

ONE YEAR DISCIPLESHIP COURSE

52 Lessons in Christian Living

David Cloud

Sample



One Year Discipleship Course
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Ways These Lessons Can Be Used

As a Sunday School course

As a textbook in Bible Institutes

As part of a home schooling curriculum

As study lessons in jails and prisons

As discipleship lessons for new Christians

As private study lessons

As preaching outlines

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Sample

Suggestions for Using This Material

1. Suggestions for use in a Sunday School or other public setting

- a. These lessons can be used for ages ranging from middle school to adult.
- b. Each teacher should familiarize himself thoroughly with the material before it is taught. An ill prepared Bible teacher is a disgrace to the service of Christ, weakens the ministry of the church, and discourages the hearts of the students. When I was a kid growing up in a Baptist church, my teachers would typically just read the Sunday School lesson. No significant preparation. No heart involvement. No clue! It was doubtless a factor in why the majority of the young people in that church left as soon as they could. The Bible is the living eternal Word of God, and Bible classes should not be dull and boring. This reminds us of the importance of choosing the right teachers in the first place. Pastor Ken Shaver of Greater Cumberland Baptist Church in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, observes, “The objective is not to teach a lesson but to teach the word of God. The lesson is just a tool to help the teacher accomplish this.”
- c. In addition to going over the review questions, the teacher should try to think of some other questions that will help the students apply the lessons to their daily lives.
- d. The memory verses should be used. They are carefully selected and are an important part of the course. They can be quoted at the beginning or end of the class. Or the teacher can have the students indicate by a show of hands if they have done the memory work and then pick out some of the students to quote the verses, alternating students each week. Or one or more faithful students can be assigned the task of hearing the verses quoted by the other students.
- e. Since the *One Year Discipleship Course* lessons are not mere bare outlines and all of the points are developed, it is a good idea for the teacher to make copies available to the students for future reference. One objective of any Bible class is for the students to be able to teach the material to someone else (Hebrews 5:12). The lessons are designed to help the child of God teach God’s Word. Handing out copies of the lessons at the end of the class is also a good idea if the teacher is unable to cover every point and deal with every reference in the class. The students can be encouraged to go over the material later in private.
- f. It is a good idea for pastors to meet with the teachers each week and go over the highlights of the material. This way the teachers are all on the same page and understand the main points to emphasize. Further, the pastor can answer any questions that the teachers might have about the material. This is a good opportunity for the pastor to give instruction about methods of teaching.

2. Suggestions for use as a personal study

The lessons are well developed so that they can be used effectively for private study.

- a. The student needs to look up and read every verse. The Word of God is always more important than any commentary about it.

- b. The memory verses are a very important part of the course. We suggest that the student ask someone to test his or her memorization work.
- c. The review questions are also an important part of the course. Take the time to answer each question.

3. Suggestions for use as a “one on one” discipleship course.

Way of Life’s *One Year Discipleship* course can be used as a discipleship program in churches whereby more mature church members teach others.

For this purpose, we recommend that the entire 52 lessons be used.

Alternatively, the following 14 lessons for the one-on-one discipling:

Repentance
Saving Faith
The Gospel
Evidence of Salvation
Baptism
Eternal Security (3 lessons)
Position and Practice
The Law and the New Testament Christian
Christian Growth and Spiritual Victory (4 lessons)

The program has the following objectives:

Discipleship of every member - The first goal is to give some basic Bible teaching to every church member. They will have opportunity to ask questions and get answers. Paul’s goal in Colossians 1:28 should be that of every church: “Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” No member should be left behind.

Training teachers - The second goal is to provide a means for training new teachers and an opportunity for the people to develop spiritual gifts. The program provides opportunities for serious ministry, including opportunities for the more mature young people. The best way to learn is to teach. According to The Learning Pyramid, developed from research by the National Training Laboratories in Bethel, Maine, we retain 5% from hearing a lecture, 10% from reading, 20% from an audio-visual presentation, 30% from a demonstration, 50% from a group discussion, 75% from practice, and 90% from teaching others. This is because the act of teaching something to others requires that the teacher understand the material himself. Einstein said, “If you can’t explain it to a six-year old, you don’t understand it yourself.”

Multiplying the ministry - The program takes some of the teaching workload from the leaders.

Fellowship - Another goal is to help develop closer relationships between church members and to encourage them to talk about spiritual things rather than worldly and vain things of no eternal value.

The program is set up in the following way:

The first step is to select qualified disciplers. These can include older teens that meet the standards. Some basic suggested requirements are as follows:

- A good Christian testimony
- Faithfulness
- Submissive attitude to authority
- Agreement with the church's doctrine and practice
- Having read the Bible through at least once
- Having the ability to teach others in a one-on-one private context
- Having the time to devote to this project

The potential teachers study the first lesson on their own and prepare to teach it.

The church leaders set up training sessions to go through the course, hitting the high points of the lessons and providing teaching tips. During the training sessions, the potential teachers present a portion of a lesson to the leaders and the other trainees, after which they are critiqued.

When the teachers are deemed ready, they are prayerfully assigned a student, female students being assigned to a female teacher and male students to a male teacher.

The next step is for the teachers to set up appointments with their students to meet with them privately and to go through the material. They should meet consistently once a week, except for emergencies.

The leaders should try to attend some of the first lessons to provide further training and to make sure that the teacher is effective.

The leaders must monitor the program to make sure that the teachers are actually meeting with their students and making good progress and to see if there are any problems. They also need a brief report from the disciplers as to the spiritual progress of the students. A monthly teacher's meeting is a good way to facilitate this follow-up. All of the disciplers can be present to give reports in person. Or one person can be put in charge of the discipling program, and he can collect the weekly reports and present them to the leaders.

Another option is to appoint two-person teams for discipling. A more mature and knowledgeable and gifted Christian is teamed with a younger or newer or less gifted Christian. The teaching can be done by one of the team members or by both, depending on the situation. The older team member is responsible to help develop the newer one. If the second members of the teams mature and prove themselves, they can become leaders in new teams.

The teachers should try to get to know the person they are discipling. They should encourage the person to ask questions and try to give answers. But they should avoid acting like an expert (unless they are), and if they aren't sure of the answer to a question they should say that they will try to find the answer that week and will give an answer in the next session.

4. Suggestions for using the One Year Discipleship Course for evangelistic Bible studies.

Another way to use the One Year Discipleship Course is for evangelistic Bible studies.

Evangelistic home Bible studies can be an effective means for teaching the gospel in the careful, systematic way that is necessary for bringing sinners into a proper understanding of the gospel. The first several lessons of the course--Repentance, Faith, The Gospel, Baptism, and Eternal Security--can be used in this way.

We now have the *Seeker's Bible Study*, which is geared specifically to evangelism. It is available as a free eBook: https://www.wayoflife.org/free_ebooks/seekers_bible_study.php

Evangelistic Bible studies can be used as a follow-up for mass evangelistic campaigns (house to house literature distribution, radio broadcasts, etc.). Include a brochure announcing a course such as "Basic Christianity Bible Studies" or "Basic Bible Truths." Instead of trying to get people to pray a sinner's prayer before they understand the gospel, focus instead on getting the interested ones involved in a series of Bible studies where a relationship can be established and they can be dealt with carefully. This is what the apostle Paul did. He preached the gospel to the masses, then took the interested ones aside and instructed them more carefully in the things of God (Acts 17:34; 18:5-11).

Evangelistic Bible studies can be used to reach out to specific neighborhoods. Bible studies can be conducted in different neighborhoods by various men and women in the church and thus greatly expand the congregation's outreach. We are not talking about "cell groups." The evangelistic Bible studies have the goal of getting people saved and brought into the membership of the church (and incorporated into the full life of the church, including the regular services).

Evangelistic Bible studies can be used to target specific groups of people. Basic Bible Studies can be geared to specific groups, such as women, teenagers, foreigners, professionals, uneducated, deaf, etc. By offering Bible studies for a particular group, the church can focus on their special needs in a way that cannot be done during regular church services or Sunday School. For example, in American cities today there are large numbers of immigrants and visitors and students from other countries and cultures. They often need special consideration when the Gospel is communicated to them. Oftentimes they do not speak English well. It is not uncommon for them to be completely ignorant of the gospel or even of the most basic facts of the Bible and Christianity. The typical "Romans Road" gospel presentation will often be insufficient. They need to be taught the very basics of biblical truth, such as creation, the fall of man, the character of God, and the uniqueness of the Bible, before they can understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. All of that can be taught out of Romans, of course, because Romans itself begins with creation and the fall of man, but this is not what most people do when they present the "Romans Road." Many immigrants and foreign visitors will not be familiar with any of the terms of the gospel, such as sin and repentance and grace and faith. Unless those terms are carefully explained, they will "hear" the gospel, but they will not understand it. Too much of the soul-winning activity in North America is simply too shallow and hurried. Missionaries who work in other parts of the world understand this and develop ways of teaching the gospel effectively to their people, but too often personal workers in North America approach foreigners without proper knowledge of how they think and how to reach them. They try to reach them exactly as they would someone who has grown up in the Bible-belt of the United States, and they wonder why it doesn't work. Involving select groups of people in Bible studies that are geared to their needs and that are led by people who understand them can solve many of these problems.

Evangelistic Bible studies can be used in conjunction with evangelistic revival meetings. It is said that only about 5% of people making professions at large (mass or city-wide) revivals go on to become active church members. Of course, one would suppose the percentage to be higher in local church revivals. Still, the percentage of those who don't "stick" is appallingly high in all types of evangelistic programs today. There are many reasons for this, one of the chief being that scores of those making professions do not truly understand the gospel and are, therefore, not fully committing themselves to Christ in biblical repentance and faith. It's one thing to say, "Yea, I'll go along with that; it sounds good," and quite another to be truly born again of the Spirit of God. If most of those coming forward in revivals were strongly encouraged to commit themselves to a multi-week Bible study and if godly, mature church members faithfully taught the course, we can only imagine that the lasting fruit of our meetings would be ten-fold greater than would otherwise be the case.

Sample

Repentance

MEMORY VERSES: *Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 20:21*

In the first two lessons we will look at man's part in salvation. There are two things to consider: repentance and faith. Paul describes both of these in Acts 20:21, and he puts repentance first, so this is where we will start.

Following are the answers to some important questions about repentance:

Is repentance necessary for salvation?

Repentance is commanded by God. It is mentioned 60 times in the New Testament. It was preached by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1-2), by Christ (Luke 13:3), by Peter (2 Peter 3:9), and by Paul (Acts 17:30). Since the apostle Paul preached both repentance and faith, it is obvious that both are required for salvation (Acts 20:21).

What are some false views of repentance?

Repentance is not reformation or changing one's life. Salvation is not of human works; works follow salvation as the effect or fruit or product (Ephesians 2:8-10). Reformation deals with one's fellow man and with things in this life, whereas repentance deals with God and with eternal things. We must be careful not to give people the impression that they must change their lives and give up their sin in order to be saved. The life-changing part of salvation is God's part, not man's.

Repentance is not doing penance. Many Catholic Bibles translate "repentance" as "do penance." This involves confession to a priest, contrition, absolution (forgiveness pronounced by the priest), and satisfaction. Catholic penance is a works salvation which the Bible condemns.

Repentance is not mere remorse for wrong actions. The Bible tells us that men can be remorseful about their actions without exercising genuine repentance unto salvation. This is described as "the sorrow of the world" in 2 Corinthians 7:10. There are examples of this in the Old and the New Testaments. King Saul is the prime Old Testament example. He was sorry that he got caught in various sinful acts, but he did not demonstrate true repentance in that his actions didn't change (1 Sam. 15:24; 24:17; 26:21). Judas is a New Testament example of a man who was remorseful of his actions but did not repent toward God (Mat. 27:3-4). A main difference between remorse and repentance is that repentance is directed toward God ("repentance toward God," Acts 20:21). We see this in the Prodigal Son. He was not merely remorseful of how he had lived and of the consequences he had suffered; he came to the place where he acknowledged first and foremost that he had "sinned against heaven" (Lk. 15:18).

Repentance is not merely believing in Christ. Some have defined repentance as a synonym for believing. One well-known fundamental Baptist preacher defined it as "turning from unbelief to belief." But if this is true, the Bible's preachers would not have preached repentance *in addition to faith*. We have seen that Paul preached repentance toward God AND faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21). The reason why verses such as John 3:16 and Acts 16:31 don't mention repentance is that true saving faith includes repentance and true repentance includes faith. Repentance and faith are sometimes spoken of in Scripture as both being necessary for salvation (i.e., Acts

20:21; Hebrews 6:1), while at other times only one or the other is said to be necessary. For example, salvation is referred to as coming to repentance with no mention of faith in the following passages: Matthew 9:13; 11:20-21; 21:32; Mark 1:4; 2:17; 6:12; Luke 15:7; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 11:18; 26:20; 2 Corinthians 7:10; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 2 Timothy 2:25; and 2 Peter 3:9. Then in other passages, such as John 3:16 and Acts 16:31, salvation is referred to as believing and repentance is not mentioned. By comparing Scripture with Scripture (rather than isolating Scripture), we conclude that saving faith includes repentance. Saving faith is a repentant faith.

The true meaning of faith must be explained and emphasized. The common way that “faith” or “belief” is defined by people today involves a mere mental consent to something, such as “I believe that George Washington was America’s first president” or “I believe that Jesus was the Son of God and came to die on the cross.” That is not what the Bible means by saving faith. Saving faith is a faith that issues from a heart that is convinced of its own fallen condition and has stopped making excuses and hiding in self-righteousness. Saving faith issues from a heart that is convinced that Christ is the *only* Lord and Saviour and *that reaches out to Christ* in personal trust. Saving faith issues from a surrendered heart, which is the very essence of repentance.

That, and that alone, is saving “faith.” And when we are dealing with people’s souls we must be careful to explain the meaning of the terms of the gospel, as opposed to hastily running through some little “Roman’s Road” plan and then trying to get the person to pray a sinner’s prayer before he knows what he is doing.

What is biblical repentance?

Repentance is admitting that I have sinned against God and being sorry for that (Acts 20:21). Repentance is “toward God” because it is God that I have offended. He made man for Himself, and He made man to obey His laws, but we have turned our backs on Him and broken His laws, and He requires that we repent of this. Repentance is admitting that I am not good, that even my supposed righteousness is as filthy rags before a thrice holy God (Isaiah 64:6).

Repentance means to turn around, to change directions (Acts 26:20). It is something that happens in the heart and mind.

Repentance means to surrender to God’s rule (Isaiah 45:22-23). *Repentance is to receive Christ as Lord* (Romans 10:9-13). To believe is to receive Jesus Christ as my *only Saviour* and to repent is to receive Him as my *only Lord*. The Bible says the sinner is at enmity against God because of his rebellion to God’s rule (Rom. 8:7). “Enmity” means “the quality of being an enemy.” To repent means that I reject this attitude and surrender to God’s rule over my life. We see this surrender throughout the New Testament in the lives of those who were saved. Those who received Jesus in a saving manner called upon Him as Lord (Luke 23:42).

Repentance is not a change of life; it is a change of mind about God and sin that results in a change of life. Many who “believe” or “pray the sinner’s prayer” have no intention to change or to allow God to take control of their lives. They are not interested in being a disciple of Christ. They want a ticket to heaven that keeps them out of hell, but they want to continue to live as they please. They want to “believe in Jesus,” but they have no interest in obeying Him. That is not biblical salvation. The sinner must be ready to turn from his false gods, including self-worship, in order to worship and serve the true God (“ye turned to God from idols,” 1 Thessalonians 1:9).

Repentance is an assassin laying down his knife. Evangelist James Stewart wrote:

“The hand that clutches the assassin’s knife must open ‘ere it can grasp the gift its intended victim proffers; and opening that hand, though a single act, has a double aspect and purpose. Accepting the gift implies a turning from the crime the heart was bent on, and it was the gift itself that worked the change. Faith is the open hand, relatively to the gift; repentance is the same hand, relatively, not only to the gift but more especially to the dagger that is flung from it” (Stewart, *Evangelism*, pp. 48, 49).

Repentance is a thief returning the stolen property. The late Lester Roloff said:

“I believe we ought to make right what we can make right. What if I was staying with a group of preachers and one of them stole my wallet while I was sleeping? The next day he comes up to me and tells me he is terribly sorry and asks me to forgive him. I would be glad to hear that he is sorry for stealing my wallet, but I would certainly want and expect more than that from a repentant thief. I would want my wallet back! I don’t believe he has really repented unless he brings my billfold back. I DON’T BELIEVE YOU HAVE REPENTED UNTIL YOU GET RIGHT AND SAY, ‘LORD, I’M GOING TO LIVE DIFFERENT FROM NOW ON,’ and by the grace of God you will live different” (Roloff, *Repent or Perish*).

What are some Bible examples of repentance?

The best way to understand repentance is to examine examples of it in the Bible.

The Prodigal Son “came to himself” (Luke 15:17-20). This refers to conviction and spiritual enlightenment by the Holy Spirit. He humbled himself, acknowledged his sin against God and against his father, and turned around so that he was facing in a different direction. This is repentance. The evidence of his repentance is that he returned home and made things right with his father; he humbled himself and was willing to be a mere servant.

Zacchaeus repented and was converted so dramatically that he became an honest man who paid back those he had cheated (Luke 19:8).

The Thessalonians “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9). That is biblical repentance. Notice that they didn’t turn from idols to God; they turned to God from idols. The order is important. If a man turns to God, he has his back to his old gods and old life. This is true repentance. It is “repentance toward God” (Acts 20:21). Unless a person rejects his false gods and false religions and self-righteousness and surrenders to Christ’s Lordship, he cannot be saved.

How do we use repentance in soul winning?

First, we must not skip over it; we must tell the people that God requires it and we must explain what it is.

One afternoon I accompanied a pastor to knock doors in a part of a city that was populated with university students. A few times in one afternoon he shared a five-minute Romans Road plan (i.e., all have sinned against God, the wages of sin is death, Jesus died for our sin, and those who believe can be saved) and then immediately asked three questions: “Does that make sense to you?” (All of them said it made sense.) “Do you have any questions?” (None of them did, because they didn’t appear the least bit interested, not interested enough even to invite us into the home.)

And, “Would you pray to receive Christ right now?” (None of them did.) Not only was the program “quick,” to say the least, the pastor didn’t even hint to the people that there would need to be a change in the direction of their life, a turning, a surrender.

An independent Baptist church in Maine conducted a door-to-door campaign a few years ago in which the people were taught to say, “If I were to tell you today that you can be saved and go to heaven and you won’t have to change anything, would you be interested?”

Many gospel tracts don’t contain a hint of repentance.

This is not scriptural soul winning. If Christ and the apostles preached repentance, then we must preach repentance! We need to explain that the individual must be ready to surrender to God, and not give him the false impression that it is possible to be saved without this.

Of course, we also explain that God will do the changing; repentance is not reformation or turning over a new leaf; but the sinner must be ready to accept God’s working. He must surrender.

If the individual is not ready to surrender, he is not ready to be saved. I have dealt with hundreds of people who came to the place of understanding and believing that Christ died for their sins and that faith in Christ is the only way of salvation, but they simply were not ready to surrender to God. They refused to repent.

Repentance was the thing that was missing in my life as I grew up in a Baptist church. I don’t recall a time when I did not believe in Christ. I had no doubt that He died on the cross for my sin. (What child growing up in a Bible-believing church does *not* “believe”?) I made a public profession of faith at about age 11-12, but it was empty because I had no intention of surrendering my life to Christ. I was already entranced by rock & roll and its lifestyle and bowing before Jesus as Lord was the farthest thing from my mind. Not surprisingly, the course of my life did not change one iota after I “believed.”

When my wife and I first began our missionary work in South Asia in 1979, our landlord began coming to our house to have Bible studies. He was a wealthy middle-aged Hindu and had a concubine with whom he spent most of his time, though he was married and had grown children. After we went through the gospel a few times, he told me he felt that he understood what I was teaching and he “believed that Jesus died for his sins” and that he was interested in receiving Christ, but he wanted to know what he would have to do about two specific things in his life--his shady business practices and his illicit relationship with the concubine. He is the one who brought these things to my attention. I could have said, “Don’t worry about that. Just pray to receive Christ and those things will work themselves out later.” That’s the method I was taught in Bible School, but I don’t believe it would have been scriptural counsel. I don’t believe he could receive Christ and be saved unless he repented of his immorality and his dishonesty. Salvation requires surrendering. I explained to him that if he would turn to Christ, God would change his life and he would have different desires, but he didn’t want that. He was entirely unwilling to surrender to God as God. The power to change one’s life is from God, but the sinner must surrender to God’s working. After I told him this, he never returned for a Bible study.

Consider Christ’s dealings with the woman at the well in John 4. He faced her squarely with the immorality that had dominated her life.

Consider Christ's dealing with the rich young ruler. He faced the young man with his sin of self-righteousness and covetousness (Luke 18:18-23).

This is the way God deals with people. He reproveth men for their sin in order to bring them to repentance (John 16:8). And this is the way *we* must deal with men, too, if we want to follow the Bible in our gospel work. To preach repentance means to deal with glaring sins that people are holding onto and to tell them plainly that they must repent of sinning against God; they must yield their lives to Him; they must change directions; they must surrender. God will do a glorious work in their lives but they must be ready for that to happen. They must have a change of mind about God and sin that will result in a change of life.

It appears that many soul-winning programs try to "slip the gospel by the sinner" and get him saved before he really knows what is happening! That is not possible. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3, 5). There is no salvation without repentance, and it is a Holy Spirit-wrought change of mind that results in a change of life.

To tell sinners that God demands that they repent might cut down on the "decision" statistics, but it is the only honest and scriptural path. God has commanded that all men everywhere repent and Jesus said they can't be saved without it, so how can we fail to tell them this?

Second, it is not necessarily the word "repentance" that always has to be used; it is the concept that the soul winner must get across.

We must make the individual understand that God requires surrender.

Third, we need to deal with each case individually.

Preaching repentance depends on the context. We see this from the fact that the Bible sometimes mentions repentance and sometimes doesn't in the context of evangelism.

The example of the Philippian jailor. He was already under conviction when he cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" Doubtless Paul and Silas had been witnessing to him. We know that they had been singing and praising God. Further, the power of God displayed in the earthquake had shaken the jailor deeply. Now, through the Spirit's working, he was ready to do whatever God told him to do. In such a case there is no need to go into a lengthy study about repentance. He was already repenting! I, too, have met men in jails and other places that were ready to be saved. They had heard the gospel and God was working in their hearts; they knew that they were sinners and were sorry for their sin against God were tired of the old life and were ready to surrender to Him. In that context, all that is needed is to explain to the individual how to put his or her faith in Christ in a saving manner (e.g., Romans 10:8-13).

The example of the idolaters at Athens. On the other hand, when Paul preached to the idolaters at Athens who were treating the gospel as merely another philosophical debate, he told them that God "now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). He didn't say, "Just believe in Jesus." They needed to repent of their false gods, and particularly of their chief god, which was Self! They needed to be confronted with Almighty God and His claim on their lives.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON REPENTANCE

1. In what verse does Paul say that he preached both repentance and faith?
2. How many times is repentance mentioned in the New Testament?
3. What preachers in the New Testament preached repentance?
4. In what verse did Jesus say except you repent you will perish?
5. In what verse did Paul say that God now commands all men to repent?
6. In what verse did Peter say that God wants all men to come to repentance?
7. What are four false views of repentance?
8. What is the "sorrow of the world"?
9. How do we know that King Saul did not repent?
10. How do we know that repentance is not a synonym for believing?
11. Why doesn't John 3:16 mention repentance?
12. Why is repentance directed toward God?
13. In what verse did Paul demand that believers "do works meet for repentance"?
14. Repentance is a _____ about God and sin that _____.
15. Repentance means to _____ around.
16. Repentance means to change _____.
17. Repentance means to _____ to God's rule.
18. Repentance is not a change of _____; it is a change of _____.
19. What are three Bible examples of repentance?
20. How do we see biblical repentance in the life of the Prodigal Son?
21. How do we see biblical repentance in the life of Zacchaeus?
22. The Thessalonians _____ to God _____ idols.
23. Why is it necessary to preach repentance when we are soul winning?
24. If the individual is not ready to _____, he is not ready to be saved.
25. What kept my landlord in Nepal from coming to Christ?
26. How did Christ deal with the woman at the well in regard to her sin?
27. What sins did Christ point out in the life of the rich young ruler?
28. Why did Paul tell the philosophers at Athens to repent but he didn't say that to the Philippian jailor?

Saving Faith

MEMORY VERSES: *Matthew 11:28-29; John 1:11-12; 3:16; 6:28-29; 14:6; Acts 16:30; Ephesians 2:8-9*

In these first two lessons we are considering man's part in salvation. There are two things: *repentance* and *faith*. Having examined repentance in the first lesson, we will now examine faith.

Acts 20:21

As we saw in the first lesson, Paul preached repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ. The sinner must repent toward God, because it is God that he has offended by his self-will and disobedience. The sinner must put his faith in Jesus, because He died for our sins.

Consider three important questions about saving faith:

What is saving faith?

It is important to understand that saving faith is not simply believing some historical fact with one's mind. For example, we believe that George Washington was the first president of the United States and that Hitler ruled Germany in World War II and that Mahatma Gandhi lived in India. But such beliefs do not change the lives of those who believe. Likewise, many people believe that Jesus Christ lived long ago and that He did many wonderful things, but this belief does not change their lives. Saving faith is different from this.

Saving faith is an undivided faith.

The Bible says that Jesus is the *only* Lord and Saviour. See John 14:6; Acts 4:12. To be saved I must believe that Jesus Christ ALONE is Lord and Saviour, just as the Bible says. Some people try to add Jesus to their other gods. They want to believe in Jesus while believing in other lords as well. No one can be saved this way.

Saving faith is a trusting faith.

The word "believe" in the Bible means to trust, to depend upon, to commit oneself to. To be saved a person must fully trust his soul and eternal destiny to the Lord Jesus. He must rely upon Jesus and Jesus alone to forgive his sin and make him right with God and carry him to heaven.

Trusting Jesus is like trusting a boat to carry me across a lake. It is not enough to look at the boat and to admire it. You must actually get into the boat and trust it to carry you safely to the other side. Have you trusted Jesus to take away your sin? Some people say they believe in Jesus, but they continue to go through their old religious rituals. This proves they are not truly trusting in Jesus. When we trust Jesus, we realize that we do not need any vain religious rituals for salvation.

Saving faith is a convinced faith.

To be saved I must be fully convinced that Jesus is Lord and Saviour and that He will fulfill His promises to me. True salvation is a know-so salvation. This is the kind of faith that Jesus' early disciples had. See Peter's testimony in John 6:66-69. This is the testimony of a genuinely saved

person. We can be sure because of God's promises (1 John 5:11-13). In contrast is the "faith" of those who say they "hope" they will be saved, meaning they aren't sure. I once met a Nepali who said he had 99% faith in Jesus. That isn't enough!

Saving faith is an unmixed faith.

Saving faith cannot be mixed with human works. See Romans 3:24; 4:4-5; 6:23; 11:6; Ephesians 2:8-9. A person must receive Christ's salvation as a free gift, not as a reward for good works. A gift is something that someone else purchases and then gives to me freely. If I try to pay anything whatsoever, it is no longer a gift. Jesus is the one who purchased our salvation at great cost with His death and the blood. Are you enjoying God's free salvation in Jesus Christ today, or are you still trying to do something to earn your salvation?

Saving faith is a receiving faith.

Saving faith receives Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Saving faith doesn't merely believe in Jesus as a historical person; it calls out to Him and asks Him for salvation. See Matthew 11:28-29; John 1:11-12; and Romans 10:13. Salvation is a personal relationship with Christ.

What is the place of works in the Christian life?

Does believing in Christ mean that I don't have to do any works in the Christian life? What is the place of works?

Again we will look at Ephesians 2:8-9, but this time we will examine verse 10, as well.

God wants us to live obedient, holy lives, but this comes *after* salvation. Good works are *the product and fruit of* salvation, not *the way of* salvation. Good works are produced in the believer by the Holy Spirit.

In the epistle of Ephesians, there are nearly 90 commandments that the believer is to obey. These include being humble (Eph. 4:1), longsuffering (Eph. 4:1), putting away lying (Eph. 4:25), putting away anger (Eph. 4:26), not stealing (Eph. 4:28), not speaking any corrupt thing (Eph. 4:29), being kind (Eph. 4:32), forgiving (Eph. 4:32), putting away fornication and uncleanness (Eph. 5:3), having no fellowship with the works of darkness (Eph. 5:11), redeeming the time (Eph. 5:16), understanding God's will (Eph. 5:17), not being drunk (Eph. 5:18), being filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18), wives submitting to their husbands (Eph. 5:22), husbands loving their wives (Eph. 5:25), children obeying their parents (Eph. 6:1-3), fathers training their children and not provoking them to wrath (Eph. 6:4), servants being obedient to their masters (Eph. 6:5), and masters treating their servants justly (Eph. 6:9).

These are some of the works that God wants the believer to obey, but we cannot do these things until first we are saved. We must be reconciled to God through Jesus, forgiven of our sins, and indwelt with the Holy Spirit. Only then can we serve God acceptably.

Is salvation a religious process?

A popular heresy today is the teaching that salvation is a *process*, but the Bible says it is a miraculous conversion *experience*. This was what Jesus taught. See Matthew 18:3 and John 3:3.

The new birth conversion is not a long process; it is a supernatural, life-changing event! And this happens when the sinner repents of his sin and puts his faith in Jesus as his only Saviour.

Coming to repentance and faith can be a process, but salvation itself is a birth and a conversion experience.

This is what we see in the Bible. Those who were saved in the book of Acts were saved on the very day they received Christ. This includes the Jews who believed on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41), the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:36-39), Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:44-48), Lydia (Acts 16:14-15), and the Philippian jailer and his household (Acts 16:30-34).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON FAITH

1. In what verse did Paul say that he preached both repentance and faith?
2. Does saving faith mean simply to believe some fact in the mind?
3. What are the five characteristics of saving faith?
4. In what verse does Jesus say that He is the way, the truth, and the life?
5. What verse says there is no other name under heaven whereby men might be saved?
6. How is trusting Jesus like trusting a boat to carry you across a lake?
7. In what verse did Peter say that he was sure that Jesus is the Son of God?
8. What verse says we can know that we have eternal life?
9. What verse says that those who receive Christ become sons of God?
10. What verse says, "Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"?
11. What passage says that we are saved by grace without works but we are saved unto good works?
12. What verse says we must be converted?
13. What verse says we must be born again?
14. How long did it take people to be saved in the book of Acts?

The Gospel

MEMORY VERSES: *Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:10, 23; 6:23; 10:9-13; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 1 John 5:11-13*

Introduction

1. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 contains the gospel in a nutshell. Nowhere else in Scripture is the gospel summarized in this brief manner. This is therefore a most important passage.

- a. We need to know the right gospel, because it is the only way of salvation (1 Cor. 15:2).
- b. We need to know the right gospel, because Paul warned that every false gospel is cursed of God (Galatians 1:6-9).
- c. We need to know the right gospel because Jesus commanded us to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15).

2. Paul addressed this presentation of the gospel to believers (1 Cor. 15:1). This teaches us that new believers need to learn the gospel properly so they can be grounded in its truths personally and preach it to others. This also teaches us that older believers need to learn the gospel better and better. We will never stop learning about the gospel.

Important Questions Answered about the Gospel

Every foundational truth about the gospel is covered in this important passage in 1 Corinthians 15.

What is the gospel?

There are three major parts to the gospel of Christ:

1. Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture (1 Cor. 15:3).
 - a. Notice who died: It was *Christ*. Jesus is the Christ promised in the Old Testament. He is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. The name “Christ” is a Greek word that means “anointed one.” The Hebrew word “Messiah” means the same thing (Psalm 2:2; 132:17). Jesus is the Messiah. The prophets said that Messiah would come to earth the first time to be cut off or die for man’s sins (Dan. 9:25-26), and He would come again to rule on the throne of David and to establish the kingdom of God on earth (Isaiah 9:6-7).

- b. Notice why Christ died: *for our sins*.

(1) All men are sinners (Rom. 3:23). When Adam disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, he became a sinner, and all of his children inherited his fallen nature. We are sinners by nature. No one has to teach us how to sin. “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies” (Ps. 58:3). The fallen human heart is full of sin and deceit. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9). To sin is to break God’s laws (1 Jo. 3:4). Sin is to turn away from God to our own way (Isaiah 53:6). In God’s holy eyes, all men

are terrible sinners. They are described in Romans 3:9-18. No person can be saved unless he acknowledges that he is a sinner that the Bible says he is. Man's sinful condition is an essential teaching of the gospel.

- (2) The Bible says that every sin will be punished (James 2:9-10). Every secret thing will be judged (Ecc. 12:14; Lu. 12:2-3; 1 Co. 4:5). The punishment is death (Rom. 6:23). There is both physical death and eternal death in the lake of fire, which is the second death (Rev. 20:11-15).
 - (3) The good news of the gospel is that Christ died for our sins. He is the sinless Son of God and did not deserve to die. He died in our place. He took our punishment. Salvation is an exchange. Christ is the sinner's substitute. When we believe on Christ, He takes our sin and we take His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21).
 - (4) To be saved, the individual must see himself as a wicked sinner before God who is deserving of eternal condemnation. No one can be saved apart from this. If the person still thinks of himself as basically a good person, he cannot be saved. A pastor friend was on soul winning visitation in California with a veteran missionary one Saturday when a Roman Catholic man answered the door. In a few minutes, the missionary showed the man the Romans Road and led the man in a sinner's prayer, and while he was filling out the church report and getting the man's information so he could report him as "saved," my pastor friend asked the man whether he believed he was a good person and whether he believed it is possible for a person to go to heaven by being a good person. The man answered, "Yes." It is obvious that the man was not ready to get saved, and it is criminal to lead people in a sinner's prayer when they don't understand or don't agree with the basic truth of the gospel.
 - (5) Therefore, a major goal in soul winning is to help people see that they are lost sinners. We have to take the time to explain what sin is according to God's definition, because most people think of sin either only as some small matter (such as a Buddhist who thinks sin is stepping on an ant) or only as some "big" thing like murder. Hindus typically think of sin only in these terms. They will admit that they are sinners in a vague way, but typically they do not mean by this that they are completely unrighteous before God, that they are not good, and that they are deserving of God's judgment.
 - (6) We must look to the Holy Spirit to accomplish the supernatural work of bringing conviction to the heart of the sinner and making him guilty before God (John 16:8).
- c. Notice that Christ died *according to the Scriptures*. This refers to the amazing prophecies in the Bible that described His death in great detail. These were written down hundreds of years before Jesus was born. Following are just a few of these prophecies from Psalm 22:

The Scripture prophesied that Jesus would die by crucifixion (Psa. 22:14-16; Jn. 19:16-18). This is a perfect description of death by crucifixion, and when the prophet David wrote it 1,000 years before Christ came, crucifixion was not yet practiced! It began to be practiced in the days of the Roman Empire not long before Jesus was born. To punish murderers and robbers, the Roman government would nail their hands and feet to a wooden cross and leave them there to die.

The Scripture prophesied that the soldiers would gamble for Jesus' robe at the foot of the cross (Psa. 22:18). The cruel soldiers did this while Jesus was suffering (Mat. 27:35).

The Scripture prophesied the words that Jesus spoke from the cross (Psa. 22:1; Mat. 27:46).

The Scripture prophesied that Jesus would thirst (Psa. 22:15; Jn. 19:28).

The Scripture prophesied that the people would mock Him (Psa. 22:6-8; Mat. 27:39, 41-43).

The Scripture prophesied that the people would sit and stare at Him (Psa. 22:17; Mat. 27:36).

2. Christ was buried (1 Cor. 15:4).

- a. His burial proved that He really died. He did not merely faint or merely appear to die as some false teachers have claimed. The reason the soldiers did not break Jesus' legs is because He was already dead (Jn. 19:31-34).
- b. He was in the grave for three days and nights (Mat. 12:40). For this reason we know that it was not possible that Jesus was buried on Friday as many churches teach. We know that Jesus rose from the dead early Sunday morning (Lk. 24:1) and if He was in the grave for three days and three nights, He died either on Wednesday or Thursday.
- c. His burial fulfilled prophecy. It was "*according to the Scriptures.*" The Bible prophesied that Jesus would be buried in the tomb of a rich man (Isaiah 53:9). This prophecy, written about 710 years before Jesus was born, was fulfilled when Jesus was taken down off the cross by a wealthy disciple and buried in that disciple's own tomb (Mat. 27:57-60).

3. Christ rose again according to the Scripture (1 Cor. 15:4).

- a. His resurrection was prophesied in Psalm 16:10. This was written about 1,000 years before Jesus came.
- b. His resurrection proved that He is the Son of God (Rom. 1:4). Jesus prophesied that He would rise again the third day (Mat. 16:21), and if he had not done so it would have proven that he was a false prophet and not the Son of God that He claimed to be.

Is there evidence that the gospel is true?

In this same context, Paul gives two great evidences of the truth of the gospel:

1. The Old Testament prophecies prove that the gospel is true. He died and rose again "according to the scriptures." We have already looked at these. Bible prophecy is a great, great miracle. We don't even know what will happen tomorrow, yet the Bible's prophecies describe events thousands of years in the future with detailed exactness.

2. The eye-witness testimonies prove that the gospel is true (1 Cor. 15:5-8). The Bible is not a "blind religious faith." It is based on "many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3). Biblical faith has "substance" and "evidence" (Heb. 11:1).

- a. The resurrected Christ was seen by more than 500 people on one occasion (1 Cor. 15:6). When Paul wrote this epistle, most of these eyewitnesses were still alive. Paul was not writing about things that had happened long ago and been passed down from generation-to-generation by word of mouth and dependance on man's fallible memory.

- b. This resurrection dramatically changed the lives of those who saw Christ. Whereas before He rose, the disciples were fearful and in hiding from the authorities (John 20:19), after they saw the risen Christ they were bold and were willing to lay down their lives for their faith.
- c. The resurrection convinced Jesus' own half brother James (1 Cor. 15:7). Compare John 7:5 where we see that Jesus' brothers did not believe on Him before His crucifixion.
- d. The resurrection convinced Paul and converted him from being Christ's bitter enemy. From an earthly perspective, Paul had absolutely nothing to gain by following Christ. He was persecuted to the end of his life and lived a nomad existence without family or property. The reason that he was willing to suffer these things was that he was absolutely convinced that Jesus had risen from the dead thus proving that He is the Son of God.

What does it mean to "believe in vain" (1 Cor. 15:2)?

Paul probably means that there are ways to believe that do not result in salvation. Consider some of the ways that this is possible:

- a. *One can believe in vain by believing the wrong thing* (Jn. 2:23-25). These Jews "believed" on Jesus as a worldly provider who would feed and protect them instead of believing on Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. See Jn. 6:14, 15, 26, 66. Likewise, many today believe on Jesus in wrong ways. They come to Jesus and pray to Him so He will help them with their problems or build up their self-esteem or make them wealthy or heal them or some other thing rather than humbling themselves as sinners and trusting Him solely as their Saviour.
- b. *One can believe in vain by "believing" without repentance* (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 20:21; 26:20). Repentance means to surrender to God. Many want to "believe in Jesus" without surrendering their lives to Him, but it is impossible to be saved without repentance. The devils "believe in God" but not in a saving sense (Jam. 2:19-20). They know He exists but they do not submit to Him. Many sinners do the same thing, but this is not saving faith.
- c. *One can believe in vain by believing a false gospel or a false christ* (2 Cor. 11:3-4). Many believe in a different gospel or a different Jesus than that which is revealed in Scripture. For example, they believe in a gospel of faith plus works or Jesus plus sacraments or a Jesus that is not Almighty God in the flesh.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE GOSPEL

1. In what book and chapter did Paul give the gospel in a nutshell?
2. What are three reasons why we need to know the gospel?
3. In what book and chapter did Paul warn about false gospels?
4. What are the three parts to the gospel?
5. What verse says that all have sinned?
6. What verse says that sin is the transgression of God's law?
7. What verse says that if we break God's law in even one point we are guilty of all?
8. What verse says the wages of sin is death?

9. What is the second death?
10. In what book and chapter is the second death described?
11. What does the Bible mean when it says that Christ died for our sins?
12. Why can a person not be saved if he does not fully believe that he is a sinner?
13. A major goal in soul winning is to help people see that they are _____.
14. What does the Bible mean when it says that Christ died according to the Scriptures?
15. What are four prophecies about Jesus' death?
16. What great prophecy described Jesus' death by crucifixion?
17. How do we know that Jesus did not die on Friday?
18. What two things did Jesus demonstrate by rising from the dead?
19. What are two evidences that the gospel is true?
20. What are three ways that someone can believe in vain?

Sample