible in terms which show its effectiveness, e.g. substitution and redemption.

At home look up:

[ Romans 5:10, 18-19 Romans 8:31-32 Hebrews 9:12 John 6:39-40 John 17:2]

Look up too the specific groups Christ is said to die for:

[ Matthew 1:21 Acts 20:28 Ephesians 5:22-26 John 10:11 Revelation 5:9. How would you explain? 1 John 2:1-2 John 3:16 and 2 Corinthians 5:14-21]

Christ's resurrection

Jesus died, his body was buried in the tomb and the same body rose from the dead and walked out of the tomb. It was a physical body which was continuous with the old but different.

 Luke 24:1-8, 36-48 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

Notice the nature of historical evidence and the reasoning in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8:

- 1) Scripture
- 2) Fact
- 3) Witnesses
- 4) Personal experience

What is the significance of this event?

- 1) It declares to us that Christ is who he claimed to be and has achieved what he came to do.
 Romans 1:4 Romans 4:25 [Philippians 2:9]

- 2) The death-resurrection sequence symbolises what happens to the Christian in union with Christ.
 Romans 6:1-9 [Romans 5:10 1 Corinthians 6:14 1 Corinthians 15:20-25 Ephesians 1:18-20]
- 3) The Resurrection assures Christians that one day we will have a resurrected body like Christ and so it fills them with hope.  Philippians 3:20-21 1 Peter 1:3

STUDY 7 THE HOLY SPIRIT: HIS PERSON AND WORK

This is only the briefest outline. Before we start, write down a list of what comes to mind when you hear the words 'Holy Spirit'.

This study concentrates on the central features of the Holy Spirit's person and work.

The Holy Spirit's Person

He is a person, God, the third person of the Trinity, proceeding forth from the Father and the Son. Let's look at each of these ideas in turn.

The Holy Spirit is a person

It is most important not to think of him as a 'force' or energy. Six biblical reasons for believing he is a person:

- | | |
|--|---|
| a) He is referred to as a person. | 
John 15:26
[John 16:13-14
Hebrews 3:7] |
| Look up the others later: | |
| b) He is affected by the actions of others. | Acts 5:3
[Ephesians 4:30] |
| c) He performs acts proper to a person. | Luke 12:12
[Genesis 1:2-3] |
| d) His name is mentioned alongside other people. | John 16:14 |
| e) He has personal characteristics. | 1 Corinthians 2:10-11 |
| f) He is distinguished from his power. | Luke 4:14 |

The Holy Spirit is a *divine* person

[Again just look up (a) and leave the rest for personal study]

-  a) Spoken of as God. Acts 5:3-4 [1 Corinthians 3:16, 12:3-6]
- b) Divine actions associated with him. Genesis 1:2-3
- c) Divine attributes. 1 Corinthians 2:11-12
Psalm 139:7 Romans 8:2 John 16:13
Romans 15:30
- d) Associated with other persons of the Godhead. Matthew 3:16-17
Matthew 28:19 2 Corinthians 13:14
1 Peter 1:2
'Trinitarian formula' frequently found in Paul's letters, e.g. 1 Corinthians 12:3-6
Ephesians 1:13-14, 2:18, 3:14-19, 4:1-6 etc.]

[The Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son]

– not one *or* the other.

 John 15:26 [Romans 8:9 Galatians 4:6]

The Holy Spirit's work

The Holy Spirit was promised to believers by Christ

 John 14:16-26 [John 15:26, 16:7]

He was specifically and historically poured out as promised at Pentecost.

 Acts 1:4-5 Acts 2:1-13

The work of the Holy Spirit is presented like this in Scripture:

- The Father plans
- The Son carries out the plan,
- The Spirit applies the work of Christ.

Yet because God is one, each is involved in the others activities. There is an inter-penetration of role, e.g.  Romans 8:9-11.

Aspects of the Holy Spirit's work

- a) His work in creation.  Genesis 1:2-3
- b) His work in communicating God's truth. 2 Timothy 3:15-16
[2 Peter 1:19-21 John 14:26, 15:26, 16:13-14]
His main work is to testify to (point to) Christ. John 16:13-14
- c) He is involved in Christ's work. Luke 1:35 Matthew 3:16

- d) His work in human beings is extensive.
- The new birth John 3:1-8 Ephesians 1:14
1 Corinthians 12:13
 - Giving understanding 1 Corinthians 2:4
[John 14:26, 15:26]
 - Producing fruit (holiness) Galatians 5:22-26
1 Peter 1:2
 - Fills believers Ephesians 5:18
 - Gives gifts to believers 1 Corinthians 12:4-7
[Ephesians 4:7-14 1 Peter
4:10-11 Romans 12:6-8]
 - Helps in prayer Ephesians 2:18 Romans
8:26

He applies the work of Christ to believers.
He seals and sanctifies believers in Christ.

Questions to consider

- 1) *Can you be a Christian and not have the Holy Spirit?*
No – without the Spirit there is no life and you cannot please God. 📖 Romans 8:9
- 2) *Does the Spirit of God live within Christians?*
Yes, he does. 📖 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:18-20
- 3) *How can you tell the Holy Spirit has produced the new birth in you?*
He produces faith in Christ. 📖 John 3:1-15
- 4) *Are all Christians baptised in the Holy Spirit?*
Yes, see 📖 1 Corinthians 12:13. The Holy Spirit is also received by faith. 📖 Galatians 3:2,3,14

- 5) *How can we tell we have the Holy Spirit?*

It is not a matter of feelings or power (see 📖 1 Corinthians 13:1-3) but of having faith in Christ which produces a changed life. 📖 Galatians 3:14, 5:22-23 2 Peter 1:3-11

- 6) *Do all Christians have the same gifts?*

No – gifts are not primarily for the individual's benefit, but for the benefit of the church community and therefore need to be varied and used for the good of the community. 📖 Romans 12:4-8 1 Corinthians 12:10,11,27

Summary

The Holy Spirit gives new life and brings a person to faith in Christ, uniting them to Christ and all his benefits. He makes the believer part of Christ's body. He indwells and seals the believer. As the Holy Spirit lives in the believer, he produces growth in grace and holiness of life. He empowers the Christian for service by giving different gifts.

STUDY 8 SAVING FAITH

We have seen the Father's electing love, the Son's redemptive work and the Holy Spirit's task of applying that to us. We need now to look at the effects on us.

We are going to look at saving faith. Faith is the chief gift of the Holy Spirit. By faith we are united to Christ and all the benefits of Christ's work become ours. Becoming a Christian is something which has far reaching effects. It is often called conversion.

Conversion

Means a *change*. In order for us to understand this, the Bible splits it up into different components, a constellation of transforming events which occur together. During this process a person is brought to life by the Holy Spirit (regeneration  Ephesians 2:5 John 3:1-4 etc.) and then they can consciously turn to God in repentance and faith.  Acts 15:3

Examples of conversion in the Bible

	
Mannaseh 2 Chronicles 33	The jailer Acts 16:31
Zacchaeus Luke 19:8-9	[Cornelius Acts 10:44]
Lydia Acts 16:14	[Paul Acts 9:5]

Let's look at two elements in this change or *turning*, repentance and faith.

Repentance

The word in the Bible means *a change of mind or purpose, a turning back, a returning*. In this change there is also sorrow for the past life. It can be defined like this :

Repentance unto life is a saving grace, (i.e. something God gives)  Acts 11:18, whereby the sinner out of a true sense of his sin,  Acts 2:37 and an understanding of and laying hold of the mercy of God in Christ, does with grief and hatred of sin turn from it to God, with full purpose of and endeavour after new obedience. (Westminster Shorter Catechism – modified.)

So it involves:

- a) Knowing before God you are a sinner.  Luke 15:18
- b) Feeling sorry for that sin. Psalm 51:2-4, 14 [2 Corinthians 7:9-10]
- c) Turning from sin to God for pardon and cleansing. Acts 2:38 Romans 2:4

Saving faith

A saving faith is defined like this in the Shorter Catechism:

Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace (a gift of God  Ephesians 2:8) whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation as he is offered to us in the gospel.

- a) You know the truth.  Hebrews 11:1,6
- b) You see it to be true. John 3:16,18,36 [John 6:40 Acts 10:43 Romans 3:22]
- c) You trust your whole person to that truth in Christ. Romans 10:9-13 [John 5:24 Acts 16:30-31]

You see Christ as the Saviour. Faith in him alone receives that salvation from him. This faith is God's gift.

 Philippians 1:29 Ephesians 2:8 [Acts 13:48 John 10:25-26]

Have you got this saving faith, that positive trust in your heart brought about by the Holy Spirit, which has convinced you of the truth of the gospel and caused you to rest in Christ alone for your salvation?

What happens at the same time as we place our faith in Christ?

- 1) Union with Christ.
📖 Romans 6:1-8
(see the next study)
- 2) A radical break with sin.
📖 Romans 6:1-8
- 3) Justification.

Justification

Another definition from the Catechism:

Justification is an act of God's free grace (a gift) wherein he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in his sight only because of the righteousness of Christ imputed (reckoned) to us and received by faith alone.

This item is a legal term, where God the judge declares the sinner not guilty and righteous (upright) in his sight on the basis of what Christ is and has done. Christ's work and righteousness is reckoned as being in our account.

This is received by faith alone.

📖 Romans 3:21-26 [see also Romans 4-5:1 Galatians 2:16 2 Corinthians 5:21 Romans 10:3-6 Zechariah 3:1-4]

STUDY 9 LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

- The Aim of the Christian life is holiness.  1 Peter 1:15-16 [1 Thessalonians 4:3]
- The means is the Holy Spirit's work in the Christian. 1 Peter 1:2
- The evidence is a life of obedience. John 14:15 [2 Corinthians 10:5]

What is the aim of the Christian life?

It can be seen in three ways:

- To glorify God.  1 Corinthians 10:31
- To enjoy God. Psalm 73:25-26 [Psalm 37:4]
- To be as God wants us to be, holy. 1 Peter 1:15-16

What is holiness or the process of holiness, sanctification?

There are two basic ideas:

- a) Separation or consecration to God ('otherness')
- b) Purity

Sanctification is the process by which the believer is transformed in heart, mind, will and conduct and is conformed more and more to the will of God and to the likeness of Christ until at death he is made perfect in holiness, and at the resurrection on Christ's return his body will be like Christ's body.

Remember always what we were saved for:
📖 Ephesians 1:4 Romans 8:29.

This process of sanctification is like a three stage rocket

- 1) Lift-off – once for all radical break with sin.
- 2) Progress – the fight to be rid of the remains of sin as we live this life.
- 3) Arrival – freedom from all sin in heaven (*glorification*).

Lift-off - once for all radical break with sin

This occurs at conversion. Before conversion we are bound by sin's power and rule. At conversion that bondage is broken. We are removed from the realm of sin and placed in God's kingdom.

 Romans 6:2-6 Colossians 1:12-14 [1 Peter 2:24]

How does this happen? In union with Christ. Christ died, defeating sin. In him, united to him by faith, we share in that victory. We have risen to a new life.

This once for all break with sin does not mean we are sinless. It means we are no longer bound to sin. We have the power to live differently and should do so. We are set free to serve God.

[Read the whole of  Romans 6.]

The progressive change

- a) God works in us so we can do his will.  Philippians 2:12-13 [1 Thessalonians 5:23-24]
- b) There is conflict with indwelling sin. Romans 8:13 [Romans 7:14-25 Ephesians 6:10-18 1 Timothy 6:12 Colossians 3:5]

- c) We have a responsibility to move the work of holiness forward in our lives. 2 Peter 1:3-11 [2 Corinthians 7:1 Hebrews 12:14 John 15:5-10]
- d) There is a spiritual warfare. Ephesians 6:10-18 [James 4:7-8 1 Peter 5:8-9]

As we are progressively changed there are negative and positive aspects to the work. Look these up at home:

[*Negative:*  Romans 8:13 Ephesians 4:25, 31
Positive:  Romans 13:11-14 Ephesians 5:1-2
We are to be active, e.g.  Philippians 3:12-14 Acts 20:32.]

What practical things can we do to promote this progressive change?

- a) Ask God to give us what we need to serve him.  James 1:5,17
- b) Pray. Ephesians 6:18
- c) Read the Word of God – this promotes the renewing of our mind and equips us for all that God wants us to do. 2 Timothy 3:15-16 Psalm 119:9-16 Romans 12:1-2
- d) Be an active part of a redeemed community (church). Ephesians 4:11-16
- e) Be involved in worship and fellowship. Hebrews 10:24-25
- f) Be mission-minded. Matthew 28:18-20

Pray Read the Bible Obey the Bible Become more like Christ.

All this is done with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Arrival - the final state: glorification

(More on this in the section on heaven)

- 1) It's certain.
📖 Romans 8:28-30 Philippians 1:6
Those truly saved persevere in following Christ and arrive as God planned and promised in glory.
- 2) It's being like Christ.
📖 1 John 3:2 Philippians 3:21

STUDY 10 HEAVEN AND HELL

In this study we will deal with three things:

- 1) Christ's Second Coming
- 2) Heaven
- 3) Hell

Christ's Second Coming

God made the world, man fell into sin and God promised a Saviour. The Saviour came, lived, died, and rose again. Then he ascended into heaven and poured out the Holy Spirit. The next event is his personal bodily return. All Christians are agreed he will return but the sequence of events around his return is still a matter of difference amongst Christians.

Christ's second coming is a fact taught by Scripture

📖 Matthew 25:31
[Matthew 24:30-31 Acts 1:11 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17]

The time is unknown

Any system which predicts the day or year is wrong.

📖 Matthew 24:36-42 [2 Peter 3:3-10 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3]

There is a need for us to be prepared, by being saved and serving Christ [📖 Matthew 25].

Scripture gives pointers which herald his coming

Yet in these 'last times' (the time between Christ's ascension and his second coming) Christians have always experienced some of these and thought his coming was near.

📖 Matthew 24:9-13,21,22 (Some see all this as referring to the fall of Jerusalem in AD70).

[📖 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10 2 Timothy 3:1-7 1 John 2:18-22]

On Christ's return, two things will happen

- a) The resurrection of the dead. 📖 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 [John 5:28-29]
- b) The final judgement. 📖 Matthew 25:31-46 [2 Corinthians 5:10 Revelation 20:11-15 2 Peter 3:10-13]

Heaven

What happens to believers when they die?

- a) They go to be with Christ to await the resurrection of the body. 📖 Luke 23:43 Philippians 1:21-23 [2 Corinthians 5:8 Revelation 6:9]
- b) At Christ's return their bodies and souls will be reunited. 📖 Philippians 3:20-21 1 John 3:1-3 [1 Corinthians 15:22-23 1 Thessalonians 4:16 John 6:40]
- c) We will face judgement (the evaluation of our lives). 📖 2 Corinthians 5:10 [2 Timothy 4:1 Revelation 20:12 Matthew 25:46 1 Corinthians 3:11-15]
- d) Christians will then live with Christ in a new heaven and new earth. This will be *physical*. 📖 2 Peter 3:10-13 John 14:2 [Revelation 21 and 22 – It's important you read these chapters – they are symbolic pictures of the new heaven and earth].
- e) There will be in that new heaven and earth eternal life. 📖 Matthew 25:46

Hell

What happens to unbelievers when they die?

- a) It seems they are cast into hell like the rich man in the passage. 📖 Luke 16:19-31
- b) They rise from the dead on Christ's return and face judgement. 📖 John 5:28-29 [Daniel 12:2 Acts 24:15]
- c) Then they are put into a place of everlasting punishment. 📖 Matthew 25:42-46 Matthew 13:40-43
- d) In this awful place, deprived of God's favour, they will experience endless lives filled with pangs of conscience and despair with no opportunity to change. 📖 Mark 9:47-48 2 Thessalonians 1:1-8 [Luke 16:19-31 Matthew 8:12 Revelation 21:8]

In view of the awful certainty of God's judgement, 📖 Hebrews 9:27, the practical applications of what we have looked at are:

- 1) Be sure to trust in Christ. 📖 2 Corinthians 6:1-2
- 2) Outside of Christ means Hell. Therefore we must be concerned for our fellow humans and take the gospel to them. 📖 2 Corinthians 5:10-21
- 3) There is an urgency now to live well for Christ. Everything we do has significance. 📖 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 [1 Thessalonians 4:7 Philippians 3:12-16 2 Peter 3:14]

STUDY 11 THE CHURCH

What is the church?

Brainstorm (write on board/ paper). How is the word used by us?

The word church means an *assembly* – a gathering of called-out ones. It refers to people, not buildings or organisations. It is used in two ways in the N.T.:

- 1) Local churches.  Acts 11:25-26 Acts 14:23 Acts 15:41
- 2) The church universal (believers everywhere in every age).
 Ephesians 3:21

The church is called the body of Christ, a gathering of believers.
 Ephesians 1:22-23, 5:29

[See also  Acts 14:27 1 Corinthians 11:18]

(Once only does 'church' refer to churches in an area  Acts 9:31 [A.V. Greek text has 'churches'].)

Who are the members?

Those who have been called to faith in Christ and redeemed by him.

 1 Corinthians 1:2 Ephesians 5:25-26 [Acts 2:38-47, 5:14]

They show their new-found faith in Christ by being baptised and gathering with the other believers. See  Acts 14:27 1 Corinthians 11:18 [Acts 16] (and other texts above).

What are the functions of the local church?

(Brainstorm.)

- | | |
|--|--|
| a) Worship of God. |  |
| Worship is a wide term, currently used too narrowly for 'singing'. It includes singing, prayer, reading the Bible, and preaching.
[It has an even wider use for the whole of the Christian's life.] | Hebrews 10:24-25
Ephesians 5:19-20

Romans 12:1-2 |
| b) Teaching and preaching the truth. | Paul's example:
Acts 20:29-31 2
Timothy 1:13, 2:2, 4:2
[Other texts: 1 Timothy 3:14-15 2 Timothy 3:15-16 Titus 2:1] |
| c) Ordinances. Baptism and the Lord's Supper (see next study). | Acts 19:4-5
1 Corinthians 11:28-30 |
| d) Fellowship – sharing spiritual things. | Acts 2:42 Ephesians 4:16,29,32 |
| e) Discipline. | Matthew 18:15-18
[1 Corinthians 14:33,40
Titus 3:10-11] |
| f) Evangelism (Mission). | Matthew 28:19-20
Romans 1:16-17
Romans 10:13-17 |

How is the church ruled?

- Christ is its head.
 Ephesians 1:22-23 [Colossians 1:18 Ephesians 5:23-24]

Christ's rule is applied as the Holy Spirit applies the word of God to the community. 📖 Colossians 3:15-17

- Christ's authority is exercised also through
 - Elders/overseers/pastors. 📖 1 Timothy 5:17-20
1 Peter 5:13
 - The gathered church. 📖 1 Corinthians 5:1-3,13
Matthew 18:15-18

Leaders in the church

Leaders in the church are referred to as *elders* and *deacons* and sometimes leaders.

In each local church there was a group of elders also known as *pastors*, *overseers* (*bishops*), and *undershepherds*. The names are interchangeable. Their role is preaching, teaching, ruling, pastoral (shepherding) work and being a good example. See:

📖 1 Peter 5:1-4 1 Timothy 3:1-13 1 Timothy 5:17-20
Hebrews 13:7 Acts 20:17-18 Titus 1:5-9.

Also there was a group of deacons (servants) to help the church.
📖 Philippians 1:1 1 Timothy 3:1-13

Church membership

Early churches obviously recognised who belonged, e.g.
📖 1 Corinthians 5:13 Acts 5:14.

It is the duty of all of us if possible to belong to a local church.

📖 Hebrews 10:24-25 Acts 2:43-47

Qualifications for church membership:

- Believers
- Baptised by immersion
- Willing to join with that body in unity and love
📖 Ephesians 4:1-16

In our church you need to agree to the central doctrines of the faith and be in sympathy with a summary of biblical truth (the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith).

[If you are interested, ask the elders at Grace for the church Constitution and Confession of Faith and discuss the matter with them.]

STUDY 12 BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

The two things commanded by Christ as a sign and seal of his work are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are each termed an *ordinance* (something commanded by Christ), or *sacrament* (oath or pledge).

Baptism

– an outward sign of an inward change.

The water does not itself accomplish anything; it merely symbolises what has already taken place.

The word *baptism* is an anglicised form of the Greek (i.e. a Greek word carried over into English without being translated). It means to *dip* or *immerse*.

A person is immersed in water and baptised in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit  Matthew 28:18-20. It symbolises what has already taken place and seals or confirms it.

Baptism symbolises:

- | | |
|--|---|
| a) Union with Christ. | 
Romans 6:1-6
[Colossians 2:9-13] |
| b) Washing away of sins. | Acts 22:16 |
| c) Initiation. | Acts 2:37-41 |
| d) Reception of the Holy Spirit. | Acts 2:37-38 |
| e) Sealing one's relationship to Christ. | Ephesians 1:13-14
[1 Corinthians 12:13
Ephesians 4:4-6] |

Who are suitable candidates for baptism?

Believers in Christ.

Why?

All the illustrations in the N.T. are of those who have believed. Where the household is mentioned there is no reason to believe it didn't indicate believers, e.g.  Acts 16:14-15, 31-33.

If it symbolises union, washing, initiation and reception of the Spirit, etc. it is difficult to see how it could apply to non-believers – a symbol symbolising what has not yet taken place.

Why then do some people believe in infant baptism?

They link the ordinance with O.T. circumcision. This was the initiatory rite for male children indicating they belonged to the covenant people of God and therefore it is assumed it is right to baptise believers' children, male and female. Some link the rite with what it symbolises and believe it makes them Christians. [ Colossians 2:11-12]

The covenant people of God are not now a race or nation but people from every tribe and nation who believe in Christ. Now regeneration incorporates people into the people of God and this shows by faith in Christ and is demonstrated by baptism.

How are believers to be baptised?

Immersion. Jesus was immersed.  Matthew 3:13-17

Why was Jesus baptised?

He wanted to fulfil all righteousness.
He identified with sinners in his redemptive work.
It signified his own death, burial and resurrection.

What responsibility is involved in baptism?

believers.

It symbolises union with Christ, incorporation into his body.
Therefore we should play our full part in the body.

 Ephesians 4:4,5,15,16 [1 Corinthians 6:15-20]

Do you have to be baptised to be saved?

No! But if you are saved you will want to be.  Luke 23:43
[Mark 16:16]

The Lord's Supper

The Biblical basis

 1 Corinthians 11:17-26
[Matthew 26:26-30 Mark 14:22-26 Luke 22:17-25].

The Lord commanded us to remember him until he comes.

What does it signify?

- a) A sign symbolising the Lord's death.  1 Corinthians 11:26
- b) It is a seal or pledge. Believers who participate have that assurance that they are loved by Christ and are reminded of the evidence of that love. Participation means communion, fellowship, sharing.  1 Corinthians 10:14-17
- c) It is a communal activity. We are remembering our individual relationship with Christ and also expressing our union and fellowship with our fellow  1 Corinthians 10:14-17
 1 Corinthians 11:17-32

Where can the Lord's Supper be held?

In the setting of church fellowship. 📖 1 Corinthians 11:18,20,22

Who can take the Lord's Supper?

Repentant believers. 📖 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 Acts 2:38-42

Note the sequence in Acts:

Conversion Baptism Belonging to the church (added to their number) Lord's Supper.

Why not keep that sequence now?