

Foundations Class Index

<i>I. Bible Basics</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>II. Accuracy & Reliability of the Bible .</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>III. Reading and Studying Your Bible . .</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>IV. Identity and Structure of the Church .</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>V. What is Worship?</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>VI. The Purpose of Sunday Assembly .</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>VII. What We do During Sunday Assembly</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>VIII. Resolving Conflict</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>IX. The Gospel Message</i>	<i>52</i>
 <i>Appendix</i>	 <i>61</i>
<i>Baptism- which mode?</i>	
<i>Bible Divisions</i>	
<i>Bible Maps</i>	

FOUNDATIONS

Section One: Bible Basics

Old and New Testament, Two major Bible Divisions

The apostle Paul wrote, *"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."* (2 Timothy 2:15). In *"correctly handling the word of truth,"* we must recognize and understand the two basic divisions of the Bible — the Old and New Testaments.

As we consider the two covenants, some questions always come to mind. The one most frequently asked is "Should we live by the Ten Commandments?" The answers to this question and others like it must come from our only source of religious authority — the Bible.

Lets' examine some related questions concerning the Old Testament.

To Whom Was The Old Testament Written?

The Old Testament law was given to the children of Israel only. Notice the words of Moses;

Exodus 19:3-6 *"Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'* These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

A Gentile (someone who is not a Jew) was never included as part of the Old Testament. He was not subject to its laws. The Jews (descendants of Abraham and Sarah through Isaac and through Jacob) made up the priesthood and kingdom of Israel (The Israelites). The only way that a Gentile could be a part of that covenant was to become a Jewish proselyte (convert). The Old covenant was given by God to guide and govern Israel as a nation and as a Kingdom. If the Old Testament was still in force today, it would still apply to the Israelites only.

What Purpose Did The Old Testament Serve?

The Old Testament (covenant) revealed the coming of a new and better way which is the New Testament. Jeremiah, the Old Testament prophet, wrote in Jeremiah 31:31, *"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.* This passage has its fulfillment in Hebrews 8:8-13. Here, the writer of the book of Hebrews points out the Old Testament, as a covenant, is obsolete and contrasts them to a new and living way with better hopes and promises — the perfect Old Covenant.

The Old Testament predicted the coming Messiah. The many prophecies of that covenant pointed toward details about the Messiah. It prophesied His birth (Isaiah 7:14). It revealed the Messiah's forerunner (John the Baptist) as *"A voice of one calling: 'In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. ..."* (Isaiah 40:3). It predicted the Messiah's zeal (Psalm 69:9), His miracles (Isaiah 35:5-6), and characterized His preaching (Isaiah 61:1-3). Also, it described the Messiah's betrayal by a friend and His death (Zechariah 11:12; Psalm 22). The Old Testament also prophesied about the Messiah's resurrection and ascension (Psalm 2:7; 68:18; 110:1). We see these above passages fulfilled in the New Testament with Jesus.

The Old Testament revealed sin- it taught what sin was. Paul wrote, *"Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin."* (Romans 3:20).

What Purpose Does The Old Testament Serve Today?

The Old Testament was written as a shadow of a new and better way which is the New Testament. Hebrews 10:1 says, *"The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship."* The Old Testament was written for our learning. In Romans 15:4 Paul wrote, *"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."* The Old Testament is still the Word of God and we learn the principles but need to be careful to recognize that the commands and regulations in the Old Testament were given to the Jewish people.

The Old Testament was written for an example and for our admonition. In 1 Corinthians 10:11 Paul wrote, *"These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come."*

When Did The Old Testament Go "Out Of Effect?"

The Old Covenant went out of effect after the testator (the one who makes a will, in this case, Christ) of the New Testament died. Hebrews 9:16-17 says, *"In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living."* The one who makes the will valid, who establishes the New Testament is Christ Jesus. Paul wrote, *"...having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to*

the cross." (Colossians 2:14). So, the Old Testament went out of effect at the death of Jesus (Hebrews 10:9). The New Testament went into effect after the death of Christ. The New Testament of Jesus was made known at the first preaching of the gospel of Christ (Acts 2:22-40) on the day of Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem in AD 33 as was prophesied.

Why Did The Old Testament Become Of No Effect?

The Old Testament could not take away sins. Hebrews 10:4 & 11 says, *"because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."* (v11) *"Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins."*

There was something wrong with the old covenant. Hebrews 8:7 says, *"For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another."* Reading further in Hebrews we can see that the people, being imperfect, could not keep the law perfectly but Jesus lived perfectly and provided the perfect sacrifice for us.

The Old Testament was a shadow and not the real thing. Hebrews 8:5 says that *"the Old Testament priests serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven"*. The Hebrews writer also said, *"The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves"* (Hebrews 10:1).

Since The Bible Teaches...

Since the Bible teaches these things concerning the Old Testament then we should not live like we are under the Ten Commandments or any other Old Testament mandate. To go back to the Old Testament is to go back to a time when sin could not be removed. Paul said *"You who are trying*

to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace." (Galatians 5:4). That sounds very serious doesn't it?

Ask yourself:

-When Jesus was walking on Earth, was it the Old or New Testament that was in effect?

-Since the Law of Moses was a shadow, contained faults, and could not take away sins, why would anyone want to live under the Old Testament?

IT IS SO IMPORTANT TO PICK UP THE FOLLOWING HABIT AS A CHRISTIAN!

As you go through this course, do the following: (1) Pray each day. (2) Read your Bible each day, even if it's only for a few minutes. The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John) are a good place to start. Use a notebook so that you can record your prayer time and Bible reading.

Here is an *example* of how to fill out your daily reading/prayer time notebook below:

→*What did I read in the Bible today?:*

→*What did I notice or observe in the passage?:*

→*What did I pray about today?:*

FOUNDATIONS

Section Two: The Accuracy and Reliability of the Bible

Christianity is a historical religion, with real people, places, events and verifiable geography. History and faith cannot be separated since the Bible is a book about faith but the context was history. It is the history of God working with people through thousands of years to bring about the dying of Jesus on the cross for the redemption of mankind. Paul expressed to King Agrippa that the events surrounding the growth of Christianity and Christ's resurrection happened in a historical setting that the people could check out (Acts 26:26, "*For this has not been done in a corner.*").

There are outside sources (non-Biblical) that showed Christ actually did live and died, and there are many verifiable people, places, and events within the Bible to show it is accurate as to the points we can check, but only the Bible tell us the "why" of Christ's coming and of God's great love for us. In fact, the Bible really is the only document that tells us the details of Christ's walk on this Earth and his teachings.

Today we are dealing with how solid the Bible is as ancient literature. The world often scoffs at the Bible as a made-up fairytale, yet quotes Plato and Aristotle as the "gospel truth." An honest evaluation shows the Bible having superior textual verification. Also, not covered here, is the verification from archaeology and other scientific disciplines. Jesus and the Bible are solid and rational belief systems rooted in facts, eyewitnesses, and verification.

The "Acid Test"

When a historical book is said to pass the "acid test," we are referring to how validation on the historical document is looked upon. If the document was written in the same generation in which the events

took place, and was circulated during that time period (which allowed those current people to either deny or affirm the events written about), and if that document was affirmed, then the "acid test" of historical validation was passed. For example, if I wrote about a giant meteorite smashing into downtown which I said killed 37,000 people and leveled all the buildings there, would you believe me? What if I wrote about that event a few decades from the time it happened, when the people who lived there were still around when I wrote it? If no one denies my historical presentation of the facts from people who were alive then, my historical paper would pass the "acid test." If I fabricated and made up the whole story, people would say so and I would be exposed as a fraud. The New Testament passes the "acid test," being written and distributed when people who were eyewitnesses to these accounts were still alive.

First, we find "pagan sources" that show Jesus was a real person. In 73AD Mara-Bar-Serapion contrasts Jesus with other wise men like Socrates and Pythagoras. Cornelius Tacitus in his Annals 15:44 mentioned how Jesus suffered during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of Pontius Pilate. From Jewish sources, we see Josephus, a Jewish historian, in his books Antiquities and in Wars, he mentions many Biblical verification points and Jesus, with early Rabbinical writing containing references to Jesus of Nazareth, a transgressor in Israel. Jesus was a real, historical person and debunks the so-called "Christ Myth." Jesus was not made-up from someone's imagination. He is a real person in history.

A Comparison

The evidence for the early existence of the New Testament writings is clear. The wealth of materials for the New Testament becomes even more significant when we compare it with other ancient documents which have been accepted without question.

Author and Work	When Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	Number of copies
Caesar	100-44 BC	900 AD	1000 years	10
Plato (Tetralogies)	427-347 BC	900 AD	1200 years	7
Aristotle	384-322 BC	1100 AD	1400 years	5

- New Testament:
- > Approximately 45-90 as it was written
 - > Minimum 4,000 original capital letter Greek manuscripts (some say up to 5,000 manuscripts)
 - > 9,000 copies of existing ancient versions in at least 14 languages (rare for ancient books)
 - > 2,000 lectionaries (church lessons containing New Testament quotes)
 - > 36,289 Times the New Testament is quoted by early writers (patristic fathers) between 70-260AD.
 - > Complete copies of the New Testament dating 200-300AD, fragmentary manuscripts dating 100-150AD. Compare these time spans to the ancient texts listed above.

Homer's *Iliad* has the most extant (discovered) manuscripts than any other ancient book except the New Testament. The Bible has survived in a purer form than any other ancient book:

The New Testament

4,000-5,000 manuscripts
 9,000 versions in 14 languages
 2,000 lectionaries
 36,269 quotes (70-260AD)
 20,000 lines of text
 40 lines in doubt
 0.2% textual corruption
 (0.5% with other minor variations)

Vs. **Homer's Iliad**

643 Manuscripts which include:
 453 Papyrus manuscripts
 2 capital-letter manuscripts
 188 small-letter manuscripts
 15,600 lines of text
 764 lines in doubt
 5% textual corruption

Range of Textual Purity (calculated on substantial variations)

98.33% Westcott and Hort
 99.9% A.T. Robertson
 99.5% Metzger

Prophecies

There are around 60 major prophecies of Christ in the Old Testament that He fulfilled in the New Testament. Let's just take eight of these prophecies and look at the probability on any person fulfilling just these eight.

1. Born in Bethlehem. Micah 5:2 with Matthew 2:1
2. Proceeded by Messenger. Isaiah 40:3 with Matthew 3:1-2
3. He was to enter Jerusalem on donkey. Zechariah 9:9 with Luke 19:35-37
4. Betrayed by a friend. Psalm 41:9 with Matthew 10:4
5. Sold for 30 pieces of silver. Zechariah 11:12 with Matthew 26:15
6. Money to be thrown in God's House and price given for a potter's field. Zechariah 11:13b with Matthew 27:7
7. Silent before his accusers. Isaiah 53:7 with Matthew 27:12-19
8. Crucified with thieves with his hands and feet pierced. Isaiah 53:12 with Matthew 27:38 and Psalm 22:16 with Luke 22:33.

Peter Stoner, in the book *Science Speaks*, calculates using the science of modern probability that "the chance of any man might have lived down to the present time (1963) and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in 10 to the 17th power (100,000,000,000,000,000). If we take that many silver dollars and lay them down on the face of Texas, they would cover the state two feet deep. Now mark just one of these silver dollars, place it somewhere in the state of Texas, blindfold a man and ask him to walk as long and as far as he wants, but just have one chance to reach down, dig to the right depth and pick up that one marked coin. Jesus did not fulfill all 60 prophecies by fluke or by chance. So how did he fulfill those prophecies?"

What the Bible claims about itself

The Bible claims to be the actual authoritative word of God. Notice the following passages:

1 Thessalonians 2:13 *"And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe."*

1 Corinthians 14:37 *"If anyone thinks they are a prophet or otherwise gifted by the Spirit, let them acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command."*

Galatians 1:8 *"but even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!"*

Christ's words are the final authority and judge (John 12:48), and they come to us by the inspired writings of various men who proved they were from God (2 Peter 1:20-21):

We "have a copy of the final test" before we have to take it!

John 12:48 *"There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day."*

2 Peter 1:20-21 *"For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."*

Matthew 28:18 *"Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."*

2 Corinthians 12:12 *"I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders and miracles."*

In **John 20:30-31** we read: *"Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."*

John closes out his Gospel this way: *"Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written."* (**John 21:25**)

FOUNDATIONS

Section Three: Reading and Studying your Bible

The story of Vince Lombardi's opening-day practice with the Green Bay Packers football is legendary. As the players assembled, Lombardi scanned the men, half his age and twice his size. The great coach walked to the front of the room, stood in silence for several seconds and then began. "Gentlemen," he said, "this is a football."

What Lombardi communicated that day led to five championships in nine years? The coach's point was, "*If you're going to play football, you'd better know what a football is.*"

The Bible is the most important book ever written. It has influenced our lives in more ways than any other book in history. (A great book about this is by Alvin J. Schmidt called "Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization.") The Bible claims to be a key to understanding life. More than that, it claims to be able to guide you in living life, and to life eternal (John 10:10). Since that's true, it's the most basic tool a person can possess.

Why Study the Bible?

Navy Seals, an elite branch of our military force, are trained to disassemble and assemble their rifles while blindfolded, even hanging upside down! Their trainers are acutely aware that if their weapon jams, they may not be in a place where they can turn on a light to fix it. Just like a soldier without a weapon is an easy target, so a Christian without knowledge of the Word of God is an easy target for Satan's deceptions. **Ephesians 6:12** tells us that "*our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*" Just a few verses later we can read that our sword is the Word of God (v17). If we don't have the Word in our hearts and minds, Satan will roll over us.

How did Jesus use knowledge of Scripture? After all, He is our greatest example. Let's take a look.

Matthew 4:1-11: *"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.' Jesus answered, 'It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"* Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him."

It's evident from this reading that Satan knows the Bible! He tries to use scripture to tempt Jesus. He even uses it in proper context (more on this later). Jesus uses his knowledge of the word of God to fight Satan! Remember, from Ephesians chapter six, it is our "sword" (Ephesians.6:17) to use against the spiritual forces set against us as children of God. Ignore it to your own peril.

Craving it

The apostle Paul encourages Christians, *"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation"* (1 Peter 2:2) Observe three things in this verse:

First, your appetite for the Bible should be like a newborn baby looking for its next meal. Think of how a newborn will typically behave- "I'm hungry! Feed me!" And every time you get a bottle into their mouth they will drink it like it was their last meal! That newborn has an appetite for milk!

Besides having a newborn's appetite, Peter says we ought to "*crave pure spiritual milk.*" Babies don't think too far ahead, but as we age, we are able to anticipate a good meal. The apostle's point is that we ought to look forward to reading and studying the Bible like a pregnant woman craves certain foods.

Such desire doesn't happen instantly. God's word is an acquired taste. **Psalm 19:10** says the words of God are sweeter than honey. Yet many of us shy away from it like it is soured milk. People who learn to study the Bible for themselves can't imagine *not* reading it regularly. But many people never spend enough time in it to acquire that kind of taste. That is a shame- God is ready and wanting to bless us through His word but many don't take advantage of what He made available and want us as his children to take in.

Peter's third piece of advice is to study the Bible so we can grow up. Notice, he is not saying the purpose of Bible study is to *know* more, but to *grow* more. The Bible's purpose is to teach, rebuke, correct, and train us in righteousness (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**). Not to fill our brain with simple Biblical facts, but to fill it with God's perspective and transform our life (**Romans 12:1-2**).

Gathering Facts in Study

Make sure you have all of the facts you can gather on a topic before you make a conclusive "Thus saith the Lord!" about it.

This is an important principle in reading and studying your Bible. Don't think a single verse says it all, or that it totally shows you the truth of a principle. Let's look again at the temptation of Jesus in **Matthew 4:1-11**. Notice how Satan used verses that were true about Jesus, (4:6) but Jesus says in verse 7, "It is also written do not put the Lord your God to the test." Notice how one verse modifies another to get to God's truth. Many people in religion today have "their verse of TRUTH" to hang onto for a particular doctrine or teaching, but ignore other verses that may challenge their "TRUTH", and then fail to accept God's Truth on a subject. We see this even with the very core verses to show how people come into the grace of God with Christ's blood for forgiveness of sins. Notice in a parallel passage in Luke 4:13 that Satan left Jesus, but he was waiting for

another opportunity to tempt Him, so expect that you too will be continually hit from Satan. Struggles and trials are part of your Christian life and you should expect it.

A great example of how one passage cannot bring all the facts to the event is found in when Jesus was picked up by the authorities and Judas. Notice how if you start in Matthew, you will find additional facts to add to the whole scene, and you won't have the correct truthful facts of what happened here unless you read all the passages and then come to a conclusion.

EXERCISE:

Read **Matt.26:47-56**. Then read **Mark 14:43-52**. Anything added? (How about verses 43,44,47,51-52 etc.) Now read **Luke 22:47-53**. Anything new? (How about verses 48-49,51,53) And finally go to **John 18:1-11**. Anything else added for understanding on what went down when Jesus got picked up? (How about verses 2-3, 4-9, 10) Notice key facts and names that Luke and John add which we would miss if we just used Matthew and Mark!

Ponder this→ Why does God do it this way and not just have all the facts on a topic in just one place?

Understanding Context

Context helps us understanding the word meaning by using the words around it.

Context is important, which is why we try to keep in mind to whom a verse is written and understand the meaning of the original word when it was written. Many use Revelation 3:20 as a verse on how a lost person becomes a Christian when they invite him into their hearts as Jesus is knocking on the door of their hearts. But notice the context, (**Revelation 3:14-22**) and this verse is talking to the church, which are already saved people, but are lukewarm and in danger of losing their relationship with Jesus. He then calls that group to repent since he is knocking on their hearts. Always keep in mind who the verse is talking about to make sure

the principle or command is applicable to you and your life. This context is not for sinners needing to become Christians but Christians needing to repent.

As we have seen earlier, the Old Testament is a covenant for the Jewish people, and we need to be careful to not directly take every command as "ours" since these were to Jews, not Christians. In Hebrews 10:9, 7:12,18,22, 8:8-13, 9:15-18 ,etc., we see the Old Testament (covenant) being replaced with something better, the New Testament, which is the covenant we are under as Christians. It is the New Testament which we follow, and we use the Old Testament as Romans 15:4 shows for our learning and teaching which gives us endurance and encouragement.

Original Meaning

What did the word originally mean?

Context is also trying to figure out what that word means to them in that day. For example, in **Luke 14:26** it says, *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple."* Now we know Jesus talks of loving others, giving our very lives for others, and the whole OT law system is based on loving God and loving others (Matthew 22:34-40). What about what Paul says in I Corinthians 13? What could Jesus mean by such a bold statement?

First, notice the context is talking about the cost of being a serious follower of Jesus. It takes commitment and putting Jesus first even to the bold statement of verse Luke14:33. In that Greek and Roman culture, if you wanted to make a strong point, words are used and they understand that it was not "literal hate" but the opposite of love, or as this next passage says, to "love less." Even today, when I say "I am starving to death" before dinner, do you have any problem that I don't mean that literally, but have used that word for emphasis? Fifty years ago if a book written then wrote about a man being "gay", we would have to understand the word back then meant happy, but today it would mean homosexual. Always try to figure out what those words meant to them first. Secondly, go to other passages on the same subject like **Matthew10:37** which says, *"Anyone*

who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me."

That gives us insight into what Luke was saying and helps us to see the truth that he calls us to put Him first in our lives.

What is the meaning of the word "baptism" in the original language? In today's dictionary, it means to sprinkle, pour or immerse, (since that is how our culture uses that word), but in the language back then, it only meant immerse or dip. In the Greek Septuagint (LXX), which is a Greek translation of the Old Testament, we see in Leviticus 14:15-16 that all three concepts are mentioned with three completely different Greek words (pour-ekcheo, dip-baptizo, and sprinkle-rhantizo.) There should be no confusion on the original word meaning of baptism.

Ponder this → Is it OK to do something different than what God specified in His Bible on command type of verses? Does it matter about how much water or the method of baptism? Why or why not?

Additional resources for Bible study: (Either on-line or in books)

Concordance- shows where words or phrases are located

Bible Dictionary and Greek Lexicons- shows word meanings

Let clear verses interpret unclear verses

Let the clear verses interpret the unclear verses, instead of the other way around. Too many times people build theologies on a verse or two, many times on a verse that may be ambiguous. For example, we see in I Corinthians 15:29 about "baptized for the dead" and a major religious group in America looks at genealogy so they can actually be baptized for their dead relatives in the past. But very clear verses in the Bible about baptism would not support that interpretation. See verses like Acts 2:38, 22:16, Romans 6:3-5, Galatians 3:27, Colossians 2:12, 1 Peter 3:21 etc. It is a response of people with free choice and a personal decision to come into Christ having their sins washed away by Christ's blood and be saved.

Here is another example. From the following passage (Mark 16:17, 18) can you tell if, as a believer in Christ you should be able to handle snakes and they will not harm you? Why or why not? *"And these signs will accompany*

those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well." There is a whole religious group that practices snake handling in the "church service" since they believe if you have real faith, a snake bite from a rattler won't hurt you. Can you think of an example of where the Apostle Paul had this happen to him? (Acts 28:3-6) Can I directly apply that verse today? Notice how these signs and miracles testify about Jesus in Hebrews 2:4; 2 Corinthians 12:12 and John 14:11.

Conclusion

It is always important that we use reasonable approaches to understand God's Word for our lives, and this lesson helps us see things we many times do automatically anyway. But we need to be mindful of how we are "thinking" as we learn from Him, and try to handle the Bible accurately so we don't distort it to our own destruction as **2 Peter 3:15-16** warns. (It is also interesting that even Peter thinks some things that Paul wrote are hard to understand, so don't get discouraged if you don't understand everything at once. God will allow you to grow in understanding all your life, so you can have a life of growth, and not ever be at the point where you "know it all".) Be like those noble people of Berea who search the Scriptures daily to see if what Paul taught was true from God's Word (**Acts. 17:10-11**). The Word is powerful and able to penetrate your very soul and spirit (**Hebrews 4:11-13**). Let's not be the people that fall into the rebuke that we should have grown more and leave the milk of the Word to get into the meat of His Word (**Hebrews 5:12-14, 6:1-7**). Be diligent, give effort, and GROW.

FOUNDATIONS

Section Four: The identity and structure of the church

The Core Teaching of Jesus

The Core teaching of Jesus is the key when learning about the church in Scriptures

Look at **Acts 2:22-24**. Jesus is core; his life, death and resurrection. Jesus is the key to understanding “who” is in the church and the key to our unity. We need to agree on the core issues, and then continue to study and work on all the rest of the Bible’s teachings. It is also important to understand that we don’t just “join” a church because of how it feels, or we like the preacher or children’s program, but because that group of believers teaches the core Gospel on salvation and our response to it. Acts 2:21 prophesied all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved and notice Paul’s conversion in Acts 22:16 when Paul called on his name in baptism it washed away his sins. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 that of first importance is the Gospel; Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection and in Romans 6:3-5 that is tied to baptism. The concept of having faith in Jesus, repenting of our sins, confessing Him as Lord and being baptized (immersed) into Him are fundamental core teachings that allows us to be added to the church. The core Gospel message and our response defines the church since the church is the saved people.

Later in Acts 2:29-33 we see Jesus again being proclaimed, his death and resurrection. The lost Jews in verse 37, were cut to the heart and said, “What shall we do?” Peter replies in Acts 2:38, “repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus, for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Notice these key verses: Acts 2:41 says that those who accept this message were baptized and about 3,000 were added to their number that day. Who added them? Verse 47 says the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. When you come into Christ, with your sins washed away, you are saved and added by Christ to His church. You do not "join" His church, but you are added to it when you come into Jesus (Galatians 3:26-27) and are saved by Him. So to identify His church, we should start with those who are obeying the Gospel the way the Bible says to. Start with the core teaching on salvation!

The Founder & Head; Christ's Church

The founder of the church is Jesus, the Christ (Christ means "the anointed one," Jews would use the word "Messiah"). This is clearly proclaimed in **Matthew 16:18**, where Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church". The phrase "my church" demonstrates possessiveness. The indication is that the church belongs to Jesus. The term "my" is a possessive pronoun. Therefore, Jesus is viewed as founder and owner of the Church.

In addition to being the founder of the church, Jesus Christ is also identified as the head of the church. He holds the superior position, in which he is the final authority in matters of doctrine and practice. **Colossians 1:18** states, "and he is the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."

Christ's church, notice these below verses.

Ephesians 5:29 Christ feeds and cares for the church

Ephesians 5:25 Christ loves the church and died for her

Colossians 1:24 Christ's body is the church, we are the church

Ephesians 1:22-23 Christ is head of everything to us, the church, and our whole lives

Ephesians 3:10 The church makes known God's intent and wisdom known to the spiritual world.

Ephesians 3:20-21 God's glory is in the church as he works in us.

It is also important to realize that God has arranged the different parts of the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be

(**I Corinthians 12:12-18**). He put you in this body and expects you to use your individual talents and abilities for His glory and for the benefit of others. You are important to your local body of Christians.

History

The Restoration Movement (Stone-Campbell movement). A bit of our history.

In the early 19th century people sought to restore the first century church and unify all Christians in a single body patterned after the New Testament church. They were tired of all the man-made doctrines and churches, and wanted to return to the church of the first century. They simply wanted to be "Christians." In this movement were the roots of the Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ, the Christian church and others.

Christianity should not be divided; Christ intended one church. This movement used the Bible and its only source of authority, since man-made creeds and names of human origin divide. Some of the slogans that were used were: "Where the scripture speaks, we speak. Where the scriptures are silent, we are silent." "We are Christians only, but not the only Christians." "In essentials, unity. In opinions, liberty. In all things, charity (love)." "Call Bible things by Bible names." These are still valid concepts as we strive to be the church of the Bible that Christ died for, and that church where He is the only head.

Why do we call ourselves the "church of Christ?" Well, since Christ is the head of the Church it makes sense we are the church of Christ as Romans 16:16 shows, but there are other "scriptural" names like "the way (Acts 19:23)," or "The Church of God (Acts 20:28)," or the church within a certain town like in 2 Thessalonians 1:1. It is most often referred to as simply "the church". The Greek word is Ekklesia, which means to be called out (for us, we are called out of the world by Christ), an assembly or gathering. Church is not the building, but the people. Some other names from the Bible for the church is found in 1 Timothy 3:5 "God's church" and in Hebrews 12:23 "church of the firstborn," So there are other names that we could call ourselves, but we call ourselves the church of Christ since that is a group of people throughout the world that also agree on the core Gospel, and follow the salvation plan of the Bible. So we identify with this group of believers since the core unifies us all, even though we have some different opinions of various Bible things. It is also nice when traveling that you can generally know others that believe the core issue of salvation meet in a certain place and may have the name "Church of Christ." Anyone who obeys the Gospel plan of the Bible and is saved with the same message that Paul taught is a brother or sister in Christ. Notice how vital that the core Gospel is not changed in Galatians 1:6-9. They had differences with Gentile and Jewish churches, and with people who had different convictions on such things as eating meat sacrificed to Idols, but notice they we unified as Christians. Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 are good passages to study on this subject.

Local Organizational Structure

Let's now consider how the church was organized in the New Testament. Each local congregation was independent and autonomous. There was no hierarchy or denominational headquarters. Each local church was directly under the headship of Christ (Colossians 1:18).

Within each of these churches, the New Testament shows it is good if men who meet the qualifications of **1 Timothy 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:5-9** can be appointed to be elders. Other names for this function in the New Testament are bishops, pastors, shepherds, and overseers (Titus 1:5, 7; Acts 20:17,28; 1 Peter 5:1-2). They shepherd and watch over the members under their charge (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-4), direct the affairs of the church (1 Timothy 5:17) and admonish the church (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

The church in the Bible has two other leadership/service positions that we will discuss here. These are evangelists and the deacons. The function of the evangelist is to preach the word (2 Timothy 4:2-5), guard the faith (2 Timothy 1:13-14) set things in order (Titus 1:5), appoint elders (Titus 1:5), and develop other teachers (2 Tim 2:2).

Then there are deacons who serve in the official capacity. These are men who aid the church by providing for the physical needs of the congregation. This concept can be found in Acts 6 when the church chose seven men to wait tables for the neglected widows. Although the text does not specify that these were deacons, it does provide us with some concept of the work of a deacon. We see the qualifications of deacons in **1 Timothy 3:8-13**. We also see Paul addressing both elders and deacons in Philippians 1:1.

In conclusion, the church is the group of saved people who have obeyed the Gospel and had their sins covered by the blood of Jesus. We are created in Christ Jesus as the church to do good works (**Ephesians 2:10**), and therefore we need to be active people for Jesus in our daily lives as His body. In **Ephesians 4:4-6** it says there is one body (church), one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father. God says there is one body, the church, and we need to be that body of the Bible that Jesus wants you to be. There are not many "faiths" but one, and that is Christ's. He is the only way back to God as **John 14:6** says "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one come to the Father except through me.*" (Also see **Acts 4:12**; **1 John 5:12**; **Hebrews 1:1-4**) There is

one baptism, not many types, just like there is one God. We know who is in Christ to affiliate with because they obey the Gospel like the Bible and Paul says. We then strive to do what the Bible says in church organization since He knows how the church works best.

In **Romans 10:1-3** Paul writes, *“Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God righteousness.”*

We can do the same thing today by trying to establish our own thoughts about “church” and this shows how important it is to be going back to His Word for all our understandings and teachings in all subjects. Zeal and enthusiasm without truth is worthless. Let’s be the church that is zealous and is founded in Bible truth!

FOUNDATIONS

Section Five: What is Worship?

The word "Worship"

When you hear the word "worship" what comes to mind? If you are like most people you will probably think of what the church does when it comes together on Sundays. In this section we will look at the Biblical concept of "worship."

Did you know that the Bible never refers to the Sunday morning church gathering as a "worship service?" Where then does the idea come from that we just get together on Sunday to worship? We as a gathered group of Christians do worship on Sundays together, but often we limit our view of worship to Sundays.

To help us understand some background to that answer let's look at how God's people worshiped under the Old Covenant (Old Testament). Under the Old Covenant worship was based, in part, on location. We can see this in Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well in **John 4:19-24**. Jesus tells her, *"Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ... Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."*

So what happened? What was different in the New Covenant Jesus came to establish? They would no longer go to the temple to worship. They would no longer travel to a place to worship God there because God now resides in a different temple. Read **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**. Where is God's temple in the New Covenant? Just think about being a

“walking temple of the Holy Spirit” in your everyday life! What does this mean for the believer regarding lifestyle and worship?

Many understand worship as something you do one Sundays and then you are done with worship until the next week. But worship is not something we come to once a week and get our spiritual card punched. Look at **Hebrews 13:15-16** and notice the “worship word” sacrifice. Here we see sacrifice as praise, doing good and sharing, not just done on Sundays.

Word Definitions

Before we go on it may be helpful to look at the word “worship.” If you refer back to section three on reading and studying your Bible we looked at the importance of understanding the original word meanings. There are a handful of Greek words that are translated into English as “worship” but they have different meanings in the original language. A more common example of translation generalization is the use of the word “love.” We have one word in English while the Greek language had at least three; one meaning brotherly love, one meaning romantic love, and another meaning a self-sacrificing or giving love.

Let’s look briefly at some words translated as “worship.”

Leitourgeo: Ministry or service, used many times in the Old Testament when a priest in the temple fulfilled his priestly duties and activities. (Acts 13:2)

Sebomia: To revere or worship. (Matthew 15:9)

Threskeia: Defined as worship and religion. (Colossians 2:18; James 1:27)

Proskuneo or **Proskyneo**: To worship, to fall or bow down before something worthy of worship. (1 Corinthians 14:25; Acts 24:11)

Eusebeo: Worship, piety or godliness. More of the New Testament meaning of worship being how you live your life. (1 Timothy 2:1-2; 4:7-8; Acts 17:23)

Latreuo: Worship, religious service or homage. This word is tied a lot to the concept of bringing a sacrifice. (Found in Romans 12:1, Hebrews 12:28; 2 Timothy 1:3)

Let's review what we've talked about so far. Biblical Christian worship is a lifestyle; it is broader than just the assembled worship (something we will talk about in the next section). We know from looking at Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well and from our reading of **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** and **Romans 12:1-2** that we are no longer constrained by place and time to worship God but God now lives in every believer! We are His walking temple of worship!

Bible Passages on Worship

Let's look at some other passages on worship. What can you say about worship from each of the following passages?

Romans 12:1-2 *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."*

We have already read **Hebrews 13:15-16** *"Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess*

his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased." How does that tie into **Ephesians 2:10** "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."?

Hebrews 12:28-29 "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."

Mark 7:7-8 "...They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.' You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."

Malachi 1:6-11 "A son honors his father and a servant his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?' says the Lord Almighty. 'It is you, O priests, who show contempt for my name.' But you ask, 'How have we shown contempt for your name?' 'You place defiled food on my altar.' 'But you ask, 'How have we defiled you?' 'By saying that the Lord's table is contemptible. When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?" says the Lord Almighty. 'Now implore God to be gracious to us. With such offerings from your hands, will he accept you?'—says the Lord Almighty. 'Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and I will accept no offering from your hands. My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name, because my name will be great among the nations,' says the Lord Almighty."

Do we "give back" a little to the Lord, and not give all of us? God wants your best, He wants you! He desires a real relationship with you as His child. This is a principle from the Old Testament that shows the heart of sacrifice and worship that is even true today.

Romans 6:15-23 *“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Amos 5:21-24 *“I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!”*

Notice the “true fast” in Isaiah 58:5-8. Here we see a lifestyle of doing good to others, not just external religious duties coupled with the evil they were doing in verses 3 and 4.

God has always wanted a lifestyle of worship and doing good to others, and worship today is an everyday thing we do all the time. We do assemble together each Sunday, which is also worship, since Christians are walking temples of the Holy Spirit as we bring in the light of Jesus to a dark world.

FOUNDATIONS

Section Six: What is the purpose of the Sunday assembly?

In the Christian life we realize that worship is not just a Sunday event; we walk with Christ every day. We covered that last session. However, these scriptures teach it is vital to meet together on the first day of the week.

Why Sunday?

We follow the example of the New Testament, where they met on the first day of the week, the day Jesus was resurrected. Let's take a look at the following passages:

1 Corinthians 16:1-4. The people were instructed to take up a collection each week they meet.

1 Corinthians 10:14-22. The church was coming together to participate and share in the Lord's Table.

1 Corinthians 11:17-34. This Lord's Table is the Lord's Supper with the body and blood of Jesus being remembered with the fruit of the vine and the unleavened bread.

Acts 20:6-12. Notice they stayed for seven days to assemble with the church on the first day of the week as they came together to break bread.

Revelations 1:10. The "Lord's Day" is referred to here.

James 2:1-13. What meeting was spoken of here? They met together on the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, the day Christ was resurrected.

The real reason for our Sunday assemblies

We often use the wrong phraseology in referring to what we do on Sundays. Did you know the Bible never refers to what we do when we assemble together a “worship service?” The Bible, as we saw in the last section, is more holistic than that. Worship is more about how we live our lives. Yet many are comfortable with the idea of a once a week “worship service.” This concept takes away our spiritual responsibilities (and benefits!) for the remainder of the week.

In the next section we will look specifically at what we do in Sunday assemblies but for now we are going to be looking at some different passages that speak to our assembled time together.

In **Hebrews 10:24-25** we are told to *“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

1 Corinthians 14:26. Notice the purpose for everything that is done in the assembly. *“What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.”* Keep excelling in the gifts that build up the church, even as 1 Corinthians 14:12 states.

Go back to 1 Corinthians 14:26. We are told that everything we do in assembly should be done to strengthen and edify the church. There is a challenge here. Despite what others do or don't do, what can you do to contribute to strengthen others? See **1 Peter 4:10-11**. How well do you and the church here fulfill the purposes stated above? What can you do to better fulfill those purposes?

Continuing on with the passage from Hebrews, let's read 10:23-39. What do verses 26 and 27 refer to?

When you have a campfire and coals are all together it burns brightly. But when one coal is separated from the others it burns out quickly. Likewise when we come together on Sunday we stand should-to-shoulder, being strengthened and encouraged to live the Christian life for the rest of the week. Our assembly isn't just for God's benefit but for ours. (1 Corinthians 14:26)

We are encouraged in **Galatians 6:9**, "*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*" Keep on doing good for the Lord, use the Sunday meetings to strengthen one another as we worship God as one body.

FOUNDATIONS

Section Seven: What we do during Sunday assembly

In this section we will look at what we do during Sunday assemblies, according to the Bible. The Word of God is our authority, so let's look at singing, the Lord's Supper (sometimes referred to as communion), prayer, giving (sometimes mistakenly referred to as a tithe, which is an Old Testament command), teaching, and preaching.

PRAYER

Prayer is a cornerstone in our relationship with God and something the early Christians did in their assemblies as found in **1 Corinthians 14:14-17**. It was a fundamental aspect of the very early church. In **Acts 2:42** we read, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

We pray together as a congregation for different things, just as we see in the Bible. In Acts chapter 12 the church prayer for Paul's release from prison; in Acts chapter one prayer was offered to choose a replacement for Judas; at the end of Acts chapter 20 we see Paul pray with members of the Ephesian church before he departed, and the list could go on.

But how does prayer take shape in our lives outside of assembly? Let's look at some scripture:

1 Thessalonians 5:17. We pray constantly, not just on Sundays.

1 Corinthians 14:14-17. We pray with our spirits and minds.

1 John 5:14-15. We must pray according to His will to be effective. This is why sometimes when a person is unsure of God's will they might add the phrase "If it is your will" in a prayer to God. It also shows the importance in studying God's Word to know His will.

1 John 3:21-22. To have our prayers answered from God we must be obedient to Him and do what pleases Him.

Luke 18:1-8. We must be persistent in prayer.

Mark 11:22-26 and **James 1:6-7.** We must pray without doubt, but in convicting faith.

James 1:2-8. We pray for wisdom.

1 Timothy 4:4-5; Mark 8:6 and **Matthew 26:26.** Prayer with eating.

Luke 6:12. Jesus prayed all night before an important decision.

Ephesians 6:18-20. We pray in the Spirit for all kinds of prayers and boldness to share the Gospel.

1 Timothy 2:1-3. We make requests, prayers, and intercession. Thanksgiving is to be made for everyone, including our leaders. This is pleasing to God!

Look at the following passages for specifics to pray about.

How can I use these verses to pray?

- ➔ **Ephesians 1:15-21** pray for the eyes of your heart to be opened, to see and understand Christ's power.
- ➔ **Ephesians 3:14-21** to pray God's spirit strengthens you to follow Christ
- ➔ **Philippians 1:3-6** to pray with thankfulness
- ➔ **Matthew 6:5-15** prayer is not about an outward show with many words, but Christ shows us a pattern prayer

Christians not only pray at assembly, but it is a fundamental building block in your daily growth as a follower of God. When we say "Amen", that is saying "we agree, or so be it" to the prayer we just heard, and therefore participate in that prayer said. That is why the speaker must pray loud enough to be heard.

TEACHING AND PREACHING

We usually have a sermon and a Bible class every Sunday during our assemblies. In **1 Corinthians 14:26**, we can read about what was happening at their assemblies, "When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up." Notice it addresses "each of you," as we all have the responsibility to strengthen each other. Look at **Acts 20:32** the Word of God also builds us up. This is why it is important to listen to the sermon and attend class. This word of instruction and God's revelation, the Bible today, is something we do during the first part of our assembly with a sermon and also during the second half of our assembly, during our Bible classes. Both are important and should not be missed. Look at the very early church in **Acts 2:42** they "devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings," which is now our Bible.

We see Paul's priority in teaching about Christ in Acts 18:11 where he taught the Word of God for 18 months. We also see Paul teaching during the assembly in Acts 20:7.

Some of the goals of these teachings are stated in the Scriptures below:

Colossians 1:28. *"We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect (complete) in Christ."*

1 Timothy 1:5. *"The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."*

We see in **Hebrews 5:11-14** the constant training so we can distinguish good from evil, and there was a rebuke to "grow up" and mature in Christ. Also look at Ephesians 4:15.

The book of 2 Timothy shows us some things about preaching. **2 Timothy 2:2** says teaches others, so they can teach others. Verse 2:14 warns about quarreling and verse 15 says, *"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."*

It continues in **2 Timothy 4:2-5**, telling how we must focus on God's Word and truth in our teaching, and not just entertaining folks or playing to "itching ears," and this can correct, rebuke and encourage.

In **1 Timothy 4:6** we see the preacher pointing out things to the "brothers" (fellow Christians) and in v13 he calls them to "devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching." This appears to be addressing what is to be done in assembly.

And the context of **2 Timothy 3:16-17** seems to imply that preaching is not just for evangelism on the street corner or in the synagogue, but for the saints who need (as 2 Timothy 4: 2 says) "reproof, rebuke, exhortation, patience and instruction" so we try to accomplish these goals through preaching and teaching as well. This is another goal of preaching- and it relates to what we do with our lives.

GIVING

Tithing was a contribution of 10% that was required under Old Testament Law (Leviticus 27:30; Numbers 18:12-13, 21-32) but the New Covenant for Christians does not give any percentage for giving.

We see in **1 Corinthians 16:1-4** that at their assembly, when they gathered every week, gave according to the instruction of "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income".

In **2 Corinthians 8-9** we can see that giving is a grace and a privilege, to share our wealth. We are bought by Christ, we are not our own (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), and Jesus is the head of all things to us (Ephesians 1:22-23) Notice that the Macedonian Churches gave much even while in extreme poverty (2 Corinthians 8:2-3), and did so "entirely on their own."

The key to our giving money is found in **2 Corinthians 8:5** "*they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.*" Later, in verses 11-12 we can see giving is tied to your individual situation and your willingness.

It is also interesting to note that in **Ephesians 4:28** we can see that one reason we even work is so we have money to share. It is not just about ourselves! (See 1 Timothy 6:17-19) In **2 Corinthians 9:5** we can see that our giving should be a generous gift, not one grudgingly given. In vv6-15 we see God loves a generous, cheerful giver (notice, it's the attitude that is mentioned, not a percentage). We see in verses 8-11 that God is able to work with your giving. Trust Him to help you give generously, according to what you have, and not what you don't have (2 Corinthians 8:12).

Another good passage about giving is found in **1 Timothy 6:3-19**; we need to be careful about loving money (v10). We must put our hope in God, not in wealth (v17) and do good with our money (v18).

In **Philippians 4:14-19** Paul discusses the giving of money with his support and how it is "credited to their account." God knows and remembers the good you do with your money. **Hebrews 13:15-16** talks about how the sharing our "stuff" is a sacrifice, a "worship" word and activity.

Earlier, in **Hebrews 13:5-6** we see the command to not love money and be content with what we have because God is always with us- He is our helper.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

What is the Lord's Supper? To better understand it, let's look at some background from the Old Testament. The Old Testament was full of memorials for the Israelites. A sampling of these memorials are as follows: Genesis 9:13-16 – the rainbow; Exodus 20:8-11 – the Sabbath; Exodus 16:32- the omer of Manna in the Ark of Testimony; Exodus 28:7-12 – the names of the Sons of Israel on High Priest's clothes; Joshua 4:5, 6 – the Stones at the crossing of the Jordan; Joshua 24:21-28 - Stones placed as a witness to a vow.

What are some purposes for memorials in the Old Testament?

Exodus 12:25-27 *"When you enter the land that the Lord will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.'" Then the people bowed down and worshiped."*

Joshua 4:6-7 *"...to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it*

crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.'"

It was during one of the memorials (the Passover, Exodus 12:1-14) that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. We can read about this in Matthew 26:17-20, 26-29; Mark 14:12-17, 22-25; and Luke 22:7-20. If you also read in John (chapter 13-17), we see not just the Lord's Supper but the great teachings of Jesus during the Passover meal, knowing his time on earth was coming to an end.

In **I Corinthians 5:7-8** Christ is called our Passover lamb. What does this mean? Jesus said "this is my body, given for you"

From the following scriptures, look at what is significant about his "body."

John 1:14; 2 John 7 - Jesus became flesh

Hebrews 2:14-18 - Since Jesus became human (sharing in flesh and blood), he also became a merciful and faithful high priest.

I Corinthians 10:14-22 - We are all one body, participating in the Lord's Table together.

Ephesians 2:13-22 - We all have been reconciled together into one body.

Body (symbolized by unleavened bread) Matthew 26:26

In Exodus 12:18-20 - The original Passover bread was not to have any leaven in it. In 1 Corinthians 5:7-8 leaven symbolizes malice and wickedness. In Hebrews 4:15 we see Jesus was without sin, so the unleavened bread reminds us of that, and this was the type of bread used when Christ instituted the Lord's Supper in the upper room in Mark 14:12-26.

Blood (Symbolized with "fruit of the vine") Matthew 26:27-29

Jesus said, "this is my blood of the new covenant." From the following passages, look at the significance of his blood:

Ephesians 2:13 - You have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Romans 5:9 - We are justified by his blood.

I John 1:7 -The blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin.

Acts 20:28 -The church is bought with the blood of Christ.

If you would like to look at some more passages you can read Revelation 12:11; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Romans 3:24-25.

Ruining the Lord's Supper.

In I Corinthians 11:17-34 Paul said in verse 20 that when they met together, it was not to eat the Lord's Supper (they were messing up the Lord's Supper). Whose supper were they eating then?

How does one eat and drink the Lord's Supper in an "unworthy manner?" How were these Christians not "discerning" the body? What are the horizontal (relates to each other) and vertical (relates to God) aspects to the Lord's Supper?

You may have heard the Lord's Supper referred to as "communion." This is from the Greek word *koinonia*, meaning "to share in common, fellowship or participation." (**I Corinthians 10:16-22**)

What considerations should be taken to eat the Lord's Supper in a worthy way?

Explain how the Lord's Supper is focused in the following ways:

- A. **I Corinthians 11:24-25** How does the Lord's Supper look to the past?
- B. **I Corinthians 11:26b** How does the Lord's Supper look to the future?
- C. **I Corinthians 11:28** How does the Lord's Supper look inward?
- D. **I Corinthians 11:29** and **33-34** How does the Lord's Supper look outward?

Why do we do the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week?

When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, he said nothing about its repetition and frequency but Paul, in I Corinthians 11:17ff, says he had passed on what he "received from the Lord," and in Acts 20:7 they met together on the first day to break bread (This passage gives us an example of when the first Christians met to partake of communion). You can also look at 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.

In the context of Acts 2:42 and Acts 20:7 we see this "breaking of bread" was likely the Lord's Supper. But in Acts 2:47 and Acts 20:11 this breaking bread was more likely to be a common meal since the context of homes and "eating" words informs our insight. The Greek indicates in Acts 20: 7 - "for the purpose of breaking bread." We come together on Sundays for the Lord's Supper. We look at it by the context. So we have an example of the Apostolic church doing the Lord's Supper on the first day of every week, which is also the day that Christ rose from the grave and the Christians met on the first day of every week. (1 Corinthians 16:2). By the time Corinthians was written it was referred to as the Lord's Supper.

SINGING

In the Assembly

In the assembly verse of **1 Corinthians 14:26**, singing was done together. We also see singing done in prison, by Paul and others, in **Acts 16:25**. Singing was and is done in times and places where it might seem out of place to someone who doesn't know Christ, but to the Christian it is part of the joy that overflows within us! Consider **Hebrews 13:15** which refers to our "sacrifice of praise" the "fruit of our lips." We also see Jesus and His disciples singing after "instituting" the Lord's Supper in **Matthew 26:30**. We see in **1 Corinthians 14:15** that we sing with the mind and the spirit. We can read just a bit later in verse 26 that singing to one another is a way to

teach and admonish one another- this is all for the strengthening of the church.

Colossians 3:16 *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God."*

Singing to one another is more than just an emotional experience- it is also a tool for teaching, something that applies to the mind, not just the spirit. We see in the passage above that we do this in the context of "one another," which fits into the assembling we do together. It also shows we sing to God as we sing to one another, so our singing is both "vertical" and "horizontal." Sometimes we just focus on our singing towards God and forget the purposes singing serves towards one another. If you want to read more on singing, see Hebrews 2:12 and Romans 15:9.

We also see we can sing alone just because we are joyful. Look at James 5:13 *"Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise."* Notice in Zephaniah 3:17 even God sings- he sings over you with rejoicing!

"A cappella" singing

Ephesians 5:19-20 says *"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

What can we learn from the passage in Ephesians? These verses are not addressing the broad subject of music but specifically the singing of these spiritual songs to God and to one another. The "music" is made in your heart with singing, so always sing with your heart and mind engaged. We literally "pluck the strings of our heart."

The term "a cappella" comes from the Italian language, meaning "In the manner or style of the chapel." It is singing without instrumental accompaniment. We, as a body of Christians sing in this manner because we are just trying to do our best to do Biblical Christianity, from what we see in the Bible. This starts with the Gospel and our response to it in baptism and trying to fulfill God's will in all we do.

So why do we sing "a cappella"? It would seem reasonable that it was just vocal singing in prison with Paul, or with Jesus after the Lord's Supper, but the verses in **Colossians 3:16** and **Ephesians 5:19-20** also specifically say we sing to one another so let's take just a moment to discuss a reasonable approach to interpret the Bible.

When God specifically tells us to do something, wouldn't it exclude other things? For example, God said to baptize, which means immerse, and that would exclude trying to "baptize" by sprinkling or pouring water. If I just said "go get some food at the store," anything you brought back would be fine. But if I said, to "get hamburgers, buns, coke, potato chips, and Snickers candy bars," then getting other things would not fulfill my "command." A specific command can exclude other "coordinates" of that command.

We see this principle in the example of "authorized" or "strange" fire and God's wrath on those who didn't specifically get their fire from where God specified. You can read this story in Leviticus 10 about Nadab and Abihu and there are some other good passages to look at as well; Leviticus 16:12; Exodus 30:9, 34-38; 2 Chronicles 26:16. When God says to do something in a specific way, it excludes other ways of doing that thing.

So, if God had just commanded us to make music to one another that could include singing and playing instruments. Both are music, but when he says to sing and make music with our heart (which is the instrument we "pluck") it excludes anything besides singing. We could also reasonably conclude that since the purposes of singing is to teach and admonish one another as well as to praise God, that fits in with the verbal aspect of

singing with the spirit and mind since instruments do not teach. In the Old Testament God did specify instruments and even certain groups of priests to sing, but in the New Covenant God specifies our heart as the instrument.

The "Christian Church" sang "a cappella" for many centuries, even giving birth to the term itself, meaning "in the style of the chapel." Perhaps since the Jewish synagogue also made music vocally in Jesus' time, the Christians may have also followed that pattern. This was different than Old Testament Temple worship, which commanded instruments be used.

We try to go back to the Bible for our reasons about what we do. In effect, our "vocal singing" was the usual practice of the early church and continued to be so for hundreds of years. We do it the same way in our spiritual songs, when we sing to one another and to God.

FOUNDATIONS

Section Eight: Resolving Conflict

The Bible teaching about resolving conflict in personal relationships brings good news! Conflict is inevitable. It happens. It's painful. You have it. I have it. The question is how can we resolve it?

In this section, we will identify eight principles that are part of a process of resolving conflict. I give a disclaimer. No system in this world will absolutely resolve conflict every time. Including this one. Also, there are many more things that can be said, but we lack space in this section to cover everything that could be covered, but we want to give you principles and actions you can put to work when conflict arises with a brother or sister in Christ. The broad concepts here will start, if applied faithfully, to help you create a system that will resolve much conflict that you face on a day to day basis.

Resolving Conflict: The Christian Goal

Peace and unity are the goals. Paul wrote, "*Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*" (**Ephesians 4:3**) Jesus said the peacemakers are blessed (**Matthew 5:9**). Again, Paul reminds us, "*If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.*" (**Romans 12:18**)

From this we see that resolving conflict is important to God. On a practical level, peace is cheaper than war, divorce, counselor's fees, and split churches!

Preserve Relationships

Have in your mind the idea that it is to your benefit to maintain positive, workable relationships with the people involved. This oil for this process is Christian love, which I have explained in another Bible study.

If it is your employer, co-worker, fellow church member, ex-spouse, customer – whatever, it is to your benefit to maintain a positive relationship. An exception is if the relationship is so toxic and harmful that it would be dangerous to maintain.

Consider All Legitimate Interests

The Bible teaching about resolving conflict encourages us to not selfishly consider only our own interests in disputes. Paul wrote, *“do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”* (**Philippians 2:4**)

Too often conflict involves one side pitted stubbornly against the other side. Both sides ruthlessly try to prove their side right, and the other wrong. They magnify their interests, and minimize the other person’s interests. It becomes a win-lose trap. This is not resolving conflict, but escalating it.

Don't Violate Biblical Principles

Paul writes, *“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness”* (**2 Timothy 3:16**). He also told us to look to the examples in the Bible to decide which course of action to take (**1 Corinthians 10:11**).

The information we need in resolving conflict is in the Bible. The problem is discovery, application and motivation. Good common sense, wise men and women, and what we learn from life experience are helpful. Outside advice must not, however, conflict with biblical principles.

Glorify God

Paul wrote, *“whatever you do, do all to the glory of God”* (**1 Corinthians 10:31**). Resolving conflict falls under the umbrella of “whatever.” It is easy to forget about God when we are in the drama of resolving conflict. Our passions and pain get in the way, and all we can think of is our own problem, and desperately looking for a way of escape or winning.

Pray about it

Prayer calls on Divine power, guidance, intervention, and wisdom in resolving conflict. It must, however, be followed up by enacting biblical principles that apply to the case – in other words, action. In conflict we always need to focus our prayers on God’s will as **1 John 5:14-15** says.

Forgiveness

The Bible teaching about resolving conflict is unconditionally clear. Jesus instructed us in our prayer life, *“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors”* (**Matthew 6:12**). Clinging to and nourishing vindictive grudges will eat our soul, rob our creativity, suck away our happiness – and un-forgiveness is useless in resolving conflict.

And as Jesus pointedly taught, how can we expect God to forgive us when we don’t forgive others?

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

What should our motive be when dealing with anyone?

Hebrews 12:14 *"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord..."*

Romans 12:18 *"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."* Regardless of how others treat us, we are to try to have peaceful relationships with them. In the beatitudes, Jesus Christ—the Prince of Peace—said that those who are peacemakers will be called the children of God (Matthew 5:9).

What important character trait is needed to deal with conflict?

Philippians 2:3 *"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself."*

James 3:17-18 *"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."*

The opposite of conceit and selfishness is humility. Humility is necessary to properly deal with difficult people. We want others to be patient with our shortcomings, and we should be patient with theirs. When we strive to make peace, we are exercising humility.

Is there ever a time we should "get even" with someone who mistreats us?

Romans 12:17-21 *"Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live*

peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing so you will heal coals of fire on his head."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Matthew 7:12 (also known as "The Golden Rule") *"Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. We should never treat someone in a way we would not want to be treated. Just because someone may mistreat us, we have no right to mistreat him or her. God says vengeance is His, simply because He alone can carry out righteous justice. In fact, when we overcome evil with good, it makes an impression on those who mistreat us!"*

How do we deal with situations or people that always create problems?

Look at some of the Old Testament principles:

Proverbs 22:3 *"A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished."*

Proverbs 17:27-28 *"He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit. Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive."*

How do we deal with people who continually take advantage of us?

Matthew 5:43-48 *"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, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?"*

And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Even though it is against our human nature, God says to pray for those who hate us. If people are continually asking us for help, God says to help. If we feel they are abusing us, we need to put the situation in God's hands and let Him work it out.

How do we answer people who like to argue, or just want to be heard?

Proverbs 26:4-5 *"Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes."* Some people have their mind made up that their opinion is right, regardless of what anyone else says. With these people it is best not to continue the discussion (v4). Others like to make themselves look superior by making detrimental comments about someone else. With these people, a polite answer that shows their error is appropriate (v5).

For example, certain individuals brought a woman caught in adultery to Christ stating that she should be stoned as the law says. Their only motive was to see what Christ would say; they didn't care about the woman. So Christ politely told them that those present who had never sinned should cast the first stone. This answer peacefully and immediately silenced their accusation (John 8:3-9).

How do we deal with someone who is always angry?

Proverbs 15:1 *"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."*

Proverbs 22:24-25 "Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul."

When someone is loud and angry, answering in a soft tone usually quiets things down. When someone answers in a loud tone, the anger only escalates. If someone is known to always be angry, God tells us to stay away from him or her or we will end up in trouble. These are still workable Old testament principles.

Here are some practical phrases to use:

"Thank you for your thoughts; I'll take them into consideration."

"Thank you for your thoughts, I'll work on them."

What is the key to living in peace with difficult people?

Psalm 119:165 "*Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble.*"

Following God's law is the key to peace. When we live by God's ways, we learn the way to peace. Living God's ways doesn't mean all people will like who we are, but we are still the peacemakers in Christ (Matthew 5:9)!

FOUNDATIONS

Section Nine: The Gospel Message

The Gospel is the Good News about Jesus.

So who is this Jesus?

Matthew 16:13-17 He is the Christ.

John 1:1-14; Matt 1:23 He is God in the flesh, God with us "Immanuel."

Colossians 2:9 Whole deity dwells in him.

Hebrews 1:3 He is the exact representation of God.

John 14:9 If you see Jesus, you have seen the Father.

Hebrews 1:8 He is the son of God (John 8:58, Exodus 3:14).

Notice, Christ has all authority:

Matthew 28:18 All authority has been given to him.

Matthew 9:6-8 He has the power to forgive sins.

Mark 4:41 Even the wind and waves obey him.

Matthew 7:28-29 People were amazed at his authoritative teaching.

We see all three persons in the Godhead at one time in Matthew 3:16-17, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Why did Christ come to earth?

Luke 19:10 To seek and save the lost.

1 Timothy 2:3-6 God wants all to be saved, he is our mediator.

John 14:6 "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" This is the only way back to God; it is his design.

Acts 4:12 "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

1 John 5:12 *"Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."*

So, what is my problem with sin?

Isaiah 59:2 *"but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear."* God will punish sin. Look also at **1 Thessalonians 4:6** *"the Lord will punish men for all such sins";* **2 Thessalonians 1:8-9** says he will *"punish those who do not know God and who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord."*

1 John 3:4 *"Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness."* In verse 5 we can read Jesus appeared to take away sin.

James 2:10 *"For whoever keeps the whole law yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it."*

1 John 3:15 *"Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."*

James 4:17 *"Anyone, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."* Also look at Romans 2:12-15 about our conscience.

Therefore, from the above verses, we can all agree with this next verse:

Romans 3:23 *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* Also look at Romans 1:18-2:16.

Look at lists of sins like in **Galatians 5:19-21** *"Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."*

Luke 12:4-5 *"I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom*

to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!" Look at punishment in Matthew 25:31-46.

The problem is we are dead in our sins (Ephesians 2:1) and need our savior Jesus- so how do I accept this free gift of salvation- what is my faith response to get into Jesus? Without Jesus we see wrath. **John 3:36** *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not believe, disobeys or rejects the Son shall not have life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*

FAITH

We must believe and have faith in Jesus.

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

Hebrews 11:6 *"And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."*

Hebrews 11:1 *"Now faith being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."*

Romans 10:17 *"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."*

John 8:24 *"I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins."*

James 2:14-26 shows us the kind of faith that saves is active and responsive, and will do what God says.

v22- faith and actions are working together

v24- you see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. This is the only time "faith" and "alone" appear together in the Bible.

v26- *"For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead."* Notice how faith is connected to being baptized

into Christ in **Galatians 3:26-27** *"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ, have clothed yourselves with Christ."*

Notice how faith is also connected to confession (Romans 10:8-11) and repentance (Acts 20:21). It is a "whole package", not separated concepts. We need it all to be what the Bible says with our salvation response to the free gift of God in Christ Jesus.

CONFESSING CHRIST

Our faith leads us to confess with our mouth Christ is Lord.

Romans 10:8-10 *"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved."*

Notice, the physical action of confessing is not "working your way to heaven," but simply a faith response and action to what God asks us to do. Obedient action is always part of faith, not opposed to faith.

Matthew 10:32-33 *"So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven."*

We also see Paul "calling on his name" at his baptism in Acts 22:16 *"And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name."* Some later versions of the New Testament also have Acts 8:37 as the confession of the eunuch at his baptism.

1 John 1:9 *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

REPENTANCE

Repentance is turning towards God and away from sin. Repentance is also an essential part of our response to the Gospel.

Acts 17:30-31 *"...In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."*

Romans 2:4 *"... God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance"* Also, 2 Peter 3:9 *"He wants no one to perish, but all to come to repentance."*

Acts 20:21 *"...I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus."*

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 *"For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."* Also see in Ephesians 4:17-5:21, how this turning and living for God is manifested.

Acts 26:20 *"...declared ... I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds."* Notice the actions here are not "working your way to heaven, but obedience.

Acts 2:36-38 *"Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.' Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' And Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

Repentance is produced from faith, and turning to God, away from the ways of the world (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Jesus says straightforwardly to repent or perish in **Luke 13:1-5**.

BAPTISM

Baptism is the crossing-over point into Christ, with our faith, confession, and repentance all working here. Where does the Bible say we get into Christ, where do we get our sins forgiven or washed away, where are we united or clothed with Christ?

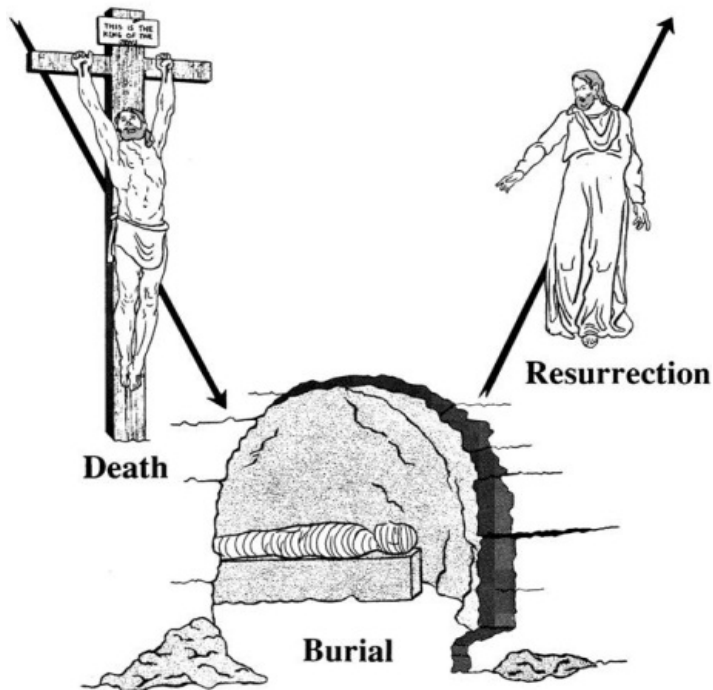
Galatians 1:6-9 *"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!"* We better have the Gospel Paul speaks about since that is the only one which saves. Don't trust even the message of an "experience" or an angel if it is not what Paul preached. Look also at the principle in Deuteronomy 13:1-5.

Romans 1:16 *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes..."*

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 *"Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures..."*

the Gospel enacted

I CORINTHIANS 15:3-4



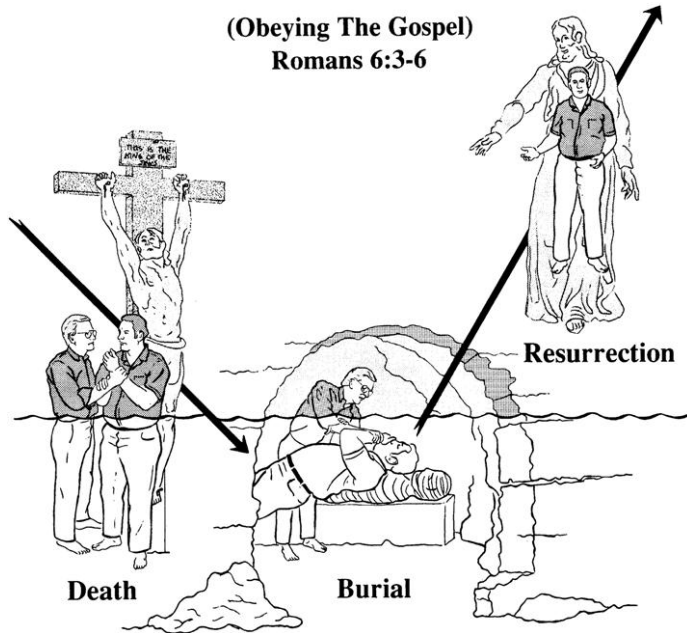
2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 "when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might"

How can we "obey" this historical fact of the Gospel, that is, the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus?

Romans 6:3-5 "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his."

the Gospel re-enacted in Baptism

(Obeying The Gospel)
Romans 6:3-6



Notice, in the Gospel that Paul preaches, we get baptized into Christ (which is where salvation is) and he ties in baptism to obeying the core elements of the Gospel, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Paul says if we are united with Christ in his death at baptism, we certainly will be resurrected! He says we are united with Christ at our baptism, the crossing over point to Jesus. In Christ we have redemption through the forgiveness that comes through his blood (Ephesians 1:7).

1 Peter 3:21 *"Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ"* Baptism saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ! Hebrews 9:14 shows us it is Christ's blood that cleanses our conscience.

Read **Acts 8:26-40**. Somewhere in the teaching about Jesus (v35) baptism is taught as the response to the Gospel since the eunuch is the one who said "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" This is a desert road- there would need to be a place with water to baptize (immerse) him. Also, notice, they didn't wait to get to a city or a place with other people. The Eunuch was baptized as the Bible teaches, not as a public proclamation, but for the forgiveness of sin as Acts 2:38 states.

Even though there are different baptisms in the New Testament (John's baptism, Jesus' baptism, Baptism of the Holy Spirit, etc.), when the book of Ephesians was written (around 60AD) there was only one baptism, just as there is one faith and one Lord (Ephesians 4:4-6).

This is the crossing-over point; the point at which we get clothed with Christ (**Galatians 3:26-27**). It is where we are buried with Christ as our faith raises us up (**Colossians 2:12**), and it is where we have our sins washed away (**Acts 22:16**). Our faith, confession and repentance lead up to this point of obeying the Gospel, and will continue to carry us forward to live our lives for Jesus.

CONCLUSION

Now that I am in Christ, with his forgiveness, I have life (John 10:10), I am faultless before God (Jude 24), I will be resurrected to glory (1 Corinthians 15:20-23) and can escape the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15; 2 Timothy 1:10)!

Romans 5:8-10 *"but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life."*

We need to "count the cost" of following Jesus, to make sure with can stay with him in this decision. Read Luke 14:26-35; Matthew 10:37; 2 Peter 2:20-22.

Obedience to him is just a show of our love. **1 John 5:3** *"For this is the love of God, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome." Faith is obedient, and never a "working" your way to Heaven.*

*Be the Bereans of **Acts 17:11** and check out these scriptures to see if this is true and is Paul's Gospel in Galatians 1:6-10.*

APPENDIX

“Baptism: which mode?” By one of our elders
Bible Divisions
Bible Maps

BAPTISM: WHICH MODE?

In our world today, there are many sincere religious groups that have very different views as to how they should do Christian baptism. Some churches baptize only infants or only adults and some do both. Certain groups do “baptism” by sprinkling or by pouring water over the head, while others do a complete immersion of the body. The Random House Dictionary defines the English word baptism as a “ceremonial immersion in water, or application of water, as an initiatory rite or sacrament of the Christian church.”

Yet these differences may not be just a minor issue of preference, but a basic core belief that the Bible does address in a clear manner to follow. The purpose of this paper is to give you some thoughts that I think are reasonable and true. I hope we all can be open to God, His Word, and the Holy Spirit, as we strive to follow Jesus as best we know how. Do not automatically just dismiss the importance of this subject or be closed to a different viewpoint. Let us all be like the open-minded people found at Berea in Acts 17:10-12 where they checked out the information to see whether it was right or wrong. Remember, Isaiah 55:8-9 says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.”

- I. The original Greek meaning of the word, baptize.
 - a. Baptisma: immerse, submersion. A Christian baptism, according to the view of the apostles, is the rite of sacred immersion, commanded by Christ... From bapto, which means to dip or immerse. (Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New

Testament, J.H. Thayer, DD. Zondervan 18th Ed. 1977. Pages 94-95.)

- b. Baptism, consisting of the process of immersion, submersion, and emergence. (baptisma, from bapto, to dip) Primarily a frequentative form of bapto, to dip, was used among the Greeks to signify when a garment was plunged under water containing dye, or when the water was drawn up by dipping a vessel into another. (Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words. WF Vine, MacDonald Co. Pages 98-99.)
- c. Bapto: to dip under water. Baptizo: to immerse or even used in the sinking of a ship, or to drown under water in some Greek literature. (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Gerhard Kittel, Vol. 1 Wm.B. Eerdmans's 4th Printing, 1969. Pages 529-530.)
- d. Baptizo: to dip, immerse, plunge, and sink. Bapto: to dip something, like a garment dipped into blood or dyed by dipping. (A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature. William Arndt and F.W. Gingrich. University of Chicago Press, 4th Edition. 1952. Pages 131-132.)
- e. Bapto: to dip. Baptizo: to dip or immerse, the act of dipping or immersing. (The Analytical Greek Lexicon. Zondervan Co. 14th Edition. 1977. Page 65.)
- f. Baptizo: "The word baptized is not the translation of the Greek word here, but it's a transliteration: it is Greek spelling in English letters. The word is used in the classics of a smith who dips a piece of hot iron into water, tempering it. In the LXX (Leviticus 4:6) we have the priest dipping (bapto) his finger in blood seven times and then sprinkling it, which is rhantizo." (Word Studies in the Greek New Testament. Vol.1 Kenneth Wuest. Wm. B. Eerdmans Co. 1979. Page 96.)
- g. Baptizo and bapto: To dip, immerse, or submerge. "Despite assertions to the contrary, it seems that baptize, both in Jewish and Christian contexts, normally meant immerse and that even when it becomes a technical term for baptism, the thought of immersion remains." (The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology. Vol.1 Colin Brown, Editor. Zondervan Co. 3rd Edition. 1979. Page 144.)
- h. Greek usage of baptism. "The Greek language has had a continuous history, and baptize is used today in Greece for

baptism. As is well known, not only in Greece, but all over Russia, wherever the Greek church prevails, immersion is the unbroken and universal practice. The substitution of pouring or sprinkling for immersion, as the Christian ordinance of baptism, was late and gradual and finally triumphed in the West because of the decree of the Council of Trent." (The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. James Orr, Editor. Vol.1. Wm.B. Eerdman Co. 1979. Page 386.)

It seems very reasonable to me that the original word only meant an immersion, and it was people, not God, that changed the usage of the word like it is used in America today. The question that all of us have to ask ourselves is why would we want to change the meaning of this word and the mode of it, when God specified a particular format? Convenience? Are you sure God is accepting the change society has placed upon the word, or are we being arrogant and ungodly in changing what God originally asked us to do?

- II. The context of usage within the actual Bible verses indicates that baptism is immersion. Consider these following New Testament verses. What do you think is reasonable for its meaning in these contexts?
 - a. Romans 6:3-4. "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." Do you sprinkle or just pour a little dirt over a dead body to bury it, or do we immerse it under the ground and completely cover it?
 - b. Colossians 2:12. "...having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead." Notice that after we are immersed under the "water for burial" in baptism, we are literally raised up as well from that watery grave. How do I get "raised up" when I just have a little bit of water sprinkled on my head? Going under but not coming up again

(raised) fits the context of immersion, but not sprinkling or pouring.

- c. Acts 8:36 and 38. "As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" ... And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water..." Why couldn't they just use the water they were carrying for the desert journey to sprinkle the eunuch for his baptism, instead of having to wait and find a pool of water to be baptized in? Notice they went down into the water and they came up out of the water. It is also interesting that somewhere in the teaching about Jesus, baptism was preached because of the eunuch's response. (He was taught Jesus, then responded by being baptized.)
- d. John 3:23. "Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptized." If the other "modes" and approaches to baptism could be done, like sprinkling or pouring, then there would be no need to be in an area where there was "much water."
- e. Mark 1:10. "Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove." Doesn't it make more sense that immersion happened here when Christ "came out of the water?" Again, the context supports immersion as the meaning of the word.
- f. I Peter 3:21 has baptism linked to the figure of the Flood. Lots of water in a flood, and not just a sprinkle. Again, contexts supports this understanding.

III. The original "founders" of various religious groups here in America even agreed that the word baptism originally meant to immerse.

- a. Martin Luther (Lutheran) said of baptism, "On this account I could wish that such are baptized should be completely immersed in water according to the meaning of the word, and the significance of the ordinance, as also, without doubt, it was instituted by Christ." (Works, Vol.XI, page 76.)

- b. John Wesley (Methodist and Wesleyan) said of Romans 6:3 and John 3:5, "We are buried with him, alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion... by water then, as a means, the water of baptism, we are regenerated or born again; whence it is also called by the apostles the "washing of regeneration." (John Wesley, Notes on the New Testament. 1825.)
- c. John Calvin (Presbyterian) said of Mark 16:15-16, "He commanded all who believe to be baptized for the remission of their sins. Therefore, those who have imagined that baptism is nothing more than a mark or a sign which we profess our religion before men as soldiers was the insignia of their sovereign as a mark of their profession have not considered what was the principle thing of baptism which is that we ought to receive it with the promise; 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.' The word baptism means immerse, and it is certain...immersion was observed in the early church." (Institutes, Book IV, chapter 13)

Again, the meaning of the word does not seem to be in doubt, but just a men's theology as we try to apply our understanding of the Bible to our lives.

- IV. There are three individual and distinct words for three individual and distinct concepts of sprinkle, pour, and immerse. To say we can substitute one word for another completely ignores the rules of language and meaning. The Septuagint (LXX) is a Greek translation of the Old Testament, and we see that this passage in Leviticus 14:15-16 clearly shows why we cannot switch one word for another. To say I baptize by sprinkling is really impossible if we follow the word meaning, unless you keep sprinkling until that person is completely immersed.

"The priest shall then take some of the log of oil, pour (ekcheo) it in the palm of his own left hand, dip (bapto) his right forefinger into the oil in his palm, and with his finger sprinkle (rhantizo) some of it before the Lord seven times." Just think if baptize (bapto) could also mean sprinkle or pour, how utterly confused the priest would have been to fulfill this command.

Rhantizo (sprinkle) means just that, to sprinkle like its usage found in Hebrews 9:13-14 and 10:22.

Thank you for your time and considering this subject, and I hope this information is helpful and thought provoking. Yes, our English word could mean all three since our culture uses it for all three, but that is not how the Bible uses it. I encourage you to continue to seek God and do His will as best you can, including your understanding of baptism.