

# **Beginning Again**

***A Study of  
First Principles***

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# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

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# **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this book to . . . . . my grandparents for being such an inspiration to me in my youth. They encouraged me to become a minister and share the gospel.

I dedicate this book to . . . . . John Hendley who baptized me into Christ on March 27, 1988 and to all of the great ministers that have impacted my life: Carl Herndon, Chuck Eakins, Jack Cole, Dennis Smith, and Eugene Pigg. These men encouraged me to be a Christian leader.

I dedicate this book to . . . . . the graduate committee that presided over my practicum and major paper at Heritage Christian University: Dr. Steven Guy, Dr. Bill Bagents, and Dr. Coy Roper. This workbook began as a project under their supervision and guidance for the purpose of completing research and a thesis on the subject of new converts and keeping the saved.

I dedicate this book to . . . . . my brother and friend Clayton Pepper. He inspired and encouraged me to complete this work. He was the first person to proof the completed workbook and attempted to get it published. He passed away on the day I gave my defense for my thesis, which included this workbook among my research.

I dedicate this book to . . . . . the wonderful editors that have helped throughout the entire process. This workbook has been printed seven times. Each printing demanded grammatical changes and better organization. Anyone who knows me well realizes that I am a stickler for detail. I thank Sharlotte Roper, Dee Lange, Billie Wright, Janice Blankenship, Sherry Burns, Travis Creasy, and Ralph McGee for their insightful advice. I also thank my secretaries who have had patience with me and helped to present this edition: Patsy Canady, LeAnne Bryant, and Monica West.

I dedicate this book to . . . . . the congregations that I have worked for over the past eighteen years: Cloverdale Church of Christ (Cloverdale, AL), Collinsville Church of Christ (Collinsville, AL), Buhl Church of Christ (Buhl, ID), Pine Hill Church of Christ Church of Christ (Florence, AL), North Broad Street Church of Christ (Albertville, AL), Huntingdon Church of Christ (Huntingdon, TN), Gulf Shores Church of Christ (Gulf Shores, AL). I have grown through my experiences at these congregations. This material has especially helped to solidify the kingdom in these areas. More than thirty believers participated in the new convert's class at the Pine Hill church alone.

I dedicate this book to . . . . . my wife and kids. Sarah is the single greatest influence and inspiration in my life, save Jesus Christ. She has put me through school and been there when no one else would encourage me. I love you, Sarah! I also need to thank my boys (Luke, Seth and Izak) who are willing to sacrifice time with daddy so that the kingdom of God can enlarge its borders. No one could ask for a better family!

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## *Preface to the Workbook: For the Teacher*

The most challenging issue for the church is how to fulfill the Great Commission by reaching the lost and then keeping them faithful. Both are absolutely necessary to accomplish the mission of the church. As long as the church has been in existence there has been a danger of some backsliding into sin. Several of the New Testament books were written to congregations of the Lord's church that were slowly becoming unfaithful and unfruitful. Even today, no congregation is immune to the problem of unfaithful members. This workbook was prepared to prepare new converts for faithful Christian living.

First of all, let me thank you for deciding to use this workbook in your new converts/seekers class. There are many workbooks that are useful for a class on first principles but few are as extensive as this one. I hope that you will find it practical and effective.

Many teachers are uncertain as to how to teach a new converts class. It is beneficial to make some guidelines before the class begins. Personally, I hold to a few guidelines and use them whenever I teach a new converts class. I will share them with you briefly.

As a teacher of the new converts class you should love the lost. The most essential part of the new converts class is you, the teacher. It is valuable to have experience teaching new converts, or at least some experience working with them. I have always advocated that the person doing personal evangelism, or baptizing the new converts, should lead the new converts class. If you use your talent and show your love to the new Christians they will be more likely to accept your teachings and stay faithful.

The new converts class should be organized. While it is beneficial to have an informal discussion format for the class it is also helpful to be organized. As the teacher, you should follow the outline in the workbook or assigned subject, so that the new converts will not be caught off guard each week. The benefit of this organization is to show the students the need for structure and discipline in their study.

This workbook includes a few important items that may need to be explained. There is an entering Bible quiz that should be given to the student before they begin the class. Then after the class is finished the students can take the exiting Bible quiz and see their progress. There are also general review lessons for group discussion.

I recommend that the new converts class be separate from regular Bible classes. The small home groups are often the most successful. However, I have always tried to have the classes at the church building before evening services on Sunday night or Wednesday night. It should be emphasized that attendance is voluntary for these classes.

As for questions, each student should feel free to ask as many questions as he or she needs to in order to understand the material. Time should be provided at the end of each class for questions from the students. The student should be encouraged to show respect to all of the other students. No laughing, mocking, or ridiculing should be allowed. Everyone should feel free to ask questions and answer questions from the teacher, or even fellow students, and feel free from persecution.

One word of caution is that it is possible to bond too closely with these new converts. Make sure that you are not trying to shepherd the flock unless you are an elder (**Acts 20:28**). Also make sure that the students are converting to Christ, not to you. Good luck and may God bless you!

The Author

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## Introduction: A Study For New Christians

*“Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (I Peter 2:1-3).*

I believe with all my heart that the Lord will bless you for placing your faith in God and following the scriptural steps to salvation. I would like to congratulate you on your new life in Christ Jesus. As your brother in Christ Jesus, I would like to share with you a few things that can help you in your life as a Christian believer.

The subjects we will be covering are just a few of the many important topics that should be known by every Christian believer. I have tried to prepare timely material that will be of great value to you and others who might read this material. Before we begin our study together, I would like to give you a preview of what we will be talking about.

It is important that each person know about the Godhead or Trinity. Therefore, the first three lessons will help you learn more about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. The first lesson we will begin studying is entitled *“Getting To Know Your Maker.”* This lesson discusses the different characteristics and qualities of God. We will see how these characteristics relate to us and see how we are like God in different ways. Then we will study a lesson entitled *“Getting To Know Your Savior.”* In that lesson we will see God’s plan of redemption, and notice God’s providential power through the ages. By understanding that plan of redemption we can see how much God loves us. Finally, we will study a lesson entitled *“Getting To Know Your Comforter.”* This lesson discusses the different characteristics and qualities of Holy Spirit and how He works today. All of these lessons should benefit you in your Christian walk.

After these lessons, we will take a look at material that focuses on our personal life with Christ. We will begin by talking about *“The Purpose of Your Baptism,”* *“Your New Life In Christ,”* and also *“Facing Temptation: The Devil Is After You.”* These lessons will help you to take a closer look at your life and to see if you are really serious about serving God.

After those lessons we will discuss three lessons on *“Walking Daily With Christ.”* In these lessons we will notice the importance of prayer, meditation, fasting, personal sacrifice, and also we will talk about daily Bible study. Since daily Bible study should be an important part of every Christian’s spiritual life, we will study about translations of the Bible and Bible helps in one of these lessons. As we study together on these lessons, let me state that I use the New King James Version in my studying and preaching. I do not hold that it is the most accurate version, but it is one of the most accurate versions that we can find today in modern English. I believe that it is one of the easiest to understand; therefore, all of the quotations that I give will be from that version, to prevent confusion.

I also thought that it would be fitting for us to discuss the importance of the church. We need to really understand the value of the biblical accounts of *“The Establishment of the Church.”* Therefore, we will spend an entire lesson on that subject. Then we will spend three lessons on *“The One True Church,”* so that we can understand the difference between the church of the living God and the many denominations that we see in the world today.

When we finish our lessons on the church, we will return to subjects that relate to each of us as individuals. We will study a lesson on *“The Steps To Salvation”* and another on *“Remaining Faithful In Christ.”* These lessons may seem to backtrack but the author wants to make sure that the student has learned the material but also, more importantly, saved.

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It is also important to learn how we can do things right, why we do things the way that we do, and how we can determine what is traditional and what is doctrinal truth. In order for us to realize the importance of God's law as it relates to His worship, we will spend three lessons on "*The Acts of Worship*," and we will challenge our traditions and take a biblical perspective on these acts of worship. Then we will spend a lesson reflecting on the purpose of worship, on Christian living, and on fellowship as it relates to our "*Brothers & Sisters in Christ*."

The next lesson will be on "*The Second Coming of Christ*." When Jesus comes again we will be judged according to our obedience to the Bible. Therefore, this lesson will lead us to three lessons on "*Getting to Know Your Bible*." I also call these lessons "*The Basics*." I use the term "basic" because I believe that the things we will discuss in these lessons are very important for every Christian to commit to memory. You will probably find that you will already know most of this material, but do not be ashamed if you don't.

After discussing the importance of studying the Bible on a daily basis and the most essential facts that the Bible has to offer, we will then refer back to a study of the church for a few lessons. I think that it is necessary for us to consider "*The Leadership of the Church*." I will discuss the scriptural organization of the church. I will discuss who is to lead and why. We will also briefly discuss the qualifications for the different leaders in the church. While we are focusing on the church, I will also have a lesson on "*Non-Denominational Christianity*." This lesson will focus on reasons why we can be non-denominational in a world of denominations. We will see how to keep the church free from false doctrine, traditions of men, and heresy.

The last lesson on "*Back to the Basics: Teaching What You Know*" is by far my favorite lesson of all those we will cover. We will remind ourselves of scriptures like **I Peter 3:15** that says, "*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.*" We will also take a look at the accounts of the Great Commission, and we will consider the need for evangelism. We need to pass on all that we know to others in order to keep the church alive.

There are also two lessons in the Appendix on "*General Review*." The teacher is encouraged to use these lessons in class if time permits. In these two lessons we will notice how important all of the things we have learned are and why we need to pass them on. We will also make sure that the material has been learned and the objectives have been met. If you pay close attention to the lessons, and answer the questions after each lesson I promise that you will be blessed for your diligent study.

Before we close this introductory lesson, I would like to encourage you to answer a few questions. After each lesson there will be a few questions for you to answer. The teacher should also try to make time for questions and comments after each class. Remember that these workbooks are for you, and they will not be collected after each lesson. So please bring this workbook and your Bible with you each week. I hope you are looking forward to these studies. My prayers are with you!

### ***Questions on the Introduction***

- (1) What do you hope to learn from this book?
  
- (2) What topic sounds the most interesting to you? Why?

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- (3) How do you think these lessons can benefit you as a Christian?
- (4) Why do you think it is important that we have lessons on how to study the Bible?
- (5) How has Jesus made an impact on your life?
- (6) List some reasons why you decided to become a Christian.
- (7) List some names of people that you want to see go to heaven.
- (8) Why are you excited to be a part of God's family?
- (9) Who was the most influential in leading you to Christ?
- (10) What good works do you hope to be a part of now that you're a Christian?
- (11) How can you be more active in your local congregation?
- (12) What do you expect from this class?

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## *Chapter One - Getting To Know Your Maker*

There are so many wonderful things that we can look at in this world. We can glance around and see all of God's wonderful creations. Creation was God's action of bringing the natural universe into being. **Genesis 1:1** says, "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*" The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the New Testament declared, "*By faith we understand that the world was framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible*" (**Hebrews 11:3**).

People of the pagan nations in the ancient world believed that matter was eternal and that the gods evolved out of natural processes. Not much has changed because some still hold to this view. Some others believe that all of the world just happened and is the result of a big bang. But the Bible teaches that God existed before the creation and spoke the physical world into existence out of nothing. The main account of His acts of creation is found in the first two chapters of the Book of Genesis, although God as Creator is a prominent theme also seen in **Deuteronomy 4**, **Psalms 33**, and **Isaiah 40-48**.

The phrase "*God created*" appears in Genesis chapter one on three occasions (vs.1,21,27) and the statement "*God said*" appears several more times (vs.3,6,7,11,14,20,24,26,29). Its frequency declares the significance of the way God created. He simply created by speaking a word (**Psalms 33:6,9** and **Hebrews 11:3**).

The Bible does not seek to prove the existence of God, because it simply affirms His existence by declaring, "*In the beginning God . . .*" (**Genesis 1:1**). God has revealed Himself through the physical universe (**Psalms 19:1** and **Romans 1:19-20**). By observing the universe, one can find absolute traces of God's existence. Creation reveals the results of a universal mind that devised a master plan and then executed it. It makes more sense to accept the idea of God as Creator of the universe than to become like Atheists and assume that this universe of order came into existence apart from a divine being.

The greatest revelation of God comes through the Bible. The Bible is the inspired written record both of the existence of God and the nature of God (**II Timothy 3:16-17** and **I Peter 1:22-25**). Both the existence of God and the nature of God are revealed in and through Jesus Christ. Jesus stated, "*He that has seen me, has seen the Father*" (**John 14:9**).

The full revelation of God was made in Jesus Christ, but the human mind cannot fully understand God or His mind. One reason for this inability is the limitation of the human mind. How can our finite human minds understand the infinity of God? It is not possible. But, even though we cannot fully understand God, we still can know Him and His divine will. We can know Him through a personal relationship of faith and through a study of what the Bible teaches about His nature.

We need to study about the creation of the universe in order to better understand God's nature and purpose for this earth. God's first act of creation was to bring into being the great waters. **Genesis 1:2** states that "*The earth was without form and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.*" His next creative act was to bring order and to separate the land from the water. This act set the stage for the creation of plants and all kinds of animal life. He created inanimate life first, including grass, other vegetation, trees, and fruit trees. Then the sea was created with living creatures. The air was filled with flying things, and the earth was filled with creeping things. Then He created the land animals.

The creation of man was on the sixth and final day of creation. This happened because man was special and was to rule over the rest of God's creations. The Bible records: "*Then God said, 'Let us make man in Our image, according to our likeness'*" (**Genesis 1:26**).

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This statement has fascinated men for many years. What does the “*image*” of God mean? Since God is spirit (**John 4:24**) and not a material substance, it must mean more than a physical resemblance. I believe that being created in God’s image means that men and women, even though they are human creatures, are like God because we (a) can rule, (b) have dominion, (c) are free thinking, and (d) have similar characteristics.

We will see that the more we learn about God the more we can learn about ourselves. Here is a brief list of the qualities and characteristics of God:

- God is the creator of all things (Genesis 1:1)
- God is righteous (Genesis 18:25)
- God is a warrior (Exodus 15:3)
- God is one (Deuteronomy 6:4)
- God is trustworthy (Deuteronomy 7:9)
- God is too great to be described (I Kings 8:27)
- God is gracious and merciful (Nehemiah 9:31)
- God is good (Psalm 34:8)
- God helps His people when they need it (Psalm 46:1)
- God is mighty (Psalm 50:1)
- God is our rock (Psalm 62:6)
- God is our hope (Psalm 71:5)
- God is near everyone (Psalm 75:1)
- God is everywhere (Psalm 139:7-12)
- God is love (Psalm 145:9)
- God is holy (Isaiah 6:3)
- God is our salvation (Isaiah 12:2)
- God is sovereign (Isaiah 25:8)
- God alone is worthy of glory (Isaiah 42:8)
- God is our father (Matthew 6:9)
- God is all-powerful (Luke 1:37)
- God is spirit (John 4:24)
- God is all-knowing (Romans 11:33)
- God is knowable (Ephesians 1:17)
- God is wise (I Timothy 1:17)
- God is living (I Timothy 4:10)
- God is King of kings (I Timothy 6:15)
- God is approachable (James 4:8)
- God is unchanging (Hebrews 1:12)
- God is judge (James 4:12)
- God is eternal (II Peter 3:8)
- God is love (I John 4:16)
- God is almighty (Revelation 1:8)

As we see God’s characteristics, we can see parallels between them and human characteristics. Of course, there are many that we do not have and cannot ever have. On the other hand, there are some that we all have and can have more abundantly in Christ Jesus. Therefore, if we study about God, we really are studying about ourselves. We are studying about our spirits, our purpose, and our nature.

God is the Creator, and He is the only being capable of making something from nothing. People also have the capacity to be creative, but we have limited creativity. God is the ruler of this world. We are like him in this capacity because we were also told to have dominion over the creation. God is holy, moral, and ethical because He is righteous.

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People are also morally and ethically responsible and must make moral choices. God has revealed that He is a social being (i.e. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). People also are social beings who need relationships with others. Human experience and the biblical record suggest that these are some ways in which we reflect the image of God.

Many Bible students wonder about the six days of creation. Were these 24-hour days or indefinite periods of time? It is my belief that these were 24-hour periods of time. I could spend an entire lesson on this subject with you, but time will not permit us to study this much further. I encourage you to do more study on this issue at another time. I will simply say that God's power is absolute, complete, perfect, and faultless. He does not have to conform to nature and cannot be threatened by it. God is sovereign and does not have to share His secrets with us. If God wants to create something out of nothing . . . He can! And if He wants to create something in one day . . . He can! We should really not worry ourselves with how God created all of these things, but instead we should be asking ourselves why He created them and for what purpose.

Since God created the universe out of nothing, it is His will that all of it serve His purpose. As He shaped creation without any interference from anyone, He will bring creation to its desired end. No power can frustrate God in His purpose to complete the process started in creation and revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Our hope rests in the sovereign power of the Lord who created this world and who has the power to re-create us through Jesus Christ. God is the Creator and the Sustainer of the universe who has provided humankind with a revelation of Himself through the natural world and through His Son Jesus Christ. We need to get to know our Maker!

### *Questions For Chapter One*

(1) The worlds were framed by the \_\_\_\_\_ of God according to **Hebrews 11:3**. Why is that significant?

(2) How can we know that God existed before the creation and spoke the physical world into existence out of nothing?

(3) What are the two phrases that are used repeatedly throughout the first chapter of Genesis?

(4) What is the greatest revelation of God?

(5) What is the full revelation of God?

(6) What special creation was on the sixth and final day of creation?

(7) What does the "*image*" of God mean?

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(8) Name five of the characteristics of God.

(9) Is God the only being capable of making something from nothing? How can we know?

(10) Is it God's will that all of creation serve Him? Why?

(11) Why are we commanded to worship God?

(12) What are the benefits of getting to know the Father better?

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## *Chapter Two - Getting To Know Your Savior*

From the moment God created the world, He knew exactly what He expected out of His creations. All of the creations of God were made for His pleasure. The greatest gift that we can give God is the glory that is due Him. We are encouraged by the Psalmist when he says: “*Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together*” (**Psalm 34:3**). We should all praise the Lord for creating us, blessing us, and giving us all that we have.

After the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the Lord began to plot a way to rescue man from his sins. He declared to the serpent, “*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel*” (**Genesis 3:15**). So the Lord began preparing the way for Christ immediately after the fall of man. After the sin of Adam and Eve, all people sin, but through Jesus Christ we can all receive redemption. **Romans 3:23-26** says, “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*”

First we need to define our terms and look at some examples. A “savior” is a person who rescues others from evil, danger, or destruction. A savior is also a preserver that gives life and breath to all things (**Luke 1:47**). The Old Testament viewed God Himself as the Savior: “*There is no other God besides Me, a just God and a Savior*” (**Isaiah 45:21**). God is the source of salvation, because He sent human deliverers to rescue His people (**Psalm 106:21** and **Isaiah 43:3**). This word was also used to describe the judges of Israel. They are those “saviors” or “deliverers” who rescued God’s people from oppression by their enemies (**Judges 3:9**). In the New Testament the word for “savior” describes both God the Father (**I Timothy 1:1**, **I Timothy 2:3**, and **Jude 25**) and Jesus Christ the Son (**Acts 5:31** and **Philippians 3:20**). We can rejoice in Christ because God has become the “*Savior of all men*” (**I Timothy 4:10**). He was the Savior of Gentiles as well as Jews.

As Christians, we are exhorted to “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (**II Peter 3:18**). Therefore, we need to learn more about our savior. We need to learn His mission and purpose. We need to learn what His message is and what He intends us to do with His example and His teachings. We need to be “*looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works*” (**Titus 2:13-14**). One way that we can accomplish his purposes for us is by growing in the knowledge of Christ. We need to “*come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*” (**Ephesians 4:13**).

There are many ways that we can see that Jesus is our Savior. Jesus saved us by living perfectly and fulfilling the law. **Romans 8:3-4** says, “*For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*” Jesus saved us by shedding His precious blood on the cross of Calvary. **Romans 5:9** says, “*Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.*”

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Jesus came to this earth and put on human flesh. The same flesh that He helped to create was the same flesh He wore in order to save mankind. Then He suffered the pains of temptation, torture, and a cruel death so that we might live through Him (**I Peter 2:21-25**). **John 3:16** says, “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*” God allowed Jesus to offer Himself on our behalf. He accepted the sacrifice.

God displayed His love for us on that cross, and Jesus proved His love. **I John 4:9-10** says, “*In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*” We must remember that God loved us first, and He continues to love us despite our weaknesses.

We really need to learn more about Jesus Christ. The more we learn about Jesus, the more we can learn about ourselves. Here is a brief list of the qualities and characteristics of Jesus mentioned throughout the Bible:

- Jesus is all-powerful (Isaiah 9:6)
- Jesus has authority over demons (Mark 1:27)
- Jesus is the Son of God (Luke 1:35)
- Jesus is God (John 1:1-5)
- Jesus is the Messiah (John 4:25-26)
- Jesus is the Judge (John 5:22)
- Jesus is the Bread of Life (John 6:35)
- Jesus is the Light of the World (John 9:5)
- Jesus is the Good Shepherd (John 10:11)
- Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25)
- Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6)
- Jesus is the True Vine (John 15:1-8)
- Jesus is the author of life (Acts 3:15)
- Jesus is the wisdom of God (I Corinthians 1:21-24)
- Jesus is the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23)
- Jesus is the highest authority (Philippians 2:9-10)
- Jesus is the Creator (Colossians 1:15-16)
- Jesus is faithful (II Timothy 2:13)
- Jesus is coming again (Titus 2:13)
- Jesus is sinless (Hebrews 4:15)
- Jesus is holy (Hebrews 7:26)
- Jesus is the King of the ages (Revelation 15:3)
- Jesus is the Lamb of God (Revelation 21:22)

Some people have trouble accepting the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead. The story of the resurrection is very important. In fact, it is essential to the Christian faith. Many have doubted that the resurrection actually took place. It is recorded that even one of the twelve apostles doubted. We call him “doubting Thomas.” Because of his doubt we are all given the proof needed to believe in the resurrection. **John 20:24-29** records these events. Even though Thomas doubted, it is important to note that Jesus answered all of his questions. Thomas recognized both the resurrection and the deity of Christ. Thomas based his faith on sight. Christ promises a blessing for those who believe upon hearing instead of upon seeing. **II Corinthians 5:7** says, “*For we walk by faith, not by sight.*”

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Jesus is called many different names throughout the Bible. He is called everything from Messiah to the Alpha and Omega. He is worthy of all of these titles, but the one that best fits him is “Savior.” He came to this earth, put on human flesh, placed our sins upon himself, and then died for every one of us. **Mark 10:45** says, “*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*” The king of kings became a servant and was crucified like a criminal for us. He is a great Savior. We need to get to know our savior and have a personal relationship with Him.

### *Questions For Chapter Two*

- (1) Has God always had great expectations for His creations? Why?
- (2) What is the greatest gift we can give God?
- (3) When did the Lord begin planning the plan of redemption?
- (4) Define the term savior.
- (5) Why do we need to learn more about our Savior if we knew enough to be baptized?
- (6) How did Jesus suffer while He was on this earth?
- (7) What was required of Jesus in order for God to accept His sacrifice as an atonement for sin?
- (8) What did God display on that cross?
- (9) Name five of the characteristics of Jesus.
- (10) What can we gain from the example of doubting Thomas?
- (11) What are some of the titles Jesus uses?
- (12) Briefly write a paragraph on what Jesus means to you.

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## *Chapter Three - Getting To Know Your Comforter*

Today there is a lot of controversy surrounding the third part of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. A study of the Holy Spirit is a subject that cannot be overlooked. He was involved in the creation (**Genesis 1:1-2**). He was involved in the early church (**Acts 2**). He is also involved in the process of salvation (**Romans 8**). The Holy Spirit was needed in order for the disciples ministry to be complete. This is why Jesus was planning on sending Him to them (**John 14:26**). The Holy Spirit was being sent to help them remember and also to teach them. This promise to send the Holy Spirit was also a promise that said He would stay with Christians forever.

In the time of the apostles the Holy Spirit was given in a miraculous way. The apostle Paul tells us that after those days the miraculous power of the Spirit would pass away (**I Corinthians 13**). However, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit was promised as a Comforter that would never leave God's people (**John 14**) and He is given at baptism (**Acts 2:38**).

We need to learn how the Spirit of God works today. To get a real understanding of how the Holy Spirit works, it is essential to consider the scriptures. There are many scriptures in the New Testament that teach about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, such as: **I Corinthians 3:16-17**, **I Corinthians 6:19-20**, **Romans 8:9-13**, **Ephesians 4:30**, **I Thessalonians 4:8**.

The Holy Spirit has some of the same divine personality traits as the Father: (1) He is eternal (**Hebrew 9:14**), (2) He is omniscient (**I Corinthians 2:10-11**), (3) He is omnipotent (**Micah 3:8**), (4) He is omnipresent (**Psalms 139:7**). Romans chapter eight is a text that summarizes how the Holy Spirit works today, and will be the proof text for this lesson.

The Holy Spirit delivers Christians from condemnation (**Romans 8:1-2**). In the first few verses, notice that those who are not in Christ are still subject to condemnation. Freedom can only be found in Jesus Christ. Christians can also be free from guilt (**Romans 8:3**). Notice that these things can only happen if Christians "*walk according to the Spirit,*" and only if they are "*in Christ Jesus*" (**Romans 8:1**). Just like Christ, the Holy Spirit has a role in salvation.

The Holy Spirit also gives spiritual life. The law of "*the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,*" made Paul free from the "*law of sin and death*" (**Romans 8:2**). It would be safe to say if it could make Paul free, it can make everyone free. The main thought is that the constraining power of sin, if not broken, leads to death. So sinners can only be delivered from condemnation if they are "*in Christ Jesus*" and "*walk according to the Spirit.*" This makes the Holy Spirit of equal value in salvation as the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit enables realization of righteousness (**Romans 8:3-4**). The Mosaic law could not get rid of sin, because we were too weak and bound by sin to obey that law. It took God to send "*His own Son,*" in human flesh, among sinners, in a crucifixion sacrifice, to allow a way out. Therefore, "*He condemned sin in the flesh*" (**Romans 8:3**). He took on the form of sin, a common person, not a king or one of authority, and conquered sin. It is important to notice that Jesus came in "*the likeness of sinful flesh*" (**Romans 8:3**). Jesus took on a sinful nature, but was not corrupted by sin. He paid the penalty for sin and guilt, and overcame the power of sin. "*The righteous requirement of the law*" can be fulfilled in the Christian (**Romans 8:4**). This can become true if Christians "*walk according to the Spirit*" (**Romans 8:1**). The Spirit sets sinners free from the power of inward sin so that they can do what God's law rightly requires.

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

The Holy Spirit produces life (**Romans 8:5-8**). These scriptures teach that those who live according to the Spirit are those that set their minds to think, to will, and do the “*things of the Spirit*” (**Romans 8:5**). Notice the Paul uses the thought of being “*carnal minded*” (**Romans 8:6-7**). To be “*carnal minded*” is to set the mind on selfish human desires that are contrary to God’s purposes, and this leads to death (**Romans 7:5**).

To be “*spiritually minded*” brings life eternal and peace. The carnal mind opposes the will of God and refuses to obey him. Because those attitudes can never be reconciled with following Christ, they must be cleansed from all who seek to “*please God*” (**Romans 8:8**). So those who have the Holy Spirit, will be spiritually minded, and therefore, this will produce life. The opposite, being carnal minded, will lead to death.

The Holy Spirit enables one to have the mind of the Spirit (**Romans 8:9**). It is important to remember that the “*Spirit of God*” and the “*Spirit of Christ*” both refer to the Holy Spirit (**Romans 8:9**). They are all one (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), as already mentioned. In fact, Christ’s prayer proves this in **John 17**. Many other scriptures also explain this, such as **Romans 1:20**, **Colossians 2:9**, **Acts 17:19**, **John 1:1ff**, etc. Having the mind of the Spirit will allow a Christian to be guided by the spirit of truth.

It is important to note some things concerning “*to the flesh*.” To live according to the flesh is to have fleshly desires (**Romans 8:5**). It also leads to spiritual death (**Romans 8:13**). While all Christians are indwelt with the Spirit, they still struggle with and yield to the flesh. However, it is not God’s plan. Some Christians are still carnal and struggle with the presence of fleshly desires (**I Corinthians 3:1-4**, **Romans 7:13-25**). This is why they must be filled with the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit enables one to belong to Christ (**Romans 8:9**). Anyone who is in Christ has the Holy Spirit of God. Therefore, Christians belong to Christ if they are in Him. If one is not in Him, then they do not have the Spirit, and are not His. Therefore, all those in Christ have the Spirit, and belong to Him. Notice that if a person doesn’t have the Spirit then they are not His. It is important to remember that those who say that they don’t have the Holy Spirit are actually denying that they belong to God.

When a Christian leaves the fold of God and falls from grace they can also lose the Holy Spirit which disqualifies them as children of God. It is a dangerous thing to leave the safety of God’s everlasting arms. Christians are reminded over and over again in the scriptures to remain faithful in their walk with God despite the trials they will face.

The Holy Spirit produces righteousness (**Romans 8:10**). If Christ is in the body of a Christian they are dead. They have died with Christ through the process of baptism (**Romans 6:1-4**). This burial is also the process that allows Christians to receive the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:38**). Therefore, Christians are made righteous in Christ. This can only take place with baptism and the continual cleansing.

The Holy Spirit produces a spiritual resurrection (**Romans 8:11**). Even if Christ lives in the Christian through the Holy Spirit, the physical bodies still must die because of sin. The indwelling Spirit assures eternal life, because the person has been justified by Christ. God will also raise the mortal bodies to a glorious new life at the resurrection. This is one of the many hopes that a Christian has but without the Holy Spirit, it would never happen. It is important to remember that not all those with the Holy Spirit will go to heaven. One must remain faithful to the Lord (**Revelation 2:10**). Many people will fall away from the Lord.

The Holy Spirit is essential to life (**Romans 8:12-13**). It is important to remember that Christians are not of this world. Disciples need to make sure that they don’t live according to the flesh. There is no reason for Christians to continue living under the control of sin. They can be delivered by the Holy Spirit. Those who live under sin’s control will die, without hope of eternal life (**I Corinthians 3:16-17**).

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

There is a need to realize that the Spirit of God dwells in every Christian, and then realize the need to take care of our bodies. If every Christian would do this it will please God (**Romans 8:8**). It would allow the Spirit lead them us and help us receive eternal life.

The Holy Spirit is essential to being sons of God (**Romans 8:14-17**). To be controlled by God's Holy Spirit, shows that the person is one of His children. The Holy Spirit is, "*the Spirit of adoption*," and assures the Christian that they are right with God (**Romans 8:15**). **I John 3:24** also affirms that one's own spirit, and the Holy Spirit, bear witness to the fact of their sonship.

The presence of the Holy Spirit assures the obedient Christian that Christ abides in them. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the secret of true spirituality and effective service to God. Paul stresses the importance of the Spirit as a witness to salvation (**Romans 8:16**). This is also seen in **I John 3:24, I John 4:13, and I John 5:6**.

Notice that it says that Christians can call Him "*Abba, Father*" (**Romans 8:15**). "Abba" is, of course, the Aramaic word for Father. It should be noted that the Aramaic and Hebrew languages were very similar and these are the languages in which the Old Testament was written. To address God by this name shows the most intimate relationship with Him because it is like calling Him "daddy."

If a person does not have the Spirit of God then they are not His (**Romans 8:9**). So if a person wants to belong to Him and have His Spirit they must follow God's will. If these steps have been followed, and if they live faithfully, then they are worthy to be called His children and they will be rewarded (**Revelation 2:10**). Those who are not children of God will not inherit the kingdom of heaven (**Matthew 7:21ff**).

By "*bearing witness*" with the Christian's spirit one of the great mysteries can be seen concerning a ministry of the Spirit and sonship (**Romans 8:16**). This is an affirmation of the intimate fellowship between the Christian and God. Those who commune with God the Holy Spirit will find comfort in the assurance of God's gracious fatherhood for them.

The Holy Spirit is essential to ultimate glory (**Romans 8:17**). Christians are "*heirs of God*" if they "*are His children*" (**Romans 8:17**). This is seen in **Galatians 3:29, Ephesians 3:1-7, Titus 3:7, Hebrews 6:17, 11:9, James 2:5, I Peter 2:9, 3:7**, etc. As the child is heir to the parents, Christians are heirs of God. Because of this they are united with Christ and shall share the wonder of eternal life with God. The Spirit of God is essential to ultimate glory because it is essential to inherit eternal life.

The Holy Spirit produces hope (**Romans 8:18-25**). It is important to notice "*the sufferings of this present time*" (**Romans 8:18**). The suffering of Christians in a world that does not recognize Christ is one of the conditions for inheritance of future glory with Him. This is in agreement with the fact that the Holy Spirit is essential to ultimate glory. This hope can be seen in many different ways. Christians will suffer persecution (**II Timothy 3:12**) but are urged to remain faithful (**Revelation 2:10**). The Holy Spirit guides through prayer, study, and also through the written word. These are all aspects of that great hope.

The hope of eternal life with God is the hope that is mentioned here (**Romans 8:24-25**). Faith appears with faith and love as Paul's three fundamental principles of the Christian life (**I Corinthians 13:13**). So by having the Spirit Christians gain hope in two ways. They gain the hope that they can inherit eternal life and they gain the hope that they can get through trials and temptations.

The Holy Spirit helps in prayer (**Romans 8:26-27**). The Spirit makes intercession for a person when they pray (**Romans 8:27**). This is a promise from God to help Christians pray more effectively. The Spirit intercedes for them as they pray, according to the will of God. Jesus Himself submits to this will (**Luke 22:42**), and Christians too must be committed to the Lord and His will.

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

One reason for the great hope mentioned in **Romans 8:18-25** is that Jesus is our Mediator (**I Timothy 2:5**) and the Holy Spirit is our Intercessor (**Romans 8:26-27**). The Spirit is called a “Helper,” because of His nature (**John 15:26**). He helps with the prayers of a Christian and, therefore, makes them more effective. So His name fits His work. Other translations call Him a Comforter, and this is obviously true as well. He is indeed the great Comforter and Helper.

The Holy Spirit is essential to ultimate good (**Romans 8:28-30**). God causes all things to work for spiritual good and ultimate salvation. This can only come to those who respond to Him in love and obedience. Therefore, one must obey the gospel plan of salvation. All those “*called according to His purpose*” basically means all people (**Romans 8:28**). All people can receive this calling, even the Gentiles (**Ephesians 3:1-7, John 3:16, Romans 1:16**). Those who respond in obedience to His will become His people. Christians can be confident that nothing can hurt God’s people so deeply that God cannot turn it around for their own good. This is the reason for the confidence mentioned in **Romans 8:28**, as it can be seen in **Romans 8:29-30**.

God’s eternal plan will always be accomplished. He did not predetermine who would be saved but He predestined that those who believed would be made holy like His Son. He also called them to Himself. Christians are justified through their sins being forgiven, by the process of baptism into Christ cleansing blood, and continuing to walk in Him. Christians are glorified by God allowing them to share eternity with Him. In addition to this, His ultimate will is also seen in the works of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit gives assurance (**Romans 8:31-39**). Therefore, nothing can keep God from working all things together for good. In these last few verses of **Romans 8** it is easy to see the conclusion of God’s plan for His people that Paul explained in **Romans 8:8**. Paul affirms that God is for Christians, therefore, no one can succeed against them (**Romans 8:31**). God is for Christians being in Christ. This statement is a concise summary of the gospel and is also the basis of the following rhetorical questions that assume that God will give all things (**Romans 8:32**).

No one can bring a charge against a child of God (**Romans 8:33**), nor can a believer succeed if He condemns them (**Romans 8:34**). Nothing can keep those who belong to Christ from receiving the benefits of God’s love (**Romans 8:35-39**). There are six things that need to be kept in mind as a result of these things: (1) No one can stand against us, (2) God will freely give us all things, (3) No charge against us can be sustained, (4) God alone justifies, (5) The Lord is for us, (6) Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

The Holy Spirit is a helper, as already mentioned. He helps in many ways, in fact as already mentioned, there are more than a dozen ways that can be seen from the text of **Romans 8** alone. Among other things, the Spirit helped in the life and the work of Jesus Christ and He will help us in our walk with Christ. We should lean on Him for comfort.

### *Questions For Chapter Three*

- (1) What all has the Holy Spirit been involved in? Give one scripture for each.
- (2) What are some scriptures that teach us about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?
- (3) Name four of the personality traits of the Holy Spirit and give a scripture for each.

## **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

- (4) Without the Holy Spirit are we Christians? Explain.
- (5) Name four things that the Holy Spirit is essential for and give a scripture for each.
- (6) What benefit is there to having a comforter?
- (7) What benefits do we have for being a child of God?
- (8) What interests you about the Holy Spirit?
- (9) Why do you think people are afraid of talking about the Holy Spirit?
- (10) Can confusion about the Holy Spirit hinder your walk with God? Explain.
- (11) Why are we encouraged to know the Holy Spirit?
- (12) What are the benefits of getting to know the Spirit of God better?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## *Chapter Four - The Purpose of Your Baptism*

I remember my baptism as if it were just yesterday. I wanted to respond during the invitation that Sunday night, but my parents refused because they thought I was too young. After three hours of debate and talk they agreed to take me back to the church building. I was scared at first; but after a short talk with the minister, I calmed down. He reminded me that God loves us all and is not willing that any should perish (**II Peter 3:9**). Then he took me to the baptistery and baptized me. I was so excited after being baptized that I called my grandparents, family, and friends. I told everyone that I was saved from my sins and was a new person. I really had no idea all that was in store for me in the next few months, but I was just glad to be in Christ and have a fresh new start on life. However, soon after my baptism I began to wonder about the purpose of my baptism. You may have asked yourself the same questions.

I am thankful that we have been provided with the scriptures. There are many great passages that help us to understand God's will. Without these verses we would not know what to do in order to be saved. The Bible gives many examples and commands concerning baptism. By looking at these verses, we can learn the importance of baptism, the purpose of baptism, the necessity of baptism, and the nature of baptism. I would like to consider a few things about baptism:

- (1) The Bible teaches us that through baptism we can be saved from our sins.  
**Mark 16:16, I Peter 3:20-21**
- (2) The Bible teaches us that at baptism we are born again as a new creature.  
**John 3:1-21, Romans 6:3-4, II Corinthians 5:17**
- (3) The Bible teaches us that by being baptized we display obedience to Christ.  
**John 14:15, Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15-16, Acts 10:48**
- (4) The Bible teaches us that through baptism we have remission of sins.  
**Acts 2:38**
- (5) The Bible teaches us that through baptism we enter into the church of Christ.  
**Acts 2:37-47, Romans 16:16, I Corinthians 12:13**
- (6) The Bible teaches us that through baptism our sins are washed away.  
**Acts 22:16, Hebrews 9:22, 10:22, I Peter 3:21**
- (7) The Bible teaches us that through baptism we get into Jesus Christ.  
**Romans 6:3-4, Galatians 3:27**
- (8) The Bible teaches us that after baptism we walk in newness of life.  
**Romans 6:3-5, Colossians 3:1**
- (9) The Bible teaches us that through baptism we become a child of God.  
**Galatians 3:26-27**

We need to remember that the Lord has truly blessed us with salvation in Jesus Christ. We should serve Him in the way He desires. He desires that a person be baptized in order to be saved. I really cannot give you any reason to why God requires baptism, but I can simply say that if God says it, that statement settles it. The Bible is very clear on the steps to salvation (we will cover more on that subject later in this class). After reading these scriptures, one must conclude that baptism is essential for salvation.

Many teach that baptism is not essential for salvation. They defend a different doctrine than the one the New Testament church taught. The Bible plainly says that Peter said, *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38),”* and *“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them” (Acts 2:41).*

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

There are others who teach that Jesus didn't mean what he said and didn't say what he meant concerning baptism. Jesus plainly said, "*unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5),*" and "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:16).*" I believe that Jesus had all authority (**Matthew 28:18**) to command baptism as a means of salvation (**Matthew 28:19**).

After looking at all of the scriptures concerning baptism and obedience to the gospel, you learn that you can have great assurance. Baptism completely washes away our sins, makes us new, and cleanses us from all of the sin in our life by the precious blood of the Savior. If Christ had not offered Himself on that cross, died in our stead, and faced death for all mankind, we would not have this blessing of salvation. Baptism is not for ritual purposes. Baptism is not for those who are already saved. Baptism is not a bath but it is a cleansing. **I Peter 3:21** says, "*There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*"

Baptism clearly has three main purposes: (1) confession of faith in Christ, (2) cleansing or washing the soul from sin, and (3) spiritual death to sin and a new life in righteousness. The command to baptize was extended with the command to preach the gospel by Jesus in the Great Commission. All nations are to be evangelized; they are to be made disciples, and then they are to be saved through baptism (**Matthew 28:19**). By looking closer at these scriptures, we can see from history the implication that in Christian baptism there was a deeper spiritual significance than many denomination have tried to make it out to be today. Baptism is more than an answer to a good conscience or an outward sign of an inward grace. We need to consider our baptism daily and realize its significance.

I have mentioned quite a few scriptures in this lesson. Many of you have heard these scriptures taught, and you know what baptism can do for you. On the other hand, you might have experienced an unscriptural baptism or may not know what the standards are for a scriptural baptism. The Bible is very clear on what baptism requires:

(1) Baptism requires a birth.

**John 3:5, I Peter 1:22-25**

(2) Baptism requires much water.

**Acts 8:36, Acts 10:47, John 3:23**

(3) Baptism requires a washing.

**Acts 22:16, Ephesians 5:26, Titus 3:5, Hebrews 10:22**

(4) Baptism requires a burial.

**Romans 6:3-5, Colossians 2:12**

(5) Baptism requires a planting.

**Romans 6:5**

(6) Baptism requires going down into water.

**Acts 8:36, Matthew 3:5-6**

(7) Baptism requires a coming out of the water.

**Matthew 3:16, Acts 8:39**

(8) Baptism requires a raising out of the water or a resurrection.

**Acts 8:39, Romans 6:1-4, Colossians 2:12**

The scriptures are clear that baptism cannot be sprinkling or pouring. The word "baptize" means "to submerge," "to dip," "to immerse," or "to plunge." The word implies that a candidate for baptism is plunged beneath the water, not poured upon or sprinkled. If you were not completely plunged beneath the water, then you were not scripturally baptized. And if you did not have a scriptural baptism, then you are still lost in your sins.

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

It is very important that we do things according to God's will and not our own. When we are in the wrong, we need to change because God does not change. Again I say that I have no idea why God chose baptism as a means to salvation. Maybe we suffer from the same dilemma that Naaman found himself in (**II Kings 5**). He wasn't sure why he had to dip in the river. But when he simply obeyed, he was cleansed of his leprosy. In the same way, we can be cleansed of our sins if we are dipped in water.

### *Questions For Chapter Four*

(1) Who was the first person you told about your baptism? Why?

(2) Give one scripture for the following points concerning the purpose of baptism:

We can be saved from our sins	_____
We can have our sins washed away	_____
We can have remission of sins	_____
We can get into Jesus Christ	_____
We can enter into the church	_____
We put on Christ to be a child of God	_____
We walk in newness of life	_____
We are born again as a new creature	_____
We are obedient Christ	_____

(3) What is baptism not for?

(4) What are the three main purposes of baptism?

(5) Give at least one scripture concerning these standards for scriptural baptism:

Much water	_____
Going down into water	_____
A burial	_____
A planting	_____
A washing	_____
A birth	_____
A resurrection	_____
A coming out of the water	_____

(6) What does the word "baptize" mean? And what significance does it have?

(7) What man who suffered from leprosy did something that applies to baptism?

(8) Why is so important that we teach and re-teach New Testament baptism?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## Chapter Five - Your New Life in Christ

I mentioned in the last lesson that I was so excited after being baptized into Christ that I could not wait to call my grandparents, other family members, and even my friends. I went to school the next day, and I told everyone that I was saved from my sins and that I was a new person. I realized that it was just the beginning of something new and that God was going to work through me now, as an instrument for Him. However, it did take me a while to realize the deeper meaning of my new life in Christ.

I would like to begin this lesson by looking closer at this new birth. The new birth is a spiritual renewal and is a result of the power of God in a person's life. When a person decides to completely devote his life to God and is raised after his baptism, he is given a new chance on life. He is given a clean slate and begins anew. This changed condition is almost like a second birth because you are a completely new person and must change your entire lifestyle.

The concept of the new birth was first used in **John 3:3-7**, where Jesus told Nicodemus, "*Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" Jesus meant that all people are so sinful in God's eyes that they need to be regenerated, recreated, and renewed. This change can only be accomplished by the sovereign activity of God's Spirit and a scriptural baptism (**John 3:5-8**). This scriptural baptism is what we discussed in the previous lesson. The activity of God's Spirit, on the other hand, is what regenerates sinful people through faith and obedience in Jesus Christ (**John 3:10-21**). Without faith there is no regeneration. Without baptism there is no regeneration. Without God's Spirit there is no regeneration. We must understand that without regeneration a person does not have eternal life. Regeneration occurs at the moment a person exercises his faith in Christ and is baptized in Jesus' name. At that point, your sins are forgiven, and you are born again by the power of the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:38**).

Regeneration is the spiritual change brought about in a person's life by an act of God. In regeneration a person's sinful nature is changed, and that person is enabled to respond to God in faith. The word "regeneration" occurs only in the New Testament (**Matthew 19:28, Titus 3:5**), but the concept or idea is common throughout the Bible. The literal meaning of the word "regeneration" is "being born again." There is a first birth (the womb) and a second birth (water). The first, as Jesus said to Nicodemus is "*of the flesh*"; the second birth is "*of the Spirit*" (**John 3:1-12**). Being born of the water and the Spirit is essential before a person can enter the kingdom of God. Every biblical command toward God's people to undergo a radical change of character is an appeal to be "born again," changed or "regenerated" (**Psalms 51:5-11, Jeremiah 31:33, Zechariah 13:1**).

The word "regeneration" itself is a combination of two words. It combines "again" with "birth" and when it is put together, means "new birth" or born again. The concept of "spiritual regeneration" is especially seen in **Titus 3:5** which says, "*not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*" Two of the operating powers that lead one to this "spiritual regeneration" are "*the word of truth*" (**James 1:18, I Peter 1:23**) and the Holy Spirit (**John 3:5-6**). When someone reads the inspired word of God (**II Timothy 3:16-17**), the Holy Spirit unfolds the gospel message, convicts men of sin (**Acts 2:22-41, Acts 10:34-43**), and leads them to the truth (**John 8:32**). The washing of regeneration can sanctify and cleanse us by the "*washing of water by the word*" (**Ephesians 5:26**).

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

The new birth, regeneration, and baptism do not represent successive stages in your spiritual experience, because they refer to the same event. However, they can be viewed in different ways. The new birth stresses the communication of spiritual life in contrast to spiritual death. Regeneration stresses the transformation from spiritual death to spiritual life. This usage shows why Jesus applies this term to Israel in **Matthew 19:28**. In that scripture the word is used, in the Lord's discourse, in a wider sense. In the context it means of the "*restoration of all things*" (**Acts 3:21**). God desires for everything to be just like He wants it, and He wants us to be regenerated and born again. **II Peter 3:9** says that the Lord is "*not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*"

Great religious experiences like those of Jacob at the Jabbok (**Genesis 32:22-32**), Moses at the burning bush (**Exodus 3:1**), Josiah on hearing the reading of the Law (**II Kings 22:8-13**), or even Isaiah in the Temple (**Isaiah 6:1-8**) can be regarded as "regeneration" under the Old Law. Regeneration involves an enlightening of the mind, a change of will, and a renewed nature. It extends to the total nature of people, changing their desires and restoring them to a right relationship with God in Christ. Under the Old Law people could receive regeneration without baptism. **Acts 17:30** says, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent." We can see how many people in the New Testament experienced this "regeneration" the way that Jesus explained it would be for the kingdom (**John 3**). Paul, the Ethiopian eunuch, the Philippian jailer, and many others experienced the new birth and entered the church (**Acts 2:38, 47**).

The need for regeneration grows out of our sinful human nature. It is initiated by God, not by man. All of us are humans and sinners; therefore, we are in need of regeneration. **Romans 3:23** says, "*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" God works in the human heart, and the person responds to God through faith and obedience. Regeneration is an act of God through the Holy Spirit and through the watery grave of baptism that results in a resurrection from sin and brings one to a new life in Jesus Christ (**II Corinthians 5:17**).

Similar words in the Bible describe the same concept without using the terms "new birth" and "regeneration." Paul said, "*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new*" (**II Corinthians 5:17**). Another way that we can see this concept is when Paul tells us that the "*outward man*" is perishing, but the Christian's "*inward man is being renewed day by day*" (**II Corinthians 4:16**).

**Romans 6:8** says, "*Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,*" and then **Romans 6:13** says, "*And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*" When you are raised out of that watery grave of baptism, you are given a new life. It did not come before you entered the baptistry, while you were under the water, or during the week that followed your baptism. The instant you were raised up, you were no longer dead, but alive in Christ. **I Corinthians 15:22** says, "*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.*"

We can have a lot of assurance in our new birth. We can rest assured that the Lord has remitted all of our sins (**Acts 2:38**). We can rest assured that the Lord has washed all of our sins away (**Acts 22:16**). On the other hand, we can also have the assurance that we are no longer just men, but now are the sons of God. **I Peter 1:23** says, "*having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.*"

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We may boast in the assurances we have as new Christians, living a new life for Christ, but are we aware of the consequences? Are you aware of the change that must take place? In **I Corinthians 6:9-11**, Paul reminds the Corinthians that the things that they were doing and the lifestyles that they lived were washed away at their baptism. You cannot return to the same lifestyle. Again I remind you that **II Corinthians 5:17** says, “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*” Everything must be new and you must not return to your sinful state.

The whole concept of repentance is change. You must change your thinking and your attitude. You must change your outlook on life. You must change your focus from sin and the world to the cross. **Matthew 16:24** says, “*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*” We must follow God’s will and not our own. **Matthew 6:33** says, “*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*” We need to remember that this change makes us who we are: born again, regenerated believers.

One of the main reasons that we need to change our lifestyle is that we need to be more like Jesus than the world. He set the perfect example for us (**I Peter 2:21-25**). He is “*the forerunner*” (**Hebrews 6:20**) and is “*the author and finisher of our faith*” (**Hebrews 12:2**). We must always look to His example as a pattern. By practicing our old ways, we are not following in the footsteps of our Lord. We need to seek the mind of Christ in all that we do (**Philippians 2:5**). By asking the question “What Would Jesus Do?,” we can avoid many of the trials we face. We can also rest assured that the Lord will be by our side if we are following His commands and living out His will in our lives as new creatures in Christ.

### Questions For Chapter Five

- (1) When is the first time we see the concept of the “new birth” in the Scriptures? What does that verse say?
- (2) Define the term regeneration.
- (3) What does Titus 3:5 tell us about regeneration?
- (4) What religious experiences can be labeled under the Old Law as regeneration?
- (5) What other words does the Bible use to describe the same concept as new birth and regeneration?
- (6) What assurances can we have in our new birth?
- (7) What does it mean to repent?

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(8) How do you think people can turn their focus off of the world and onto Christ?

(9) Why is it so important that a person turn from their old ways when they begin their new life in Christ?

(10) What do you think is the best part about having a new life in Christ? Why?

(11) Briefly describe what you think it means to be a new creature in Christ.

(12) Briefly describe what you think it means to be a living sacrifice.

(13) How can you make sure that you do not revert to the old you?

(14) Why is it so difficult to surrender everything to God?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## *Chapter Six - Facing Temptation: The Devil Is After You*

I have mentioned in the last few lessons that I was excited after being baptized into Christ. One thing that I remember was that I really had no idea of all that was in store for me in the next few months. Most of you have experienced, or will experience, the same things I went through almost immediately after my baptism. It seems that we cannot even get out of the baptistry before we are faced with temptation. Let me tell you why. Satan has everyone in the world, so he focuses his efforts on the church, especially the new babes in Christ. He plans to steal you away, and he may succeed in his efforts. More than half of the new converts brought into the church are lost almost as soon as they begin. You must be prepared!

Temptation is an enticement or an open invitation to sin, with the implied promise of greater good to be derived from following the way of disobedience. We need to note that God does not tempt people, nor can He Himself as the holy God be tempted (**James 1:13**). God cannot be induced to deny Himself (**II Timothy 2:13**). The supreme tempter is Satan (**Matthew 4:3, I Corinthians 7:5, I Thessalonians 3:5**), and he is able to prey upon the weakness of corrupted human nature (**James 1:14**) and so to lead people to destruction. The Bible tells us to resist temptation, promising blessedness to those who do resist the temptations of the devil (**James 1:12**). The gospel also directs us to pray for deliverance from exposure to temptation and from surrender to it (**Matthew 6:13, Luke 11:4**). The Lord will not allow His people to encounter any temptation beyond what they can handle; therefore, we will have ability to resist it (**I Corinthians 10:13, II Peter 2:9**).

In the Old Testament, tempting by God can be understood as testing or proving. The context is the covenant relationship of mutual love and faithfulness between God and His chosen people. The Lord tested Israel to prove the true nature of her faithfulness to Him (**Genesis 22:1, Deuteronomy 8:2-16**). His purpose is not to induce, tempt, or cause His people to sin, but to confirm their faith (**James 1:2-4**). In the case of Job, Satan the tempter can serve the Lord's purpose, but God allowed the temptations and did not take part in them in any way. Satan's temptation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden was also the Lord's testing of their faith. This temptation was the first, and it led to the fall of all men.

The Israelites tried to tempt and test the Lord by questioning His loyalty (**Exodus 17:2-7, Psalm 78**). God had promised to preserve Israel as His own possession, but His righteousness also requires that He destroy a rebellious nation (**Hebrews 10:31**). The disobedience of His people tested the Lord to break His promise to be their God, but He did not because He does not change, although He will punish those who are disobedient.

Immediately after Jesus' baptism He was led into the wilderness to be tempted (**Matthew 4:1-11**). These temptations were real, whether external and literal, internal and mental, or a combination of both. He did not pretend to be tempted, but by resisting the temptation to sin, Jesus demonstrated His qualifications to be God's Messiah and humanity's Savior. Jesus met many temptations throughout His ministry (**Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-13**). Some of these occurred: (1) when the crowds only wanted a healer (**Mark 1:35-39**), (2) when they wanted to make Him king (**John 6:14-15**), (3) when His disciples rejected Him (**Matthew 16:21-28**), and also (4) when He was in Gethsemane looking for a way to pass the cup (**Matthew 26:36-46**).

**Hebrews 2:18** says, "*For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.*" We can all learn from the temptations of Jesus. We need to be reminded that **Hebrews 4:15** says, "*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*"

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By living in human flesh, staying faithful to the Lord, and not giving in to temptation, He set a great example (**I Peter 2:21-25**). We need to look to Him as our great and perfect pattern. We should consider how he faced every temptation. He was able to logically think about each temptation and reminded Satan, and Himself, what the scriptures said.

Jesus was tempted for forty days in the wilderness. Can you imagine being tempted for that long and not giving in to temptation? We can see that Satan knows the best ways to tempt us. He knew the conditions regarding the nature of Jesus' messianic mission, so he tried to use that against Him. The first two temptations (**Matthew 4:2-7**) attempted to make Jesus doubt His divine sonship, the basis for His role as Messiah. Jesus countered the first (**Matthew 4:2-3**), which appealed to the physical appetite (**Matthew 4:4**), with **Deuteronomy 8:3**; the second (**Matthew 4:5-6**), which calls for a spectacular display (**Matthew 4:7**), He countered with **Deuteronomy 6:16**. The final temptation listed (**Matthew 4:8-9**) deals with ambition and is countered by **Deuteronomy 6:13** (**Matthew 4:10-11**). Therefore, Jesus repelled the temptation to give in to compromise with Satan. He chose the right path and set the example for us. He did not give in to even one of the temptations of Satan. That is one reason why He is our great example (**I Peter 2:21-25**).

Since Jesus was tempted by Satan, then it makes sense that Satan would also try to tempt those who follow Christ. **II Timothy 3:12** says, *“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”* This persecution will come from all directions. We will all face trials, temptations, and persecution from those within and without. Satan is able to use anyone and anything in order to tempt us. **II Corinthians 11:14** says, *“For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.”* He can make everything look good and appealing. **I John 2:15-16** says, *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.”* These three sins were used against Adam and Eve in the garden and are still in the world today. Satan is still using the same old bag of tricks, and we still struggle with him.

One reason why we have a hard time facing temptation is that we do not really understand our tempter. We need to really study about Satan and how he will tempt us. We need to understand why he hates us so much and why he wants us to fall. One reason that he hates us so much is that we have one thing that he does not have. We are made in the image of God and he is not. Another reason that he wants us to fall is that he is already condemned, and he wants to make sure that he will not be alone in hell. He will do anything to bring you with him. He wants all of mankind to suffer the torment that he has to face. Unfortunately, he will persuade many to follow him. **Matthew 7:13-14** says, *“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”*

We must be careful in what we do, and we must remember that we can overcome anything that we face. **I Corinthians 10:13** says, *“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”* We not only have the power to overcome anything we encounter, but we also have the assurance that God will help us if we will ask for His strength and help in our time of need.

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**II Peter 2:9** says, “*then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.*” We also can boast in our trials because the more we are tempted, the more we know the Lord believes we can overcome. This concept explains why Paul boasted in his many trials.

We are warned throughout the scriptures to resist temptation. **Matthew 26:41** says, “*Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*” We are reminded that God will be at our side when we need him. **James 4:7-8** says, “*Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*” **I Peter 5:8-9** says, “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.*” The devil will eat you for lunch if you are not ready to face Him. Will you be ready?

### Questions For Chapter Six

- (1) What is temptation?
- (2) Can God tempt us? Explain.
- (3) Who were the first ones to fall into temptation?
- (4) Can we tempt God? Explain.
- (5) What are some ways that Jesus was tempted?
- (6) What can we learn from the temptations of Jesus?
- (7) How did Jesus deal with the three temptations mentioned in Matthew 4?
- (8) Why does Satan spend so much time tempting Christians?
- (9) Why do we need to study about Satan?
- (10) Can we overcome every temptation we face? Explain.
- (11) Why can we boast in our trials?

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## *Chapter Seven - Walking Daily With Christ: Part I*

In this lesson we are going to begin a series of lessons focusing on walking daily with Christ. In this first lesson, I want to focus on the importance of prayer. As temples of the Holy Spirit, our bodies should be houses of prayer (**I Corinthians 3:16-17, I Corinthians 6:19, II Corinthians 6:16**). Anything that distracts us from prayer is a thief, stealing from us the blessings the Father longs to give us. Distractions also take glory from the Father that He so richly deserves. We need to learn the art of prevailing prayer which links us with the almighty God. We need to learn the principles of prayer.

Prayer is both a great blessing and a great responsibility for the Christian. It should be in the heart of all of God's people to pray. **II Samuel 7:27** says, *"Therefore Your servant has found it in his heart to pray this prayer to You."* All of God's servants need to desire to pray to God. Children of God pray for God's strength, wisdom, grace, mercy, protection, and His presence. God desires the urgent, persistent, and expectant prayers of His children. These are three essentials for the Christian in prayer. Without prayer, we have no avenue for approaching God.

If God does hear and answer prayer, then the one thing above all else that I should learn to do is to pray. Failure to pray is more than a tragedy. In fact, it is a sin. **I Samuel 12:23** says, *"Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way."* What did Jesus teach about prevailing prayer? In **Matthew 6:9-13**, our Lord provided some wonderful insights to aid us in our prayer life.

Jesus emphasized the person of prayer. Christ's model prayer begins with "Our Father." Immediately we learn that powerful prayer involves a child talking with his Father. Therefore, we must be children of God in order to pray with effectiveness. Not everyone has the right to call God "Father." Only those who have been born into His family have that right. God makes it clear in the Scriptures that some human beings are not His children. Jesus said that some are like their *"father the devil"* (**John 8:44**). We become children of God and can call Him "Father" only when, by faith, we obey Him and follow the plan of salvation. **John 1:11-12** says, *"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name."*

If God is your Father, prayer should be as simple and natural as conversing with your earthly father. The Holy Spirit can teach us to pray and helps us when we don't know what to say when we pray (**Romans 8:15**). The word "Abba" is an Aramaic word that is very close to our word "Daddy." It is one of the first words spoken by little children. It is amazing to know that as God's dear child you can come with such intimate confidence as to call Him "Abba, Father." We can have a very close relationship to Him.

Jesus emphasized the purpose of prayer. We are told to pray, *"Your kingdom come, Your will be done."* This scripture tells us that prayer has one major purpose, and that is to seek and to secure the will of God. Prayer is answered positively only when it is in the will of God. **I John 5:14** says, *"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."* Praying in the will of God does not mean fewer blessings, but rather greater blessings for you. We should never fear the will of God. Remember that prayer is not some exercise in which we try to bend God's will to fit our will. Prayer is not talking God into doing something that He ordinarily would not do. Prayer is a way of finding God's will and then asking Him for a blessing.

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How do we know God's will? God's will is made known as we read the Bible. The secret of knowing God's will in prayer is not only to know the Bible, but to let its truth abide in us. Remember that because you are a temple of God and a house of prayer, God's Holy Spirit abides within you, and He will help you pray (**Romans 8:26-27**). When we pray, we are to pray to the Father through the Son in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit teaches us the will of God and helps us to pray as we ought. This instruction indicates that we must learn to wait before the Father in meditation and openness when we pray.

Jesus emphasized the provision of prayer. We can ask the Lord for our needs. Jesus says to say, "*Give us this day our daily bread.*" While we should not pray selfish prayers, we certainly may pray personal prayers for personal needs. Our Father is concerned with every need we have. Remember that this model prayer is a guide for praying. Jesus did not mean we should only ask for bread. This model means that we should bring all of our needs to the Father and ask Him specifically for what we need. **Philippians 4:19** says, "*And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*" Notice that Paul did not say "all your wants." Sometimes we want things we do not need, and sometimes we need things we do not want. Many Christians have needs that are unmet simply because they do not pray (**James 4:2**). Let us learn to ask the Father for the things we need and thank Him for all He gives. Nothing that is big enough to concern us is too small to concern Him. Ask Him for all of your needs, and He will meet your needs.

Jesus emphasized the pardon of prayer. Powerful prayer must come from a clean heart (**Psalms 51**). Jesus taught us to pray for daily forgiveness just as we pray for our daily bread. Many of our prayers are not answered because we are not including confession and repentance with our petitions. The prayer from a dirty heart is a prayer not answered. **Psalms 66:18** says, "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.*" James warns all of us when he says, "*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded*" (**James 4:8**). We cannot pray effectively with dirty hands, defiled hearts, and double minds. Sometimes we would rather hold to our sins than enjoy the freedom of a prayer life that knows no limits. Are there sins that have made your temple a den of thieves rather than a house of prayer? If so, pray, "*Forgive me my debts.*"

Jesus emphasized the protection of prayer. The phrase, "*deliver us from the evil one,*" is an acknowledgment of our need for God to provide us a way of escape from our great enemy the devil. Satan has already made plans to destroy your life. Satan cannot get at God directly. He knows that if you cannot harm someone, then the next most effective thing is to harm someone that person loves. God loves you, and, therefore, Satan has aimed all of the artillery of hell at you. You need the protection provided through prayer. The prayer for deliverance from evil and temptation is preventive medicine. We need the Lord on our side and He will protect us because He loves us.

Jesus emphasized the praise of prayer. The model prayer opens and closes on a note of praise. He says, "*Yours is . . . the glory forever.*" Prayer must be done in faith, and praise is the best expression of faith. When we ask God for things, that is petition. But petition without praise is unbelief. Praise without petition, however, is presumption. But when we link petition and praise together, that action is power. When I ask God, then praise God, I am believing in God. Petition says, "please," but praise says, "thank you." If your faith is strong, your prayers will be strong. If you pray and believe, you will receive. If you pray with doubt, you will do without. It is important that we learn to praise before we pray. If your prayer life seems useless and powerless, learn to praise God first. The Bible says that God inhabits the praises of His people. He is very near when we praise Him and when we pray to Him.

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The Lord's Prayer begins with "*Our Father*" and ends with "*Yours is the kingdom.*" Our Father is an Almighty King. Just think about the fact that you have a Father who will hear you and a King who can answer you. You have the sympathy of a Father and the sovereignty of a King tuning into your prayer. This Father/King is the Creator of the world and the savior of it, and yet He takes time to hear your prayers. In fact, listening is one of the things He looks forward to each day. Why shouldn't you offer God praise? Why deny yourself blessings that you could be receiving? Why not pray to someone who loves you and will provide for your every need? You will discover victory when you let your temple be a house of prayer because you are doing what God wants from you, God wants a personal relationship. God can and will bless you if you will only take the time to get to know Him.

There are certain things that we can learn about prayer before we pray. Christians need to pray urgently. Prayer has lost its urgency to people today. People enjoy playing and feasting, instead of praying and fasting (**Luke 11:5-9**). Prayer needs to be urgent. The apostle Paul emphasizes this point more than any other. **Ephesians 6:18** says, "*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.*" Christians need to pray persistently. Prayer is to be done without ceasing (**I Thessalonians 5:17**). We must pray without stopping, or as often as possible. Prayer is to be continuous. Christians who really pray persistently will be blessed (**Matthew 7:7**). Christians must pray expectantly. Prayer should be prayed in faith. It should be a faith in God, more than prayer (**James 1:6-8**). Prayer is the avenue by which we receive blessings. When you pray, expect an answer and be ready to thank God for that answer, whether you like it or not.

The New Testament church often mixed prayer with fasting. The subject of fasting is very interesting. There are many scriptures in the Old and New Testaments that give great examples of fasting, and commands to fast. I challenge you to study more on this subject. I want to challenge you by asking four simple questions and then giving you a Bible answer.

First, we need to ask ourselves, "Should Christians fast today?" Yes, Christians should fast because of the teachings of Jesus. Jesus assumed His disciples would fast when He left this earth. **Matthew 6:16-17** says, "*Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face.*" Notice that Jesus said "when" not "if." Jesus said that His disciples would fast when He was gone. **Matthew 9:14-15** says, "*Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?' And Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.'*"

Jesus taught His disciples how to fast the way God wanted them to (**Matthew 6:16-18**). Jesus taught His disciples that when fasting is done properly, God will give His favor (**Matthew 6:18**). Jesus taught His disciples that fasting should be done only when the occasion properly calls for it (**Matthew 9:16-17**). Jesus also taught His disciples that there would be occasions when prayer joined with fasting might be needed (**Matthew 17:20-21**).

We also should consider what happened after Jesus left the earth. Of course, there was fasting in the Old Testament, but let's return to our question, "Should Christians fast today?" Yes, Christians should fast because of the examples of the early church fasting. The brethren in Antioch fasted in **Acts 13:1-3**. They fasted in their service to the Lord. They fasted and prayed when they sent Paul and Barnabas out on their missionary journey. The brethren at Galatia fasted in **Acts 14:21-23**.

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There was fasting in every church when they appointed elders in the churches to watch over the flock. Yes, Christians should fast because of Paul's fasting as a minister of the church. He listed fasting among the many things that proved him as a minister of Jesus Christ (**II Corinthians 6:5, 11:23-28**). We are commanded to imitate him, even as he imitated Christ (**I Corinthians 11:1**), and both refer to examples fasting.

Now ask yourself, "Why should Christians fast?" People today fast for many different reasons. Some fast purposefully and for health reasons. Some fast without thinking about it, in times of grief and sorrow. Others fast in an effort to gain some kind of self-control. But none of these are good reasons. Christians should fast in order to better improve their service with God (**Colossians 2:20-23**).

Christians should fast when they are in need of divine help. Fasting in a time when help is needed is consistent with the majority of the fastings in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament Israel fasted in times of war or in the threat of war. David fasted when his loved ones were sick. Ahab and Daniel fasted when they were seeking God's forgiveness. Ezra fasted when he was seeking God's protection.

Fasting in a time when help is needed is consistent with the majority of the fastings in the New Testament. Jesus fasted when He was dealing with temptation. The church in Antioch fasted in their service for the Lord. The church in Antioch fasted when they were beginning a work for the Lord. The church in Antioch fasted when they were sending out missionaries. The church in Galatia fasted when they were selecting and appointing elders.

When fasting is done properly, and in conjunction with prayer, you can accomplish many things. You can humble your soul by fasting (**Psalms 35:13**). You can chasten your soul by fasting (**Psalms 69:10**). Humbleness aids our prayer life (**Ezra 8:21-23**).

Now we come to our next question of "When should a Christian fast?" Christians should fast whenever the occasions requiring divine help arises. These may be occasions when an individual is faced with difficult temptations, or when an individual is faced with the serious illness of a loved one. These occasions might also present themselves when an individual is struggling in his or her spiritual life. There are also scriptural examples of fasting when the early church appointed elders and sent our missionaries, so those are times when it might be appropriate. Whenever you are facing a time when you are needing to persistently pray, fasting is appropriate. We are taught many times in the scriptures to be persistent with our prayers (**Luke 18:1-8**), and what is more persistent than skipping a meal to pray to God (**Matthew 6:17-18**). When prayer is needed, fasting can help you in your praying. Fasting cannot be done everyday, but it certainly can help us in our walk with Christ.

The final question we have to ask is "How should Christians fast?" Christians should fast, but not to be seen by men. **Matthew 6:16-18** says, "*Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.*" Whether we are fasting as individuals, or with other people, it is important to not do it for show.

Christians should fast, but not as a regular ritual (**Matthew 9:14-17**). Fasting should be done only when the occasion calls for it, and these situations always begin with the need for prayer. Fasting is never done without prayer. Christians should fast, but not without true repentance (**Isaiah 58:3-9**). All of the praying and fasting is worth nothing if it is not done with a clean heart. Christians should not deny one another in the marriage except for a time of prayer and fasting (**I Corinthians 7:5**). A devoted time of prayer and fasting can help one in time of need and can help one in facing temptation.

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Fasting is just one of the many things that can help us build a strong spiritual life, but it probably should not be done every day. Since the principle of fasting is to deny yourself of something you enjoy and substitute that time with prayer, maybe it would be good to not watch a television show, play outside, go to town, etc. There are many things we can do to help ourselves in our daily walk with Christ, and fasting can be a part of that process. It gives you an opportunity to meditate on the greatness of God.

The main purpose of fasting is to devote more time to prayer. There is no doubt in my mind that it is a practice that is neglected today. However, prayer is just as neglected. I want to make you a challenge. . . . starting today make time to pray every single day. Pray in the morning for ten minutes and at night for ten minutes, in addition to other times that you pray. We must pray more if we intend to walk daily with Christ.

### ***Questions For Chapter Seven***

- (1) As temples of the Holy Spirit, our bodies should be houses of \_\_\_\_\_.
- (2) How is prayer both a great blessing and a great responsibility for the Christian?
- (3) If we don't pray, are we sinning? Explain.
- (4) What are three of the things that Jesus teaches us about prayer? Give scriptures.
- (5) What scripture tells us that a prayer from a dirty heart is not answered?
- (6) Why should we praise God in our prayers?
- (7) What are three things you can do to pray more effectively?
- (8) Should Christians fast today? Why? When? How?
- (9) What do you think you can gain from fasting often and praying everyday?
- (10) How can praying and fasting help you in your walk with Christ?
- (11) Why is fasting such a humble sacrifice?
- (12) How does fasting and prayer depend on our faith in God?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## *Chapter Eight - Walking Daily With Christ: Part II*

This particular series of lessons in the workbook focus on walking daily with Christ. In this lesson and the next, I want to focus on the importance of studying the Bible. **II Timothy 2:15** says, “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*” (King James Version). The New King James Version reads “*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*” The American Standard Version reads, “*Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth.*”

The verse begins with one powerful word in the King James Version. The word “*study*” as translated in the KJV is not the normal word you think of for a student. Instead, this is a word used for a workman. It means to “give diligence,” “to endeavor,” or “exert oneself.” A workman is to give diligence, endeavor, or exert himself, to show himself “*approved unto God.*” Approval means one has been put to the test and measures up. Therefore, he can win the approval of the person testing him; in this case the one from whom we should seek approval is God.

The workman here is one who is handling the Word of God. It certainly takes diligent study of the Word to rightly divide it. This expression means “to cut a straight course,” or “lay out a road.” Maybe it could be better understood if we say that we must “correctly interpret” the Word. Many people divide the scriptures the way they want to interpret them, but we need to learn how to rightly divide the word. All of the Word of God is true, which is why Paul calls it the “*word of truth*” (**II Timothy 3:16-17**). You cannot add to nor take away any of it if you rightly divide it (**Revelation 22:18-19**).

Let me give you a few reasons why we need to study. We need to study in order to better serve God and His church. Where else can we find all of the things we need to know? We can study in the Bible what God’s commands are. We can study in the Bible how to follow those commands. We can study in the Bible the pattern for the church. Jesus Christ is the Head of the church because **Ephesians 1:22-23** says, “*And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*” This concept is repeated in **Ephesians 4:11-16**, **5:23**, **Colossians 1:18**, **Colossians 2:18-19**, etc. The point is that there is no room for our own materialistic opinions and human input. When God says it, that settles it!!!

We need to be like the Bereans who “*received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily*” to see if Paul taught the truth (**Acts 17:11**). We need to study in order to make ourselves stronger and better Christians. We can become stronger in our faith. We can become stronger in the trials we face. We can become stronger in our spirituality. We can become stronger in our congregations.

We need to study in order to recognize false teaching. In fact, we are told in **I John 4:1** to “*not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*” How can we test the spirits? We can test the spirits by using the same guidebook with which we will be tested. For this reason why Peter warns you to “*sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear*” (**I Peter 3:15**). How can we answer those who question our beliefs if we don’t know the scriptures on which we base our beliefs?

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By studying the Word of God, we come to a knowledge of the truth. **Hosea 6:6** says, *“For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”* God wants us to know Him and His will. Hosea saw how people had lost that knowledge in his day, and he records in **Hosea 4:6**, *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.”* Jesus reminded the people of His day about this lack of knowledge and in fact, quotes this scripture on two occasions (**Matthew 9:13, 12:7**).

A knowledge of the truth can be gained from studying the Bible, and this truth contained in it can set us free. We are told in **John 8:32**, *“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”* Then Jesus gives us assurance when He says, *“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed”* (**John 8:36**).

We need to study in order to promote truth and unity. We need to be teaching about how the church can continue in truth. We need to continuously examine ourselves, as individuals and as a church, to see if we are following what is right. How can we conduct this examination if we don't study the Bible to seek God's pattern? And by studying the Bible, we can learn how to be a strong church.

Well, what can happen if we don't diligently study individually and as a body? Here are the consequences of not studying. When we don't study and rightly divide the word of God, we cannot know the truth. When we don't know the truth, we might allow false teachers to come in because we assume them to be sheep, when really they are wolves. When we don't know the truth we will allow our own opinions to become so strong that they could cause divisions in the Lord's church. When we don't know the truth, we might be lead astray because of our emotions or the influence of others and be tempted to even leave the church.

When we don't study and rightly divide the word of God, we cannot grow. We cannot grow spiritually as an individual or as a church when we don't study. We must rightly divide the Word of God in order to seek the mind of Christ. We need to learn about His perfect example and live like Him everyday because He is perfect (**I Peter 2:21-25**).

The final consequence of not diligently studying to show ourselves approved unto God is that we will not gain our heavenly reward that we all desire. **Matthew 7:21** says, *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”* On the Judgment Day, God will choose those who have done His will to enter the kingdom of heaven. Anyone can claim to be a Christian, come to worship, and praise God; but not everyone will study God's Word to see what His will is.

If we do read our Bibles and study diligently, then we can have assurance. Paul had that assurance in **II Timothy 4:6-8** when he said, *“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”* That is also why he urges us to do the same in **I Timothy 6:12**. I challenge you to study your Bible for at least fifteen minutes a day. We all need to study the Bible more. In the next lesson I will show you how.

### Questions For Chapter Eight

- (1) How can we show ourselves approved to God?

## **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

- (2) If we do not study can we rightly divide the word of God?
- (3) What are some reasons why we need to study?
- (4) What are some of the consequences if we do not study?
- (5) How do you think studying the Bible can help you in your walk with Christ?
- (6) How many hours do you think you could study per week to consider yourself a faithful Bible student? How many per day?
- (7) Who is the most studious person you know when it comes to Bible study? Why? How can you model their example?
- (8) Why are people worried about studying the Bible on their own?
- (9) Can you understand everything in the Bible? Explain.
- (10) If you have questions in your Bible study what should you do? Why?
- (11) How long, or how often, can one study before they consider themselves an expert on the Bible?
- (12) How can knowing the Scriptures help you to have assurance and confidence?
- (13) How can knowing the Scriptures help you to share your faith with others?
- (14) How much do your plan on studying the Scriptures? Why?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## *Chapter Nine - Walking Daily With Christ: Part III*

The Bible is the most important book you can ever read. Since the message of the Bible and the teachings of the Bible are essential to every Christian, it is imperative that you choose the right tools to help you in your Bible study. You need to make sure that you will not be led astray. There are many tools that can be effective and many others that can be a hindrance.

First, I would like to focus on the different translations of the Bible. We must note that the Bible was not written in the English language. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and Aramaic. The New Testament was written in the Greek language. The language in the Bible posed a problem in the early church because as the gospel spread around the world, the books had to be translated into different languages. I believe that “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*” (II Timothy 3:16-17). And when those writers wrote down their words, they were inspired of God. However, when the translation process began there were some problems with different parts of each language, being that each language is unique, so men had to use their own judgment in interpreting and translating some passages.

The oldest and most complete translations of the entire Bible are good to use in personal Bible study. Some of the earliest attempts to translate the Bible were halted due to much criticism. John Wycliffe completed his translation in 1384, and then Tyndale translated the New Testament in 1525. While these were good private interpretations, many scholars began trying to translate a more accurate version. In 1611, the King James Version of the Bible was translated. In that time, and for many years to follow, it was the most accurate translation. However, there were still many errors in that translation. Of course, we must note that all translations of the Bible will have some errors because they are translated by men. The best thing that you can do before you study a Bible is to read the preface and see what the scholars planned to accomplish in preparing that version of the Scriptures.

Because of the tremendous pressures on the scholars that translated the King James Version, some changes were made on purpose. The scholars did not plan to harm the interpretation of the Word, but simply to make it agree with their doctrine; of course, we must know that changes are not needed. **Revelation 22:18-19** says, “*For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*” The King James Version was translated in light of the doctrine of the Church of England. The translators state in the preface to the translation, “And now at last, by the mercy of God, and the continuance of our labors, it being brought unto such a conclusion, as that we have great hopes that the Church of England shall reap good fruit thereby.”

Some of the changes in the King James Version include the transliteration of the word “baptizo.” It means “to submerge,” “to dip,” “to immerse,” or “to plunge.” The word itself implies that a candidate for baptism is plunged beneath the water, not poured upon or sprinkled with water. Of course, King James, being a member of the Church of England, had not been immersed in water for the remission of his sins. King James was a follower of the practice of sprinkling. Therefore, in fearing the king instead of fearing God, the scholars transliterated a new word into the English language.

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Another change made by the King James translators is the word “Easter.” The word is added in **Acts 12:4** and has no reference in the Greek language. Easter was a holiday that the Catholics initiated in order to celebrate Christ’s death and resurrection. It was not a custom of the early church. In fact, it was not a practice in any church for hundreds of years after the book of Acts was written. This example shows how easy it is to change something in a translation and make it fit the translators doctrine. We must be careful to rightly divide the Word of God (**II Timothy 2:15**).

There are many other problems with the King James translation and with the words that the scholars transliterated, but these problems are enough to believe that it should be put on a shelf. It is very accurate in some of its translations. In fact, I feel that if it were in modern-day English, it would be the best translation around. Unfortunately, it was translated nearly 400 years ago in England. We don’t talk like the people did then; consequently, it is hard to understand the language today. We sometimes find ourselves reading the KJV, trying to translate it into modern English, trying to understand its meaning, and then trying to apply it. While it is accurate, we perhaps should to rely more on translations that are easier to understand.

There is no doubt in my mind that people can read the King James Version today and apply it, but I believe that people struggle with it too much and need a more modern-day version. Peter and Paul did not preach from the KJV as some might believe. The KJV is not holy, and it is not the only version one can read. It is good to consider a variety of translations to interpret the meaning of a text. If you are planning on being a great Bible student then the KJV should be a study tool that you use often.

The second complete version that was printed in English was the Revised Version of 1881. Then came the American Standard in 1901, followed by the Revised Standard Version or 1952. While these versions were good in using modern-day English, they had many problems with accuracy. Other translations came after them including: Berkeley’s translation in 1959, Amplified translation in 1965, Jerusalem Bible in 1970, New American Standard translation in 1971, The Living Bible in 1971, Today’s English Version in 1976, the New International Version in 1978, the New King James Version in 1982, the Revised English Bible in 1989, the New Revised Standard Version in 1990, the Contemporary English Version in 1995, and the New Living Translation of 1996.

While many of these translations use good modern-day English, they suffer from the same problems as all of the other translations. The problem is that the translators translate their own doctrine in their translations. There are a few versions that I would strongly recommend to you, but there are a few others that I would suggest you throw away. The ones that I hope you will not use are the Today’s English Version, the Contemporary English Version, and the Living Bible. If you have these translations, I will show you what is wrong with them, but we don’t have time to consider all of their problems. All I can say is take my word for it, or look at them for yourself. I believe that these three versions are the most perverted versions of the Bible and are not as reliable as the KJV or the ASV.

The translations that I would recommend to you are the most accurate with the best use of modern-day English. Yes, these versions have their problems, too, but they are far superior to other translations. They are better for those struggling with the language found in the translations of years past. The first translation that I suggest to you is the New King James Version. It is a lot like the old KJV; however it has taken “Easter” and other odd words that were added by the King James translators out of the scriptures. It is also written in modern-day English. You can give a copy of this version to a fourth grade student, and he or she can probably read most of it without stuttering over many words.

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Another good translation of the Bible is the New American Standard Version. It is a lot like the New King James Version in that the translators wanted an accurate translation in modern-day English, but wanted it based on one of the oldest and most accurate translations. The ASV is a good translation; but since it wasn't in modern English, it needed to be revised. I feel that the KJV is a better translation than the ASV. The same is true with the NKJV and the NASV, both are good translations, but I feel that the NKJV is more accurate.

We need to remember that there are some that have studied the KJV and the ASV all of their lives; so to them, not only are these versions accurate, but they are also easier to understand. If you are one of those people; then by all means study those versions. We need to study versions of the Bible that we are comfortable with, as long as they are accurately translated. Some versions of the Bible are not accurately translated even though some people are comfortable with them. Please study this problem more on your own.

Another good translation of the Bible is the New International Version. If you have a copy of this version of the Bible, I encourage you to read the Preface to your Bible. It will tell you how the translators used the oldest and most accurate manuscripts in their translation of the Bible. Whereas other translations usually based their work on the King James Version, the translators of the NIV tried to make a new version as free from any denominational doctrines and as accurate as it could be. More than fourteen denominations helped to translate it "to safeguard the translation from sectarian bias." I feel that there are still problems with it, but it is a very accurate translation. I also highly recommend the translation written and edited by Hugo McCord from Freed-Hardeman University and the New Century Version.

Now that we have covered some of the translations of the Bible, let me offer to you some more tools for effective Bible study. There are various introductions to the Bible that will often contain just the information for which a student is looking. Here are a few that are helpful to me: *Nelson's Quick Reference Introduction to the Bible* by Howard F. Vos, *Talk Through the Bible* by Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Nelson's Quick Reference Bible Handbook*, and *Hailey's Bible Handbook* by Henry H. Hailey.

Introductions that concentrate on the Old Testament and the New Testament are also effective in your studying. For studying the Old Testament, I recommend *An Introduction to the Old Testament and Its Study* by R.L. Cate, *A Survey of the Old Testament* by Gleason L. Archer, *Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament* by Irving L. Jensen and *Old Testament Survey* by W.S. La Sor, D.A. Hubbard, and F.W. Bush. Those that focus attention on the New Testament that I recommend include *A Survey of the New Testament* by R.H. Gundry, *An Introduction To The New Testament* by D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, and *New Testament Survey* by M.C. Tenney.

Bible atlases not only help in locating geographical sites mentioned in Scripture but also often contain summaries of Biblical history. Among the best are *Baker's Bible Atlas* by Charles F. Pfeiffer, *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts*, *Nelson's Quick Reference Bible Maps and Charts*, *Nelson's 3-D Bible Mapbook* by Simon Jenkins, *The Macmillan Bible Atlas* by Y. Aharoni, M. Avi-Yonah, A.F. Rainey, and Z. Safrai, and *The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands* by B.J. Beitzel.

My favorite tool is *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* by James Strong. Other special tools for Bible study include these: *The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* edited by Jerome Smith, *The King James Bible Word Book*, *The NKJV Greek-English Interlinear New Testament*, *Unger's Bible Dictionary* by Merrill F. Unger, and *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* by W. E. Vine, M. F. Unger, and W. White.

## **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

Bibles, Bible tools, and special Bible helps can hinder you as much as they can help you. Be sure that you know what you are getting into before you purchase any items to help you in your studies. The best advice I can give you is to ask an elder in your church, a minister, or someone that is very knowledgeable in the Scriptures.

### ***Questions For Chapter Nine***

- (1) What language was the New Testament written in?
- (2) What two versions are the oldest and considered by many to be the most reliable?
- (3) What translations are not recommended by the author? Why?
- (4) What translations are highly recommended by the author? Why?
- (5) What tools are good for Bible study?
- (6) Who should you ask for advice on biblical subjects or Bible study tools?
- (7) How can making the most of Bible study help you in your Christian life?
- (8) If the Bible is the book that we will be judged by, and it is, how much should we know about it?
- (9) What are the benefits to having a good Bible dictionary and a concordance?
- (10) What are some of the difficulties you have had with Bible helps? Is there anything that we can do to help you?
- (11) How do you approach Bible study?
- (12) Someone once said that “Bible study is not for information but for transformation.” How is this an accurate description of our interpretation and application of the Scriptures?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## Chapter Ten - The Establishment of the Church

**Matthew 16:13-18** says, “When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’ So they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.’”

Jesus had promised to build his church. He made this statement in **Matthew 16** before the kingdom was established, and he even told them who would hold the keys to open the kingdom. He told the disciples that they would see the kingdom come with their own two eyes. **Matthew 16:28** says, “Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.” The word “kingdom” here can mean the same as church because Jesus uses the terms interchangeably. The church is the kingdom of God and this fact can be referenced to other scriptures. I wish we had the time to look at all of them.

There are a few prophecies concerning the church or the kingdom. One of the best is seen in **Daniel 2:30-45**. We don’t have time to read all of the verses, but notice with me: (1) The first level of this image was a head of gold which represents the Babylonians, or the Nebuchadnezzar’s Empire (v.38). (2) The next level of this image was the chest and arms of silver represented the Medo-Persian Empire (v.39a). (3) The third level was the belly and thighs of bronze which represented the Grecian Empire, or Alexander the Great (v.39b). (4) The last level on the image was the legs of iron and feet of iron and clay, and this represented the Roman Empire (v.40). After mentioning these different levels of the image, Daniel tells of the kingdom that will come during the days of these kings in the last level, and this period is obviously during the time of Christ (**Revelation 1:9, Colossians 1:13, and I Thessalonians 2:12**).

Another good scripture to consider that prophecies of the church is **Isaiah 2:2-4**. It says, “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” This passage gives us four really important points for finding out when the kingdom was established.

By looking closely at **Acts 2**, we see that all of these things mentioned were fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost.

- (1) “Last days” - also prophesied by Joel and these were the last days - **Acts 2:16-17**
- (2) “All nations flow unto it” - many nations were present - **Acts 2:5**
- (3) “Out of Zion shall go forth the law” - Jerusalem is on Mt. Zion - **Acts 2:5**
- (4) “Word of the Lord shall go forth from Jerusalem” - church began in Jerusalem

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All of these points mentioned by Isaiah are fulfilled in **Acts 2**. The same four points that Isaiah uses are also seen in **Micah 4:1-2**. It says, “*Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*” Of course, **Joel 2** is another good chapter to consider because it is what Peter preached on that great day. There are many great passages that point to the fulfillment of these prophecies.

Notice that the passages in the gospels continue to point forward and that the church was not established as long as Jesus was on this earth. **Matthew 16:18-19** says, “*And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*” Notice that Jesus says, “*I will build my church.*” He had only laid the foundation. The establishment would be in the future. Jesus named a specific man to announce the terms of entrance into the kingdom, Simon Peter.

**Mark 9:1** also points forward. It says, “*Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.*” Of the twelve apostles, all were present on the Day of Pentecost but Judas. They saw the kingdom established with their own eyes. They also saw it with power because they were all filled with the Holy Spirit that He had promised them. Some teach that the kingdom was established while Jesus was here on the earth. That theory is not possible because all of the pieces could not be put together until the Day of Pentecost. Others teach that the kingdom has not yet come. Are these apostles still alive? Of course not, therefore, the kingdom is already established on the earth.

**Luke 24:46-49** says, “*Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.*” Repentance and remission of sins were preached in Jesus’ name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem. Jesus even prophesied of this Himself. **Acts 1:7-8** says, “*It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*” The apostles did wait there in Jerusalem for the power of the Holy Spirit and they received it.

The church could have only been established on the Day of Pentecost, because the time was right. All of the pieces to the puzzle were in place: (1) it was after Jesus ascended, (2) the apostles were still alive and waiting in Jerusalem, (3) it was the last days, (4) many nations were present, (5) Peter preached the sermon and had the keys to the kingdom, (6) the power of the Holy Spirit had been given, (7) repentance and remission of sins were taught, and (8) the word went out from Jerusalem.

The word “church” is a term that is used in the Septuagint of the Old Testament for the congregation of the Israelites and in the New Testament for the Christian believers. It applies to a local congregation or to the church universal. It is the body of Christ, to which all obedient believers belong. The word is not used in the Bible as a name for the building in which believers gather for worship. Instead it is used to refer to the “called out ones,” or the assembly of believers themselves.

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There is absolutely nothing holy about the building we worship in; it is those Christians who are in it that make it special. The building is not the temple, because Christians are the temples of God. **I Corinthians 3:16-17** says, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.” **I Corinthians 6:19-20** says, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” We can consider many other scriptures to remind us that we are the temple of God (**Zechariah 2:10-11**, **II Corinthians 6:16**, **Ephesians 2:19-22**).

There are only a few scriptures that we can really get confused about concerning the church’s being individuals instead of a building. One of those scriptures is Paul’s advice for some to “*keep silence in the church.*” This scripture refers not to a building, but to an assembly of Christians for prayer and edification (**I Corinthians 14:26-35**), because when members are gathered together, we are the church. The other scripture that might confuse us is the one that talks about “*the church in the wilderness*” (**Acts 7:38**). This scripture can be better translated “the congregation in the wilderness.”

We are the church of the living God, and we must remember that He is the Head of His church (**Ephesians 1:22-23**, **Ephesians 5:23**). We must remember that the Lord controls His church and that He is the one who shed His blood for it. Consequently, we must not change anything. There is much that we can learn from Him and the establishment of the church. We need to study about the church more. We will spend the next three lessons looking at the one true church.

### Questions For Chapter Ten

- (1) Who was to hold the keys to the kingdom? Why?
- (2) What was the significance of Daniel’s prophecy as it related to the church?
- (3) Where can we see the fulfillment of these prophecies?
  - (1) “*Last days*” \_\_\_\_\_
  - (2) “*All nations flow unto it*” \_\_\_\_\_
  - (3) “*Out of Zion shall go forth the law*” \_\_\_\_\_
  - (4) “*Word of the Lord shall go forth from Jerusalem*” \_\_\_\_\_
- (4) How can we know that the church was not established while Jesus was on this earth?
- (5) How can we know that the church was established and is present today?
- (6) What is the meaning of the word church?

## **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

- (7) Give one scripture that proves that the church is not a building.
- (8) Who is the Head of the church? Why?
- (9) What subject will we be studying next as a series of three lessons?
- (10) Why is it important that we study about the church?
- (11) Why is it important that we learn the customs, traditions, teachings, and actions of the first century church?
- (12) What should we do if we notice that the early church did something that we are currently not doing?
- (13) How can we make sure that we stay on the right path in the church?
- (14) What are the benefits of congregational Bible study and application?
- (15) Why did the early church assemble, fellowship, and study together so often?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## Chapter Eleven - The One True Church: Part I

There are many denominations in the world today claiming to be the New Testament church. How can you find the one true church? There is only one standard that we can look at, and that standard is the Bible. **II Timothy 3:16-17** says, *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

In the next three lessons we will look at several scriptures and see some things that can help us to find the one true church (There are several scriptures that have been put in bold letters. The teacher may not go over every scripture, but the author recommends the students read them in their spare time). Jesus only built one church (**Matthew 16:18**). It does make a difference what one believes, and we cannot afford to be mistaken. The Bible holds the answer, so let's consider a few things about the one true church that Jesus built.

The one true church was founded by Jesus Christ.

He is the owner and purchaser of His church.

**Acts 20:28, Ephesians 5:25**

He is the builder of His church.

**Matthew 16:13-18**

He is the lawgiver of His church.

**Acts 2:36**

He is the head of His church.

**Ephesians 1:22-23, Ephesians 5:23**

He is the savior of His church.

**Ephesians 5:23**

The one true church has its foundation in the Son of God.

He is the rock that is the foundation of the church.

**Matthew 16:18** says, *“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”*

He is the laid foundation of the church.

**I Corinthians 3:11** says, *“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”*

He is the tried foundation of the church.

**Isaiah 28:16** says, *“Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily.”*

The foundation was built on the apostles and prophets.

**Ephesians 2:20** says, *“having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.”*

The one true church had its origin in 33 A.D. and was established in Jerusalem.

Hades tried to hold the Builder of the church but failed.

**Matthew 16:18** says, *“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”*

**Acts 2:31** says, *“he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.”*

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

The church was established while the apostles were alive.

**Matthew 16:28** says, “Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

**Mark 9:1** says, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.”

The church was established when the Holy Spirit came.

**Mark 9:1** says, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.”

**Acts 1:7-8** says, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

**Acts 2:1-4** says, “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

The church was established when all of the prophecies concerning it were fulfilled.

**Isaiah 2:2-4** says, “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”

**Joel 2:28-32** says, “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the remnant whom the Lord calls.”

**Micah 4:1-2** says, “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

**Luke 24:49** says, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

We need to notice the only scriptural names given for the church. Anyone who does not use a scriptural name for the church is guilty of changing God's pattern. We must do God's will God's way.

The one true church received its designations by apostolic authority.

Jesus called the church:

"My church"

**Matthew 16:18**

"My kingdom"

**Luke 22:30, John 18:36**

"The kingdom of heaven"

**Matthew 16:19**

"The kingdom of God"

**John 3:5, Luke 22:16**

The apostles, and early Christian believers, called the church:

"The church"

**Colossians 1:18, Ephesians 1:22, 3:10, 5:23-32**

"The church of the Lord"

**Acts 20:28**

"The church of God"

**I Corinthians 1:2, Galatians 1:13**

"The churches of Christ"

**Romans 16:16**

"The body of Christ"

**Ephesians 1:22-23, Colossians 1:18, 24**

"The bride of Christ"

**Ephesians 5:22-32, Revelation 3:12; 19:6-9; 21:2, 9**

"The kingdom of Christ"

**Colossians 1:13**

"The temple of God"

**I Corinthians 3:16**

"The house of God"

**I Timothy 3:15**

"The household of God"

**Ephesians 2:19**

"The household of faith"

**Galatians 6:10**

"The kingdom of God"

**Acts 28:23, 31**

"The kingdom of God's dear Son"

**Colossians 1:13**

"The church of the firstborn"

**Hebrews 12:23**

"A kingdom which cannot be shaken"

**Hebrews 12:28**

The scriptural names for the church are very important. Now that we have noticed the names that the church can go by, it would be good to briefly consider how one enters the church. There are scriptural steps that must be taken. We will only mention them briefly because we will cover them in more detail later in these lessons.

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

We also need to make sure that we have done these things and that we have been added to the right church. We need to remember that it is God who requires these things and not man. The Bible is very clear about these steps to salvation.

A member of the one true church is one who has done the following:

Heard the gospel of Jesus Christ

**Matthew 17:5, Acts 15:7, Romans 10:17**

Believed in Jesus Christ as the Son of God

**Mark 16:16, John 3:16, John 8:24, Acts 4:12, Acts 16:31, Hebrews 11:6**

Repented of their sins

**Luke 13:3, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Acts 17:30**

Confessed the deity of Christ

**Matthew 10:32, Acts 8:37, Romans 10:9-10**

Has been baptized into Christ

**Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15-16, Acts 2:38, 10:48, 22:16, Colossians 2:11, Galatians 3:24, I Peter 3:21**

Walk in newness of life

**Romans 6:3-7, II Timothy 4:6-8, Revelation 2:10**

We need to understand that baptism is very important. Baptism is not only essential, but it must be done in a scriptural manner. It's been said that: "If something is worth doing, it's worth doing right." We need to make sure that we are following the Bible in all of the things we do. This list of things required to make baptism scriptural is just as important as the act itself. All things must be done according to God's will. **Matthew 6:33** says, "*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*" We must put God first and not ourselves. Baptism must be done scripturally (At this point I would encourage you to go back and look at chapter four).

Baptism does many things for us. We can gain many wonderful things by being baptized into Christ. However, if we are not baptized according to God's standards, we cannot have any of these wonderful blessings that God offers us. Unless people meet the conditions we have mentioned, they are still in their sins and lost. They need to be converted to Christ.

### ***Questions For Chapter Eleven***

- (1) What is the only standard we can use to find the one true church?
  
- (2) Who is owner, founder, purchaser, builder, head, lawgiver, and savior of the church of Christ?
  
- (3) Who is the rock, the laid foundation, and the tried foundation of the church?
  
- (4) When was the church established? How do you know?
  
- (5) Name five of the scriptural names given for the church and give the scriptures.

## **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

- (6) What acts are required for one to be accepted as a member of the Lord's church?
- (7) Why is it so important for the church to wear a scriptural name?
- (8) Why doesn't God just accept anyone as His child?
- (9) Why do you think God commands the various steps to salvation?
- (10) Why is it wrong for man to add to the steps to salvation?
- (11) If a person claims to be a Christian but has not followed the biblical plan are they correct in their assertions? Explain.
- (12) Which step to salvation is the most important? Which is least important? Explain.

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## *Chapter Twelve - The One True Church: Part II*

I mentioned in the last lesson that there are many denominations in the world today claiming to be the New Testament church. How can you find the one true church? There is only one standard that we can look at, and that standard is the Bible (**II Timothy 3:16-17**). In the last lesson, we looked at some of the scriptures that can help one to find the one true church and become part of its membership. Jesus only built one church (**Matthew 16:18**). It does make a difference what you believe, and we cannot afford to be mistaken. The Bible holds the answer, so let's consider a few things about the one true church that Jesus built.

The worship of the Lord's church is very important. The church holds true to the fact that "*God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth*" (**John 4:24**) There are to be specific acts of worship practiced each time the church assembles, which is on the first day of the week (**Hebrews 10:24-25, Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2**). There are five main acts of worship.

- (1) The church must edify one another with preaching and teaching.  
**Acts 2:42, Ephesians 4:16, I Timothy 3:15**
- (2) The church must pray in the assembly.  
**Acts 2:42, 1 Timothy 2:1-2, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, James 5:16**
- (3) The church must partake of the Lord's supper on the first day of every week.  
**Acts 20:7, Hebrews 10:24-26, I Corinthians 11:20-31, 16:1-2**
- (4) The church must worship with a cappella singing.  
**I Corinthians 14:15, Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16**
- (5) The church must give of their means as they have prospered.  
**I Corinthians 16:1-2, II Corinthians 8:1-5, 9:7**

The works of the church are also important. The works are almost as important as the worship. The work is saving souls. That work can be accomplished by three things: (1) preaching the gospel (**II Corinthians 11:8, I Thessalonians 1:8, Philippians 4:14-18**), (2) providing for the poor and less fortunate (**Acts 4:34-35, 6:1-7, I Timothy 5:16, James 1:27**), and (3) edifying itself in love (**Ephesians 4:11-16**). By doing these things the church works for God and not for men.

The doctrine of the church is only the New Testament. There is not room for any human creed because God's word is perfect and must not be changed. **Revelation 22:18-19** says, "*For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*" Christ is the lawgiver of the church (**Ephesians 4:7-16, 5:24**). The Holy Spirit is the Revealer to the church (**I Corinthians 2:13, Ephesians 3:1-6**). The apostles' teaching is the only manual for the church (**Acts 2:42, Ephesians 2:20**). The word of God and the gospel are what they believe and teach (**II Corinthians 11:1-4, Galatians 1:6-10, I Thessalonians 2:13, II Peter 1:3-4, II Timothy 3:14-17**).

The organization of the church is very simple because it is congregational. It is naturally independent of every other local congregation. The local church is self-governing under Christ, the heavenly bishop (**Acts 14:23, I Peter 2:25, 5:4, Philippians 1:1**). The church is led by elders (also referred to as bishops, overseers, pastors, shepherds, presbyters), and their work is to oversee and feed the flock (**Acts 20:28, I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, I Peter 5:1-4**) There are deacons there to serve the church (**I Timothy 3:8-13, Philippians 1:1**) There are local evangelists, ministers, or preachers who are to teach and preach God's word (**I & II Timothy, Titus**).

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

In regards to membership, all of the members in the local body are to minister in word and deed (**I Corinthians 12:24-27, Ephesians 4:11-16, Colossians 3:17**). Each congregation practices autonomy, and their common love binds them together (**Philippians 2:1-5, Jude 3, Galatians 5:1**).

It is important to know that those whom Jesus has added to the church are called specific names. The church as an organized body must also go by names that are fitting for the membership. These members that are not elders, deacons, or evangelists are to bear certain names, although the elders, deacons, and evangelists bear these names too.

The individual can be called a believer.

**Acts 5:14, II Corinthians 6:15**

The individual can be called a disciple.

**Acts 6:1, 7, 11:26**

The individual can be called a saint.

**Acts 9:13, Romans 1:7, Philippians 1:1**

The individual can be called a Christian.

**Acts 11:26, 26:28, I Peter 4:16**

The individual can be called a member.

**I Corinthians 12:27**

The individual can be called a child of God.

**Galatians 3:26-27, I John 3:1-2**

The individual can be called a priest.

**I Peter 2:9, Revelation 1:6**

The government of the church is not a democracy. It is an absolute monarchy. Some have called it a theocracy. Jesus ascended into heaven in **Acts 1**, and since He is the Head (**Ephesians 1:22-23, Ephesians 5:23**), that is where the headquarters will be (**Ephesians 1:19-21, 4:8-10**). The law for the church came from heaven (**Ephesians 1:22, 4:11-16, Romans 8:2**). The church is to serve under heaven (**Ephesians 5:23-24**). The church is to worship toward heaven (**John 4:24**).

The church is universal and is for all nations. There is not one culture, one race, one sex, or one nation that has a monopoly on God. The commission of the church is worldwide (**Matthew 28:18-20**). Its scope involves every race, color, and tongue (**Mark 16:15-16**). Its invitation is to all who will hear the gospel message (**Matthew 11:28-30, Revelation 22:17**). Its duration is everlasting, throughout this age (**I Corinthians 15:23-26**). Its fellowship is for the obedient (**I John 1:7**). Its benefits are eternal (**II Peter 1:10-11, Revelation 22:2**).

The message of the church is the gospel, the good news, and the good message. The church can rejoice in the good news of the gospel message. Here is the heart of the gospel message:

The facts to believe concerning the gospel message.

The Birth of Christ - **Matthew 1:21-25**

The Life of Christ - **Mark 10:45**

The Death of Christ - **I Corinthians 15:1-3**

The Burial of Christ - **I Corinthians 15:4**

The Resurrection of Christ - **I Corinthians 15:4-9**

The Ascension of Christ - **Acts 1:9-11**

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

### The commands to obey that result from hearing the gospel.

The steps to salvation

Hear - **Matthew 17:5, Acts 15:7, Romans 10:17**

Believe - **John 3:16, John 8:24, Acts 4:12, Acts 16:31, Hebrews 11:6**

Repent - **Luke 13:3, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Acts 17:30**

Confess - **Matthew 10:32, Acts 8:37, Romans 10:9-10**

Baptism - **Acts 2:38, 10:48, 22:16, Colossians 2:11, Galatians 3:24**

Walk in newness of life - **Romans 6:3-7, II Timothy 4:6-8, Revelation 2:10**

Loving one another

**John 13:34, John 15:12, 17, Romans 13:8, I Thessalonians 3:12, I Peter 1:22, I John 3:11, 23, I John 4:7, 11-12, II John 5**

Studying the Bible

**Acts 17:11, II Timothy 2:15**

Submitting to the eldership

**Acts 20:28, Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24, I Peter 5:1-5**

### The promises you can enjoy if you obey the gospel.

Remission of sins

**Acts 2:38, 3:19**

Gift of the Holy Spirit

**Acts 2:38, 5:32**

Eternal life

**Revelation 2:10, 22:14**

Obedience is also very important. You should know that your obedience to God is the only acceptable response to God's grace (**Matthew 7:24-27**), and that obedience means that one must hear and do the will of God. Obedience is necessary for your salvation (**John 14:15, Hebrews 5:8-9**). The opposite is also true: disobedience will cause you to be lost (**II Thessalonians 1:7-9**). A child of God can be lost (**I Corinthians 9:27, 10:12, Galatians 5:4, Hebrews 3:12-19**). A Christian must be constantly walking with God (**I Peter 2:9-10, I John 1:5-10**).

### *Questions For Chapter Twelve*

(1) We are to worship God in \_\_\_\_\_ and in \_\_\_\_\_ (John 4:24).

(2) Give a scripture reference to where we can document the following acts of worship:

preaching and teaching \_\_\_\_\_

praying in the assembly \_\_\_\_\_

partaking of the Lord's supper \_\_\_\_\_

a cappella singing \_\_\_\_\_

giving as we have prospered \_\_\_\_\_

(3) What three things are important in the work of the church?

(4) What is the only doctrine for the New Testament church? Why?

## **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

- (5) Briefly explain the organization of the church.
  
- (6) Give three scriptural names for those who are part of the membership of the church and give the scriptures.
  
- (7) Briefly explain the government of the church.
  
- (8) Give two scriptures that explain why the church is universal and is for all nations.
  
- (9) Give two of the facts concerning the gospel message and one scripture for each.
  
- (10) Give two of the commands to obey that come as a result of hearing the gospel, and give one scripture for each.
  
- (11) Give two of the promises you can enjoy if you obey the gospel and one scripture for each.
  
- (12) Why is obedience necessary? Explain.

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## *Chapter Thirteen - The One True Church: Part III*

I have stressed the urgency of finding the one true church in the last two lessons. There is only one standard that we can look at, and that standard is the Bible (**II Timothy 3:16-17**). In this lesson, we will be looking at the membership of the Lord's body and its significance. The body of Christ, as a whole, is unique in many ways. We should try to understand the enabling grace of the church. It is the everlasting and eternal love that the church shares toward one another. We need to make sure that we are looking to heaven and not to the world. We know that by looking to heaven we will find help when we need it. **Matthew 7:7** says, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." Here are some of the things that the Lord's church gives:

The one true church gives the Judge to reward.

**Matthew 25:31-46**

The one true church gives heaven as its hope.

**I Corinthians 15:19, I Peter 1:3-5**

The one true church gives the King to rule.

**I Timothy 6:15**

The one true church gives the Prophet to teach.

**Hebrews 1:1-2, Acts 3:22-23**

The one true church gives the Priest to intercede.

**Hebrews 7:21-28**

The one true church gives the Lamb's body for sacrifice.

**Hebrews 9:26-28**

The one true church gives the Lamb's blood for atonement.

**Hebrews 9:14**

Many denominations teach that there is nothing required after one becomes a Christian. However, the life of a Christian in the Body of Christ is one of devotion. Everything changes once you are in Christ, and you are required to faithfully follow the Lord (**Matthew 7:21, 16:24, Romans 6:3-7, II Timothy 4:6-8, Revelation 2:10**). Here is a list of things to which the Christian is to be devoted:

The one true church is to be devoted to the word (John 8:31-32):

As the infallible word

**Psalms 119:160**

As the life giving word

**Matthew 4:4**

As the eternal word

**Matthew 24:35, I Peter 1:25**

As the comforting word

**I Thessalonians 4:14-18**

As the complete word

**II Timothy 3:16-17**

As the sufficient word

**II Timothy 3:16-17**

As the inspired word

**II Timothy 3:16-17, I Corinthians 2:13**

As the powerful word

**Hebrews 4:12, Romans 1:16**

As the saving word

**James 1:21**

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

The one true church is to be devoted to the example of Christ (I Peter 1:25):

Toward His enemies

**Matthew 5:43-48, Luke 23:34**

Toward lost men

**Matthew 18:11, Luke 15**

Toward civil government

**Matthew 22:15-22**

Toward His family

**Luke 2:51, John 19:26-27**

Toward His Heavenly Father

**John 5:30, 6:38, 8:29, Luke 22:42**

Toward the church

**Ephesians 5:25**

By being devoted to the word, we will be able to read of Christ's great example. If we read and apply the characteristics of Christ, we will not only please God, but we will also see great blessings. The church is blessed for seeking the will of God first (**Matthew 6:33**).

Peter's exhortations in **I Peter 2:21-25** regarding submission and obedience are given as a foundation for the church. The sufferings of Christ provide spiritual healing by His accomplished work on the cross. The sufferings of Christ are also exemplary. Just as Christ suffered at the hands of unjust people of His day for being faithful to the will of God, we also as believers may receive the same opportunity to follow in His steps. We must be prepared to serve and die if necessary. **Philippians 1:21** says, "*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*" We should be thankful that we are given the opportunity to live again in Christ, but when we die, we will receive a greater reward.

It is common among some of the denominations in the world today, to believe that there is somewhere else to go instead of heaven. Some believe that they will stay on this earth. Others say that they will just be in some kind of a spiritual realm. The Christian assurance is seen in the words of Christ. **John 14:1-4** says, "*Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.*" The destiny of the church is heaven.

By heaven's love it was purchased.

**Acts, 20:28, Ephesians 5:25**

By heaven's grace it is kept.

**Romans 5:2, Ephesians 1:7, Hebrews 4:16**

By heaven's wisdom it was purposed.

**Ephesians 3:10-11**

In heaven it will remain.

**I Thessalonians 4:17, I Corinthians 15:24**

For heaven's glory it hopes.

**II Timothy 2:10, Hebrews 2:10, I Peter 5:1, 10**

In heaven it shall rest.

**Hebrews 4:8-11**

To heaven it will go.

**I Peter 1:4, Colossians 1:5**

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

The one true church holds to all of the great Bible truths. There are many great things that the church can receive if they will only follow the Bible. Many denominations try to use their own books, creeds, doctrines, and traditions of men. We are even warned by Christ to be careful not to follow the traditions of men. **Matthew 15:8-9** says, “*These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*”

The one true church follows only the Bible.

The one true church believes that the Bible is a light to guide you.

**Psalm 119:105**

The one true church believes that the Bible is the truth.

**Psalm 119:160, John 8:32, 17:17**

The one true church believes that the Bible is the standard by which we are judged.

**Matthew 28:18, John 12:48**

The one true church believes that the Bible is truly the word of God.

**I Thessalonians 2:13**

The one true church believes that the Bible is inspired of God.

**II Timothy 3:16**

The one true church believes that the Bible is able to save your soul.

**James 1:21**

The one true church believes that the Bible is not just a work of men.

**II Peter 1:20-21**

By following the Bible the one true church realizes that truth is so many things.

Truth is more valuable than anything else.

**Proverbs 23:23**

Truth is what Jesus came to show us.

**John 1:17, 14:6**

Truth is knowable.

**John 8:31-32**

Truth is able to make you free.

**John 8:31-32**

Truth is what has been fully revealed in the Bible.

**John 16:12-13, II Peter 1:3-4, Jude 3**

Truth is what Jesus came to bear witness.

**John 18:37**

Many, after the first century, began to follow traditions of men and tried to change the church. The church went through many changes, but the true church of the Bible has been restored. The church still fits all of the same principles of the early church. We will spend an entire lesson on this subject later in this series.

The one true church still exists today.

It is faithful to Christ.

**Mark 8:38, Luke 6:46, Revelation 2:10**

It pleads for unity among believers.

**John 17:20-21, Ephesians 4:4-6**

It is not a denomination.

**I Corinthians 1:10-13, Ephesians 4:4-6**

It is guided by the same word.

**I Peter 1:22-25, II Timothy 3:16-17**

It contends for the faith.

**Jude 3, Ephesians 4:5**

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## Questions For Chapter Thirteen

(1) Give a scripture for each of the following points.

The one true church gives the Lamb's body for sacrifice. \_\_\_\_\_

The one true church gives the Lamb's blood for atonement. \_\_\_\_\_

The one true church gives the Priest to intercede. \_\_\_\_\_

The one true church gives the Prophet to teach. \_\_\_\_\_

The one true church gives the King to rule. \_\_\_\_\_

The one true church gives the Judge to reward. \_\_\_\_\_

The one true church gives heaven as its hope. \_\_\_\_\_

(2) Give three reasons why we should be devoted to the Word.

(3) Give three reasons why we should be devoted to the example of Christ.

(4) What is the destiny of the church? Why?

(5) Why should we study about the destiny of the church?

(6) Give a scripture for each of the following points.

The Bible is inspired of God. \_\_\_\_\_

The Bible is not just a work of men. \_\_\_\_\_

The Bible is truly the word of God. \_\_\_\_\_

The Bible is able to save your soul. \_\_\_\_\_

The Bible is a light to guide you. \_\_\_\_\_

The standard by which you will be judged. \_\_\_\_\_

The Bible is the truth. \_\_\_\_\_

(7) Give a scripture for each of the following points.

Truth is knowable. \_\_\_\_\_

Truth is able to make you free. \_\_\_\_\_

Truth is more valuable than anything else. \_\_\_\_\_

Truth is what Jesus came to show us. \_\_\_\_\_

Truth is what Jesus came to bear witness. \_\_\_\_\_

Truth is what has been fully revealed in the Bible. \_\_\_\_\_

(8) Why must we not follow the traditions of men?

(9) Does the one true church still exist today?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## Chapter Fourteen - The Steps To Salvation

We need to be reminded from time to time about the importance of salvation. We also need to study the Bible in order to see if we took scriptural steps in our own process of salvation. Since we just finished four lessons on the church, I thought it would be fitting to note the steps to salvation. The Bible has a lot to say about sin and salvation from sin, so it is a lesson worth studying.

The Bible teaches us that all have sinned. **Romans 3:23** says, “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” **Galatians 3:22** says, “*But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.*” **I John 1:8** says, “*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*” We need to accept the fact that we are sinners and there is nothing we can do to work out our own salvation. We had to have an atoning sacrifice offered to please God because we are unable to do it ourselves.

We need to realize that man’s biggest problem is that he always tries to do things his own way instead of God’s way. **Proverbs 16:25** says, “*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.*” You see, we may think we are doing right when really we are doing wrong. **Jeremiah 10:23** says, “*O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.*” We are reminded by Jeremiah that we cannot walk without tripping over our own two feet when God is not with us. **Matthew 7:13-14** says, “*Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*” There is a way that can save us, but it is straight and narrow. This way is not an easy one. There will be persecutions along the way. **II Timothy 3:12** tells us that we “*will suffer persecution.*”

We cannot be saved by just being religious. We sometimes emphasize the importance of the qualities of a Christian and the characteristics of a Christian (and these are important), but are we looking at the inward or the outward? Even religious people can be lost if their heart is not right with God. In **Acts 8:26-39**, we see the story of the eunuch. We are told he had gone to Jerusalem to worship (v.27). He was even reading from the prophet Isaiah. (v.30) Obviously Philip, knowing the eunuch’s religious background, knew that the eunuch was still lost. Even Paul was a good religious man before his conversion. **Galatians 1:13-14** says, “*For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.*” Cornelius is another example we can consider.

We cannot be saved by just being honest. **Acts 23:1** says, “*Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, ‘Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.’*” Paul had no idea that his persecutions were against the Lord’s people. He felt that he was doing the right thing. Paul was honest, sincere, and humble in his persecution of the church. These characteristics were not enough to save him because Annanias told him in **Acts 22:16**, “*And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*” You can’t put things off, especially baptism. He needed to be baptized, and for some reason, Paul was hesitating. This indecision is unacceptable to God. **II Corinthians 6:2** says, “*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*”

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

We cannot be saved by just being morally good. Again I am reminded of the story of Cornelius in **Acts 10:1-6**. Cornelius was a good and moral man, but he was still lost. Salvation takes more than being morally good. Cornelius is even described as “*a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always*” (**Acts 10:2**). You can be well respected, pray always, give to the poor, and fear God; but unless you have obeyed the will of God, you are still lost in your sins. **Matthew 7:21** says, “*Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.*”

We cannot be saved by just being a believer. Anyone can believe in Jesus and believe that He is the son of God. **James 2:19-26** tells us that even the devils and demons believe. We need to do more than just believe. I am reminded of those who are almost persuaded. Paul tried to warn Agrippa when he said, “*King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe.*” but Agrippa said to Paul, “*You almost persuade me to become a Christian.*” And Paul said, “*I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains*” (**Acts 26:27-29**). He said that he was almost persuaded. That’s just not enough because believing is only part of God’s will. Since we have no record of King Agrippa’s conversion, we have to assume that he was lost.

What is enough in order to be saved?

- (1) We must hear the gospel in order to be saved.

**Matthew 17:5, Acts 15:7, Romans 10:17**

- (2) We must believe that Jesus is the Son of God in order to be saved.

**Mark 16:16, John 8:24, Acts 16:31, Hebrews 11:6**

- (3) We must repent of our sins in order to be saved.

**Luke 13:3, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Acts 17:30**

- (4) We must confess that Jesus is the Son of God before men in order to be saved.

**Matthew 10:32, Acts 8:37, Romans 10:9-10**

- (5) We must be baptized in order to be saved.

**Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, 10:48, 22:16**

There are a few questions that we must ask ourselves. First of all, who commands us to do these things, men or God? **Matthew 28:18-20** says, “*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.*” The Lord authorized baptism, He commanded baptism, and He was also baptized; however, His reason for being baptized was to fulfill all righteousness. We cannot authorize such things; only the Lord makes the rules for the church.

We might also ask ourselves, “Into whom or what are we baptized?” **Acts 8:12** says, “*But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.*” Since Jesus Christ is the one who commanded these things, we are to be baptized into Him. **Galatians 3:27** says, “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*” You are not baptized into the church, just into Christ, because it is God who adds you to the church (**Acts 2:47**). **Romans 6:3-4** says, “*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*”

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

Redemption comes to us when we obey the plan of salvation. **Acts 20:28** says, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” **Colossians 1:13-14** says, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” The blessing of redemption does not come before baptism, or even during baptism, but it occurs immediately when we are raised.

We receive many wonderful things when we obey the gospel. We receive all spiritual blessings in Christ (**Ephesians 1:3**), we will have eternal life (**I John 5:1**), there is no condemnation (**Romans 8:1**), we are new creatures (**II Corinthians 5:17**), and even the dead in Christ are blessed (**Revelation 14:13**). We really should be thankful for all of these wonderful things God gives us.

### Questions For Chapter Fourteen

- (1) Name one scripture that tells us that we are all sinners.
- (2) What seems to be man’s biggest problem? Why?
- (3) How do we know that we cannot be saved by just being religious?
- (4) How do we know that we cannot be saved by just being honest?
- (5) How do we know that we cannot be saved by just being morally good?
- (6) How do we know that we cannot be saved by just being a believer?
- (7) Give one scripture for these steps to salvation.

Hearing the gospel	_____
Believing in Jesus Christ	_____
Repenting of sin	_____
Confessing our faith	_____
Being Baptized into Christ	_____

- (8) Who commands baptism?
- (9) Into whom or what are we baptized?
- (10) When do we have redemption?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## Chapter Fifteen - Remaining Faithful in Christ

In the last lesson, we discussed the steps to salvation. These steps are essential to become a Christian, but there is much to do after we become a Christian. We cannot assume that there is nothing to Christianity. The Lord made it clear that discipleship would not be a “piece of cake.” In **Matthew 6:33** He said, “*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*” In **Matthew 16:24** He said, “*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*” In **Matthew 19:29** He said, “*And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.*”

We are reminded throughout the Bible that faithfulness is one of the things that the Lord requires of His church. **Romans 6:22** says, “*But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.*” **Revelation 2:10** says, “*Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*” It might be good for you to study the story found in **Matthew 13**. We need to make sure that our seed grows and is not cut down when it begins to grow. We must remember that the devil will be working against us. **I Peter 5:8** says, “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*” When we face temptation, we need to remember that God loves us, and we must be faithful to Him. **I Corinthians 15:58** says, “*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*”

We are reminded throughout the Bible that obedience is one of the things that the Lord requires of His church (**Matthew 7:21, Acts 10:34-35, II Thessalonians 1:7-9, John 14:15,23, I Peter 1:22-23, Hebrews 5:8-9, I John 2:4, 5:3, Romans 6:16, James 2:24**). What good are your children if they are not obedient to you? Children need to be disciplined, and Christians are not any different.

God does not look favorably on rebellious children (**Deuteronomy 21:18-21**), and neither does God look favorably upon His people when they disobey (**Isaiah 1:2-4**). Obedience is one of the hallmarks separating man from beast and insects. God’s people are obedient to His Word (**Romans 6:16-17**). Even God’s Son had to learn obedience (**Hebrews 5:8-9**). I Peter is often considered a letter to new converts encouraging them to live a life of devotion to God. **I Peter 1:13-16** is a section that describes some very important characteristics of obedient children. It says, “*Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’”*

Obedient and faithful children have their minds prepared for action. **I Peter 1:13a** says, “*Gird up the loins of your mind.*” Peter says that the Christian’s mind should be prepared for action. This mind control is important because discouragement often dulls the sharpness of the mind. It is easy for Christians to become apathetic (**Revelation 3:15-17**). Our obedience is directly related to the mind’s mental preparedness (**Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 4:17-18, 23**). To be mentally prepared requires study, prayer, worship, and fellowship. Basically all the mind needs is activity. So we need to put our minds to work. Is your mind prepared for action?

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

Obedient and faithful children are well-balanced. In **I Peter 1:13b** we see that we are to be “sober” (NKJV - KJV), or “self-disciplined” (NIV). The Greek term basically means “free from every form of mental and spiritual drunkenness.” The cares of this life and the pressures of persecution can “intoxicate” the Christian and distract his focus (**Mark 4:16-19, Luke 8:13-14**). All obedient children need to have clear judgment. There should be continuous re-adjustments as change occurs. Religious happiness can also render an unbalanced Christian life. If we are unbalanced we will not have our sights set on the right goals. Is your spiritual life well-balanced?

Obedient and faithful children are focused totally on Jesus and His return (**I Peter 1:13**). Often a reward is given to children to encourage proper behavior. We will gain an even greater reward if we endure. This hope of reward will also benefit God’s children. **I Peter 1:3-5** says, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*” Peter was determined to let others know about this reward and the hope we can have in it (**I Peter 1:21, 3:15**). This focus will enhance our obedience (**Hebrews 3:12-14, 6:17-19**). We can see from these scriptures that we need to focus on Christ. Is your focus totally on Jesus and His salvation, or upon something else?

Obedient and faithful children do not look back (**I Peter 1:14**). It’s hard enough to be true to God without remembering your past sinful pleasures. Remember Lot’s wife; because she turned back, she was turned into a pillar of salt. A Christian must break ties with his former ways because he is “a new creature” (**Romans 6:3-4, II Corinthians 5:17**). We need to crucify the old man. **Romans 6:6** says, “*knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.*” We need to learn to control temptation by controlling our lusts and/or the opportunities to be in the presence of sin. Imagine how many temptations we could avoid if we could see them coming. Remember, our Great Example is Jesus Christ. He endured in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil (**Matthew 4:1-11**). Are you still looking back to the former lusts?

Obedient and faithful children are holy, as their God is holy (**I Peter 1:15-16**). Often we think that holiness is not possible for us. This supposition is simply not true because God has called us to a life of holiness. We are called to be like Him in all ways. Our model is nothing less than God Himself. Instead of conforming to the world, we must transform (**Romans 12:1-2**). If obedience and faithfulness are in your life, holiness is attainable, but not perfection. Holiness is attainable only through an obedient relationship with Jesus. **Leviticus 11:44-45, Leviticus 19:2, and Leviticus 20:7** are just a few of the many scriptures that show us that God is holy; and, therefore, we should be holy. So this point is to be made quite clear, and it is not a new point. Are you striving to be holy?

After becoming Christians, we must worship the Lord. The worship in the early church was in spirit and truth (**John 4:19-24**), and the worship services were conducted on the first day of each week (**Acts 20:7, I Corinthians 16:2**). We will spend an entire lesson later in this series on the acts of worship that are to be conducted on the first day of every week. **Hebrews 10:24-25** says, “*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*” We must make sure that we remain faithful in our attendance to the services of the Lord’s church so that we can learn how to serve better as Christians.

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

After becoming Christians, we must study the Bible. We will spend more time on this subject later in this series of lessons. We need to be like the Bereans who “*were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so*” (**Acts 17:11**). **Acts 5:42** says that “*daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.*” We should meet as often as we can. When the church sets a time to meet, we should not neglect that gathering and assembly of the saints. We need to be there for one another.

After becoming Christians, we must love our brethren. We will also spend more time on this later in this series of lessons. We are commanded to love by Jesus (**Matthew 19:19, John 13:34-35, John 15:12,17**). We are commanded to love by the apostles (**Romans 12:9, I Peter 1:22, I John 3:18**).

### Questions For Chapter Fifteen

- (1) Give two scriptures that tell us that we are to be faithful.
- (2) Give two scriptures that tell us that we are to be obedient.
- (3) Does God look favorably on rebellious children? Why or why not?
- (4) Give one scripture reference to the following points in regards to obedient children:

Have their minds prepared for action \_\_\_\_\_

Well-balanced \_\_\_\_\_

Totally focused on Jesus and His return \_\_\_\_\_

Do not look back \_\_\_\_\_

Holy, like God is holy \_\_\_\_\_

- (5) After becoming Christians, why must we worship the Lord? Give one scripture.
- (6) After becoming Christians, why must we study the Bible? Give one scripture.
- (7) After becoming Christians, why must we love our brethren? Give one scripture.
- (8) Can a faithful and obedient child neglect God, His Word, His church, and His people and still please Him? Explain.
- (9) Why do you think being faithful is so important?
- (10) What do you plan to do to make sure that you stay faithful?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## *Chapter Sixteen - The Acts of Worship: Part I*

As Christians we really need to understand the purpose of New Testament worship. The worship in the early church was in spirit and truth (**John 4:19-24**). The organization of New Testament worship was very different from the worship seen in the Old Testament. In the next few lessons we will study the acts of worship.

Organized worship services were conducted on the first day of the week (**Acts 20:7, I Corinthians 16:2, Hebrews 10:24-25**). However, worshipping God is not just for the first day of the week (**Matthew 5:14-16, Ephesians 6:7-8, Colossians 3:17**); it was simply a corporate worship of praise organized on the first day of the week. In order to restore this style of worship, we must worship in spirit and truth with understanding (**John 4:24, I Corinthians 14:15**). Worship must also be done decently and in order (**I Corinthians 14:40**).

### The Acts of Worship in the New Testament Church

- (1) Preaching, teaching, and reading of the Scriptures  
**Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, Acts 10:42, Romans 10:14**
- (2) Singing with the heart  
**Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16, Hebrews 13:15, James 5:13**
- (3) Praying to the Lord  
**Acts 2:42, I Thessalonians 5:17, I Timothy 2:1-2, James 5:16**
- (4) Partaking of the Lord's Supper (communion)  
**Matthew 26:26-30, Acts 2:42, Acts 20:7, I Corinthians 11:20-32**
- (5) Giving liberally and cheerfully  
**I Corinthians 16:1-2, II Corinthians 8:1-5, II Corinthians 9:6-8**

All of these acts of worship must be studied individually. All are significant to the worship service of the church. They are significant to the Lord as well. We really need to try and understand the importance, the purpose, and the meaning of these acts of worship.

In this lesson we will focus on the first acts of worship mentioned in the list above: preaching, teaching, and reading of scripture. Preaching, teaching, and reading of the Scriptures were very common in the early church, but most importantly, we must notice that it was a part of the regular worship assembly on the first day of the week.

Jesus first commanded Christians to preach and teach. **Matthew 28:18-20** says, "*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.*" Likewise, **Mark 16:15-16** says, "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*"

The apostle Peter was the one promised to have the keys of the kingdom. **Matthew 16:17-19** says, "*Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*"

Therefore, he was the one to preach when the church was first established in **Acts 2**. He was the one that delivered the message to God's people and taught them how to worship, as he was taught by Jesus and as he was led by the Holy Spirit. That is why **Acts 2:42** says, "*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*"

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

Later in **Acts 10:42** Peter said, “*And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.*” **Romans 10:14** says, “*How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?*” Preaching is required for people to hear and obey the gospel. Therefore, common sense would tell us that it should be a part of the worship, even if it was not commanded.

It is important for us to note that the message we are to be preaching and teaching must only be the truth contained in the Word of God (**I Timothy 1:8-11, II Timothy 4:3-5, Titus 1:9, Titus 2:1, Psalm 119:160, John 17:17, John 8:32**). Most denominations try to pervert and change the Holy Scriptures in order to make them fit with their own doctrine. But good students know that all of the Word is truth, and this is what makes the Bible profitable (**II Timothy 3:16-17**). Many of Paul’s writings give the warning to look out for false teachers (**II Corinthians 11:13, Galatians 2:4**). Jesus also warned that there would be wolves coming to tear up the flock of God. Therefore, we must study along with those who are teaching and preaching the gospel.

The truth contained in the word cannot be altered or changed (**Revelation 22:18-19**). Scriptures are to be read aloud and shared. This sharing of course, involves preaching and teaching (**II Timothy 4:1-5**). Several books in the New Testament were passed from one congregation to another. **Colossians 4:16** says, “*Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.*” **I Timothy 4:13** says, “*Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.*”

**II Timothy 4:2** says, “*Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.*” God has not changed. The God of the Old Testament (**Exodus 3:14**) and the God of the New Testament (**Hebrews 13:8**) are the same God. God is consistent, and He does not change. Compare the God of the Old Testament in **Psalms 119:160** to the God of the New Testament in **John 17:17**. Compare the grace of God to those mentioned in the minor prophets to those who sin in the New Testament. We can know God’s Word as truth (**John 8:32**) and we must teach others.

To emphasize the consistency between the two testaments, remember that there has always been a blueprint and a pattern (Adam & Eve in **Genesis 3:22-24**, Israelites in **Dueteronomy 4:1-2**). There is a comparison between these scriptures that shows us that God has always punished His people for their sins. The God of the New Testament in **Revelation 22:18-19**, and the God of the Old Testament in **Dueteronomy 5:32-33** show us a message that sounds familiar. The God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament are the same. The same strictness is seen in both, and both require obedience (**Dueteronomy 4:24-26, Matthew 7:21**). The same wrath tempered with grace and mercy are seen in both (Nadab & Abihu - **Leviticus 10:1**, Eleazar & Ithamar - **Leviticus 10:4-20**, Ananias & Sapphira - **Acts 5**, Saul - **Acts 9**).

Nearly all New Testament preaching carries an evangelistic drive. Paul declared, “*It pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe*” (**I Corinthians 1:21**). The redemptive mission of Christ as fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies was the main theme of New Testament preaching (**I Corinthians 1:2-3, 15:14**). The personal testimony of Christ’s power in the preacher’s own life was also the heart of many sermons especially throughout the book of Acts. Such evangelistic passion led thousands to be saved when Peter preached at Pentecost (**Acts 2:41**).

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

The distinction between preaching and teaching made in the church today is not as evident in the New Testament. Both Jesus and Paul regarded themselves as preacher-teachers and were so regarded by others. Luke reports that Jesus “*taught the people in the temple and preached the gospel*” (**Luke 20:1**). Paul testified that he was appointed “*a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles*” (**II Timothy 1:11**). The best New Testament preaching had a strong element of teaching. This is especially seen in the charge that Paul gave young Timothy in **II Timothy 4:1-2**.

We will notice of the next few lessons that all five of the acts of worship - preaching, singing, praying, partaking of the Lord’s Supper, and giving - are essential, and all must be done on the first day of the week. We can also meet on other days throughout the week to study the Bible together. That choice is up to the elders of the church. We need to consider that the Bereans met daily (**Acts 17:11**). **Acts 5:42** says that “*daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.*” We should meet as often as we can; and when the church sets a time to meet, we should not neglect that gathering and assembly of the saints (**Hebrews 10:24-25**).

### Questions For Chapter Sixteen

(1) Give one scripture that shows that the New Testament church should worship on the first day of the week.

(2) Give two scriptural references for preaching, teaching, or reading of Scriptures publicly.

(3) What apostle warns his readers often to look out for false teachers? Why? Give one scripture reference.

(4) What apostle was the first to preach in the early church? Why did he preach that day? Who did he preach to on that day?

(5) Why must we preach and teach the Bible and not the commands of men?

(6) How important is preaching, teaching, and reading Scriptures in the assembly?

(7) Why must we worship as God has commanded us to?

(8) Who can preach to a congregation?

(9) Why should we preach evangelistic messages?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## *Chapter Seventeen - The Acts of Worship: Part II*

As already mentioned in the last lesson, Christians should understand the purpose of New Testament worship. The worship in the early church was in spirit and truth (**John 4:19-24**). The organization of New Testament worship was very different from the worship seen in the Old Testament and the organized worship services were conducted on the first day of the week (**Acts 20:7, I Corinthians 16:2, Hebrews 10:24-25**).

We have already discussed the use of preaching, teaching, and reading of scripture in the worship assembly. Another important act of worship is singing. Where did singing praises begin? People have always sung praises to God. Many scriptures show that people loved to sing to God (**Exodus 12:1-18, 20-21, Judges 5:1, Luke 2:14, Matthew 26:30**).

People shouldn't need an excuse to sing, especially when it comes to praising God in worship. We are commanded to sing in Christian worship. **I Corinthians 14:15** says, *"What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding."* It is very important that we understand the songs that we sing in our worship. As king David wrote his psalms and then sang them to the Lord there is no doubt that he did it with all of his heart and that he understood the meaning of the song.

Singing in worship is done not only to praise God but also to edify the other Christians that are in the worship service with you. **Ephesians 5:19** says, *"Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."* **Colossians 3:16** says, *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."*

When we are happy and thankful for the blessings we have our natural instinct should be to sing. **James 5:13** says, *"Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms."* If you are happy then let God know that you are happy, and He will bless you even more.

We have examples of the early Christians singing praises to God. Jesus sang a hymn with His disciples after instituting the Lord's Supper (**Matthew 26:30**). Also Paul sang while he was in prison (**Acts 16:25**). The Bible tells us that we offer a sacrifice to God through our singing (**Acts 17:24-25, Romans 12:1-2, Hebrews 13:15**). In addition to that we also help one another when we sing (**Colossians 3:16, Hebrews 3:13, Hebrews 10:24-25**).

There is an issue as to whether or not one should use instrumental music in worship. We need to remember that the Lord never commanded the use of an instrument in worship (**Matthew 3:17, Matthew 17:5, Matthew 28:18, Romans 7:4, Colossians 2:14-17, Ephesians 2:13-16, Ephesians 5:19**). The Holy Spirit never commanded the use of an instrument in worship (**John 16:13, Galatians 5:16-17, John 4:24**). The apostles never authorized the use of an instrument in worship (**Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16, Luke 24:44-45, Matthew 26:30, Acts 16:25, I Corinthians 14:15, Hebrews 13:15, James 5:13, Revelation 15:3**).

There are other observations we can make from a study on the use of instruments in worship. No instrument is ever found in New Testament worship. In fact, it was until hundreds of years after the establishment of the church that it was added by men to improve the singing part of the worship. By using an instrument we can weaken our faith because we will depend upon the instrument to work for us (**Romans 15:4, II Corinthians 5:7, Romans 10:17**).

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By using an instrument we can weaken our worship, because we will be emphasizing man-made instruments instead of giving God what He really wants. He wants to hear His instrument, our voices (**Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16**). The most important lesson we can get from a study on this subject is not to add to the Word of God (**II Timothy 3:16-17, II John 9-11, Revelation 22:18-19**).

Prayer is also an important element of Christian worship. Why should we pray? We should pray as a church because it was an important part of worship in the early church. **Acts 2:42** says, “*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*” Therefore, it was obviously a part of the worship assembly in the early church. It should be noted that nowhere in the New Testament do we see a woman leading the congregation in prayer. Men always led the congregation in prayer.

This act of worship is our way of communicating to God on behalf of ourselves and others. **I Timothy 2:1-2** says, “*Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.*” **I Thessalonians 5:17** says that we are to “*pray without ceasing.*” Through prayer we gain strength and comfort. We can also receive the healing we need. **James 5:16** says, “*Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*” There are several reasons why a Christian should pray. Here are a few:

(1) Christians should always pray because of the many examples in the Bible.

**Matthew 6:9-13, James 5:16-18**

(2) Christians should always pray because we are obedient to God when we pray.

**I Thessalonians 5:17, I Timothy 2:1-2, Job 33:26**

(3) Christians should always pray because we have faith in God.

**Romans 4:20, James 1:6-8**

(4) Christians should always pray because we are to be compassionate.

**Matthew 9:36-38, I Corinthians 13:7, Philemon 4, James 5:16**

(5) Christians should always pray because we are to be humble.

**James 4:6,10, Proverbs 16:5, I Peter 5:6**

(6) Christians should always pray because we are to be steadfast.

**Luke 18:1, Ephesians 3:13-14**

(7) Christians should always pray because we need forgiveness.

**Psalms 51:1-2, I John 1:9**

(8) Christians should always pray because we are to be grateful.

**Matthew 21:33-40, John 3:16, Ephesians 1:3**

Notice again that all five of the acts of worship - preaching, singing, praying, partaking of the Lord's Supper, and giving - are essential, and all must be done on the first day of the week. We should meet as often as we can; and when the church sets a time to meet, we should not neglect that gathering and assembly of the saints (**Hebrews 10:24-25**).

### Questions For Chapter Seventeen

(1) Why did God command singing? Give two scriptural references for singing in worship.

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(2) Why did God command praying? Give two scriptural references for praying in worship.

(3) Give two reasons why we should not use instrumental music in worship and give scriptural references.

(4) What instrument does God really want to hear? Why?

(5) Give two reasons why Christians should pray in worship.

(6) When are these acts of worship to be done? Why?

(7) Who should lead the congregation in prayer? Why?

(8) How can we teach when we sing?

(9) How can we edify and admonish one another when we sing?

(10) Why is it so important to pray?

(11) Give some scriptural reasons why we should pray.

(12) Why must we do these acts of worship as God has commanded us to?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## *Chapter Eighteen - The Acts of Worship: Part III*

As already mentioned in the last two lessons, Christians should understand the purpose of New Testament worship. The worship in the early church was in spirit and truth (**John 4:19-24**). The organization of New Testament worship was very different from the worship seen in the Old Testament and the organized worship services were conducted on the first day of the week (**Acts 20:7, I Corinthians 16:2, Hebrews 10:24-25**).

The Lord's supper is another important element of worship in the church. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper (**Matthew 26:17-30, Mark 14:11-31, Luke 22:7-34, John 13:1-17:26, I Corinthians 11:23-26**). Matthew says: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.'"

Jesus was very specific about the items to be used in the observance. The Lord's supper includes unleavened bread which symbolizes His body on the cross (**Matthew 26:26-27**). The Lord's Supper also includes the fruit of the vine, or grape juice, is used to symbolize His blood that was shed on the cross (**Matthew 26:28-29**). These items were the same that the apostles used when they gave the command to the church to observe it on the first day of every week (**Acts 2:42**).

Jesus was specific about the mind set of the observer, as well (**Luke 22:19-20, I Corinthians 11:17-34**). We must be careful not to get distracted when we partake of it. The early Christians made the Lord's Supper a part of their worship each Lord's Day (**I Corinthians 11:20-32**). **Acts 2:42** says, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." **Acts 20:7** says, "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight."

If we intend to restore the church, and be the church of the New Testament, we must take the Lord's Supper weekly. It should be part of our worship because it is very important to Jesus (**John 6:53, John 14:15**); it was important to the early church (**I Corinthians 11:33**), and it should be very important to us (**Matthew 26:28, Luke 19:10**).

The Lord's Supper must not be abused. The items are specific: unleavened bread and grape juice, not chips and water. Also it is not a meal. The church in Corinth had a problem with making the Lord's Supper out to be a love feast every Lord's day. Brief observances at each assembly, on the first day of the week, is all that God requires of His people.

The early church also gave as they had prospered on the first day of the week. **I Corinthians 16:1-2** says, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come." When we assemble we should also take a collection to keep the building up, support the work of the church, and help the minister financially.

**II Corinthians 8:1-5** says, "Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God."

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The assembly is also commanded to give with a positive attitude. **II Corinthians 9:7** says, “*So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.*” The best lesson that we can learn from giving is the story of Ananias and Sapphira in **Acts 5**. They gave with false motives and also lied to the Holy Spirit. They were killed for their actions.

The contribution of money was given to help those less fortunate. We also must give financially to the church in order to keep the work going. I have often made it a habit to share with people the seven principles of scriptural giving. I want to share this list with you. I hope it is beneficial:

- (1) Scriptural giving is liberal giving.  
**Romans 12:8, II Corinthians 9:6**
- (2) Scriptural giving is according to God’s purpose.  
**II Corinthians 9:7**
- (3) Scriptural giving is done in a cheerful manner.  
**II Corinthians 9:7**
- (4) Scriptural giving is done from the heart.  
**II Corinthians 9:7**
- (5) Scriptural giving is done regularly.  
**I Corinthians 16:2**
- (6) Scriptural giving is done personally.  
**I Corinthians 16:2**
- (7) Scriptural giving is done according to prosperity.  
**I Corinthians 16:2**

The elders of the church are to take care of the collection that is taken up each Lord’s day. If there are no elders in the congregation then the money should be handled by the men who are spiritually mature. All of the money should be used wisely and those who handle it must remember that they will give an account to the Lord for how they handle His money.

Notice again that all five of the acts of worship - preaching, singing, praying, partaking of the Lord’s Supper, and giving - are essential, and all must be done on the first day of the week. We should meet as often as we can; and when the church sets a time to meet, we should not neglect that gathering and assembly of the saints (**Hebrews 10:24-25**).

### ***Questions For Chapter Eighteen***

- (1) Give two scriptural references for partaking of the Lord’s Supper in worship.
- (2) Give two scriptural references for giving liberally and cheerfully in worship.
- (3) What do the emblems in the Lord’s Supper symbolize?
- (4) What would be wrong with having chips and water for the Lord’s Supper?
- (5) Give two of the seven principles of scriptural giving with scripture references.

## **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

- (6) Who is to handle the Lord's money? Why?
- (7) Is worship really complicated? If so, who makes it complicated?
- (8) What happened to a couple in **Acts 5** that was deceptive with their money?
- (9) What should we be thinking about when we take the Lord's Supper?
- (10) Which of the acts of worship could be altered or changed? Explain.
- (11) How often are we commanded to take the Lord's Supper and give?
- (12) Why must we do these acts of worship as God has commanded us to?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## Chapter Nineteen - Brothers & Sisters in Christ

When you are added to the Body of Christ, you are given a new family. You are then part of God's family. The Lord has provided a new environment for you and new people to be around. These helps are given to you in hope that you will appreciate the love God has for you, His church, and other individuals. This family of God can help you develop a better relationship with other people as well as with God Himself.

**Mark 10:29-30** says, *"Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life."* Jesus emphasized that the real family is the family of God. Jesus said, *"For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law', and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me"* (**Matthew 10:35-37**). He made this statement because we may have to choose sometimes between our earthly family and God's family. We need to remember that we are part of a new family now.

*"While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. Then one said to Him, 'Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.' But He answered and said to the one who told Him, 'Who is My mother and who are My brothers?' And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother'"* (**Matthew 12:46-50**). Jesus clearly states that His family is the family of God. We must love and take care of the family of God.

We are commanded by Christ to love one another, especially our own brethren. **John 15:12,17** says, *"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. . . . These things I command you, that you love one another."* He also repeats this idea in **Matthew 19:19** and **Matthew 22:39**. Jesus even tells us to love our enemies. **Matthew 5:43-44** says, *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you."* Its hard enough to love our brethren, but we are commanded to love our enemies.

When Jesus left this earth, the apostles and writers of the New Testament continued to teach this doctrine of loving one another. **Romans 13:8** says, *"Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law."* **Galatians 5:13-15** says, *"For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!'"* This thought is echoed throughout the New Testament (**I Thessalonians 3:12, 4:9, James 2:8, I Peter 1:22, I John 3:11, 23, 4:7, 11-12, II John 5**).

The love of brothers or sisters for each other is seen throughout the Bible. The love of fellow Christians for one another shows that we are all children of the same Father in a special sense. Occasionally the New Testament uses the word "brother" to refer simply to another human being, whether a Christian or not (**Matthew 25:40**), or to one's fellow countryman (**Romans 9:3**). However, it is also a term used for a fellow believer in Christ.

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This is true of all places where the concept of brotherly love, or brotherly kindness, appears. We must love one another enough to be willing to die for one another. **John 15:13** says, “*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.*” **I John 3:16** says, “*By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*”

In the Old Testament, Israelites were taught not to hate their brothers: “*You shall not hate your brother in your heart . . . but you shall love your neighbor as yourself*” (**Leviticus 19:17-18**). This emphasis is continued and is made even more positive in the New Testament. Believers are exhorted to “*be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love*” (**Romans 12:10**), to “*let brotherly love continue*” (**Hebrews 13:1**), to “*love the brotherhood*” (**I Peter 2:17**), and to “*love as brothers*” (**I Peter 3:8**). Brotherly love is to be the badge, or hallmark, of a Christian (**John 13:35**). The Greek word for brotherly love “philo” appears in the name of the city of Philadelphia in the province of Asia mentioned in the Book of Revelation (**Revelation 1:11**).

Brotherly love exists between people who are closely related to each other, whether physically or spiritually (**Romans 12:10, Hebrews 13:1, II Peter 1:7**). The phrase is used in a symbolic sense to express love of Christians for one another, since all are sons of the same Father. The Greek word translated as “brotherly love” implies more than love for one’s “blood brothers” as it is described in pagan writings. It means love for all true believers, for the members of the church, the “*household of faith*” (**Galatians 6:10**) and “*of God*” (**Ephesians 2:19, I Peter 2:17, 3:8, 5:9**).

Christians are a brotherhood in the service of Christ (**Matthew 23:8**), a family made up of those who do the will of God (**Matthew 12:50, Mark 3:35, Luke 8:21**). “*A new commandment I give to you,*” Jesus said to His disciples, “*that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*” (**John 13:34-35**). He had taught the importance of loving one another throughout His ministry, and then says that people will know you are Christ’s, because you love one another.

A Christian’s love should extend beyond the Christian brotherhood. This love should be for all people. “*If you greet your brethren only,*” said Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, “*what do you do more than others?*” (**Matthew 5:47**). The Christian is called not only to love his neighbor and his brother, but also to love his enemy (**Matthew 5:44**). This love for others will compel us to teach the lost and follow the Great Commission (**Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16**).

The brothers and sisters we have in Jesus Christ can help us when we need them. In fact, it is our Christian responsibility to serve one another. We can call on each other when we are suffering from a burden. **Galatians 6:2** says, “*Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*” This practice is one of mutual burden-bearing. We need to lend a helping hand by lifting heavy loads, especially those of God’s family. Burdens are an overload which we can lighten. The burden is a weight that is too heavy for the individual, and it is capable of being shared with others of the fellowship. In doing this, we fulfill the law of Christ and satisfy the requirements of the law. Jesus requires all Christians to share one another’s burdens.

Our brothers and sisters can help us if we are overtaken by sin. **Galatians 6:1** says, “*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*” Our brothers and sisters can be there for us when we are ready to confess our sin. **James 5:16** says, “*Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*”

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We need to be there for one another at all times. We need to offer a hand if it is needed. We need to offer advice when we see a problem. We need to offer prayers if our brethren are struggling. The family of God is one of the greatest gifts we have from God, in that we know we are not alone.

We can rely upon our brethren for many things, but they also need to rely on us when they are in need. We are told in **Hebrews 10:24-25**, “*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*” We need to lean on one another. And when we neglect worshipping the Lord, we do not allow our brethren to lean upon us. We need to consider one another more than we consider ourselves.

To sum up all of this information I refer you to the words of the apostle Paul. **Colossians 3:12-17** says, “*Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*”

### Questions For Chapter Nineteen

- (1) When are Christians given this new family?
- (2) What scriptures tell us that Jesus thought highly of this family of God?
- (3) Why must we love and care for the family of God?
- (4) What Scriptures tell us that we must love one another?
- (5) What are some different ways that the word brother can be used?
- (6) What city has the name that means brotherly love?
- (7) Brotherly love can exist on two plains. What are they?
- (8) Must a Christian’s love extend beyond the brotherhood? Why?

## **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

- (9) What are some things that our brothers and sisters can do for us?
- (10) What are some things that we can do for our brothers and sisters?
- (11) What passage tells us that we must consider one another and not forsake the assembling of ourselves together?
- (12) What passage sums up all we have talked about in this lesson?
- (13) What encourages you the most about our fellowship?
- (14) What can we do to improve fellowship as a church family?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## *Chapter Twenty - The Second Coming of Christ*

There should be no doubt in your mind, Jesus is Coming! We live in a time when many people are concerned about the second coming of Christ. For years many religious organizations have forced their opinions and traditions on people. It seems that every few years a new group of religious fanatics decide they know the exact date when Jesus will return. It is time to see what the Bible says about Jesus' second coming.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus said that He had greater works to do in the future. He specifically mentioned two works: the raising of the dead and the passing of final judgment. These works are proof that He is God, but we must understand that they were delegated from the Father. The raising of the dead and the passing of judgment are associated with Jesus' second coming.

When Paul wrote about this subject, he viewed Christ's second coming as the occasion when His people would share His glory and be displayed to the universe as God's children, the heirs of heaven. **Romans 8:21** says, "*creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*" Both the present work of Christ and His future work are dependent on His finished work. That finished work was the beginning of God's good work in His people. This work will not be completed until "*the day of Jesus Christ*" (**Philippians 1:6**), when the entire universe will be united in Christ (**Ephesians 1:10**). All of us will die, Jesus will return, and then we will have to give an account for what we have done on this earth (**Hebrews 9:27-28**).

The three most prominent views of the second coming of Christ are based on premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism. There are a large number of religious groups that believe in the doctrine of premillennialism. The doctrine of premillennialism is based on a misunderstanding of **Revelation 20**. Premillennialism has become very popular in the last twenty-five years and is the most believed by denominations today. Premillennialism is a doctrine that says that Jesus is coming back to this earth to set up an earthly kingdom where He will reign for one thousand years. The most common misconception in this particular view is that Jesus intended to set up His kingdom when he first came to this earth, but was killed before He could accomplish His goal. Therefore, his disciples were forced to establish a temporary institution, which is the church.

After hearing a description of this view you may already be thinking about lessons we have already studied in this workbook. First of all, the scriptures teach that the church is the kingdom of God (**Matthew 16:17-19**). Second, the scriptures teach that the church is not temporary and that it was planned from the beginning (**Ephesians 3:10-11**). We must remember the prophesy of Daniel in **Daniel 7:13-14** of the church. He said that the church would stand forever and that it would be the final kingdom. Third, to say that Jesus did not accomplish His goal or mission leads one to believe that He failed. This is impossible because He is God. He fulfilled His promises to establish His kingdom (**Acts 2:47, Colossians 1:13, Revelation 1:9**).

Postmillennialism is the belief that Christ will return at the end of the millennial age. Those who hold to this view believe that the return of the Lord Jesus Christ will postdate, or come after, and climax the millennium. This view envisions that the world will increasingly become better until the millennium arrives, and Jesus' millennial reign will not be in person. It is also based on a misunderstanding of **Revelation 20**. This position was supported by Martin Luther, John Wycliffe, and other early reformers, with the exception of the Anabaptists which supported premillennialism. This view used to be very popular, but is not as common today in main stream denominations. Therefore, for the sake of time, we will discuss the third view.

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Amilennialism is the belief that there is no literal millennial reign on Christ on earth. This view supports the fact that the church is the kingdom and that when Jesus comes again there will be millennial reign. This view also supports the fact that the description of the millennial reign in **Revelation 20** is not to be taken as literal but figurative. This is the view that is consistent with the Bible.

Now that we have discussed these three views we need to see how, if Revelation is not to be taken literal, we can know how Jesus is coming. We must be prepared for His coming, so we will study a few scriptures in this lesson that will help us in being more prepared for the second coming of Christ.

The only way to learn about Jesus' second coming is to see what the Bible says about it. When Jesus ascended into heaven in **Acts 1:11** the angels told His disciples, "*Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.*" This verse teaches us that Jesus will come back the same way He left. He left on a cloud and He will return on a cloud. One thing we should note from this passage is that it does not say that He will return to the earth. Instead we are told that we will meet Him in the air when He returns (**I Thessalonians 4:15-18**).

One thing you should know is that no one can know when Jesus is coming. **II Peter 3:10** says, "*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*" This is also seen in **I Thessalonians 5:2**. Some denominations believe that there will be signs to show God's people when He is coming. This, and other verses in the Bible, show us that no one will know when He is coming. In fact, no one in heaven will know until it happens. **Mark 13:32-33** says, "*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.*" Jesus says that He does not even know when it will happen, because only God knows when it will happen.

When Jesus comes again the Bible says that the dead in Christ will be raised (**John 5:28-29**). Then those who are alive will be caught up to meet Him in the air (**I Thessalonians 4:15-18**). At that time we will be taken to the judgment seat where we will be judged according to our works (**II Corinthians 5:10**). At that time God will divide the wicked from the righteous (**Matthew 25:31-46**). The wicked will be condemned to spend an eternity in hell and the righteous will enter into heaven.

The pattern of events just mentioned is consistent throughout all of the Bible. The other views, already mentioned, express a different perspective that is not biblical. They hold to the rapture. That means they believe the saved will be suddenly taken away when Jesus comes. This view is not supported with scripture and began as a doctrine because of a person's dream in the early 1800's. Some people try to twist **I Thessalonians 4:15-18** to support this view. They also support the doctrine of many resurrections when the Bible only teaches there is one (**Acts 24:15, John 5:28-29**). They also believe in the seven years of tribulation and other things mentioned in the book of Revelation because they take them as literal events that will take place in the future. These are just a few of the many doctrines held to by those who support a millennial reign.

When Jesus comes again he will not set up an earthly kingdom. Instead He will return the true kingdom, which is the church, to God (**I Corinthians 15:23-24**). At this time eternity, through the eyes of man, will begin. Then the earth will be destroyed. There is no way that Jesus could have a millennial reign after He comes because the Bible says that the earth will be melted with fervent heat and destroyed (**II Peter 3:5-7, 10-12**).

## **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

There is no doubt that Jesus will come again. We must be prepared for His second coming by knowing God's will for our lives that is revealed in His Word. **Matthew 7:21** say, "*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.*" We need to know exactly what God requires of us and obey it so that we can spend eternity with Him.

### ***Questions For Chapter Twenty***

- (1) Is Jesus coming again? Does the Bible say anything about Jesus' second coming?
- (2) What two works did Jesus say he would do in the future?
- (3) What verse tells us that we all will die and face the Lord in judgment?
- (4) What are the three most prominent views of the second coming of Christ?
- (5) What passage of scripture is often misunderstood concerning the millennial reign of Christ?
- (6) Whose prophesy said that the church would stand forever and that it would be the final kingdom? Where is it found?
- (7) Which view is consistent with the Bible?
- (8) What is the thing we can do to learn about Jesus' second coming?
- (9) How will Jesus return according to **Acts 1:11** and **I Thessalonians 4:15-18**?
- (10) Can anyone know exactly when Jesus is coming? Why or why not?
- (11) What are the pattern of events that will happen when Jesus comes again?
- (12) What are two doctrines that are often held to regarding the millennial reign of Christ?
- (13) How can you be prepared for His second coming?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## *Chapter Twenty-one - Getting To Know Your Bible: The Basics - Part I*

We have covered a lot of material in these lessons. I would like to take a break from learning a lot of Scriptures and I would like to teach you some other things that can help you in your Christian living. This material can help you in your studying as well. In this lesson, I would like to teach you some things from the Old Testament. We will begin with the books of the Old Testament, and then we will look at some lists of things that we need to remember.

The Old Testament is a collection of 39 books written in Hebrew, with a few chapters written in Aramaic. These books are arranged in five groups in English Bibles. I would like to summarize these divisions. They are as follows:

(1) *The Pentateuch*. The name means “five books,” and this group is made up of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. This group is sometimes called the “Law of Moses” or the “Torah,” which is a Hebrew word referring to God’s “law” or “teachings.” Traditionally, these five books are attributed to Moses and believed to be the work of his own hands (**Joshua 1:7, Daniel 9:11-13, Luke 16:29, John 7:19, Acts 26:22, Romans 10:19**). Genesis gives the account of creation and humankind’s early history. Genesis also records the events of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Those stories, in turn, are linked with accounts of Israel’s greatest prophet, Moses, whose birth and life story is played out through the remaining four books of the Pentateuch. Exodus includes the conflict between Egypt and Israel. Exodus also records the rescue of Israel by God from Egypt, Israel’s rebellion toward God, and forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Leviticus is an account of worship styles and specific commands directed to the Levitical priesthood. Numbers and Deuteronomy reveal the arrival at the entrance to Canaan, the Land of Promise, and the trials that soon followed.

(2) *The Historical Books*. This group is made up of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, I and II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Together, the Pentateuch and Historical books tell the history of Israel during two time periods, the Patriarchal age and the Mosaical age. The books of Genesis through II Kings tell the history the first time, while the books of I Chronicles through Nehemiah tell it the second time from a somewhat different point of view. Each book introduces new characters and new stories that help to reveal the history of God’s chosen people and the dilemmas they faced.

(3) *The Poetic Books*. This group is sometimes called the “Wisdom Books” or the “Wisdom Literature” and it contains Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. Lamentations is also considered to be one of the poetic books, but in English Bibles it follows Jeremiah, because Jeremiah has often been thought to be its author. Therefore, in some groupings it is added to the prophetic books, but is not considered a major or a minor prophetic book.

(4) *The Major Prophets*. It should be noted that the Major Prophets are not called “major” because they are more important than the “minor” prophets. These books are called “major” because they are longer than the “minor” prophetic books. They contain the messages of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. These books include discourses on proper behavior, they record interesting stories, and give special messages.

(5) *The Minor Prophets*. As was already stated, the minor prophetic books are called “minor” because they are shorter in length. They contain the messages of the prophets Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Each book contains a unique message to God’s people in Israel, Judah, and to some of the pagan nations that hindered the Jewish people.

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The best way to memorize the books of the Old Testament is to sing them and then write them down. It might be best to just try and memorize them a few books at a time. It takes a little time to memorize all of them. You might begin by learning the books of the Pentateuch, then the historical books, followed by the poetic books, the major prophets, and finally the minor prophets.

Here are the books of the Old Testament in order:

Genesis	Ecclesiastes
Exodus	Song of Songs
Leviticus	Isaiah
Numbers	Jeremiah
Deuteronomy	Lamentations
Joshua	Ezekiel
Judges	Daniel
Ruth	Hosea
I Samuel	Joel
II Samuel	Amos
I Kings	Obadiah
II Kings	Jonah
I Chronicles	Micah
II Chronicles	Nahum
Ezra	Habakkuk
Nehemiah	Zephaniah
Esther	Haggai
Job	Zechariah
Psalms	Malachi
Proverbs	

The next list with which we need to familiarize ourselves is the twelve tribes of Israel. The twelve tribes of Israel were the tribes of:

(1) Reuben	(7) Gad
(2) Simeon	(8) Asher
(3) Levi	(9) Issachar
(4) Judah	(10) Zebulun
(5) Dan	(11) Joseph (Ephraim & Manasseh)
(6) Naphtali	(12) Benjamin

Each of the twelve tribes had famous descendants that were influential characters throughout the history of Judaism. The tribe of Levi had famous descendants like Aaron, Moses, Eli, Ezra, and John the Baptist. Judah famous descendants like Caleb, David, Solomon, possibly Isaiah, and Jesus Christ. Dan boasted Samson as its most famous descendant. Naphtali produced Barak and possibly Elijah. Asher's tribe produced Anna. Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, brought forth Joshua, Gideon, and Samuel. Some of Benjamin's descendants included Saul, Esther, and Saul of Tarsus (also known as Paul).

The next list with which we need to familiarize ourselves is the judges. The judges are:

(1) Othniel	(8) Jair
(2) Ehud	(9) Jephthah
(3) Shamgar	(10) Ibzan
(4) Deborah	(11) Elon
(5) Gideon	(12) Abdon
(6) Abimelech,	(13) Samson
(7) Tola	

## **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

As we have seen with the other lists previously mentioned, it will take time to memorize these lists; but the purpose of this lesson is to familiarize you with these lists so that you may have them to study and look back on. However, I would like to encourage you to try and memorize as many as you can.

### ***Questions For Chapter Twenty-one***

- (1) What are the five main groups of the Old Testament books?
- (2) How many books are there in the Old Testament?
- (3) What are the first five books of the Old Testament?
- (4) What is the seventh book of the Old Testament?
- (5) What are the poetic books?
- (6) What is the last book of the Old Testament?
- (7) How many tribes of Israel were there?
- (8) Name the tribes of Israel.
- (9) How many judges were there?
- (10) Name the judges of Israel.

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## *Chapter Twenty-two - Getting To Know Your Bible: The Basics - Part II*

As we get to know our Bible, there is much that we need to learn. The purpose of these lessons is for us to look at those things that can help you in your studying. For the most part, the material presented to you in these three lessons is memorized by many younger Christians. In fact, you may already know some of this material. If that is the case, then this will just be a refreshing course.

One of the most important things that we can learn is the law of God. The Ten Commandments (**Exodus 20:1-17**) were laws given by God as guidelines for daily living. Although God gave the commandments to His people through Moses at Mount Sinai more than three thousand years ago, they are still relevant today. These laws are also known as the Decalogue, from the Greek word meaning “ten words.” All of the commandments were strict guidelines for those living under the Old Law. The Ten Commandments are as follows:

1. “*You shall have no other gods before Me*” (**Exodus 20:3**). Since God is one (**Deuteronomy 6:4**) and unique (**Deuteronomy 4:38-39**), belief in and worship of other so-called gods is out of the question. Since God’s character forms the basis of the covenant with His people, He demands absolute loyalty. And when a person’s intent of the heart is to put God first, his outward actions will reveal it. Then others will see what God’s character is like through the actions of His people.

2. “*You shall not make for yourself a carved image*” (**Exodus 20:4**). The second commandment is necessary because people do not always keep the first. The Israelites made a golden calf to worship even as the Lord gave the laws to Moses. Since Israel had so many contacts with people who did worship images, including replicas of their earthly rulers, God gave them this law. God has never been visible (**Deuteronomy 4:12**); He is Spirit (**John 4:24**). Idolatry, therefore, always misrepresents God.

3. “*You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain*” (**Exodus 20:7**). God’s name and His character are inseparable. Using His holy name lightly in a vain, empty manner is insulting and degrading. This action could be done by perjuring oneself in a court of law (**Leviticus 19:12**) or by cursing. Many use the name of the Lord in vain when they are angry and begin to blame Him for all their faults. However, this commandment also applies to hypocritical worship, when one uses God’s name in meaningless prayer and praise (**Isaiah 29:13**).

4. “*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy*” (**Exodus 20:8**). The word Sabbath means “rest,” but God intended for this day to stand for more than an absence of work. It was to be a day of worship. It was also a day for setting aside all thoughts of materialistic gain and thinking about Him. God Himself set the pattern by ceasing from His labors after creating the world for six days.

5. “*Honor your father and your mother*” (**Exodus 20:12**). God established parents as the authority figures in the family unit. Children often get their first impressions about God from their parents. Parents who walk in the Spirit, honestly desiring to follow the guidelines of the Scriptures, will set better examples for their children. Children who want to please God will respect their parents, regardless of the pressures from the world and from their peers.

6. “*You shall not murder*” (**Exodus 20:13**). A person who cares about others, beginning with those in the home, does not want to harm them. This law reveals God’s attitude toward people created in His image. No one has the right to take that life from another individual (**Genesis 9:6**).

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

7. “*You shall not commit adultery*” (**Exodus 20:14**). This commandment refers to being sexually involved with a married person, although, it is used by extension to prohibit all sexual relationships outside of marriage. Again, this commandment involves a right relationship with God and with others. Adultery is possible only if people are prepared to hurt others, to enjoy themselves at the expense of other people. A right attitude toward keeping God first and not harming others is tied in with several other commandments. A person who does not steal will not take another’s mate, and he does not allow covetous thoughts to grow in his mind. He wants God to have his total and undivided devotion.

8. “*You shall not steal*” (**Exodus 20:15**). Stealing involves taking something that does not belong to you. This could be another person’s property, material possessions, marriage partner, or even his reputation. This law also emphasizes the importance of getting all you own lawfully, not in a deceptive or deviant manner.

9. “*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor*” (**Exodus 20:16**). A good relationship demands truthfulness and honesty in speaking about others. The old saying, “A man’s word is as good as his name,” is sometimes a joke today. God’s people ought to cherish their own reputations and the reputations of others. If people are unwilling to speak ill of someone, they are less likely to steal from that person, to commit murder, etc.

10. “*You shall not covet*” (**Exodus 20:17**). Jesus improved on this commandment by stating, “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*” (**Matthew 22:39**). The negative and the positive work together. You do not harm people you care about; and since you should care for everyone, you should not ever harm anyone. If you love yourself, then you will appreciate others for their individuality.

This tenth commandment is an outgrowth of the first. If our hearts are fixed on the Lord, we will have the right attitude toward others. The desires that rise from our hearts will not cause pain or loss to others. The right motive, which is pleasing God who is first in our lives, will result in obeying the other commandments, which means not hurting others. Jesus expanded on the idea prevalent in the Ten Commandments by emphasizing the attitude of the heart. He said, “*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*” (**Matthew 5:8**). Christians have joy on earth when their priorities are in order.

The Ten Commandments can be divided into two different sections. The first four commandments govern our relationship to God, while the other commandments, five through ten, speak of our relationship to other people. The meaning of the Ten Commandments may be stated briefly as follows: (1) trust God only, (2) worship God only, (3) use God’s name in ways that honor Him, (4) rest on the Sabbath day and think about God, (5) respect and obey your parents, (6) protect and respect human life, (7) be true to your husband or wife, (8) do not take what belongs to others, (9) do not lie about others, and (10) be satisfied with what you have.

About 1,300 years after God gave these commandments, Jesus upheld them and fulfilled them. He actually placed these laws on a higher plane, demanding that the spirit, as well as the legal aspects, of the laws be observed. He placed His stamp of approval on the commandments by declaring, “*Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill*” (**Matthew 5:17**). This scripture shows why He is our great and perfect example (**I Peter 2:21-25**).

Next, I would like to cover the books of the New Testament. The New Testament tells of the life and ministry of Jesus and the growth of the early church. It embodies the new covenant of which Jesus is Mediator (**Jeremiah 31:31-34, Luke 22:20, I Corinthians 11:25, II Corinthians 3:6, I Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 8:8,13, 9:15, 12:24**).

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

The word “testament” is best translated as “covenant.” This new covenant was sealed with the atoning death of Jesus Christ. This covenant is the one we are under today and the one which we must obey.

The New Testament is a collection of 27 books and letters written in Greek. These 27 books of the New Testament were formally adopted as the New Testament canon by the Synod of Carthage in 397 AD. They are arranged in four groups:

(1) *The Gospels*. This group contains the four Gospels, which are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The term “gospel” means “good news,” and these four Gospels tell the good news about Jesus Christ. These gospel accounts tell about the birth, ministry, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The gospels are the heart of the Christian faith.

(2) *History*. This group contains only one book but it is a very important book. The book of Acts is the one book in this group. It tells the history of the church. It begins with the ascension of Jesus, then tells the story of the establishment of the church, it record the conversions of many early Christians, and ends with the missionary journeys of Paul.

(3) *The Epistles*. These letters have traditionally been called “epistles.” Each book is named for the group or person to which it was written. This section can basically be divided into two groups. First there are the letters of Paul. This group is made up of Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. The second group of letters contains those written by people other than Paul and includes Hebrews, James, I and II Peter, I John, II John, III John, and Jude.

(4) *Prophecy*. This group only contains one book and that is the book of Revelation. This book is quite different from the other New Testament books because it is a book of visions and prophecies. It was written by the apostle John, who calls himself the “disciple whom Jesus loved.”

Here are the books in order:

Matthew	I Timothy
Mark	II Timothy
Luke	Titus
John	Philemon
Acts	Hebrews
Romans	James
I Corinthians	I Peter
II Corinthians	II Peter
Galatians	I John
Ephesians	II John
Philippians	III John
Colossians	Jude
I Thessalonians	Revelation
II Thessalonians	

The best way to memorize these books is to sing them and then write them down. It might be best to just try and memorize them a few books at a time. First memorize the gospels and Acts, then memorize the epistles and Revelation. It takes a little time to memorize all of them, but it is helpful to learn all of the New Testament books. If you have a difficulty memorizing these books it might be helpful to buy a Bible with tabs on it. A good Bible student will learn the books of the Old Testament and New Testament quickly to help them study more effectively.

## **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

It would be good to learn the writers of the New Testament books. There are many different writers in the Bible. The Old Testament has many more writers than the New Testament, but I would like for us to remember the writers of the New Testament books. Most of them are very simple.

The authors of the books of the New Testament are as follows:

- (1) Matthew wrote: Matthew
- (2) Mark wrote: Mark
- (3) Luke wrote: Luke, and Acts
- (4) John wrote: John, I, II, III John, and Revelation
- (5) Paul wrote: Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy, Titus, and Philemon
- (6) Hebrews is written by an unknown author (possibly written by Paul or a close associate of Paul's)
- (7) James wrote: James
- (8) Peter wrote: Peter
- (9) Jude wrote: Jude

### ***Questions For Chapter Twenty-two***

- (1) What are the Ten Commandments?
- (2) Why is the first commandment so important?
- (3) What are the four groups of the New Testament books?
- (4) How many books are there in the New Testament?
- (5) What four books are called the gospels?
- (6) What is the fifth book of the New Testament?
- (7) What is the tenth book of the New Testament?
- (8) What is the last book of the New Testament?
- (9) Why is it so important that you learn these lists?
- (10) What are some of the benefits of Bible study?
- (11) What other things would you like to learn about the Bible?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## *Chapter Twenty-three - Getting To Know Your Bible: The Basics - Part III*

In this lesson, I would like for us to consider some more Bible lists that can help us in Bible study. One important list to remember is the ages of the Bible. They are (1) The Patriarchal Age, (2) The Mosaical Age, and (3) The Christian Age. The first age began with Adam and ended with the Law of Moses being given to Moses. The Mosaical Age began with Moses and ended on the Day of Pentecost. The final age is the Christian Age and it is the age that we are currently living under. We will continue under this age until the second coming of Christ.

Another important list is the twelve apostles. Jesus chose twelve apostles to serve with Him during His earthly ministry and to provide leadership for the church after His ascension. Twelve were selected because this number corresponds to the twelve tribes of Israel found in the Old Testament. They were chosen by Jesus after He prayed all night (**Luke 6:12-16**); the Twelve included two sets of fishermen brothers, a tax collector, and a money keeper that ended up being a traitor. Among the twelve apostles, Peter, James, and John were particularly close to Jesus.

The terms *disciple* and *apostle* are often used interchangeably in referring to these men. A disciple is a learner or follower, while an apostle generally refers to a person who is sent with a special message or commission (**John 13:16**). The Twelve were definitely His special apostles. When Jesus called them, He had a specific mission in mind for them, and that was to carry on His work after He ended His earthly ministry.

The original Twelve were chosen from among those people whom Jesus knew personally (**Acts 1:21-22**). They had an inadequate understanding of Jesus' mission and the necessity for His death (**Matthew 15:16**). Jesus was patient with the immature apostles, although He occasionally rebuked them (**Luke 9:55**). After they were empowered by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the apostles were filled with new boldness and understanding. They became powerful witnesses in Jerusalem and surrounding regions in spite of harsh persecution. All of them but two were martyred for their faith. As listed in **Matthew 10:1-4** (**Mark 3:13-19**, **Luke 6:12-16**, **Acts 1:13**), the Twelve were:

- (1) Simon Peter (Cephas), considered the leader of the apostles
- (2) Andrew, the brother of Simon
- (3) James, the son of Zebedee and brother of John
- (4) John, the disciple whom Jesus loved
- (5) Philip, from Bethsaida
- (6) Bartholomew (probably Nathanael), from Cana
- (7) Matthew (Levi), tax collector
- (8) Thomas (Didymus, which means "Twin"), from Galilee
- (9) Simon the Canaanite, probably a Zealot, from Galilee
- (10) James, the son of Alphaeus
- (11) Lebbaeus, who was also called Thaddaeus
- (12) Judas Iscariot, the one that betrayed Jesus

There were two apostles that were added later. Matthias was chosen by the apostles to replace Judas after the ascension of Jesus (**Acts 1:26**). Saul of Tarsus, later called Paul, was also chosen as an apostle by Jesus Himself (**Acts 9**). These appointments are the final two appointments listed in the New Testament.

## Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

It is interesting that all four lists (**Matthew 10:1-4**, **Mark 3:13-19**, **Luke 6:12-16**, **Acts 1:13**) begin with Simon Peter and end with Judas Iscariot (except the **Acts 1** list, because Judas had already killed himself). Also, the names appear to be in groups of four. Peter, Andrew, James, and John are always in the first group, although not always in that order; and then Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, and Matthew are in the second group in all four lists.

I think that it would also be beneficial to learn the beatitudes. The first four Beatitudes, or “blessed sayings,” portray the ideal heart condition of kingdom citizens. The latter five Beatitudes present the actions resulting from this attitude of heart. Together they emphasize being and living rather than doing, so that the kingdom citizen responds instinctively to various situations as they arise. The Beatitudes revolutionize accepted priorities and the world’s standard of blessedness. The Beatitudes, so designated because of the form of the statement, “Blessed are,” describe the character traits of those accepted as citizens of the kingdom of God and set forth both the present and future blessings of those whose lives portray these virtues. They describe different experiences and attitudes of one person, rather than eight or nine different categories of people.

The Beatitudes are as follows:

- (1) Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- (2) Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- (3) Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
- (4) Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.
- (5) Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
- (6) Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
- (7) Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
- (8) Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom.

Many people find it interesting and helpful to memorize the Lord’s prayer, also called the model prayer, in **Matthew 6:9-13**. We discussed this prayer at length in chapter seven. A similar prayer is found in **Luke 11:2-7**. The words of the prayer are as follows:

*Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be Your name.  
Your kingdom come.  
Your will be done  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
As we forgive our debtors.  
And do not lead us into temptation,  
But deliver us from the evil one.  
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

Another good list to learn is the fruits of the Spirit. The goal of a Christian is to bear these fruits by being connected to the Spirit of God. **Galatians 5:22-23** says, “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*” Therefore, the fruits are as follows:

Love	Goodness
Joy	Faithfulness
Peace	Gentleness
Longsuffering	Self-control
Kindness	

# **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

## ***Questions For Chapter Twenty-three***

- (1) What are the three different ages?
- (2) Which age do we currently live under? When will it end?
- (3) List the twelve apostles.
- (4) Who were the two apostles that were added?
- (5) Which apostles were the closest to Jesus?
- (6) List the Beatitudes.
- (7) Why should we learn the Beatitudes?
- (8) Why is it good to learn the model prayer of Jesus?
- (9) What are the fruits of the Spirit?
- (10) Why is it good to learn the fruits of the Spirit?
- (11) How can learning “the basics” help you in your Bible study?
- (12) How will you apply the things you have learned?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## *Chapter Twenty-four - The Leadership of the Church*

The church has been designed according to God's divine plan. The scriptural organization for the church is for there to be elders, deacons, and ministers. In this lesson, we will consider the nature of the eldership and the deaconate, and briefly we will consider the purpose of a minister in the church. We will also see how the saints fit in the picture.

First, let's consider the nature of the work of elders. There are different words used for this role in the church. One word that is used is the "word" elder which means "older." The Greek word "*presbuteros*" describes this role. It simply means an older man. It also had a special meaning when it applied to leaders in the first century church (**Acts 14:23**). The Greek word "*episcopos*" also describes these men, which is bishops or "supervisors." It emphasizes not their age, but their official function. It means they are the ones who should, "oversee, supervise, or superintend" the flock (**I Timothy 3:1**). The Greek word "*poimen*" is another Greek word that is translated to describe for this role. The translation can read "shepherd" or "pastor." It carries with it the idea of shepherding or pastoring the flock. It suggests one who has tender and loving care for the flock (**Ephesians 4:11**).

There are duties and responsibilities of elders to themselves. **Acts 20:28** says, "*Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*" Notice, this passage says, "take heed to yourselves." The Holy Spirit allows elders to be overseers; He gives them strength. Remember that Christ purchased the church with His blood.

**I Timothy 3:1** says, "*This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.*" An elder must desire the work of an elder and the eldership is a good work. **I Timothy 3:1-6**, **Titus 1:5-9**, **I Peter 5:1-4** give lists of the qualifications of an elder. These include:

1. They must want to serve willingly - must desire the position.
2. They must be blameless - without reproach.
3. They must be the husband of one wife - not given to polygamy or adultery.
4. They must be temperate - calm, self-restrain, etc.
5. They must be sober-minded - self-controlled.
6. They must exhibit good behavior - good conduct, no cursing, etc.
7. They must be hospitable - nice to others, care for others, etc.
8. They must be able to teach - not meaning a class, meaning others, etc.
9. They must not be given to wine - not a drunkard or "addicted to wine."
10. They must not be violent - doesn't seek revenge.
11. They must not be greedy for money - looks at hearts, not checkbooks.
12. They must be gentle people - shows that he loves, cares, etc.
13. They must not be quarrelsome - likes to solve the problem immediately.
14. They must not be covetous - he is thankful for what he does have.
15. They must rule his own house well - his children in submission to him.
16. They must not be a novice - must not be a new convert or quickly tempted.
17. They must hold fast to the word - keeping the truth and sharing the truth.
18. They must be able to exhort and convict those who contradict - knows the Bible.
19. They must be eager to serve - not by compulsion or for dishonest gain.
20. They must not lord it over the flock of God - there is only one Chief Shepherd.

It would be good for us to consider the duties and responsibilities of elders to the church. An elder must take heed to the flock. He must listen to them, consider them, and pay attention to them.

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**Acts 20:28** says, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” An elder must feed the flock and take the oversight of the flock (**John 21:15-19**). **I Peter 5:2** says, “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly.”

An elder must be an example to the flock. He must serve the congregation, and not lord over them. **I Peter 5:3** says, “Nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” An elder must also watch out for the souls in the flock. **Hebrews 13:17** says, “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” **Acts 20:31** says, “Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.”

Elders must take the lead in discipline problems. When discipline is necessary in the church, only the elders can do it, not the membership of the congregation. **II Thessalonians 3:6** says, “But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.” This is a whole lesson in itself, as most of the these duties and responsibilities should be.

Elders must also rule well. They must not only rule their house well (**I Timothy 3:4**), they must also rule the church well, not lording over it (**I Peter 5:3**). **I Timothy 5:17** says, “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.” An elder must pray for the sick. Such righteous and godly men will get the Lord’s attention. **James 5:15-16** says, “And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”

Other than elder’s, there is another role in the church. Deacons are mentioned in the New Testament also as leaders. Their qualifications are seen in **I Timothy 3:8-13**. Although many churches have deacons, most often their names are never seen on church signs or on stationary letterheads. Their job is important in the church, but it is not emphasized as much as “the Eldership” in the scriptures. For the most part, many churches don’t even understand what exactly a deacon should do in the church. In most churches, the deacons are the heart of the organization of worship, service, etc. In other churches, the deacons may be on the list, but they just wear a title that doesn’t fit them. What do I mean by that? You will understand in a moment. They are official leaders in the church, but they are not the overseers and shepherds. They have no authority over the flock.

What is the significance of the title or role of a deacon? The Greek word “*diakonos*” describes this role. About 25% of our English language is actually made up of Greek words that have been transliterated. This is the case with the word “deacon” which was not translated, but transliterated. What that means is that a new English word was formed from a Greek word. Basically, Greek letters are substituted for English ones. Other words have been transliterated such as “*baptizo*.” Since the word has been transliterated instead of translated, we have an English word with literally no meaning. Therefore, we must go back and look at the Greek meaning of the word “*diakonos*.” Then we transfer that meaning into English when we hear the word “deacon.”

The word “*diakonos*” means “servant,” “runner,” or “waiter.” It can also mean a “messenger,” or a “minister.” In general, it refers to a servant. Specifically, the exact type of servant is discovered from the context of each scripture. For example, in **Acts 6:1-6** some were chosen to handle daily affairs. Deacons served in many different capacities.

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What kind of servants are deacons? There are a few good examples of the word “*diakonos*” being used (**Matthew 20:28, Romans 13:4**). Some might assume that since the word is transliterated, it should be changed back. However, the title is fitting and probably should not be changed because the inspired men had a purpose in using this title. This title should be used to single out a group of people (**I Timothy 3:8-13, Philippians 1:1**). This role is very important.

Deacons are servants and leaders at the same time. If these men are officially called “servants,” this should give us a clue to their leadership style. If they are servants, they should serve like Jesus because he was a servant. **Matthew 20:28** tells us a lot about how Jesus served. This scripture gives us a good idea of how a deacon should lead. We can receive a lot of insight on the tasks of deacons by reading **Philippians 2:5-11** concerning Jesus. These scriptures can be applied to deacons today. They must be willing to take on this role. They must give up things just as Christ did. They must have the mind set that Christ had. They must be willing to go as far as they can with this role.

We see a good example of servanthood in **Luke 17:7-10**. A servant does not eat first, and the master doesn’t have to thank the servant for his service. A true servant is willing to do the job, knowing that the master may not be thankful. The servant has day duties in the field and night duties in the house. These servants mentioned in **Luke 17** were more like slaves, rather than those who worked for their wages. Thanking a servant was not necessary.

Can deacons serve and lead at the same time? Our society divides the work force into two main categories. There is management and then there is labor. The deacons fall under the category of the laborers. Some might ask, “How can a deacon lead, and serve at the same time.” The best way to understand this concept is to look at the life of Christ. He was a leader and a servant to the people. How did Jesus serve? When people needed healing, He healed them (**Matthew 4:24**). When people were hungry, He fed them (**John 6:5-12**). When people needed teaching, He taught them (**Luke 5:3**). He even resurrected the dead in several instances (**John 11:43**).

Ministers are also leaders in the church. They can also be called preachers or evangelists. Three books were written especially to ministers (**I Timothy, II Timothy, and Titus**). They are told to “*Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching*” (**II Timothy 4:2**). They are to proclaim the gospel (**Ephesians 4:11, I Timothy 4:13-16, II Timothy 4:1-5**).

Women cannot take a leadership role in the church (**I Corinthians 14:34, I Timothy 2:9-15**). In the qualifications for elders and deacons only refers to men. However, there are qualifications for their wives; these roles are not leadership roles. A wife can disqualify her husband if she is not a godly women. Women can teach and lead the younger women (**Titus 2:3-5**), but cannot usurp authority over a man (**I Timothy 2:9-15**). The leadership roles are only for men.

Paul had a vision of how the church should work together, as a living organism not an organization. In fact, he tells us that it is to be like a body (**Ephesians 4:11-16**). Each person must use their talents to help the church to grow. Christ, of course, is the Head of the church (**Ephesians 5:23**). The foundation of the church has been laid by the prophets and apostles. Now the work of the church lays in the hands of the evangelists, pastors, teachers, and the saints that have been equipped for ministry. The only way we can be “*joined and knit together*” is if “*every part does its share.*” Every member must use their talents if we are to have growth in the Body of Christ and edify each other in love.

# **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

## ***Questions For Chapter Twenty-four***

- (1) Name five of the qualifications of elders.
- (2) What are some of the duties and responsibilities of the elders?
- (3) What is the role of a deacon?
- (4) How did Christ minister?
- (5) What is the role of a minister?
- (6) Can women take leadership roles in the church? Explain.
- (7) Why should you know about the leadership of the church?
- (8) What scripture shows Paul's vision of the church?
- (9) Is the church an organization or an organism? Why?
- (10) What talents do you have that can be used to cause growth in the body of Christ?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## *Chapter Twenty-five - Non-Denominational Christianity*

We spent three lessons on the one true church earlier in this series of lessons. We discussed the things that make the one true church special. We should note that this church still exists today in many places. It is not a denomination; it is just Christ's church (**Acts 2:47, I Corinthians 1:10-13**). It still follows the pattern of the New Testament. It is free from the dictates of human authority. People can still become a member by doing what they did 2000 years ago on the Day of Pentecost (**Acts 2:36-47**). The church has been restored to its intended state.

We can be a part of the church that belongs to Jesus Christ. You can be just a Christian, nothing more or less! I would like to encourage you to search the Scriptures with an honest, loving and obedient heart. Remember the words of Jesus, "*If you love me, keep My commandments*" (**John 14:15**). The New Testament is the standard by which we shall all be judged. Jesus said, "*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth*" (**Matthew 28:18**). He also said, "*He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him, the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day*" (**John 12:48**).

We need to make sure that we keep the church the way that the Lord wants it. Jesus prayed for unity, not division and denominations. **John 17:20-21** says, "*I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.*" We need to pray the same prayer and hope that people will return to their Bible. We need to make sure that we speak when the Bible speaks, and that we are silent when the Bible is silent.

The apostles made the same plea for unity. **I Corinthians 1:10-13** says, "*Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*"

We should not call each other by names of men. Many refer to themselves as Lutherans (Martin Luther), Calvinists (John Calvin), etc. Others refer to themselves by the things that they practice (i.e. Baptists). The one true church refers to themselves as members (**I Corinthians 12:27**), disciples (**Acts 6:1, 7, 11:26**), believers (**Acts 5:14, II Corinthians 6:15**), saints (**Acts 9:13, Romans 1:7, Philippians 1:1**), priests (**I Peter 2:9, Revelation 1:6**), and children of God (**Galatians 3:26-27, I John 3:1-2**). What matters the most is that the true church simply is known as Christians (**Acts 11:26, 26:28, I Peter 4:16**). The true church should refuse to use such names and titles as the denominational churches. We are simply Christians. We are followers of Christ not Luther, Calvin, or Wesley. We should plea for the same unity that Paul did in **I Corinthians 1:10-13**.

The apostles also planned for the church to be united instead of divided. **Ephesians 4:1-6** says, "*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*" There is to be only unity in the church.

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There is only one body that proves unity among all its parts as an organism. There is only one Spirit that proves unity in life. There is only one hope, that proves unity in trust. There is only one Lord that proves unity in authority. There is only one faith that proves unity in message. There is only one baptism that proves unity in practice. There is only one God that proves unity in worship. The faithful children of God must follow this pattern and practice it (**Ephesians 4:1-3**).

Paul even told how the church was supposed to function. **Ephesians 4:11-16** says, *“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”* The church must work together to stay unified. The church must also work together in edification, evangelism, and in worship.

We should all agree that the church is not a man-made institution. It requires the guidance and blueprint of someone with more divine wisdom than man can offer. The church was built *“according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (**Ephesians 3:11**). God alone is worthy of directing the steps of man. **Proverbs 14:12** says, *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”* This great truth is repeated in **Proverbs 16:25**. **Jeremiah 10:23** says, *“O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.”* When did we ever start believing that our way was better than God’s way? We need to put God first and let Him guide His church.

We must not only believe in non-denominational Christianity, but we also must teach others what we know. We need to make sure that others do not fall into the trap of denominationalism. We may suffer at the hands of men because of our refusal to conform to the ways of the world and the ways of the denominations. **Romans 12:1-2** says, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”* **II Timothy 3:12** says, *“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”* We need to remember that we are to be a peculiar people (**I Peter 2:9**).

Why do we worry so much about being seen by men? Why do we worry about what other men may think? We need to make sure that we are doing what is right and forget about what others want us to do. Following the masses is not always a good idea. **Matthew 7:13-14** says, *“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”* One should not worry so much about men; one should be more concerned about what God wants. **Hebrews 10:31** says, *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*

When we can have the unity for which Jesus prayed for, and the unity for which Paul planned, we will have a great blessing from God. Many of us may not experience this unity unless we seek it and lead others to it.

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Even though we are in the one true church, we can still suffer from division. **Psalm 33:1** says, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” Unity among brethren is something that is easily taught, but not easily put into practice.

Jesus Himself was the perfect example of submitting to the will of the Heavenly Father: “Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” (**Hebrews 5:8-9**). He suffered for you because He loves you. Will you follow Him and promote non-denominational Christianity? You can be just a Christian and teach others.

### Questions For Chapter Twenty-five

- (1) Is it possible to restore the New Testament church? Explain.
- (2) To whom does the church belong?
- (3) Why should we keep the church the way the Lord wants it?
- (4) Is it wrong to name ourselves after men or their practices? Explain.
- (5) What was Paul pleading for in I Corinthians 1:10-13 and Ephesians 4:1-16?
- (6) Are we given instructions on how the church is to function as a body? If so, where?
- (7) Does the church require the guidance and blueprint of someone with more divine wisdom than man can offer? If so, who can offer such wisdom?
- (8) Is believing in non-denominational Christianity enough, or should we teach others? Why?
- (9) Why is following man not such a good idea?
- (10) Who offers us the best example of submitting to the will of God? Why?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## *Chapter Twenty-six - Back to the Basics: Teaching What You Know*

There is always a lot of talk about evangelism. We should be aware that there is a lack of motivation in the church for evangelism; and as a result our growth is hindered. We also need to know that it is essential to have a good evangelistic outreach in order to keep the church faithful and to bring more people to Christ. In this lesson, I want to take us back to the basics. We are going to see how the basics that we talked about a few lessons before need to be taught to others. We need to learn about the importance of evangelism, and I plan to look at it from three main stand points.

The first point that we need to emphasize is the mandate for evangelism. God Himself demonstrated his evangelistic heart, a demonstration which can be seen by one simple fact. He had only one Son, and He made Him a soul-winner. Jesus said in **Luke 19:10**, “*The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.*” The entire purpose of Jesus’ coming to this earth was to get people to glorify and follow God through Him. A truth that needs to be emphasized to every true believer in Christ is that all Christians have been charged with the responsibility of personal evangelism. For the believer, evangelism is not an option; it is an obligation. It is not a choice to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed. It is not a gift; it is a responsibility. In fact, one of the marks that a person is truly a disciple of Christ is an interest in, and a practice of, personal evangelism.

When the Lord Jesus called the first disciples, the first promise He made was, “*Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men*” (**Mark 1:16**). Immediately, we learn something every Christian must realize (in many cases rather painfully): “If you are not fishing, you are not following!” The real essence of discipleship is in the making of other disciples. It was once stated: “I would like to ask what right a man has to call himself a follower of Jesus Christ if he is not a soul-winner? There is absolutely no such thing as following Christ unless you make the purpose of Christ’s life the purpose of your life.”

The fact of the matter is that every saved person this side of heaven should be concerned about every unsaved person this side of hell. Our Lord assumed, as well as commanded, that His disciples would be about the task of personal evangelism. He said, “*You shall be witnesses to Me*” (**Acts 1:18**). His command to the entire church was to “*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations*” (**Matthew 28:19**). He also commanded the entire church to “*preach the gospel to all the world*” (**Mark 16:15**).

The greatest and most effective way the gospel will be taken to this world is by one-on-one evangelism. To illustrate the urgency of the matter, consider that there are 138,000 more lost people in the world today than there were yesterday. If all of the lost people in the world were lined up thirty inches apart, they would encircle the globe, not one time, not two times, not three times, but thirty times. That line is growing at a rate of twenty-five miles per day. Someone has stated that if a gifted evangelist with an international reputation could win a thousand persons to Christ every night of the year, it would take him over ten thousand years to win the entire world for Christ, and that feat can be accomplished only by ignoring the population explosion.

However, if one true disciple of Christ were able, under God, to win just one person each year and train that person to win one other person each year, and so forth, it would take only thirty-two years to win the entire world to Christ. This is possible, but with the way we are working now, not probable. Passing on what we know is the point Jesus was making in **Matthew 28:20** when he said, “*teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you.*” An unending chain of events might ensue!!! We know that the entire world will never be won to Christ, but the point is that we should try.

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One other point should be emphasized and noted carefully. No Christian should feel as if he or she simply cannot do personal evangelism because of a lack of ability. If we cannot go out and teach the problem may not be one of talent or ability. Many today are hindered due to health problems and cannot go out in the world to evangelize. These people can still use their telephone, the mail, and other ways to teach people about Jesus Christ.

Any command of God carries with it the power to fulfill that command. Indeed, every Christian is given the Holy Spirit precisely to empower him to be an evangelist for Christ. We also have the written and inspired Word of God. *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me” (Acts 1:8)*. Every Christian can evangelize, every Christian should evangelize, and every Christian must evangelize to others in order to be obedient to Christ. Many excuses are given, but remember that God hears a lot of excuses. I have always believed that the Day of Judgment will be a day of excuses. The heart and soul of personal evangelism is telling someone that you care about them, and then telling what Jesus has done for you. We are the ones that make evangelizing seem like such a hard task. We think we need to read a book or take a class. The mandate for evangelism is clear, and we must realize the importance of it!!!

The second thing that we should remember is the motive for evangelism. The first thing that is required of someone who is evangelizing is for him to be a Christian. Before we try to go out and *“teach all nations,”* we must be aware of our own salvation and know that what we believe in is truth. At the Great Commission, Jesus told the apostles to *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,”* then he said *“baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19)*. Then he adds, *“teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20)*. We must be sure that we are saved before we tell others how to be. Only after that command does he give the promise, *“I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20)*. We must evangelize according to God’s plan.

The motive for evangelism lies within each and every Christian believer. What a difference it would make if every Christian would see evangelism as an ultimate expression of one’s love for Christ. We need to look at it as a great opportunity, not a great responsibility. We need to look at it as a blessing, not a burden. The predominant reason that every Christian should gladly and persistently share the plan of salvation is love for the Man of salvation. Jesus said to Peter three times, *“If you love Me, feed My sheep” (John 21:15-17)*. He did not ask Peter whether he loved sheep. He did not ask him whether he loved feeding sheep. The issue was: *“Do you love Me?”*

The apostle Paul said we should evangelize because *“the love of Christ compels us”* to do so (**II Corinthians 5:14**). No one should have a problem in the area of motivation for evangelism. Yet, we are struggling the most in that area. The message of the cross should be so important to us that we are compelled to tell of its message. We should be so excited about talking to others that we will not be able to contain ourselves from telling the good news. We should be telling everyone we meet and everyone we know if the cross and *“the love of Christ compels us.”* We will even be willing to die for the sake of the message if this message compels us.

The main requirement for evangelism is simply a love for Christ. It is that love for Christ alone that will be the primary motivation for any Christian to fulfill the responsibility of personal evangelism. That love for Christ will spread and bring others to Him. A missionary was once asked the question, “Do you think that one requirement for a missionary is that they love souls?” He thought for a moment and then answered, “No, the one requirement for missionaries is that they love Jesus. If they love Jesus, they will love souls.” This is a great statement, and it is very true.

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We must also remember the message of evangelism. Soul-winning is simple because the gospel is so simple. The essence of practically any gospel presentation simply confronts an unbeliever with basic fundamental facts. The student must know that “*all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*” (**Romans 3:23**). He must know that salvation cannot be attained either by religion, ritual, or righteousness (**Ephesians 2:8-9**). He must know that Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for all of our sins (**I John 1:7**). Then he must follow the steps to salvation.

Never in the history of the church have so many tools or so much training been available to equip any Christian to share his faith in an effective, efficient manner. The problem is not ignorance; the real problem is indifference. It is absolutely urgent that the true church come alive again in enlisting, equipping, and motivating every individual member to share the great gospel message of Jesus Christ. I would also like to point out that it is not the Christian’s job to persuade the unbeliever to accept the gospel. It is our job simply to share the gospel (**I Corinthians 3:6-7**). We have been called to be witnesses, not prosecuting attorneys. The results of our sharing the gospel are up to God not us because He “*gives the increase*.”

Every Christian is to be a witness and an evangelist for Christ. Evangelism is the wise thing to do, for we are told that “*He who wins souls is wise*,” according to **Proverbs 11:30**. It is the right thing to do because the Lord commands it of us. It is the need of the hour, as eighty-three souls per second, six thousand souls per hour, go to a hopeless grave. I pray that you will go out and teach people because you can’t help but share the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified!!!

I did not make you aware of the purpose of this class when we began, but the purpose is to train you to bring others to Christ. In these lessons I have tried to equip you with the knowledge you need not only to better yourself as a student of the word but also to equip you with the knowledge you need to bring someone to Christ. I pray that this class never ends. I pray that before we can go over the next two weeks of review, that you will bring others to class with you to learn the milk of the word and that you will convert people to Christ. I pray that you will make it part of your lot in life to bring at least one person a year to Christ. In doing this, you will please God, keep the church alive, and preserve the cycle that got you where you are today (**Matthew 28:18-20**).

### ***Questions For Chapter Twenty-six***

- (1) What do we need to learn about the mandate for evangelism?
- (2) What is the motive for evangelism?
- (3) Why is the message of evangelism so important?
- (4) How important is it to keep the church alive?
- (5) Is evangelism an important part of keeping the church alive? Explain.

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- (6) What do you plan on doing to keep the church alive and keep the circle going?
- (7) List some people that you would like to see in heaven that are not Christians.
- (8) What can you do to get these people into heaven?
- (9) How can you teach others if you are not grounded in your faith?
- (10) How can you teach others what you have learned?
- (11) What more would you like to learn about the Bible?
- (12) How can you learn these things?
- (13) What are you going to do to be more faithful as a Christian?
- (14) What do you want to study next? Why?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## APPENDIX A

### The Entering Bible Quiz

#### ***What Do You Know About The Bible?***

*You do not have to put your name on this questionnaire. Please answer these questions without looking them up and do the best you can. Use a separate piece of paper for your answers. Please give your answers to the teacher.*

(1) How many books are there in the Old Testament? How many in the New Testament? Total?

(2) Name the twelve books that are called the “Minor Prophets” in the Old Testament.

(3) Name the four gospel accounts of Jesus in the New Testament.

(4) Name the five steps to salvation and give one scripture for each.

(5) Explain the seven days of creation.

(6) What are some of the characteristics of God? What are some of the characteristics of Jesus? What are some of the characteristics of the Holy Spirit?

(7) What are some things that scriptural baptism requires?

(8) Why is it important that Christians know they have a new life in Christ?

(9) What chapter records the establishment of the church? Who preached? How many responded?

(10) How many churches does the Bible say that there should be? Why?

(11) Why should prayer be a part of every Christian’s spiritual life? Bible study?

(12) How important is it to have an accurate translation of the Bible? Why?

## **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

- (13) How important should the church family be to every Christian? Why?
- (14) What are the acts of worship? Give at least one scripture for each one.
- (15) How important is non-denominational Christianity? Why?
- (16) What are the Ten Commandments? Name them.
- (17) What are the major divisions of the Old Testament and New Testament?
- (18) How many tribes of Israel were there? Name them.
- (19) How many judges of Israel were there? Name them.
- (20) Who are the three main groups of leaders of the church? Which group shepherds the church?
- (21) Name the beatitudes.
- (22) Name the apostles. Who was added later? Who is another that was called even later?
- (23) What benefit is there to knowing about redemption and a Christian?
- (24) Why is it so important that you teach what you know?
- (25) What do you plan to learn from this class?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## APPENDIX B

### The Exiting Bible Quiz

#### ***What Do You Know About The Bible?***

*You do not have to put your name on this questionnaire. Please answer these questions without looking them up and do the best you can. Use a separate piece of paper for your answers. Please give your answers to the teacher.*

- (1) How many books are there in the Old Testament? How many in the New Testament? Total?
- (2) Name the twelve books that are called the “Minor Prophets” in the Old Testament.
- (3) Name the four gospel accounts of Jesus in the New Testament.
- (4) Name the five steps to salvation and give one scripture for each.
- (5) Explain the seven days of creation.
- (6) What are some of the characteristics of God? What are some of the characteristics of Jesus? What are some of the characteristics of the Holy Spirit?
- (7) What are some things that scriptural baptism requires?
- (8) Why is it important that Christians know they have a new life in Christ?
- (9) What chapter records the establishment of the church? Who preached? How many responded?
- (10) How many churches does the Bible say that there should be? Why?
- (11) Why should prayer be a part of every Christian’s spiritual life? Bible study?
- (12) How important is it to have an accurate translation of the Bible? Why?

## **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

- (13) How important should the church family be to every Christian? Why?
- (14) What are the acts of worship? Give at least one scripture for each one.
- (15) How important is non-denominational Christianity? Why?
- (16) What are the Ten Commandments? Name them.
- (17) What are the major divisions of the Old Testament and New Testament?
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- (19) How many judges of Israel were there? Name them.
- (20) Who are the three main groups of leaders of the church? Which group shepherds the church?
- (21) Name the beatitudes.
- (22) Name the apostles. Who was added later? Who is another that was called even later?
- (23) What benefit is there to knowing about redemption and a Christian?
- (24) Why is it so important that you teach what you know?
- (25) How has this class helped you?

# **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

## APPENDIX C

### *General Review: Part I (Chapters 1-13)*

#### **Lesson One - *Getting To Know Your Maker***

Why do people get so confused about the Godhead?

What is special about God making everything by speaking it into existence?

Why do you think you need to get to know your Maker?

What blessings do you receive from God?

List some of the characteristics of God.

#### **Lesson Two - *Getting To Know Your Savior***

What is the greatest gift you can each give God?

Why do you think you need to get to know your Savior?

Why is Jesus so special to the church, to mankind, and to you?

List some of the characteristics of Jesus.

#### **Lesson Three - *Getting To Know Your Savior***

What benefit is there to having a comforter?

What benefits do you have for being a child of God?

What blessings do you receive from the Holy Spirit?

List some of the characteristics of the Holy Spirit.

# **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

## **Lesson Four - *The Purpose of Your Baptism***

Why should you learn about the importance of baptism?

Why should you learn the standards for scriptural baptism?

What scriptures teach about the importance of baptism?

What are the names of at least two of the conversion cases in the book of Acts?

## **Lesson Five - *Your New Life In Christ***

What is so great about having a new life in Christ?

What assurances can you have in your new birth?

What passages teach that you need to be born again?

What do you think is the best part about having a new life in Christ?

## **Lesson Six - *Facing Temptation: The Devil Is After You***

What are some of the hardest temptations new Christians have to face?

How did Jesus deal with temptation?

Who is the real target for Satan?

How will God help Christians when they face trials in this life?

## **Lesson Seven - *Walking Daily With Christ: Part I***

If you don't pray, are you sinning? Explain.

Why should you praise God in your prayers?

## **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

Why do you think praying everyday is essential to walking with Christ?

How can Bible study help you in your walk with Christ?

### **Lesson Eight - *Walking Daily With Christ: Part II***

What are some reasons why you need to study the Bible?

How do you think studying the Bible can help you in your walk with Christ?

What passages teach us that reading and studying the Bible is essential?

Why does the church need to study the Bible?

### **Lesson Nine - *Walking Daily With Christ: Part III***

What two versions are the oldest and most reliable?

What translations are not recommended and what translations are highly recommended by the author of this workbook?

What other tools are good for Bible study?

Why is choosing the right tools so important in Bible study?

### **Lesson Ten - *The Establishment of the Church***

What was the significance of Daniel's prophecy as it related to the church?

What other prophets, besides Daniel, prophesied about the church?

How can you know the church was not established while Jesus was on the earth?

How can you know that the church was established and is present today?

# **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

## **Lesson Eleven - *The One True Church: Part I***

Why is it important to learn about the one true church?

Who is the founder, purchaser, builder, head, lawgiver, and savior of the church?

What are the scriptural names given for the church?

What blessings do you receive for being baptized?

## **Lesson Twelve - *The One True Church: Part II***

What are the acts of worship?

What is the organization of the church?

What are the scriptural names for members of the church?

What are the facts of the gospel of Christ?

## **Lesson Thirteen - *The One True Church: Part III***

What are some reasons why you should be devoted to the word?

What are some reasons why you should be devoted to the example of Christ?

Why is it dangerous to follow the traditions of men?

What is the destiny of the church?

# Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles

## APPENDIX D

### *General Review: Part II (Chapters 14-26)*

#### **Lesson Fourteen - *The Steps To Salvation***

How do you know that you cannot be saved by just being religious, by just being honest, by just being morally good, and by just being a believer?

List the steps to salvation and give one scripture for each step.

What book contains many conversions to New Testament Christianity?

Is there anything else that is required of a person after he or she is baptized?

#### **Lesson Fifteen - *Remaining Faithful In Christ***

Does God look favorably on rebellious children?

Why does God require faithful living?

What are some things that God requires from Christians in order to prove faithful?

How can you stay faithful to Christ?

#### **Lesson Sixteen - *The Acts of Worship: Part I***

Why is it important not to change or alter the acts of worship?

What scriptures tell us that the New Testament church should worship on the first day of the week?

What scriptures tell us that the New Testament church should have preaching, teaching, or reading of Scriptures publicly in the worship assembly?

How important is preaching, teaching, and reading Scriptures in the assembly on the first day of the week? Explain.

# **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

## **Lesson Seventeen - *The Acts of Worship: Part II***

What scriptures tell us that the New Testament church should have singing in the worship assembly?

Why should Christians pray?

What scriptures tell us that the New Testament church should have praying in the worship assembly?

What scriptures tell us that the New Testament church should not have instrumental music in worship assembly?

## **Lesson Eighteen - *The Acts of Worship: Part III***

What scriptures tell us that the New Testament church should partake of the Lord's Supper in the worship assembly?

What scriptures tell us that the New Testament church should give liberally and cheerfully in the worship assembly?

What are the emblems in the Lord's Supper, what do they symbolize, and what is wrong with substituting these items with other items that Jesus did not command?

Why is it so important that Christians learn about all of the acts of worship?

## **Lesson Nineteen - *Brothers & Sisters in Christ***

Why must Christians love and care for the family of God?

What are some things that brothers and sisters in Christ can do for one another?

Why is loving one another so important in the church?

What benefits can you enjoy from having brothers and sisters in Christ?

What can we do to promote fellowship?

# **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

## **Lesson Twenty - *The Second Coming of Christ***

What does the Bible say about the second coming of Christ?

What are the three most prominent views of the second coming of Christ?

Which of the three views that you studied is consistent with the Bible?

Can anyone know exactly when Jesus is coming? Explain.

## **Lesson Twenty-one - *Getting To Know Your Bible: The Basics - Part I***

What are the five main groups of the Old Testament books?

List the books of the Old Testament.

List the twelve tribes of Israel.

List the judges of Israel.

## **Lesson Twenty-two - *Getting To Know Your Bible: The Basics - Part II***

List the Ten Commandments.

What are the four groups of the New Testament books?

List the books of the New Testament.

Which book in the New Testament is the only book of history? Prophecy?

## **Lesson Twenty-three - *Getting To Know Your Bible: The Basics - Part III***

List the twelve apostles.

List the Beatitudes.

## **Beginning Again: A Study of First Principles**

Where can you find the model prayer? What does it say?

List the fruits of the Spirit.

### **Lesson Twenty-four - *The Leadership of the Church***

List the qualifications of elders.

What is the difference between a deacon and a minister?

Why is it wrong for women to take a leadership role?

Is the church an organization or an organism? Explain.

### **Lesson Twenty-five - *Non-Denominational Christianity***

Why should you keep the church the way the Lord wants it?

Is it wrong to name the church after men or their practices? Why?

Is non-denominational Christianity possible? How?

What are some signs that we are becoming denominational?

### **Lesson Twenty-six - *Back to the Basics: Teaching What You Know***

What do Christians need to learn about evangelism?

How important is it to keep the church alive? How can you help?

Who are some people that you are going to try and bring to Christ?

What will you do to stay faithful and bring others to Christ?