

First Steps: How to Get Saved

Study #1

This course of Discipleship Essentials is designed to inform and encourage the Christian disciple to be equipped and able to continue in their spiritual development. You are about to embark on a spiritual journey that countless others have previously traveled. The original Apostles were discipled as they followed Jesus. Paul experienced growth through discipleship and then influenced others to do the same. Those men, in turn, discipled other people with the things they were taught.

This centuries-long list of those growing in Christ as a disciple can continue as you begin to experience both the enjoyment and challenge of biblical discipleship. The Lord's goal for His children is for us to **know** Him personally and **enjoy** Him forever. As Christians, we are here on earth to learn to let God love us and love others through us. This can only happen through the power of the Holy Spirit, who takes up residence in the heart of every believer at the moment they place their faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

As a church, we desire to bring praise and glory to our King, Jesus Christ, through worship, service, and unity.

- We exist to make disciples by equipping the saints through teaching and training.
- We exist to encourage each other in fellowship.
- We also exist to share the Gospel with the lost, which is called evangelism.

These things allow Christians to operate in their giftedness to fulfill the vision God has given—to grow His body, the Church. Once people experience freedom in Christ, they can operate in their giftedness to reach more people. All of this is done to reach a lost, hurting, and dying world with the only thing that can truly transform and break the bondage they are living in, which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

What is the Gospel? 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

The word Gospel means **good news**. The Gospel is not merely a historical account or a set of moral teachings. The Gospel is the revelation of God's plan for humanity's salvation through the life, death, and resurrection of God the Son, Jesus Christ. In the Gospel, we encounter the profound truth that God loves us unconditionally and desires to reconcile us to Himself. It is through Jesus Christ that we can experience forgiveness, spiritual healing, and eternal life. The Gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to transform lives. The Gospel is a message of hope for the hopeless, healing for the broken, and freedom for the captive. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the heart of the Christian faith.

The foretelling of the Gospel began with many ancient prophecies about the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the life He would live on earth. Jesus' birth fulfilled many ancient prophecies and signaled the arrival of the long-awaited Messiah. The birth of Jesus also reminds us of God's **faithfulness** to keep His promises and His desire to dwell among His people (*John 1:1-14*). Jesus' ministry was characterized by compassion, mercy, and righteousness. He

preached the good news of the kingdom, healed the sick, cast out demons, and welcomed marginalized and outcast people into the Kingdom of God. Through His teachings and miracles, Jesus revealed the heart of God and demonstrated His love for all people.

The **payment** for the Gospel was made by the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and was proven by His resurrection. He willingly endured suffering and death on the cross as the ultimate sacrifice and payment for the sins of humanity. In His death, Jesus bore the weight of our transgressions and reconciled us to God. The cross is a symbol of God's love and grace, offering forgiveness and redemption to all who believe. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is proof that the Gospel is true and that Jesus is who He said He is. On the third day after His death, Jesus rose from the grave, triumphing over sin and death. Jesus' resurrection is the foundation of our faith and the source of our hope. Through His victory, Jesus offers new life to all who trust in Him.

Therefore, the very first step in anyone's faith journey is to be **born** again:

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

John 3:4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

John 3:5 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

John 3:7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.

John 3:8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” NKJV

A person cannot be saved by manipulation or persuasive words, but only by being drawn by the Lord Himself.

Jesus said in ***John 6:44***, “***No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.***” NKJV. But Jesus also said in ***John 12:32***, “***And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.***”

John 12:33 This He said, signifying by what death He would die. NKJV

What is the condition of a person before they receive New Life in Christ?

They are spiritually dead, under the control of Satan, and incapable of controlling sinful passions. Before salvation, a person is without hope, and they are under God’s condemnation for their sin (***Ephesians 2:1-3, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Ephesians 2:12***).

So, what must I do to be saved?

- 1) We must realize we have sinned against God (perfection is needed, and there are no **perfect** people).

Matthew 5:48, Isaiah 53:6, Romans 3:11-12, Romans 3:23

- 2) We must recognize there is a **penalty** for sin (lack of perfection).

Romans 5:12, Romans 6:23, Revelation 20:15, 1 Corinthians 6:9

- 3) We must know that Jesus took our place (paid the **penalty** that was due) by dying on the Cross.

Romans 5:8, John 3:16-18, 1 Peter 1:18-21

- 4) We must understand that we are saved by grace alone (an undeserved gift), through faith alone (trust), in Christ alone, and not by any **works** we can do.

Ephesians 2:8-9

Salvation is NOT found in a religion or received by good works. Salvation is only found by receiving the free gift of salvation from Jesus. Some doubt their salvation, but a person should trust God and what He says in His Word (the Bible) about their salvation (***1 John 5:11-13, Acts 16:30-31, Romans 10:13, Romans 10:9, Galatians 3:25-26***).

What should a person do to be saved?

- Call on the name of the Lord.
- Admit you have sinned against God. Admit you need Him to forgive you to escape eternal death.

- A person should ask Jesus to take over their life, so He becomes their Lord and King.
- A person should turn away from sin and turn toward the Lord.

If you have trusted in what Jesus did on the cross to forgive you of your sins, then you are a Christian; welcome to the family! At the very moment a person receives the forgiveness of sin by trusting in the finished work of Jesus on the cross, they are baptized with the Holy Spirit as He comes to live in a believer. Although salvation is totally and completely received by accepting Christ alone, there are some things you should do immediately after you are saved.

First, after salvation, a believer should be **baptized**. The Lord comes to live within a believer at the moment of conversion through His Holy Spirit. This is known as Spiritual Baptism. There are three main baptisms taught in the New Testament:

1. John's baptism of **repentance**, which became obsolete once Jesus was crucified. *Matthew 3:11*

Before the Cross, John the Baptist was telling the Jewish people that the Messiah was coming, and they should be baptized to show repentance, anticipating the arrival of Jesus. Now that Jesus has taken the cross, we show repentance by turning to Him and turning away from our old, sinful lives.

2. The baptism of the **Holy Spirit**, which is received at salvation. *1 Corinthians 12:13, Ephesians 4:4-6, John 14:16-17*

- The Holy Spirit is a Christian's down payment to eternal life until they go to heaven. *Ephesians 1:13-14*
 - The Holy Spirit helps a Christian know the mind of Christ and understand the Bible. *1 Corinthians 2:14-16*
 - The Holy Spirit helps a Christian to pray. *Romans 8:26*
 - The Holy Spirit helps a Christian worship because God deserves our praise and worship. *John 4:21-23*
 - The Holy Spirit helps Christians with their stress. *Psalms 27:4-6, Proverbs 3:5-6, 1 Peter 5:7*
 - The Holy Spirit is your spiritual guide. *John 14:16-17, Romans 8:14*
 - The Holy Spirit transforms a Christian into the image of Christ. *Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21*
 - The Holy Spirit gives a Christian supernatural gifts. *1 Corinthians 12:8-10, Ephesians 4:7-13, Romans 12:3*
3. A Believer's (**Water**) baptism is a public announcement of a personal decision to follow Jesus as Lord and Savior. Baptism is a ceremony conducted in Bible-believing churches.

Who should be baptized? Who is eligible for baptism?

A New Testament form of baptism is described as a "Believer's Baptism" or "Water Baptism." A believer's or water baptism is for those individuals who have previously placed their faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved (*Acts 8:37-38*). After salvation, a Christian should receive a believer's baptism.

Why should someone be baptized?

Baptism was a **command** not only given by Jesus but one obeyed by Jesus as well. A believer's baptism is a picture and representation of the washing away of sins, dying to our "old self" as well as the old way of life, and beginning a new life by faith in Christ. It is a representation of the decision a person has previously made to put their faith in Christ and surrender their life to Him.

It is not a requirement for infants or children, who do not have the maturity of mind to decide to follow Jesus for themselves. A believer's baptism does not save a person, and infants and children are not held accountable for sin until they have had the chance to accept or reject God for themselves. We encourage people to be water baptized because of their own decision and their faith (*Acts 8:36-38, Matthew 3:14-15, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 8:12, Acts 22:16, Romans 6:4*).

A believer's baptism is not part of someone's salvation (*Luke 23:40-43, Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 3:5, Colossians 2:11-14, Acts 10:45-48*). Again, it is a public announcement of someone's personal decision to follow Jesus as Lord and Savior. A believer's baptism demonstrates Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (*1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Romans 6:3-4*).

How is someone baptized?

A total immersion (or submersion) is the only mode that accurately pictures Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. The biblical meaning of the word baptism means a complete immersion (always with large bodies of water).

John 3:23 and Acts 8:38-39 demonstrate going down into the water and coming back up.

Second, a believer needs a vital **prayer** life. We cannot have a relationship with anybody without there being real communication. When you read the Bible, the Lord talks to you, and when you pray, you talk to Him. It's an awesome privilege to speak to the One who created this beautiful world. Because we are now in a relationship with Almighty God, we have access to come to Him with our needs and our praise.

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. NKJV

In ***Luke 18:9-12***, there are two men mentioned in a parable about prayer:

1. The Pharisee, the self-proclaimed **religious** good guy.

Because of their arrogance and thoughts of superiority, Pharisees hindered the work of God rather than leading people to God. In ***Matthew 23***, Jesus revealed to the religious leaders that they were only concerned with outward appearances, but they had dirty hearts. In the parable of ***Luke 18***, *who do you believe the Pharisee is praying to? Luke 18:11* says, ***“The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself.”*** *With this heart and attitude, do you think his prayer was effective?*

Now let's meet the other man...

2. The tax collector, the unreligious **bad** guy.

Luke 18:13-14 tells us the first thing the Lord wants from us in prayer is authenticity. God knows everything about you (***Psalm 139; Hebrews 4:13 There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account NKJV***). In prayer, we need to get rid of our masks and pretense and be real.

Who was the tax collector praying to?

The proof that the tax collector was praying to the Lord was shown by the way he was overwhelmed by God's presence. Jesus said this tax collector (the supposed bad guy) went away justified, a pronouncement of not guilty from the Righteous Judge! Humility is always needed in prayer. When we come before the Lord in prayer, we are to be authentic, honest, humble, and have a contrite heart, and then the Lord will not refuse us (***Isaiah 6:1-5***).

Prayer is a vital link between God and us, and it is so important. Prayer is an honest conversation with the only One who can change the outcome of our situation. Authenticity, humility, and repentance are necessary in prayer to receive forgiveness and favor from the Lord.

Third, believers must show **love** one another! The best way to show others that following Christ can transform their life happens as we live for Jesus and love one another (***John 13:34-35, 1 John 4:7-12***). Your new life should be marked by care and compassion for all people, but we should especially love and take care of other believers (***Galatians 6:10***). There are

several passages in the New Testament having to do with the “*one another*” directives from the Lord.

Christians are to care for one another, bear with one another, honor one another, do good to one another, and forgive one another (*Colossians 3:14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection, NKJV*). Loving other Christians may be difficult enough, but showing love to everyone is impossible apart from the Holy Spirit (*John 15:1-5*). You are not able to love others in your own strength, but only through the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit (*1 John 3:23, 1 John 3:11, 1 John 1:7*).

Fourth, believers need spiritual **nutrition**. Besides salvation, regular church attendance and prayer, Christians grow as they read their Bibles and pray daily. We recommend new believers begin with the *Gospel of John*. Just like a newborn baby in this world must immediately have milk to live, you need spiritual food to grow as a Christian. Peter says in *1 Peter 2:2*, “*as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby*” *NKJV*. These Christians were no longer newborn babies, so Peter said it was time *to grow up* (*Hebrews 5:13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe, NKJV*).

The Greek says, “*for he is a babe,*” which means “has become a baby” as opposed to “he is a baby.” Christians who have become babies are known because they are unskilled in the word of righteousness. Brand new Christians cannot be skilled in the word of righteousness, but those who have been Christians for a time should be skilled to handle it. If you want

to grow in Christ, spiritual nutrition is not optional! ***Psalm 119:105, Psalm 119:9, John 15:3, Proverbs 3:5-6, Proverbs 1:7, Psalm 1:1-4, 1 Peter 3:15***

Fifth, believers must **reach** out to others with the Gospel (Evangelism). When God begins His work in you, He changes you. Some of the things God produces in you: ***Galatians 5:22-23, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Romans 12:1-2***. Accepting Christ is the greatest decision anyone can make. Once a Christian realizes what they have been saved from, it is time to tell others as well (***Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:41***). Sharing Christ is shown both by how you live and by what you say, and both are very important (***John 3:1-21, Romans 1:16, Mark 16:15***).

How are we to fulfill our God-given mission?

Matthew 28:16-20 is commonly known as the Great Commission given by our Commander in Chief, Jesus Christ. We are to fulfill our God-given mission with His authority and power! (***Zechariah 4:6***). The Lord does not call us to serve Him in our own strength or with our own abilities. Instead, when the Lord calls us to do something, He also empowers us to do it.

In fact, if you want any lasting results or fruit from your endeavors for the Lord, it must be done in His authority and empowered by His spirit (***John 15:1-5***). We are not to be timid in fulfilling things for the Lord, but His authority sends us, guides us, and empowers us. His work and message continue to the world through His disciples. By witnessing for Jesus, we are not to make supporters of a cause but rather develop fans of a

theology. We are to make disciples of Jesus Christ—students who are willing to follow and obey the Lord.

In the book *Not a Fan*, Kyle Idleman said, “*Jesus makes it clear that he will not share your affection. Following him requires your whole heart.*” In *Gods at War*, Idleman said, “*Being a devoted disciple means they must acknowledge their own helplessness and their ultimate need — the need for rescue.*”

Disciples are those who have committed themselves to following Jesus. We learn how to follow by learning what Jesus taught, and of course, this happens as we learn His Word, the Bible. Jesus ends the ***Gospel of Matthew 28:20*** with the words, “***I am with you always, even to the end of the age.***” Jesus does not leave us as orphans trying to navigate this life alone. He empowers us to go. He empowers us to follow and then promises there will not be one single moment He will leave us alone.

When we think about His resurrection, we have a marvelous story to share. Our relationship with the Lord is the very reason we were created. Our Worship is for God alone—He must be our deepest love, and He is the source of every other love. First, we are to come and see who Jesus is and all that He has done for us; then, we are to go and tell all who need to hear! Every person who hears the Gospel message needs to respond to the Lord for themselves. The response that pleases the Lord is to come and see and then go and tell.

Let’s end with some practical steps to Christian growth and maturity. First and foremost,

1. Christian growth and maturity begin with a **desire** to grow, which is placed within us through the Holy Spirit.

If you are indeed born again, the Holy Spirit lives within you, and since it is God's desire for you to grow up and mature in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, it will be yours as well.

Philippians 3:13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. NKJV

A desire to grow comes naturally to those who belong to the Lord.

2. Christian growth and maturity require **nourishment**.

The Lord Himself places this hunger within us to grow.

Matthew 5:6 Blessed (oh how happy) are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. NKJV

Hunger and thirst are natural expressions of the basic human desire and need for food and water, but they can also be described as a passion or strong desire within our lives. Most Christians have been fooled into believing that something from the world will fulfill the strong cravings within our lives. King Solomon wrote *Ecclesiastes* to correct that thinking. Solomon had everything you could imagine. He had wisdom, wealth, power, money, and 1000 women as his wives/concubines. Yet, Solomon could not find happiness in a worldly life. His soul was never satisfied, and he said all those things were vain and futile.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 He (the Lord) has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end. NKJV

Spiritually speaking, there is a hunger for God in our hearts that is often not recognized for what it is. Some of us have an empty feeling, a sense of longing, and even loneliness, so we try to fill it with things of the world. This happens as people look for happiness and fulfillment in any area other than in their relationship with the Lord.

The Lord says we should hunger and thirst for things only He can offer that will satisfy our deepest **cravings**:

- **Fellowship** with our Creator.
- A **right** standing with God that comes from faith in Jesus.
- The promise of **Eternal** Life.

The LORD wants to give us His power, presence, and goodness until we cannot contain what He is pouring into our lives.

John 7:38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. NKJV

We grow in that nourishment by getting to know the Lord through Bible study, prayer, worship, and fellowship with like-minded Christ followers.

3. Christian growth and maturity take time and **patience**.

James 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces

patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. NKJV

If you are like me, you want maturity and growth, but you want it yesterday. True growth takes time and patience, while walking with the Lord, as He teaches us lessons, we never realized we needed. To learn to teach, we must teach over and over again. To learn to lead singing, practice songs at home, sing with your family, and lead during church meetings over and over. To understand the Bible, study it daily and discuss it with friends and family. To learn to pray, do it over and over.

Kids may not be good at activities at first, but parents encourage them to do them over and over. Likewise, older members must encourage the newer ones to use their talents. They may not be skilled at first, but they learn by doing.

New believers will make many mistakes, but fear not, some of the greatest people in the Bible made big mistakes.

- Moses made excuses when God called him to lead Israel.
- David committed adultery with Bathsheba but was then called a man after God's own heart.
- Peter denied Jesus three times.
- Paul persecuted Christians before his conversion.
- Thomas doubted Jesus' resurrection.
- All the apostles forsook Jesus when He was arrested and crucified.

But all of these are remembered as some of the greatest servants. Great servants are not people who live without ever sinning, but

people who learn from their mistakes and go on to serve God faithfully.