



THE BELIEVE PROJECT

ONE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The essential workbook to guide your first steps in faith and understanding of new life as a born again believer in Christ Jesus

Letter of WELCOME -

Congratulations again on responding to God's offer of adoption. Jesus tells a parable in *Luke 15:7* about things lost and found; then concludes by making the point that there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than 99 righteous people. The heart of God is to reach the lost; now you can say "once I was lost; now I am found".

Does calling yourself a Christian, make it so? You could stand in a garage and calling yourself a Ferrari, but it doesn't make it so. What you must have and can never afford to lose is a deep confirmation that you are indeed a child of God. (*Romans 8:14-17*).

This course is meant to help you begin your journey as a Christian. You'll experience changes on many levels as you leave behind a secular (non-spiritual) worldview and adopt a new Christian world-view (view of life with the knowledge of God).

The intention of this booklet can be summed up in one verse - *Romans 12:1* "be no longer conformed to the world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind". The change taking place in you may make you and others uncomfortable if it is not taking place in them also. So they will try to squeeze you back into that mould that they find comfortable for you because it doesn't confront them. Many will try and win you back... If they can't; they will reject and mock you.

Don't go back to life that Jesus paid to deliver you from.

Philippians 1:6
**"being confident of this very thing,
that He who has begun a good work
in you will complete it until the day
of Jesus Christ"**

Blessings,
Philip Lewis
Senior Minister



• *Featured In This Issue* •

TABLE OF CONTENT



WELCOME 02

Getting started
- reading the Bible



THE BIBLE 04

How to read the Bible
How do I understand the Bible



BORN AGAIN 06

Where it begins
in the end



HOLY SPIRIT 07

Co-operating - Be Holy
Speaking in Tongues



THE LAW 08

Fulfilled not abolished



BASICS 10

Things you need to know



FAMILY 10

Family - Prayer - Worship



MONEY 11

Tithes & Offerings



FORGIVENESS 12

Free & whole



CITIZENSHIP 13

The new you



THE GREATS 14-15

The Great Commandment
The Great Commission



SACRAMENTS 16-17

Communion
Baptism

• *Getting Started* •

READING THE BIBLE

From the A.S.K. course, you learnt the meaning of ‘inspired’, ‘inerrant’, and ‘infallible’. You also learned that the Old and New Testament depend on each other. This is essential to ensure you don’t just read to gain information, but life changing wisdom.

Your Bible has been translated mostly from two languages with a crucial moment in time dividing them. That moment was the birth of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament covers the first 4,600 years of human history; mostly written in the Hebrew language. The New Testament, covers the last 2100 years and is mostly written in Greek. You will find an index in the front of your Bible that lists all 66 books. Within each book are chapters and verses in numerical order so you can easily find any referenced scriptures.

How to read the Bible

Some take on the task of reading the Bible from the start – but it’s a really big book. Actually it’s 66 books compiled into one big one. As a new Christian it helps to start in the New Testament.

The first four books of the New Testament are called the ‘Gospels’. Four individual accounts of Jesus’ 33-year ministry. As you move through the New Testament, you’ll see references to the “forefathers”, “customs”, “Law”, “Prophecy” – you will only fully understand these by reading the Old Testament.

The first book in the Old Testament ‘Genesis’ opens with “in the beginning”. A Great place to start if you want to get a whole picture of God and what He has done through human history.

For ages, people have tried to disagree, discredit and disprove the Bible, however, the bible continues to stand as immovable as the foundation of the earth – undisturbed and truly unthreatened by the opinions of the critics.

My recommendation would be not to waste time challenging the Bible; rather if your desire is to learn truth – let the Bible challenge you. When the Bible confronts you - ask yourself “this opinion that I’m defending, where did I get it”? “Who gave me that set of moral and ethical directives”? “Is the source of my information all-knowing? All-powerful? Unchanging? Eternal? Authoritative?”

If the answer is “no”, then it is possible it could be wrong.

How do I understand the Bible?

Here is a helpful set of guidelines for reading Scripture. Perhaps see these guides as a fence. If you go outside of them you maybe ok, but you may also be putting yourself in danger. Remember fences are erected for a reason – primarily for safety.

Diligently - If you read the Bible superficially, that will be the extent of your understanding of God, His nature, His purposes, His passions. But if you diligently study with the goal of finding pure truth, you will find that this collection of 66 books has no limit.

Before you read the Bible – Prepare yourself. Be ready to learn something, see something that you have never seen before. Next, say a simple prayer like:

“God, I am ready for your word to
a) challenge me, b) convict me,
c) correct me, d) coach me
– I want to know you more”.

1. Historical accounts – should be read ‘literally’.

2. Law – This too should be taken ‘literally’. Understand that God’s laws are given to:

- a) reveal His nature,
- b) reveal our nature, and
- c) instruct in right living

3. Prophecy – most prophets received dreams or visions - often pictorial, figurative, and in many cases, not even understood by the prophet. Their job - to deliver the Word, the hearer’s job (you and I) is to ask the Holy Spirit for understanding. Prophecy can be tricky because many people interpret prophecy with an agenda – that is not the way to do it. Interpreting the past has impact on our future. So be very careful when interpreting prophecy.

4. Parables – Context is Key! As the saying goes “if you take the ‘text’ out of ‘context’; you are just left with a ‘con’”. Often a parable’s meaning is revealed by looking at the audience.

Eg: Who Jesus is speaking to tells us why He is telling the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). Sure it paints a beautiful story of the heart of God and redemption but the parable was actually designed to confront the religious leaders at the time (represented by the older brother).

The safest approach to parables is to ask “if there is only one thing being taught; what is it?” It is better to oversimplify than to overstate what is being said.

E.g. Jesus is the shepherd, we are sheep (Matt 18:12-24). Jesus wasn’t a shepherd – he was a carpenter. We are human, not sheep – so what is Jesus talking about?

5. Instruction – whether it is the Law, a prophet, historical accounts of Israel, one of the apostles, or Jesus Himself where instruction for life can be found; take them as being literal to the original audience. Somethings need to be filtered through an understanding of ‘culture’ before applying them but certainly not to be taken lightly.

E.g. I Corinthians 11. speaks about ‘head covering’. This needs to be understood through the culture- otherwise women have to wear hats, and men are not allowed to. Hats were an external expression of being covered by an authority. It was a cultural demonstration of honour. The correct application for us is to show honour where it is due – no matter what culture.

IF YOU DILIGENTLY
STUDY THE BIBLE WITH THE
GOAL OF FINDING TRUTH, YOUR
UNDERSTANDING OF GOD WILL
HAVE NO LIMITS...

BORN AGAIN

What really happens when you become a Christian? Everyone's experience is different but what actually takes place is the same for everyone, everywhere. As you committed your life to God, Jesus' righteousness was credited to you. All the sin that has kept you apart from God is paid for in full by Jesus. The offense of it is removed and the guilt and shame are taken away.

Jesus described this experience to Nicodemus (*John 3:1-9*) as being 'born again'. That means the Holy Spirit – the One Who breathed life into Adam on his creation day now lives in you – breathing life into you. You have spiritually come to life.

The Holy Spirit will use Scripture, preaching, any and all of life's circumstances, to guide you in life. Some days you will struggle, some days you will feel like you are riding on the clouds, but through it all - you will have a simple confidence that you are born again. This is one of the simplest, yet most profound, functions of the Holy Spirit. He is that small voice deep inside confirming that you are in fact a child of God. (*Romans 8:16*)

No person can give you the Holy Spirit and no one can take it from you. You may have many questions about what is going on, but one thing you won't question is your relationship with God – He is your Heavenly Father.

In the end

It's true – one day we will all shuffle off this mortal coil... so what happens next?

Any view that suggests you will go into some form of soul-sleep, or go to some 'waiting place,' or go directly to heaven or hell, are all incorrect – certainly as far as the Bible teaches. When you die, the confines of time, space, matter no longer affect you. You will not know the difference - whether you have been dead for one second or 1000 years. Time, space, matter no longer are determining factors. You are in eternity.

There is a judgment day waiting for us all. On that day we will stand before God the Father and where you will spend eternity will be declared and there is only two places.

A) - Those whose righteousness is in Jesus Christ will receive eternal life

B) - Those who have relied on self-righteousness will receive eternal suffering because they will not meet God's righteous standard.

Make sure you are in group A.

Cooperating with the Holy Spirit's leading

The Holy Spirit will use the Bible to lead you in how to live right. It won't take long before you find things in your life that need to be dealt with. It may be something you already know is not right but God is telling you "it's time to do deal with it". It can also be something you never thought was wrong but suddenly the Bible calls it 'sin'.

Once you realise there is sin in your life you have to make a choice. You can either cooperate with the Holy Spirit's leading and be transformed into the person God formed you to be or chose not to, which will only frustrate you and interfere in your relationship with God.

HEBREWS 10:14

FOR BY ONE OFFERING HE HAS
PERFECTED FOREVER THOSE WHO
ARE BEING SANCTIFIED.

This road from here to perfection is a life long one. You can see it in operation in three stages.

1. Made right / Justified – your status with God has changed because of Jesus payment for your sin. When you confessed your sin and repented of it, Jesus payment was credited to your life.

2. Changes on the inside / Regenerated – Holy Spirit initiates changes where others can't see - thinking, attitude, belief, values, motives, passions, etc. You must cooperate with those changes.

3. Changes on the outside / Sanctified – Sanctified mean 'set apart' in two ways. First, we are set apart from the world – activities that benefit our corrupt nature. Secondly, we are set apart for God – activities that benefit our new godly nature. The outcome of this process is a guaranteed life filled with the most valuable fruits.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV)

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Be holy

We are not told to 'act' right so that God will see us as 'holy'. We are told to 'be' holy because we ARE holy. If your right behaviour is an attempt to gain God's approval or favour, then Jesus' work of paying for your sin to make you righteous, is reduced to nothing. As Christians, we act from a pure heart and good conscience, not in order to gain them. Jesus did the hard work so you could be declared 'righteous', now it's your responsibility to stay 'righteous'.

Your obedient life is nothing short of your minimal response to God's generous offer to pay for your sin (Romans 12:1).

• *Who is* •

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Once you are born again, you have the Holy Spirit dwelling in you and confirming that you are a child of God – but there is more.
The Holy Spirit has gifts to empower and enrich your life.

One of the Holy Spirit's gifts is a spiritual language. Like the noises that a new born baby makes when it is hungry, or tired, or in pain, etc. The baby has not learned to speak the local dialect but communicates in unintelligent sounds that always gets the attention of the parent.

Your tongue allows your spirit to speak directly to God. Your conscious mind can't understand or interfere, or argue. Neither is your mouth limited to your vocabulary because the sound is not important. This baptism means you can pray uninhibited by any or all of your human faculties/limitations.

It may help to have someone pray with you but no person can give it to you. This spiritual tongue can't be taught to you by someone else, you simply receive it.

Speaking in Tongues is both a gift to you and for you.

Gift - (Acts 8:18-20) You don't earn it, you can't buy it, you can't attain to a level of spirituality and have it bestowed upon you like some medal of achievement, it's a gift... pure and simple.

To you – (Acts 10:45-47) As with any gift it requires two parties... a giver and a recipient. One party is generous and decides to give

a gift, and without any qualification or merit another party receives it. As sure as the giver can choose who the gift is given to; so to the recipient can reject the gift.

For you - (1 Corinthians 14:2-4)

It is to your benefit because your personal prayer life, your praise and worship are completely elevated to a new level of liberty and freedom. You are empowered! Don't miss out on a gift from God by being concerned about "talking funny or look silly"; it is a gift, and a powerful one at that. If the baptism of the Holy Spirit provides you with a tongue where you can express yourself to God uninhibited by your vocabulary; why wouldn't I want it?

Would you like to receive it?
Why don't you ask to be baptised in the Holy Spirit for it right now?

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY
SPIRIT IS A GIFT TO YOU
AND FOR YOU

FULFILLED NOT ABOLISHED

HERE IS THE SECTION WHERE WE ADDRESS HYPOCRISY,
AND WHY CHRISTIANS ARE REGULARLY ACCUSED OF IT.

Originally a 'hypocrite' was a stage actor, and the most admired ones were those who could play multiple roles in one performance, and convincingly change a facial mask and persona to reflect the character of the mask.

Christians must NEVER be guilty of hypocrisy.

The operation of the Holy Spirit is a centrifugal one - that means, the change takes place in the centre of your life - your heart. From there it works its way out into every area of your life - values, thinking, jokes, language, preferences, choices - everything. No doubt, as a new Christian, some behaviours do need to change quickly. This is not due to a religious performance - but rather a conviction by the Holy Spirit to change - and your response to cooperate.

The Apostle Paul resolved the issue in Romans 3:31 regarding the argument for hypocrisy of Christians and their approach to the Law... yet 2000 years later it is still a problem in Christianity.

The error goes like this: "the Law of Moses is Old Testament and since we are in the New Testament era, then we are free from the Law". Nothing could be further from the truth.

"How will I know what is right & wrong; how will I know what is acceptable to God if there is no Law to tell me so?" Read Romans 3:31 again - through our righteous lives we validate the goodness of the Law.

Yes, you are a New Testament Christian.

Yes, you are under grace and have been made right with God through faith in Jesus Christ; however, 'faith' in Jesus does not remove the requirement to be righteous.

It does mean the way by which you are made righteous has changed.

DO WE THEN MAKE VOID THE
LAW THROUGH FAITH?
CERTAINLY NOT!
ON THE CONTRARY, WE
ESTABLISH THE LAW.

The Law is the declaration of God's standard. If someone fell short of the standard, the Law prescribed all sorts of ceremonial sacrifices and offerings in order for you to be made 'right with God' again. You would do as the Law prescribed, but because the sinner was able to pay the price; it bred self-righteousness. There was no change of heart, because the sinner was able to pay for their sins.

However, faith in Jesus means the sinner rejects all right to be called 'righteous' on their own merit.

Q1: When Jesus came – did God's standard change or drop?

A: No – Jesus died to make us right.

Q2: When Jesus came – did He remove the Law?

A: No – Jesus patently stated “He did not”.

Q3: Now you are a Christian are you free to live how you want?

A: No – everything you do now reflects on God, because you carry the name ‘Christian’

The Law also gives the remedy for us to make it right when we stumble. This is what the Bible refers to when it speaks of ‘works of the Law’. When we read the Law it is both:

- a) historical and
- b) instructional (*refer back to ‘how to read the bible’*).

So it is to be taken literally - but filtered through context.

For example: The Law instructs (Exodus 21:29) what you are to do if you bull jumps the fence and gorges someone... now, do you own a bull? I sure don't! So do we ignore that Law because we don't own a bull? No - we understand it contextually. What principle is it teaching? It is teaching your responsibility for your possessions and should one of your possessions cause harm, then we should initiate making it right. We all have things that can cause harm to others – a pet, a car, a motorbike, a boat, perhaps a product you manufacture or service you provide. You see, when we obey the Law, we are maintaining a standard of Righteousness that Jesus gave us.

‘Obeying the works of the Law’ is not the same as the ‘Law itself’. ‘Law’ is the declaration of God's standard vs. ‘Works of the Law’ are what is required of those who break the Law.

There is no way we can become righteous on our own merit (works of the Law). But with the help of the Holy Spirit and clear instruction from the Bible we can maintain the highest level of righteousness.

We don't obey the Law as a way of moving toward being righteous. We obey the Law out

of a position of already being ‘righteous’. There is no achieving righteousness, there is only the maintaining of it.

Romans 5 tells us what Jesus has done is so effective in making us righteous, we can approach God with confidence – amazing! The God of creation allows us to come to Him personally.

We don't want to have unconfessed and un-repented sin in our life. The only way to be sure is to know the Bible and respond correctly when the Holy Spirit lets you know there is something in your life that needs to be dealt with.

If you have no unconfessed and un-repented sin – you are perfectly righteous – stay that way. If you stumble, God has already provided the way for you to become righteous again. It is not through pennants, money, good works or beating yourself up; it is in exactly the same way you became righteousness in the first place – confession and repentance.

This was covered in the A.S.K. course but it doesn't hurt rehash the basics from time to time.

Confession – this is admitting what you have done wrong. While it may feel cathartic to confess your sins to another person, it doesn't change the offense. It only changes things if you confess your sin to someone who can do something about it. There is only one who was prepared to lay down his life to pay for your sin, and that is the one who you need to confess your sin to – Jesus.

Repentance – confession is great for expressing regret, remorse and release, but forgiveness doesn't come until you repent.

‘Repent’ means turn around and go and in opposite direction. You can be sorry all you want when you confess your sin, but only if you will commit to stopping that sin, you will know the forgiveness of God.



• *Stuff you've gotta know* •

CHRISTIAN BASICS

Family

The simplest way to understand Church is to think about family. Family - that complex, and sometimes volatile combination of people, who love their father in their own way, yet have completely different desires, experiences, education, personality types, and are trying to learn to love each other.

Of course there is differences of views, strong disagreements and at time – even tears. In the end, what binds us together is – LOVE.

*Love will always cost the individual,
but the benefit is huge for the family.*

Q: Do you value what can bind us more than what can separate us?

Family is messy, confronting and uncomfortable but the closer we become; the stronger we become. While this principle remains, it is unfortunately not always possible. As in any family - you may find some people have serious character flaws. If those flaws affect you negatively or draw out your worst – you are best not to be around them. Remember this - You are commanded to love everyone; you are not commanded to get along with everyone. 'Getting along' with others requires cooperation from the other person - that is out of your control.

Prayer

Kneeling on the floor of your bedroom with hands interlocked over the Bible is a nice, respectful image, and you may find at times that you want to pray like that, but it certainly is not necessary. Your prayers are not heard any clearer by God like that than if you are standing.

You can pray everywhere - and in fact I Thessalonians 5:17 says "pray without stopping". If you had to stay in your room or be in church in order to pray – it would be hard for you to pray continually. It is most helpful to realise 'prayer

is mankind communicating with God... and vice versa'. That's right! God hears prayer, but He also answers prayer. Sometimes even while you are praying.

Praying has three basic categories –

- a) Worship (adoring God for who He is),
- b) Request (bring your needs to Him),
- c) intercession (praying on behalf of others)

It is important that you know God answers in three basic ways

- a) Yes,
- b) No,
- c) Not yet.

It is always worth asking yourself this question regarding prayer – "are my prayers designed to change God's will or reveal God's will to me"?

Worship

We come together and sing songs and we call that 'worship'. It is... sort of. Singing is an expression of worship. Worship is to 'set your heart fondly on something / someone'. Our English word 'worship' is a development of the word 'worth-ship'. It is acknowledging the worth of someone or something.

The first of the 10 commandments is "have no other God's"; the second is "have no idols". They may seem the same thing if you miss the meaning of worship. You see - you can have a house full of 'idols', but none of them get your worship – where your heart has assigned a real worth to them.

In the west we tend to not have many carved images that we worship, but we have other things that we attribute a very high worth to – sport, career, money, relationships – so many things get that place of 'highest worth'.

The one true God alone is worthy of that place. God is the only one worthy of your worship.

• Tithes & Offerings •

MONEY

Money

You will hear a couple of different terms used when comes to money: Tithing and Offerings. They aren't swappable; they are two entirely different things. One is compulsory, the other is free will.

Tithes

Is tithing really compulsory? I could tell you story after story of people whom I personally know where God miraculously provided for when they began tithing... BUT that is not the point. I am not trying to 'motivate' you to tithe. I want to 'teach' you the principle.

Your tithing must never depend on the preacher's ability to convince you to give; it depends on whether you believe the Bible is God's Word and is authoritative. By that I mean not just having AN authority but is THE ultimate authority.

If you reject something you read in the Bible because you don't 'like' it; then no, you don't believe the Bible is the Word of God or authoritative. You are saying "I trust my wisdom and authority over God's. Please understand, if you reject God's principles, you reject God's promises. Your Christian life is going to be a frustrated one, because you will forever be battling over who truly has the final say in your life.

The first reference to a formal tithe is in Genesis 14 where Abraham offers a tenth to the high priest. Later on, God institutes tithing into the Law. The principle is simple but requires a shift in mindset. Tithe is given to God by bringing it into the church.

God owns everything and blesses man with the ability to earn for himself. The privileges of health, wisdom, gifts and the ability to earn: they all come from God. God says to us, "of what I have invested into your life, 10% is mine; 90% is yours."

God rightly sees 100% of creation as His - yet He declares only 10% of what mankind collects is His - and He means it. Malachi accuses God's people of stealing - Why??? Simple - they withheld God's tithe. It wasn't theirs to withhold; it was God's, that's why the accusation is 'theft' not 'stingy'. The tenth is already God's - so the real issue with tithing is 'obedience.'

Offering

This is for the person who sees need or cause and wants to give out of their 90%.

Perhaps sponsor a child, support a ministry, buy Christian books and music - whatever you want; it's yours.

But that first 10% tithe is God's, and it goes to your church. Your offerings can go where ever you want.

FORGIVENESS

Jesus taught that forgiveness is compulsory for the Christian.
He was so serious about it, He followed up the command with a disclaimer,
“if you don’t forgive others - you won’t be forgiven by God.”
Matthew 6:14,15; Mark 11:25,26; Matthew 8:21-35.

Here’s the rub – God tells us what we must do, but for most of us, our culture doesn’t teach us how to do it. Fortunately, Ephesians 4:32 says if we simply observe how God forgives us; we learn how to forgive others.

Before you start ‘forgiving’ based on an obligation, it is important to clear up what you are and aren’t ‘obligated to do. Forgiveness is not reconciliation.

Reconciliation may be desirable in some cases but in others reconciliation could be harmful to you. The Bible says we should stay away from liars, drunkards, thieves, immoral people... and many more but the point is, there are certain people that it is in your best interest to avoid and you should not feel guilty about keeping a safe distance.

As you walk through this forgiveness process remember “I must forgive that person, but it does not mean I making make up with them”. Meeting with that person and telling them you forgive them is not required. You don’t need their presence, attention, permission or acceptance in order to forgive.

Forgiveness is about releasing. Releasing debt, pain, offense, revenge, it may mean releasing that person from your life. Forgiveness is about your liberty.

We have produced a full course that will help you walk through this process of forgiveness in detail, but for now, let’s summarise the way in which God forgives you so you can learn how to forgive others

A.C.T.

- ACKNOWLEDGE - CANCEL - TRANSFER -

If there is un-forgiveness in your life;
then NOW is the time to A.C.T.

Acknowledge cost(s) – The **transactional cost** is the actual event that caused the offense. This is what you must forgive the other person for – but be careful, don’t confuse it with the **personal cost**. This is what has gone beyond the actual event

- Transaction – e.g. You lend someone \$1000 but they, didn’t / can’t / won’t pay it back.
- Personal – e.g. what the offended one has lost or believes is outstanding.

Cancel the debt – this is not pretending the debt never existed. To truly cancel the debt is to soberly look at the list above and choose to absorb the loss. The ugly truth about these costs is that the transaction cost is what the other person actually did to you, the personal cost is what you have done to you. This second one is the real reason we all struggle so much.

Transfer – You are turning your back on the perceived ‘right’ for justice or recompense. You are handing over to God the role of prosecutor, judge and executor. Just in that short summary it may have occurred that for most people, un-forgiveness is commonly misunderstood. We need to understand forgiveness, so we can properly do it, and share the gospel effectively with others. The essence of the Gospel is ‘forgiveness’.



The New You

One day Jesus' disciples ask Him, "Lord how should we pray"? In Matthew 6:10, Jesus says - pray of the Heavenly Father, "let your Kingdom come, let your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven". For most of us, this sounds strange because when we hear 'the Kingdom of Heaven' we think of heaven... God's eternal paradise.

Is Jesus telling us to pray for the eternal dwelling place of God to come here?

No. What makes Heaven? Heaven is the fact that God is there. God is, for all intents and purposes, the King of Heaven. When we pray, "let your Kingdom come," it is like a pledge of allegiance. A surrender to a rule bigger than your own little domain. You are saying "God I want you to be involved in my life". "I want you to be King of my life - have the final say". "Though at times I may squeal about it - it is what I want".

That was how Jesus prayed. That was how Jesus lived. That is also how He died. That is how we are to pray, live and die - Citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

When you become the citizen of another country, there is a transition of letting go of the old and embracing the new. We've all met migrants who haven't done this well. Even after decades living in their new country, they still call the old country "home". When loyalties are tested- they are torn.

I know it seems simplistic but that really is what it is like to be a Christian. You have become the citizen of a different kingdom, you have a new King. Be aware, things will change as the citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven. If you don't anticipate the change, you will fight it all the way.

A citizen of a new land is able to recall the good old days but they can recall them with the rationale 'any loss was worth it'.

A citizen integrates with the new culture and everything that culture stands for. That citizen becomes interested in the things that affect their new land - politically, financially, morally, ethically - in all ways there is a deliberate attempt to integrate.

The reason Jesus tells us to pray for the Kingdom to come to earth will become evident as you read the Bible and understand God's rule is good.

Imagine living in a society where everyone valued each other as themselves. Where hard work, honesty, honour and love were the foundation of life. Imagine children growing up under parents who were excellent examples and children who were obedient and the flow-on affect that would have in society...

I know it sounds almost unrealistic and to be sure without God it is impossible... BUT

it is absolutely possible
if the Kingdom of Heaven comes.

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

Love! That's the greatest commandment.

Sounds easy enough – Right???

We all learn 'love' from culture. With the influence of media, music, social agendas, national customs - even your individual family unit. Each culture's version of 'love' has good and bad aspects to them. But that 'love' is not what the Bible is talking about.

Jesus summed up all the Law and all the prophets in two laws; Love God and Love mankind. The word Jesus used for 'love' is "AGAPE". It is not an earthly love – it is the love the God uses to love us. So, how can we AGAPE God and each other, if we don't have it? Exactly! That is the right question.

You will notice as you grow in your Christian walk, this issue of love never stops coming up. It constantly grows. It is constantly stretched. Hopefully soon, you will have the experience of other's saying to you, "how do you love that person"? That is AGAPE.

First of all it comes to you, it then starts to work on you, then once its established it begins to work through you. That is how you can love anyone; and I mean anyone.

Check this out for yourself. John was there when Jesus gave the commandment of LOVE. John was there when Jesus demonstrated His love for humanity and died for sin. John spent three intense years with Jesus and had conversations that we will never know about. This is what John, the sole surviving disciple write at the end of His life about love - 1 John 4:12-21

The greatest evidence that we belong to God is that we agape. This is not talking about the other types of love that rely on being loved in return; Agape is a love that is completely selfless and is intent on only one thing – the betterment of the other person.

This agape love is not emotional.

It does not manipulate and cannot be manipulated.

It does not cease and knows no limits. Again, it sounds unbelievable because your journey has only just begun.

Right when you feel like you are failing in this area; here is the encouragement – you can't generate it, manufacture it - you can only facilitate it. This agape is one of the fruits that the Holy Spirit produces in your life. You have the seed of agape in you already – it happened when you gave your life to God. What you need to do is pray for strength to do as God instructs you.

The great hindrance to agape taking root in your life is your own wants, rights, agenda, outcomes. It will require you to do as Jesus did; lay down His own will for the sake of others... This is love. This is what the Christian is called to do. It's not as terrible as it seems. Loving with agape is a pure love and the more you have it and exercise it, agape in and of itself blesses you incredibly.

The promise is if you will do this; humble yourself and be obedient to Love, then God will elevate you and promote you in His timing. Maybe it will be in this life, maybe not. That is not important. What matters is the eternal reward that comes from being obedient to the Law of love. Imagine how it will feel to stand before God and the whole host of heaven and not simply be found righteous through what Jesus did for you, but being welcomed home as a good and faithful servant. Receiving the just, eternal rewards for your sacrifice of love while here on earth.

The Great Commission

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen."

You will have realised by now that responding to the Gospel message is not the end of your spiritual walk. You haven't arrived; the journey has only just begun. It is normal and right that you want to share the Gospel with everyone you meet... after all, it is the best news around.

However, when it comes to sharing the Gospel, share it as often as you can and like, but remember this; Jesus commissioned us to make 'disciples', not 'converts'. You are now a convert.

A disciple is someone who submits them self to the way (discipline) of a master.

If you haven't already come to the decision, you soon will – "am I a follower of Jesus or a disciple"?

The follower sees the Christian life as a convenience. Obeys God when it suits them, disobeys when it doesn't. Ignores God, prayer, Bible study and church until they need something, and then all of a sudden re-engage until their need is met, and then when it is, they return to old ways.

The disciple on the other hand is intent on becoming like his master. Not out of convenience or when convenient, but out of a free will choice.

The disciple values knowing and obeying above everything. Be a disciple not just a follower.

Baptising: This is of course what Jesus meant when He said "baptising in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit". Baptism is explained in more detail in the next section, but for now it is sufficient to say – baptism in the names of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is not some church ritual. It is in fact one of the most serious personal spiritual commitments you will ever undertake.

Being baptised into the name of God is the origin from which we get the term 'Christian name'. At your baptism, you would receive a 'new' name to align with your 'new' birth as a Christian.



THE GREAT COMMISSION

SACRAMENTS

• Communion & Baptism •

Jesus, in His teaching, His life and His death didn't come to complicate but to simplify things. The whole Old Testament law was summed up in one word "LOVE".

In the similar practice Jesus simplifies rituals in to two sacraments to remind us:

- a) of what Jesus has done for us, and
- b) our response / commitment to what He has done for us.



BOTH BAPTISM & COMMUNION ARE SYMBOLIC REMINDERS THAT WE DO IN RESPONSE & REMEMBRANCE OF JESUS SACRIFICIAL LIFE.

COMMUNION

Remember always with Communion that it is symbolic; not the real thing. Breaking the bread is not literally breaking Jesus body, it is a reminder that His body was broken for us. Drinking the wine is not literally drinking the blood of Jesus – that would be wrong on so many levels. Both of these symbols are a ‘remembrance’ – a moment to reflect. It is Something present to remind us of the past; something physical to remind us of the spiritual. Communion does not take away sin – Jesus alone does that.



BAPTISM

What could Jesus have possibly meant when He said “Go, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit”? Sadly, baptism is a matter of great confusion and division in church, so we want to avoid all the angst of denominational divisions and just deal with the point of Baptism. But first...

- Baptism is not necessary for salvation otherwise you have a doctrine of works
- Baptism does not take away sin – Only Jesus can do that
- Baptism does not assure of salvation – Only the Holy Spirit can do that
- Baptism is no more valid if you are sprinkled or fully immersed, though full immersion is more in line with Biblical and historical accounts

So, what is it and why do it? Should I just do it blindly because Jesus said to?

Marriage is the best analogy of Baptism. Sounds serious... right? Well it is.

How many times should we get married? Other than death breaking the marriage vow; it is meant to be done just once for life. Just like Baptism. As sure as a couple should not rush into marriage neither should someone rush into Baptism. Yes, it's that serious.

- 1st intense consideration
- 2nd cost of exclusivity - no longer available to others
- 3rd preparation of life committed to ONLY 1 other
- 4th realising magnitude “until death”
- 5th “I do” to spouse = “farewell” to all others that compromise that commitment
- 6th Plan & invitation to ceremony – preferably those who will hold you accountable to the commitment made that day.

Marriage and Baptism are more than a private ceremony, it is a celebration of a former life coming to an end and a new life commencing. Until you are married, you can call it off at any time - but marriage is the point of no return. Baptism is your own personal public boycott to the claim of ‘self’ and committing yourself to love and live for God.

The Church has a course for anyone wanting to be Baptised. It gives some Scriptures for you to look up, a little commentary and fundamental questions. It is important that you do the course so you completely understand the a) cost, b) meaning, c) commitment of being Baptised in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

A graphic of a movie clapperboard with a red background and white text. The clapperboard has a black top bar with white diagonal stripes. The text is arranged in a stylized, slightly tilted manner. The word 'BELIEVE' is the largest, in white with a blue shadow. Above it, 'THE' is in a smaller, white, italicized font. Below 'BELIEVE', the words '- PROJECT -' are in white on a dark blue background. At the bottom, 'one' is written in a large, black, cursive script, with 'Christian Church' in a smaller, black, sans-serif font below it. The entire graphic is framed by a white border.

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