

**F O L L O W M E**

BIBLE  STUDIES

Follow Me

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# FOLLOW

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.  
-Revelation 22:17

These studies are for the thirsty. They are designed for those who desire to come to Christ and live. We don't need to wonder about how to become followers of Christ. He's spelled it out clearly for us in His word.

Following Jesus is merely a decision. But it is a decision that will change our lives forever. Thus, it is not to be made without thorough examination of God's word and our own lives. Jesus repeatedly called would-be followers to "count the cost" before they could follow him. Some, like the rich young ruler, could not pay the price that Jesus demanded. Others, like the apostles, were willing to give up their lives in order to live for him.

As we examine what it takes to become a disciple (follower) of Jesus according to the scriptures, we will look at 3 C's:

**Conviction:** What do I need to believe to become a modern day follower of Christ?

**Conversion:** What has God done for me and what does he expect from me? What does it mean to be saved?

**Commitment:** What does the devoted life of a true disciple look like?

Most people who devote themselves to the scriptures highlighted in these studies will find that one or more of the C's are lacking or missing altogether in their lives. It is best, therefore, to see these studies as a new start. Even if you have been devoted to Christ for many years, getting back to basics is essential. Strive for humility with each passage and answer each question with brutal honesty. These studies are a precious opportunity to meet Jesus again for the first time. Jesus is still calling us to "come".

**JESUS IS CALLING...WILL YOU FOLLOW?**

# EXAMINE YOURSELF

## 2 CORINTHIANS 13:5

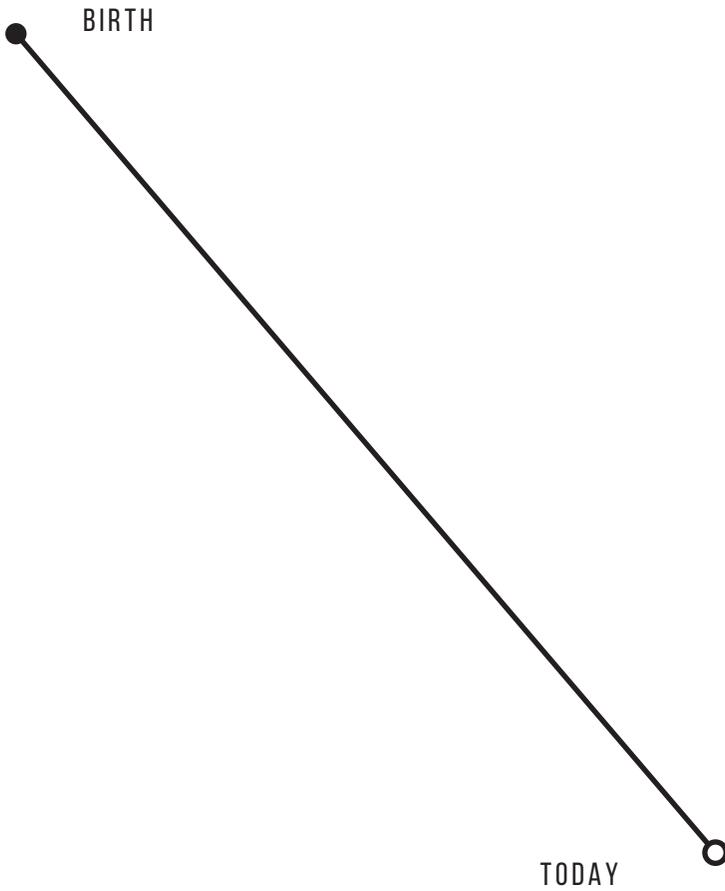
We understand the importance of regular checkups. We take our cars in for scheduled maintenance. We go to the doctor for physical examinations. We take the necessary steps to avoid catastrophe in almost every area of our lives. But how often do we examine our spiritual condition? Just as refusing to have someone look at our car regularly will leave us broken down on the side of the road, refusing to examine our relationship with God will leave us broken down on the fringes of faith.

This introductory study is your chance to step back and take an honest look at your walk with God. Prepare yourself to be open and vulnerable so you and your study partner can identify what areas of your walk with God may need attention. Pray for humility if your pride begins to flare up. Even though this first study is only an introduction, some serious decisions may need to be made right away to put you on a path toward following Jesus.

If possible, before you meet up, take notes on the bible passages and questions. Use your notes as a guide for a great discussion about being a follower of Jesus.

## ARE YOU READY TO BEGIN?

Start the self-examination by writing a time line of your spiritual life on the next page. Include any major events that you can think of (i.e.: church membership(s), important life events, repentance, baptism, salvation, major influences, inspirational moments, sin, setbacks, etc.).



**Q:** What does this big picture of your spiritual life show you?

**Q:** How would you like to grow spiritually; especially from these bible studies?

# CONVICTION

## JAMES 1:22-25, 2:14-26

Our belief in God must go beyond our heads into our hearts, hands, and feet. The combination of knowing and doing God's will proves that we are faithful. A conviction is a belief held so deeply that we live it out in every area of our lives.

In the space below, write a few of the most important commands that you know from the bible.

Then, ask yourself how you are doing at following those commands.

### BIBLICAL COMMANDS I BELIEVE ARE IMPORTANT:

1.

2.

3.

Now look back at the commands and write about how you are doing at following each one.

# CONVERSION

## GALATIANS 2:2

After 14 years of preaching, Paul went to the leaders in Jerusalem to make sure that he was teaching people the true gospel that leads to salvation. Like Paul, we need to be sure that we are not “running our race in vain” when it comes to salvation doctrine and especially our own conversions.

Take a moment to think about the conviction/belief someone needs to become a Christian or get saved.

Imagine that you have a friend who wants to be saved. In the space below, do your best to write a letter explaining how that person can become saved according to the bible. Write down references to any key scriptures.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Sincerely,

Write down any questions you have about what it means to become a Christian (to be converted) on the notes page at the end of this study.

# COMMITMENT

## ACTS 2:42-47

## HEBREWS 10:23-25

The very first Christians were devoted and they saw God do great things because of their commitment. Take some time to write out the ways that you are devoted to Christ. You can use Acts 2:42 as a template by detailing how you are devoted to the apostles teaching (the bible), the breaking of bread (communion), fellowship (deep Christian relationships) and prayer (friendship with God).

### APOSTLES TEACHING:

I live out my commitment to the bible by...

### BREAKING OF BREAD:

I live out my commitment to communion by...

### FELLOWSHIP:

I live out my commitment to deep Christian relationships by...

### PRAYER:

I live out my commitment to friendship with God by...

- Q:** In what ways would you like to be more devoted?
- Q:** Are you involved with a church? Please describe your commitment.
- Q:** Do you spend time regularly with God? Please describe.
- Q:** Do you have friends that you can be real with and get Christian support from? Explain.

*With your bible study partner, use these questions to review your self-examination:*

## SPIRITUAL TIMELINE

Have a judgment-free conversation about your spiritual life. Look for ways that God has led you to this point where you are studying the bible for yourself.

## CONVICTION

Imagine meeting Jesus in the flesh and having a conversation with him. What would your life be like after meeting Jesus? What would change? Would you keep on living like you currently do?

If you would be a completely different person after meeting Jesus, you may need to ask yourself if you have actually met Jesus and begun to follow him.

## CONVERSION

Review the conversion letter you wrote. Would you be 100% confident helping your friend if their salvation depended on your knowledge of biblical conversion?

If you lack confidence in the plan of salvation for someone else, can you be certain that you know God's plan of salvation for yourself? Eternal life is not something that we want to be mostly sure about, but with the Bible we can be absolutely sure. Talk through any questions you have about what it means to become a Christian (to be converted).

## COMMITMENT

Re-examine your commitment. Does your devotion match the devotion of the first followers of Christ? It may be difficult, but certainly worthwhile, to discuss your current church situation with your study partner. If you haven't been devoted like the Christians in the bible, then it may be wise to consider starting fresh with a church that calls all of its members to totally commit to Christ (including you!).

# FINAL EXAM: BEGINNING TO ANSWER SOME BIG QUESTIONS ABOUT LIFE WITH GOD

**Q:** When you humbly look at the big picture of your life with God, which area needs the most attention: conviction, conversion, or commitment?

You can make big changes in one or more of these areas right away! Below you will find practical ways to take action and change.

*Underline each action that you will commit to and ask your study partner to hold you accountable.*

## CONVICTION

Start reading the bible and praying daily. Discuss a plan with your partner that details the what, when and where of reading the bible and praying every day. It's great to read a gospel along with these studies!

## CONVERSION

Start praying to be open to God's word regarding conversion. With salvation on the line, it's worth a second look at the bible's teaching

## COMMITMENT

Commit to church. Your study partner can tell you all about a church full of followers of Jesus that lovingly hold each other to the high standard of the bible.

## NEED MORE?

That's what the rest of the studies in this series are for! In the next studies you will dive deep into the bible and see what following Jesus is really all about.

*Commit to meeting for a bible study at least once a week.*

## THE NEXT STUDY WILL BE AT



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## EXTRA NOTES

# SEEKING GOD

## **Purpose:**

to inspire us to seek God with all of our heart

## JEREMIAH 29:10-14

**Q:** What is God promising here?

We will find God only if we seek Him wholeheartedly.

**Q:** When was a time when you did something with all your heart? Half your heart? What was the difference? Which way worked?

**Q:** What would be the difference between half-hearted and whole-hearted seeking of God?

## MATTHEW 11:28-30

Everyone has burdens  
Where do people try to find rest?  
Entertainment  
Recreation  
Alcohol  
Impurity

Do these work? Escape hatches eventually only lead to increased burdens.  
Jesus is offering us real rest, real answers.

Is this unconditional? No, we must take on his yoke.

In farming, oxen were joined together with a yoke.

We join ourselves with Jesus, take on his yoke and actually find rest!

## ACTS 17:22-28

Is God just watching us from afar? No He is VERY INVOLVED. God is actually seeking you with all of his heart. How have you seen this?

**Q:** What does God want?

To be sought and found by you.

Our destiny is to seek and find him. This is why He created us.

## HEBREWS 11:6

What does earnestly mean?  
What do we get out of this?

Simply to work hard at seeking God.  
Great reward!

## ACTS 8:26-39

**Q:** What is God promising here?

Here is a prime example of someone seeking God with all their heart.  
How is the eunuch described?

Important, busy, talented, and driven.

How is he seeking God: willingly or eagerly, lazily or earnestly?

Practically the eunuch:

Was greatly inconvenienced!

Studying the Bible on his own.

Invited a stranger to teach him.

Was mentally engaged and asking questions.

Immediately obedient to the Word.

### PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENTS

*Study through Mark every day on your own.  
Study with partner 1-2x/week (set this routine)  
Come to Church every week.*

## THE NEXT STUDY WILL BE AT



# WORD OF GOD

## **Purpose:**

to teach that the Bible is the inspired word of God, call us to commit to the Word as our standard and inspire us to read the Bible every day

## 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

**Q:** What in your life is extremely useful to you?

Why do we not study the Bible much? Because it's not useful to us yet.  
Useful for what?

Teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness (explain).  
Explain our need for training (Olympic athlete, mechanic, etc.)  
Is classroom training or mentoring more effective?  
Result? Equipped thoroughly for every good work.

## HEBREWS 4:12-13

What does it mean for God's word to be alive in our lives? Active?  
Word of God is compared here to a sword. Used to kill sin in our lives and bring life to our spirit!

Only if we let it cut deeply into our inner world: thoughts, motives, secrets, feelings...(Cancer surgery)

**Q:** Will you let yourself be cut to the heart?

## JOHN 12:47-50

Who is the judge? God.  
What will we be judged according to? God's Word.  
Not your church, reputation or intentions!

## MATTHEW 7:13-14, 21-23

Extremely sobering passage  
Many will say, "I'm a Christian!", but have not embraced Jesus as the Lord of their life. This is the broad road.  
The narrow road is made up only of people who have embraced Jesus as Lord and do God's will.

## ISAIAH 66:1-2

**Q:** What does it mean to be humble to the Holy Word of God? Contrite? To tremble?

Either our world is transformed by the Word or we conform the Word to our world. God esteems the one who deeply respects and reveres His Holy Word!

## ACTS 17:10-11

**Q:** What is God promising here?

Berean example of revering the Word: eagerly examined every day instead of “get around to it”, surface reading, at my own convenience.

**Q:** Do you commit to being trained in the Word?

**Q:** Are you on the broad or narrow road? Which do you want to be on?

**Q:** Will you reverently tremble before God’s Word?

## PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENTS

- *Berean Challenge! Study the Word every day, look to develop a routine with “quiet times”.*
- *Journal, in response to your study, decide how you will obey the Word today.*
- *Review this study, write down any questions, bring them to next study.*

## THE NEXT STUDY WILL BE AT



# DISCIPLESHIP

## **Purpose:**

to convict and inspire us to live the life of a disciple as Jesus calls us to.

## MATTHEW 28:18-20

Jesus has all authority. It can be easy to disregard authority, but it will cost us heaven if we disregard Jesus' authority!

**Q:** What does he want all people to become?

## ACTS 11:26C

What term do we hear more often today, "disciples" or "Christians" ?

What do we think the difference is?

Biblically, a disciple = a Christian.

"Disciple" appears in NT over 200 times, "Christian" only 3 times.

**Q:** If these terms are the same, can we call ourselves a "Christian" if we have not wholeheartedly responded to Jesus' call to discipleship?

## MARKS OF A DISCIPLE

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For those who desired to follow him, what did Jesus call them to? What are the basic marks of a disciple?

## MARK 1:16-20 | FISHERS OF MEN

What does this mean?

How did they respond?

## JOHN 13:34-35 | LOVE AS JESUS LOVED

How had Jesus loved them?

What would this look like today?

## JOHN 8:31-32 | HOLD TO JESUS' TEACHINGS

Did just believing qualify them as Christians?

What is the difference between knowing the teachings and holding to them?

## ACTS 2:41-47

This is what the church should look like today!

## COST OF FOLLOWING JESUS

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Important to note that these are not options or suggestions given by Jesus!

## MARK 8:31-38 | DENY SELF, CARRY CROSS DAILY

Challenging but also incredibly freeing to be released of the burden of living for yourself!

## LUKE 9:57-62 | SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM

A disciple absolutely prioritizes God's will and kingdom.

## LUKE 14:25-33 | EVERYTHING YOU HAVE

What does Jesus mean by "hate" ?  
Often our closest family relationships are where we are most tempted to compromise, this is why Jesus gets very specific with these!  
Willing to give up everything for God.

**Q:** Do these marks of discipleship describe your lifestyle?

**Q:** Have you ever wholeheartedly responded to Jesus' call to discipleship until now?  
If not, would Jesus call you a true Christian?  
Do you want to respond to this call?

### PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENTS

- *What teachings can you begin holding to today?*
- *What disciples can you love like Jesus? How?*
- *Who can you help become a disciple? Begin praying for them and invite them to church or Bible study.*
- *Pray through and consider your greatest costs.*

## THE NEXT STUDY WILL BE AT



# SIN

## **Purpose:**

to convict us of our sin, its consequences, and our desperate need to be saved by Jesus.

## ISAIAH 59:1-2

What effect does one sin have on our relationship with God?

Complete and total separation.

Why?

Traditionally, we view sin as breaking rules, so overall we think we're a good person because we score pretty well (A- is still a good grade!) God views sin as a breaking of the relationship. One act of adultery completely separates a marriage.

What is our only hope of being in a right relationship with God again?

FORGIVENESS OF OUR SINS!

## ROMANS 6:20-23

What are the consequences of sin?

Enslavement (reflect on sin's addicting power and how it destroys lives, families, communities)

Death (physical, spiritual, emotional)

Wages vs. gifts

## JAMES 5:16

**Q:** What promises come with being open and real about our sins?

GALATIANS 5:19-21 | SINS WE COMMIT

2 TIMOTHY 3:1-5 | SINS OF THE HEART

JAMES 4:17 | SINS OF OMISSION

## GENESIS 6:5-6

Sin grieves God's heart. Why?

If we love God, can we take lightly anything that grieves him?

## MATTHEW 1:18-21

**Q:** What is God promising here?

“Jesus” literally means “God saves”.

Though our sin grieves God, He loves us so much that he sent his only son to save us!

Jesus’ mission was to save people from sin.

In the following study we’ll see the price he had to pay to do this.  
Remember our mission is the same!

### PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENTS

- *Take a sin inventory. This helps us see our sinful nature, which in turn helps us appreciate and be motivated by Jesus’ death on the cross!*
- *Try to trace sins of commission back to their root (selfishness, pride)*
- *Consider how Jesus had to die for these sins.*
- *Pray that God will help you develop deep convictions and a broken heart over your sin.*

## THE NEXT STUDY WILL BE AT



## SINS OF GALATIANS 5:19-21

**SEXUAL IMMORALITY:** Fornication, any sexual union outside of marriage. Denotes ungodly sexual acts and relationships; prostitution, rape, homosexuality, adultery, child abuse, sex with animals.

**IMPURITY:** Anything that causes disgust and loathing. Anything vulgar, wrong thoughts, lust, masturbation, wrong motives, pornography, fantasy.

**DEBAUCHERY:** Any misuse of the body. Being in such a stage of sin where shame is no longer felt. An individual no longer cares to hide his sin; he does not care what God or man thinks of his actions (see Ephesians 4:19, "lost all feeling of shame.") Usually referring to sexual excesses but, in general, refers to a readiness to indulge in any pleasure (indecent, lewd dancing). There is no respect for anyone else. In this state man is at the mercy of his passions, impulses, emotions, etc. He is completely undisciplined (e.g. gives in to gluttony, laziness, smoking cravings, masturbation, unlimited pleasure).

**IDOLATRY:** Worshipping anything other than God. Giving or devoting one's time, substance, talents, self to anything that keeps one from obeying and following God in every way (status symbols, investments, big bank balances, engrossing sports or hobbies, selfish ambitions, relationships, property, possessions, pleasures and wants, school work, pride). Praying to anyone other than God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit.

**WITCHCRAFT:** Seeking or being involved in any spiritual realm other than God's. Includes astrology (i.e. the stars control, consequently, God does not rule), horoscopes, Satan worship, the occult, magic spells, good luck charms or pictures, praying to saints. Drug use.

**HATRED:** Wishing ill or harm on anyone. Looking down on anyone, bitter feelings, resentment, wanting revenge.

**DISCORD:** Anything that breaks up relationships. Stirring up trouble, an inability to get along with people, arguing, slander, gossip, and malicious talk.

**JEALOUSY:** Possessiveness. Not sharing.

**FITS OF RAGE:** Uncontrolled anger. Losing temper, temper tantrums, quick temper, angry shouting, cussing and profanity.

**SELFISH AMBITION:** Living to please self. Wanting one's own way, getting what one wants at any cost, desiring to be first at any cost, overly competitive spirit. Not willing to do menial or demeaning tasks, refusing to admit being wrong, arrogance, doing things for honor or glory, wanting to look good for others, refusing to compromise.

**DISSENSION:** Rebelling against authority. Not submitting. Habitually disagreeing, arguing, causing division, starting arguments, stirring up trouble.

**FACTIONS:** "Country club" mentality. Cliques, refusing to associate with anyone because they are different or for any other reason. Wanting to be "own" king, prejudice.

**ENVY:** Desiring something another has while wishing they did not have it at all: (e.g. wealth, status, ability, physical features, spirituality, relationships).

**DRUNKENNESS:** Anything that causes one to lose control. Intoxication, alcohol, drug abuse.

**ORGIES:** Living without restraint. Including "partying", sexual parties, unrestrained sex, vandalism, carousing.

## DEFINITION OF SIN

**Commission:** *Breaking God's law. 1 John 3:4. Sin is lawlessness. Going beyond God's boundary. Sin is doing wrong.*

**Omission:** *Sin is not doing right. Not doing the good we are asked by God to do. James 4:17.*

## THE NEXT STUDY WILL BE AT



# THE CROSS

## **Purpose:**

To connect with the power and purpose of Jesus' death on the cross. To motivate us to lay down our lives for Jesus and others like he did for us.

## THE POWER OF THE CROSS

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### 1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-5

Paul's message was centered on the cross.  
Our message is not ourselves, our programs, our fancy building or worship band, etc.  
It is simply Jesus Christ and him crucified.

### 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18

Foolishness: little to no effect on our lifestyle.  
Power: deep and lasting effect on lifestyle which produces marked change.

### 2 TIMOTHY 3:5

Easy to embrace a form of godliness covering up self-centered life. This empties the cross of its power.

## THE PURPOSE OF THE CROSS

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### 1 PETER 2:21-24

To save us:

God is Holy, so He must condemn us.  
God is Love, so He must save us.  
God is Righteous, so He must do both.  
The crucifixion was the only solution!

To stir us:

The cross motives us to live for righteousness and follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

## THE PICTURE OF THE CROSS

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Not just for all of mankind, but for you!

### **Emotional Suffering**

Matthew 26:36-46  
Judas' betrayal (26:47-50)  
Peter's betrayal (26:69-75)

All the disciples fled (26:56)

Anger, sarcasm and mockery throughout (27:39-44)

**Physical Suffering**

Matthew 26:67-68

Matthew 27:26-31

**Spiritual Suffering**

Matthew 27:45-54

## APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO THE CROSS

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Ephesians 5:1-2: an undying love.

Acts 2:36-37: cut to the heart, humble, broken.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15: compelled to follow Jesus.

Romans 12:1-2: offer yourself as a living sacrifice.

Luke 9:21-26: carry our cross daily in following Jesus.

### PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENTS

- *Continue daily quiet times.*
- *Read medical account of crucifixion or watch "The Passion"*
- *Complete your sin inventory if you haven't yet.*
- *Meditate on Jesus having to go through this because of your choices to sin, and therefore how you are more responsible for his death than the soldiers.*
- *Let yourself be cut to the heart and moved to carry your cross in following Jesus.*

## THE NEXT STUDY WILL BE AT



# A MEDICAL ACCOUNT OF JESUS' CRUCIFIXION

BY DR. C. TRUMAN DAVIS

An attempt to examine the infinite mental and spiritual suffering of the Incarnate God in atonement for the sins of fallen man is beyond the scope of this article. However, the physiological and anatomical aspects of our Lord's passion we can examine in some detail. What did the body of Jesus of Nazareth actually endure during those hours of torture?

## GETHSEMANE

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The physical passion of Christ began in Gethsemane. Of the many aspects of His initial suffering, the one which is of particular physiological interest is the bloody sweat. Interestingly enough, the physician, St. Luke, is the only evangelist to mention this occurrence. He says, "And being in an agony, he prayed the longer. And his sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground" (Luke 22:44 KJV).

Every attempt imaginable has been used by modern scholars to explain away the phenomenon of bloody sweat, apparently under the mistaken impression that it simply does not occur. A great deal of effort could be saved by consulting the medical literature. Though very rare, the phenomenon of hematidrosis, or bloody sweat, is well documented. Under great emotional stress, tiny capillaries in the sweat glands can break, thus mixing blood with sweat. This process alone could have produced marked weakness and possible shock.

Although Jesus' betrayal and arrest are important portions of the passion story, the next event in the account which is significant from a medical perspective is His trial before the Sanhedrin and Caiaphas, the High Priest. Here the first physical trauma was inflicted. A soldier struck Jesus across the face for remaining silent when questioned by Caiaphas. The palace guards then blindfolded Him, mockingly taunted Him to identify them as each passed by, spat on Him, and struck Him in the face.

## BEFORE PILATE

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In the early morning, battered and bruised, dehydrated, and worn out from a sleepless night, Jesus was taken across Jerusalem to the Praetorium of the Fortress Antonia, the seat of government of the Procurator of Judea, Pontius Pilate. We are familiar with Pilate's action in attempting to shift responsibility to Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Judea. Jesus apparently suffered no physical mistreatment at the hands of Herod and was returned to Pilate. It was then, in response to the outcry of the mob, that Pilate ordered Barabbas released and condemned Jesus to scourging and crucifixion.

Preparations for Jesus' scourging were carried out at Caesar's orders. The prisoner was stripped of His clothing and His hands tied to a post above His head. The Roman legionnaire stepped forward with the flagrum, or flagellum, in his hand. This was a short whip consisting of several heavy, leather thongs with two small balls of lead attached near the ends of each. The heavy whip was brought down with full force again and again across Jesus' shoulders, back, and legs. At first the weighted thongs cut through the skin only. Then, as the blows continued, they cut deeper into the

subcutaneous tissues, producing first an oozing of blood from the capillaries and veins of the skin and finally spurting arterial bleeding from vessels in the underlying muscles.

The small balls of lead first produced large deep bruises that were broken open by subsequent blows. Finally, the skin of the back was hanging in long ribbons, and the entire area was an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue. When it was determined by the centurion in charge that the prisoner was near death, the beating was finally stopped.

## MOCKERY

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The half-fainting Jesus was then untied and allowed to slump to the stone pavement, wet with his own blood. The Roman soldiers saw a great joke in this provincial Jew claiming to be a king. They threw a robe across His shoulders and placed a stick in His hand for a scepter. They still needed a crown to make their travesty complete. Small flexible branches covered with long thorns, commonly used for kindling fires in the charcoal braziers in the courtyard, were plaited into the shape of a crude crown. The crown was pressed into his scalp and again there was copious bleeding as the thorns pierced the very vascular tissue. After mocking Him and striking Him across the face, the soldiers took the stick from His hand and struck Him across the head, driving the thorns deeper into His scalp. Finally, they tired of their sadistic sport and tore the robe from His back. The robe had already become adherent to the clots of blood and serum in the wounds, and its removal, just as in the careless removal of a surgical bandage, caused excruciating pain. The wounds again began to bleed.

## GOLGOTHA

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In deference to Jewish custom, the Romans apparently returned His garments. The heavy patibulum of the cross was tied across His shoulders. The procession of the condemned Christ, two thieves, and the execution detail of Roman soldiers headed by a centurion began its slow journey along the route which we know today as the Via Dolorosa.

In spite of Jesus' efforts to walk erect, the weight of the heavy wooden beam, together with the shock produced by copious loss of blood, was too much. He stumbled and fell. The rough wood of the beam gouged into the lacerated skin and muscles of the shoulders. He tried to rise, but human muscles had been pushed beyond their endurance. The centurion, anxious to proceed with the crucifixion, selected a stalwart North African onlooker, Simon of Cyrene, to carry the cross. Jesus followed, still bleeding and sweating the cold, clammy sweat of shock. The 650-yard journey from the Fortress Antonia to Golgotha was finally completed. The prisoner was again stripped of His clothing except for a loin cloth which was allowed the Jews.

The crucifixion began. Jesus was offered wine mixed with myrrh, a mild analgesic, pain-relieving mixture. He refused the drink. Simon was ordered to place the patibulum on the ground, and Jesus was quickly thrown backward, with His shoulders against the wood. The legionnaire felt for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drove a heavy, square wrought-iron nail through the wrist and deep into the wood. Quickly, he moved to the other side and repeated the action, being careful not to pull the arms too tightly, but to allow some flexion and movement. The patibulum was then lifted into place at the top of the stipes, and the titulus reading "Jesus of Nazareth, King of

the Jews" was nailed into place.

The left foot was pressed backward against the right foot. With both feet extended, toes down, a nail was driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees moderately flexed. The victim was now crucified.

## ON THE CROSS

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As Jesus slowly sagged down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating, fiery pain shot along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain. The nails in the wrists were putting pressure on the median nerve, large nerve trunks which traverse the mid-wrist and hand. As He pushed himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, He placed His full weight on the nail through His feet. Again there was searing agony as the nail tore through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of his feet.

At this point, another phenomenon occurred. As the arms fatigued, great waves of cramps swept over the muscles, knotting them in deep relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps came the inability to push Himself upward. Hanging by the arm, the pectoral muscles, the large muscles of the chest, were paralyzed and the intercostal muscles, the small muscles between the ribs, were unable to act. Air could be drawn into the lungs, but could not be exhaled. Jesus fought to raise Himself in order to get even one short breath. Finally, the carbon dioxide level increased in the lungs and in the blood stream, and the cramps partially subsided.

## THE LAST WORDS

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Spasmodically, He was able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in life-giving oxygen. It was undoubtedly during these periods that He uttered the seven short sentences that are recorded.

The first - looking down at the Roman soldiers throwing dice for His seamless garment: "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do."

The second - to the penitent thief: "Today, thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

The third - looking down at Mary His mother, He said: "Woman, behold your son." Then turning to the terrified, grief-stricken adolescent John, the beloved apostle, He said: "Behold your mother."

The fourth cry is from the beginning of Psalm 22: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

He suffered hours of limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, and searing pain as tissue was torn from His lacerated back from His movement up and down against the rough timbers of the cross. Then another agony began: a deep crushing pain in the chest as the pericardium, the sac surrounding the heart, slowly filled with serum and began to compress the heart.

The prophecy in Psalm 22:14 was being fulfilled: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint, my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels."

The end was rapidly approaching. The loss of tissue fluids had reached a critical level; the compressed heart was struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood to the tissues, and the tortured lungs were making a frantic effort to inhale small gulps of air. The markedly dehydrated tissues sent their flood of stimuli to the brain. Jesus gasped His fifth cry: "I thirst." Again we read in the prophetic psalm: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou has brought me into the dust of death" (Psalm 22:15 KJV).

A sponge soaked in posca, the cheap, sour wine that was the staple drink of the Roman legionnaires, was lifted to Jesus' lips. His body was now in extremis, and He could feel the chill of death creeping through His tissues. This realization brought forth His sixth word, possibly little more than a tortured whisper: "It is finished." His mission of atonement had been completed. Finally, He could allow His body to die. With one last surge of strength, He once again pressed His torn feet against the nail, straightened His legs, took a deeper breath, and uttered His seventh and last cry: "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit."

## DEATH

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The common method of ending a crucifixion was by crurifracture, the breaking of the bones of the leg. This prevented the victim from pushing himself upward; the tension could not be relieved from the muscles of the chest, and rapid suffocation occurred. The legs of the two thieves were broken, but when the soldiers approached Jesus, they saw that this was unnecessary.

Apparently, to make doubly sure of death, the legionnaire drove his lance between the ribs, upward through the pericardium and into the heart. John 19:34 states, "And immediately there came out blood and water." Thus there was an escape of watery fluid from the sac surrounding the heart and the blood of the interior of the heart. This is rather conclusive post-mortem evidence that Jesus died, not the usual crucifixion death by suffocation, but of heart failure due to shock and constriction of the heart by fluid in the pericardium.

## RESURRECTION

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In these events, we have seen a glimpse of the epitome of evil that man can exhibit toward his fellow man and toward God. This is an ugly sight and is likely to leave us despondent and depressed.

But the crucifixion was not the end of the story. How grateful we can be that we have a sequel: a glimpse of the infinite mercy of God toward man--the gift of atonement, the miracle of the resurrection, and the expectation of Easter morning.

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# REPENTANCE

## **Purpose:**

To teach Biblical repentance, and to inspire specific, practical, and refreshing deeds of repentance.

## LUKE 13:1-5

Universal call to repent: pagan, moral, religious, and righteous in continual need of repentance.

What does repentance mean?

Literally: to turn. From following whom? (self, world, people, sins)

Toward following whom? (Jesus, selfless love for God / others)

Not just to feel bad for or even stop sinning, but to embrace a lifestyle of total discipleship of Jesus.

**Q:** What is the only other alternative to repentance?

## LUKE 24:45-48

Prophecy as to what the message of the New Covenant will be:

Jesus' death and resurrection

Repentance (current study)

Forgiveness of sin (next study)

This is fulfilled in the book of Acts.

This is our message as well. The foundation of our church is not something we made up, but only what Christ says our foundational message must be.

## 2 CORINTHIANS 7:10-11

Godly sorrow BRINGS repentance the LEADS TO salvation.

Biblical order of response to the gospel:

Cut to the heart / godly sorrow > repentance (death) > salvation (resurrection).

The next study will tie in our spiritual death/ burial / resurrection with our response to the gospel message and the forgiveness of our sins.

Godly sorrow produces a visible change in one's character.

Discuss the picture of what Godly sorrow produces: indignation, alarm, etc.

## MATTHEW 5:29-30

**Q:** Do you have God's attitude toward sin? A radical aversion? Willingness to do anything?

## ACTS 26:19-21

Repentance is a change in heart and mind.

A decision that is reflected in one's life by change.

Deeds of repentance:

Confessions: anything not yet been open about? This will prevent godly sorrow!

Apologies: to spouse, friends, parents, siblings, children, roommates?

Radical Changes.

Opposition can come from religious people when called to repent.

## ACTS 3:19

True repentance is incredibly refreshing!

We fear that God wants to take all our fun away. Just the opposite is true!

**Q:** How often do most "Christians" receive instruction and help to truly repent?

**Q:** Why is this not expected?

**Q:** Have you ever repented in the past in accordance with what the Bible teaches?

**Q:** How many people do you know who have truly repented?

**Q:** Do you see how repentance and discipleship tie in together?

**Q:** What needs to be understood before real repentance?

Your sinfulness

The cross

## PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENTS

- *Trace sin inventory back to your primary roots of your sinful nature.*
- *Ask God for a broken and contrite heart. Not because you got "caught", but because of how you've damaged others lives, and ultimately nailed Jesus to the cross with your choices.*
- *Contemplate what repentance would look like in those areas: confessions, apologies, changes?*
- *Challenge yourself with specific repentance plans.*
- *Enjoy the refreshment that comes!*

## THE NEXT STUDY WILL BE AT



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# CONVERSION

## **Purpose:**

to teach the Biblical response to the gospel that results in a true and total conversion.

## IMPORTANT HISTORICAL FACTS:

Acts 2 is the beginning of the new covenant as predicted in Luke 24. In this chapter we see the first preaching of the gospel message, the listener's response to this gospel, and the resultant beginning of the church.

## REMEMBER:

Our sin has both separated us from a Holy God and enslaved us as a master. So the full gospel must present a "double cure" for our sin problem. We'll see it does just that!

The gospel is not something we just believe, but something we must obey in order to receive (2 Thess. 1:8, 1 Peter 4:17).

## ACTS 2:22-36 | THE FIRST GOSPEL MESSAGE

V. 22 The miracles prove Jesus was sent by God and was the promised Messiah.

V. 23 The cross was God's plan all along. We are responsible for Jesus' death because of our sin.

V. 24-35 God did not abandon him to the grave, but raised him from the dead. The apostles were eye-witnesses of the fact of the resurrection!

V. 36 The conclusion is that this Jesus is both Lord and Christ!

## ACTS 2:37-41 | THE FIRST RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL

V. 37 Cut to the heart: godly sorrow.

"What should we do?" Humble and eager to respond according to Peter's direction.

V. 38

Repent: a decision to fully turn from sin, to make Jesus Lord, and be his disciple.

Baptism: full immersion

For: (what follows explains the purpose of baptism)

The forgiveness of sins.

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

This provides the double cure for our sin problem:

The gift of forgiveness destroys the separation between God and us and brings us back into the light.

The gift of the Holy Spirit empowers us to no longer be enslaved to sin!

Responding with repentance, Lordship, and baptism is how we obey the gospel and therefore how we are brought from death to life and are saved.

V. 39 This promise (forgiveness and indwelling Spirit) is for everyone from this point on who desires to respond to and obey the gospel.

V. 40

Warned: if they don't obey the gospel, they will remain lost and reap eternal consequences.

Pleaded: passionate appeal to respond as so much is on the line!

Save yourselves: they must respond in order to be saved by the blood of Jesus.

V. 41

Those who accepted (obeyed) the message were baptized.

3000 added to their number, what number? The saved, baptized disciples, the church.

V. 47 The Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Baptized / saved / added to their number all consistent language of salvation.

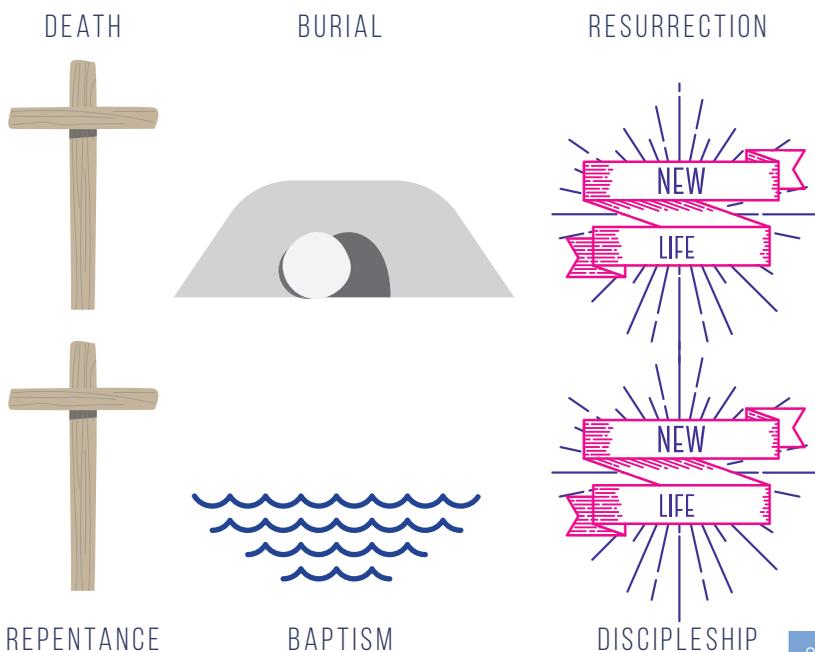
## ROMANS 6:1-7 | WHY BAPTISM IS FOR FORGIVENESS

Biblical baptism is so much more than a symbol.

V. 3-5 Baptism is where I am actually joined (united) with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection.

V. 2 Baptism is when I enter "into" Christ.

V. 6-7 Repentance before baptism is the decision to die to the old self, baptism is the burial of that old self, and coming out of the water I am raised to a new life of a disciple, empowered by the Holy Spirit, with Jesus as my new Lord and master!



## COLOSSIANS 2:11-14 | SAVED BY FAITH AT BAPTISM

Aren't we saved by faith? YES! Faith and baptism are not contradictory, because baptism is an act of faith in God.

V. 11 The cutting of our hearts is done by Christ.

V. 12 Buried / raised with him in baptism.

Through YOUR FAITH in "the powerful working of God (ESV)"

V. 13 Though dead in sins, God makes us alive (at baptism) with Christ.

V. 13 Again repeating that baptism is when our sins are forgiven.

## 1 PETER 3:18-21 | BAPTISM SAVES US

V. 20 Those in the ark are saved, all others are lost.

V. 21 Water of flood symbolizes water of baptism. (Baptism not symbolic, the flood water is symbolic of NT baptism!)

Baptism now saves you also (repeated 2x), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

NOT the physical washing, but what's going on in your heart spiritually: belief, repentance, Lordship of Christ.

## REVIEW:

### The Gospel Message

Sin produces death: separation and enslavement.

Jesus' died for our sins, was buried, was resurrected, and lives today as Christ and Lord!

Through his sacrifice we are offered forgiveness, if we obey/respond to the gospel!

### Response to the Gospel

Belief: in God, Jesus as the Son of God and the Christ.

Repentance / Lordship: turning from following sin and its mastery of our lives, and turning toward Jesus as Lord in wholehearted discipleship.

Baptism into Christ: we receive forgiveness and the Holy Spirit as double cure for our sins.

### Result of the Gospel

Forgiveness of sins.

Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

Living a life of love, discipleship, purpose, and teaching others, set free from the penalty and enslavement of sin!

**Q:** If baptized as an infant or as a symbol, was your baptism a Biblical baptism, surrounded by faith, repentance, Lordship, and discipleship?

**Q:** If not, or if never baptized, do you want to be baptized? How urgent are you?

**Q:** Are you cut to the heart?

**Q:** How is repentance going of your root sins?

**Q:** Are you ready to make Jesus Lord of your life?

## PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENTS

*Read conversion accounts in Acts:*

*2:36-47, 3000*

*8:26-39, Ethiopian Eunuch*

*16:22-34, Lydia and Jailer*

*9:1-22, Saul*

*22:6-16, Saul*

*As you study, record what we see surrounding each conversion.*

*Write down any questions surrounding the gospel, our response to it, and the results of it.*

## THE NEXT STUDY WILL BE AT



# THE CHURCH

## **Purpose:**

To teach the nature of the 1st century church, and inspire us to do our part in building the New Testament church in the 21st century!

## ACTS 2:42-47 | GOD'S VISION

This is a beautiful picture of God's family, the "banquet of the kingdom of God!"  
Boring church we're used to? No way!

## COLOSSIANS 1:18 | THE HEAD AND BODY

Jesus is the head of the church.  
The church is the body of Christ, not the building.

## EPHESIANS 2:19-22 | THE FOUNDATION AND FAMILY

The church built on the foundation of Scripture.  
Any group built on a foundation other than Scripture is not God's church.  
The church is a family.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-27 | OUR PART AND RESPONSIBILITY

Become an official "part" of the body at baptism!  
Every person has a special part in the body.  
If we're not doing our part, it hurts the whole body!

## ROMANS 12:5 | OUR INTERDEPENDENCE

We all need each other and belong to each other

## HEBREWS 10:24-25 | OUR COMMITMENT

If a child missing from the dinner table, do we just go on as normal? No! An urgent search by all members of family immediately begins! (Call or be called!)  
Never get in the habit of missing church.  
Should only miss church in case of emergency or rare, extreme circumstances.  
(Fever, throwing up, but not "tired")  
It's all of our responsibility to spur our brothers and sisters toward love and good deeds (don't just go for you)!

## HEBREWS 3:12-14 | DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT

Come to encourage others, gain encouragement.  
Strive to give and receive encouragement every day.

## OUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6; Matthew 23:23-24; Malachi 3:10  
Biblical principles: generous, cheerful, first fruits, our best, planned and decided beforehand.

Tithe is OT standard (law).

They actually gave much more than this in special sacrifices.

NT: OT principle still applies, but God wants our hearts behind it as well!  
Each year we take a special missions contribution as well.

## ACTS 2:42-47 | OUR PRACTICES

God's vision must translate to practical commitments:

Fellowship: prayer partnerships, family groups, meetings of the body (Sunday / Wednesday), conferences, and fun times together.

Apostles teaching: personal Bible study as well as Biblical teaching and training at church.

Breaking of bread: communion as well as being in each other's homes and sharing meals.

Prayer: personal prayer lives, prayer times together.

## PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENTS

- *Consider what your gifts are and how they can be used to build up the church. Initiate to serve!*
- *Are there any areas of devotion that challenge you?*
- *Are there any potential schedule conflicts that may hinder your devotion? Discuss.*
- *Consider what you will commit to give financially.*

## THE NEXT STUDY WILL BE AT





Mpls-St. Paul

CHURCH OF CHRIST