

“That You May Know...”

(... what “IT” is all about—answers to life’s big questions that may not be answered by going to church.)

Overview

1. **Know God**—Why would/should I want to be a Christian?

Jesus’ death on the cross made it possible to become God’s child and have a relationship with Him that is my closest and dearest. A grateful heart responds unconditionally and trustingly to His love.

2. **Know God’s Will**—What does God say is the way He designed for us to live?

Be a learner/follower/disciple of Jesus. Determine if I am really his disciple by examining myself according to Jesus’ definitions. If I’m claiming it, does it show? If I’m not claiming to be a disciple now, decide if I’m going to be one.

3. **Know Myself**—Why do I need help from God?

What keeps me from being close to God? What barriers do I put up by giving in to my desires and going against His will? What is my sinful nature? What does it mean to repent?

4. **Know God’s Gift of New Birth**—How do I begin a relationship with God?

God offers me a new start—forgiveness and power and a relationship with Him—by participating in Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection, to live a new life following the Spirit and not the sinful nature!

5. **Know God’s People**—Why do I need to be part of the church? What is Jesus’ church like?

God showers me with love in a tangible way through my relationships with His other children; He meets my every need not only by His Word and His Spirit in me individually, but also by working through others. He puts me in a new family where other members love and need me and I love and need them.

“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”—John 1:12,13

“...I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’”—John 3:5,6

“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”—1 John 5:13

This study covers basic questions of what it means to be a Christian and how one becomes a child of God—how one is “born again”—which even most church-going people haven’t asked or found answers to. The aim in studying together is to have friendship and fellowship that is based on unity, Jesus’ hope which he expressed just before his crucifixion (John 17:20-23) and which is based on agreement on basic biblical truths (Ephesians 4:1-6).

1. Know God

1. **John 17:3—Eternal life is to know him.**

"Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

2. **Matthew 7:21-23—What is the point these religious people missed?**

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

-cf. **Galatians 4:9a**—"But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles?"

-cf. **1 Corinthians 8:1-3**—"Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who loves God is known by God."

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

3. **John 3:16—God loves me so much, he gave his best so he could have me with him!**

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

4. **Romans 5:6-11—I need his love: powerless, ungodly, sinner, enemy. Compare to: love, die for, justify, reconcile, save.**

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

5. **Acts 2:22-24, 36-37—I crucified Jesus, my only hope. Am I “cut to the heart”?**

“Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him....Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.’ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’”

6. **Matthew 26-28—Grasp what Jesus went through for me! Put myself in his place.**

- Lord's supper—loved his betrayer
- Gethsemane—alone in time of need
- Before Sanhedrin—humiliation, pain, injustice at hands of religious leaders
- Peter's disowning—alone again
- Pilate—injustice, flogging
- Soldiers—crown of thorns, spit upon, beaten, taunted
 - cf. **1 Peter 2:21-24**—“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ‘He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.’ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.”
- Crucifixion—slow, agonizing asphyxiation, weight on spikes, rubbing against open wounds from flogging, humiliation and torture
- Separation from Father—the price for my sin, Jesus' greatest torture
- Resurrection—the culmination and goal, and our only source of hope!
 - cf. **1 Corinthians 15:19**—“If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.”

Drawing Conclusions: How does this make me feel about God? How has God's love affected me up to now in my life? How do I want to be affected by it from now on?

7. Isaiah 53:11 and context—Do I make Jesus feel like what he did was worth it?

"...he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities."

8. 2 Corinthians 5:14-21—Will I live for him?

"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

9. Mark 12:30—How will my love for God show in every area of my life?

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."

2. Know God's Will

I. Jesus makes God's will known.

1. 2 Peter 1:3-4—God provides:

- Everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him

- Divine nature, escape corruption through his promises

"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."

2. John 1:1-18—Know Jesus to know God

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

"There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

"He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, 'This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' ' From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known."

3. John 17:6-19 (especially 6,8,13-19)—He did it—provided the way to live above the worldly; spiritual answers and joy

"I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. ⁷Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. ⁸For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. ⁹I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. ¹¹I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. ¹²While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None

has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. ¹³*I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.* ¹⁴*I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.* ¹⁵*My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.* ¹⁶*They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.* ¹⁷*Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.* ¹⁸*As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.* ¹⁹*For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified."*

II. **4 obvious characteristics of a disciple (follower/learner/apprentice) of Jesus**

1. **John 8:31-32—Holds to his teachings**

"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'"

- **Isaiah 55:6-9—Trusts and obeys because God's ways are higher**

"Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call on him while he is near.
Let the wicked forsake his way
and the evil man his thoughts.
Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him,
and to our God, for he will freely pardon.
'For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,'
declares the LORD.
'As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.'"

- **Practical examples:**

- **Matthew 6:25-34—Priorities**

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

- Matthew 18:15-17—Relationship problems

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

- Luke 9:23-26—Give to be happy

"Then he said to them all: 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.'"

- Effect: Knows truth and is free!

2. John 13:34-35—Loves as he loved

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

- John 15:9-17—Lays down life, shares good things and good news

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other."

- Effect: Draws others to God!

3. **John 15:4-8—Bears much “fruit”**

“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”

- **Mark 1:16-18—Makes us “fishers of men”** (cf. **Philippians 1:22** and context)

“As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will make you fishers of men.’ At once they left their nets and followed him.”

- **Galatians 5:22-23—Gives us spiritual qualities**

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

- **Effect:** *God draws others through my life!*

4. **John 17:20-23—Oneness with other believers; unity**

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

- **Ephesians 4:1-6—Right attitude, effort, and foundations of truth**

“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

- **Effect:** *Proves Jesus’ Sonship and God’s love to the world!*

Questions: Are these characteristics obvious in my life? Would Jesus say I am a disciple of his? Is God producing the effects in and through me that he promises will be true of Jesus’ followers?

III. How to begin or continue in God's will:

1. **Acts 17:11-12—"3 E's" (NIV) - attitudes and actions, personal convictions**

"Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great Eagerness and Examined the Scriptures Every day to see if what Paul said was true. Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men."

2. **2 Timothy 3:16-17—Use it daily—"What does God say about this?"**

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

3. **Matthew 7:24-27—Put it into practice as I learn it**

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

4. **John 4:23-24—Perspective of balance—spirit and truth (cf. 1 Timothy 4:16)**

"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

- cf. **1 Timothy 4:16**

"Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers."

3. Know Myself

I. Spiritual law: God is holy and perfect and *cannot* be united with sin

1. **Isaiah 59:1-2—Sin separates**

"Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear."

2. **1 John 1:5-6—Light vs. darkness**

"This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth."

3. **Romans 6:23—Sin kills spiritually**

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

-I must understand the bad news to be able to appreciate the good news; don't minimize sin or cheapen the price paid for it.

II. All sin - sinful nature/fleshly desires

1. **James 1:13-15—Temptation—my evil desires, I choose to follow them, I am responsible for my choices**

"When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."

2. **Galatians 5:17, 19-21—Acts are symptoms of control of the flesh**

"For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."

3. **Romans 7:14-25 (esp. 18)—Slaves to sin; honesty about desires: What would I be like if not for spiritual influences helping me to somewhat overcome?**

"We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. *I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.* For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin."

4. **Romans 3:23—All fall short—God is the standard for comparison, no “curve”**
“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

III. **Specific sins we’ve struggled with help us see our own sinful nature and know where we’re weak and likely to be tempted. Question: Which specifics have controlled me?**

1. **Mark 7:20-23,**

"He went on: 'What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'"

-cf. **Jeremiah 17:9**—"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"

2. **Galatians 5:19-21**

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

3. Romans 1:18-32

"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

"For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

"Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

"Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

"Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them."

4. Colossians 3:5-9

"Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices."

5. 2 Timothy 3:1-5

"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them."

Related problems: ♦ Abortion ♦ Abuser or abused ♦ Eating disorders ♦ Homosexuality
♦ Grudges ♦ Incest/rape ♦ Substance abuse (Remember that the blood of Jesus covers even these!)

IV. Repentance seeks change, not only forgiveness

1. **Acts 3:19—Positive, first step, look forward to “times of refreshing”**

“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord...”

2. **2 Corinthians 7:8-11—Godly sorrow shows in attitude and action**

“Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while—yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.”

3. **Ephesians 4:22-24—Process—ongoing**

“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

4. **Titus 2:11-14—Motivation: grace**

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

5. **Acts 2:36-37—“Cut to the heart” leads to Question: “*What shall I do?*”**

Desperate for solution?!

“‘Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.’ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’”

4. Know God's Gift of New Birth

I. Review my condition before God—"Where am I?" No gray area!

1. **Romans 5:6-11—Need power to not sin and to be like God; need forgiveness**

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

2. **1 Peter 2:9-10—Chart of characteristics of being in darkness vs. light**

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

II. Time line—significant life and spiritual events, helps me see what I've been taught and experienced about having a relationship with God. Compare later with what I see in the Bible. (Examples: began believing, saved, baptized, confirmed, etc.)

Birth

Now

|_____|

III. Born again at a point in time

1. **John 1:12-13—The *right* to be born of God, to become God's child!**

"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."

2. **John 3:3-7—Born of water and the Spirit**

"In reply Jesus declared, 'I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.' 'How can a man be born when he is old?' Nicodemus asked. 'Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!' Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'"

Question: When does God give me a new birth? How does it take place? The Bible doesn't say here, but will answer in other verses we'll look at.

IV. Forgiveness is only possible through Jesus' shed blood and death.

1. Matthew 26:28—Jesus' blood brings forgiveness (cf. Hebrews 9)

"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

2. Colossians 1:19-23—Jesus' death and blood

"For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant."

Question: If Jesus died for everyone, is everyone saved? When does his shed blood apply to a specific person?

V. How and when Jesus' death applies to me personally:

1. Acts 2:36-41—Where we left off in study #3

"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.' When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.' With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.' Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day."

- Am I cut to the heart?

- Is Jesus my Lord (master)? Will he be both Lord and Savior to me?

- "What shall I do?" Am I ready to do something to receive new birth?

- Answer: *When* I repent & be baptized → *Then* God gives forgiveness & Spirit

2. Romans 6:1-8—Meaning of baptism

“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.”

- Die with him, substitution of his life for my sin (cf. 1 Peter 2:24)
- “*Baptisma*” (Greek transliteration) = immersion (cf. Acts 8:26-39)
- Death → burial → resurrection of Jesus and me = point in time when Jesus’ death applies to me personally!!

3. Galatians 3:26-27—“Put on Christ/clothed with Christ”—God then sees Jesus’ righteousness and perfection and not my sin

“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”

-cf. Matthew 22:11-13—Parable of Wedding Banquet

“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

4. Colossians 2:11-12—My faith frees God to work (infants? NOT!); God gave us free will and doesn’t force anyone to follow him or to submit to his will

“In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.”

5. 1 Peter 3:18-22—"Baptism saves you"

"For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him."

- Pledge of/appeal for a good conscience—no holding back
- God used water to cleanse before—the Flood
- No magic in the water itself! A spiritual reality made tangible by being received in a physical and historical event—God's wisdom!

6. Titus 3:4-7, especially v. 5—"Washing of rebirth" + Spirit = John 3!

"But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. *He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit*, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."

-cf. Ephesians 5:25-26

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word."

7. Matthew 28:18-20—Jesus' command

"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'"

-cf. Mark 16:15-16

"He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.'"

Drawing Conclusions:

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|--|--|
| - What makes us separated from God? | Sin! |
| - What removes sin? | Jesus' blood! |
| - Where and when does this happen? | In immersion into Christ! |
| - What does this mean for me? | Look again at time line and compare |
| - How do I feel about this, regarding my life? | |
| - How do I feel about others I know who don't know this? | |
| - What actions does this make me want to take? | |

Additional verses (to read during personal study review):

- **Acts: 8:12, 35-38**
 - 9 (whole chapter) & 22:1-16**—Paul's conversion
 - 10:47-48**
 - 11:15-18**
 - 16:11-33**
 - 18:7-8**
 - 19:1-7**
- **Romans 8**—Life in the Spirit—promise for a powerful new way of life
- **1 Corinthians 2**—Spirit helps us understand God's ways
- **1 Corinthians 12:12-13**—baptized by one Spirit into one body

5. Know God's People

I. Ephesians 1:5,7,13-14,17—individual foundations

II. What the church (Greek “ekklesia” = “assembly”) is:

- Eph. 1:22-23—Jesus' body, he's the head
- Eph. 2:19-22, 3:5—God's household/dwelling, built on Jesus with apostles and prophets laying foundations for all time
- Eph. 3:14—Family of believers

III. The effect of God's church

- Eph. 3:10-11—Shows his wisdom
- Eph. 3:20-21—Brings him glory
- Eph. 4:1-6—Unity draws others to God (cf. John 17:20-23)
- Eph. 4:13,15-16—Helps members “grow up” and become like Jesus

IV. How the church works

- Eph. 4:7-16ff—Each part does its part, speaking truth in love
 - Leaders equip the rest (by teaching and example) so all can minister
 - Each part has a role and responsibilities—healthy interdependency
 - Romans 12:4-5—Belong to, responsible to and for each other
 - 1 Corinthians 12:12-27—All need others and needed by others
- Involvement
 - Hebrews 3:12-13—Encourage daily, prevents sin
 - Hebrews 10:24-25—Meet with and motivate each other
 - Colossians 3:16—Use the Word to help each other
 - Titus 2—Learn from others in practical ways
- 1 Peter 1:22-2:12—Love is the foundation, received from God and cultivated

What am I going to do with what I know? I now know enough of God's foundational teachings to make a decision about what I need to do to have a relationship with Him, and therefore also be added to His body, the church, the family of God.

- Jesus wants me to weigh out my decision—Luke 14:25-33; Luke 9:23-26,57-62; Mark 10:17-31
- *It's worth whatever I need to give up to follow Him—Philippians 3:7-14! Am I ready?*
- Philippians 4:13—*“I can do all things through him who gives me strength!”*