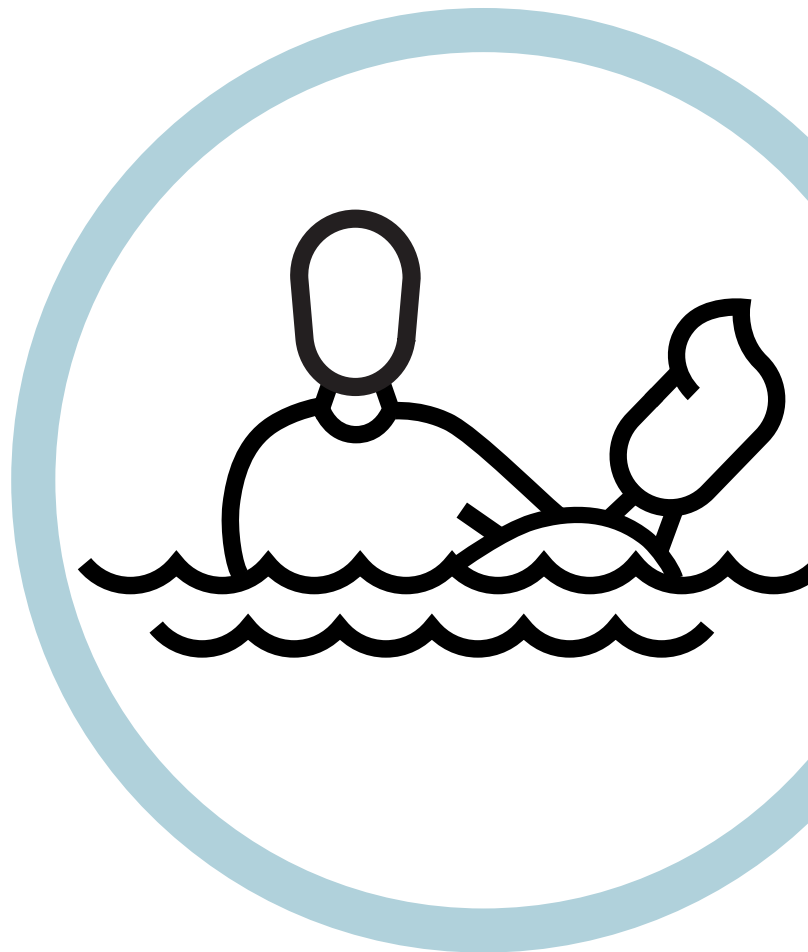


Life Hope & Truth
Bible Study Course

LESSON 10

The Process of Christian Conversion



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The Process of Christian Conversion

IN ORDER TO BE CONVERTED AND TRULY A CHRISTIAN, A PERSON MUST BE WILLING TO COMPLETELY CHANGE HIS OR HER LIFE.

The English word *convert* means to change something from one use or purpose to another. It also means to transform something from one form or substance to another. In other words, it has to do with a thorough and complete change.

The Bible speaks a lot about change. Jesus Christ said that to enter the Kingdom of God, a person must be *converted* (Matthew 18:3). It's clear that in order to be converted and truly a Christian, a person must be willing to completely change his or her life.

Yet the Bible also says that people can't just decide to be converted. They must first be called by God. The road to conversion requires an invitation from Almighty God Himself and then a choice to accept that calling.

Few people understand what the Bible teaches about the calling and conversion process. In the world of Christianity there are several approaches to this topic.

- For many, being a "Christian" is simply an identity you inherit at birth. Millions of people call themselves Christians of a certain variety (Catholics, Methodists, Anglicans, Baptists, etc.) simply because they were born into a family that adheres to that particular set of beliefs.
- In some denominations, babies are baptized (through pouring or sprinkling of water) and then in some cases "confirmed" later in life. Their identity as Christian is essentially given to them when they are very young.
- Others look at conversion as a decision to "accept Jesus"—a simple profession of Jesus as Savior. Preachers through the years have held altar calls to get people to make a spur-of-the-moment, emotional decision to "accept Jesus" and become Christians.

But none of the above approaches accurately or fully matches what the Bible teaches.

Throughout this Bible study course, you have explored many of the Bible's teachings and doctrines in great depth. But true Christianity isn't just *knowing* about the Bible. Knowledge itself will take you only so far. It is what we *do* with the knowledge that really makes a difference. And that's what conversion is all about.

This lesson is all about how we can *act* on the knowledge we have learned. It's about how the great truths of God can impact your life at the deepest levels. It is about how your life can be transformed.

PART 1

Spiritual Enlightenment

THE PROCESS OF CONVERSION BEGINS WITH GOD THE FATHER.



TERMINOLOGY

Mystery

When the Bible uses the term *mystery*, it refers to a truth that requires spiritual enlightenment from God to understand.

The process of conversion begins with God's calling—when God opens a person's mind to be able to understand His truth.

Who starts the process of conversion?

John 6:44: "No one can come to Me unless the _____ who sent Me _____ him; and I will raise Him up at the last day."

John 6:65: "And He [Jesus Christ] said, 'Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been _____ to him by My Father.'"

Matthew 13:16-17: "But blessed are your eyes for they _____, and your ears for they _____; for assuredly I [Jesus Christ] say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

Mark 4:11: "And He [Jesus Christ] said to them [His disciples], 'To you it has been _____ to know the _____ of the kingdom of God.'"

Acts 2:39: "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will _____."

Deeper insight

The process of conversion begins with God the Father. He *invites* someone to understand His truth. It is He who decides who will be given an opportunity to receive salvation during this time. The Father chooses people from all walks of life—people from different backgrounds, different cultures, different races and different ages.

We don't know why God calls certain individuals and not others, but the Bible tells us that those He calls now are mostly the humble of the world—not the powerful, rich and famous (1 Corinthians 1:26-29). God calls ordinary people for an extraordinary purpose.

When God calls someone, He *opens his or her understanding* to be able to grasp and comprehend the truths of His Word.

But why does God have to open our understanding?

**WHEN GOD
BEGINS TO CALL
SOMEONE,
HE REMOVES
SPIRITUAL
BLINDNESS.**

Read the following passages and answer the questions.

Ephesians 4:17-18. How does this scripture describe the state of those who have not received God's calling?

2 Corinthians 3:14-16. How do these verses contrast those who aren't called and those who are called?

2 Corinthians 4:4 and Revelation 12:9. Who is responsible for the spiritual blindness in our world today?

Deeper insight

Paul refers to Satan as "the god of this age." He deceives people to prevent them from understanding God and His truth (2 Corinthians 4:3). When God begins to call someone, He removes this blindness, comparing it to removing a "veil" that darkens and prevents someone from seeing the truth.

Is God calling everyone, or even a majority of people, in this age?

Matthew 22:14: "For many are called, but _____ are _____."

Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter by the _____ gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and _____ is the way which leads to life, and there are _____ who find it."

Luke 12:32: "Do not fear, _____ flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Luke 13:24: "Strive to enter through the _____ gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able."

Deeper insight

These words of Jesus Christ reveal two steps God the Father uses to initially draw someone to Jesus Christ: first, the calling, and second, the choosing.

The **calling** is the initial invitation, when God allows His truth to reach someone and helps him or her to begin to understand it. Jesus said that many receive this opportunity.

The **choosing** involves those who not only *hear* and *understand* God’s truth, but also are convicted and motivated to act on it. This entire lesson is about what one must do to truly be *chosen* by God. It is about how we can go from an intellectual understanding of His truth to becoming truly converted, applying the knowledge to change our entire life from the inside out.

It’s hard to imagine, but the Father has invited many to be converted during their lifetimes. But most don’t act upon that calling, and those who actually become converted are few in comparison to the world as a whole.

Christ gave a parable about the sower and the seed, explaining that there are four types of ground, representing individuals who receive God’s calling. But as the parable shows, only one type out of four produces lasting fruit.



**PERSONAL
STUDY**

The Sower and the Seed

In Luke 8:4-15, Jesus gave the parable of the sower and the seed. It describes four different ways people respond to the calling of God.

In the parable, the Sower represents God, the seed is His Word and the ground represents how people respond to His initial calling. Read the parable and Jesus’ explanation, and summarize how each group of people responded to God’s calling.

Ground	Meaning
“Some fell by the wayside . . .”	
“Some fell on rock . . .”	
“Some fell among thorns . . .”	
“Some fell on good ground . . .”	

THE PRIMARY EVIDENCE OF GOD'S CALLING IS HAVING THE ABILITY AND WILLINGNESS TO BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE.

How can you know if you are being called by God?

Luke 24:45: "And He [Jesus Christ] opened their _____, that they might _____ the Scriptures."

Acts 16:14: "Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord _____ her heart to _____ the things spoken by Paul."

Deeper insight

The primary evidence of God's calling is having the *ability* and *willingness* to begin to understand the Bible. Even though there are millions of people who profess a belief in God, many follow traditions that contradict the Bible (Mark 7:13; Colossians 2:8). When we are truly being called by God, we advance past a basic belief in Him or a mere religious affiliation and begin to really grasp an understanding of His Word. We begin to comprehend *who* He really is, *what* His purpose is, and *how* He expects us to live.

If we respond, this understanding then translates into personal change, just as Lydia, after hearing the apostle Paul preach the gospel, "heeded" (or obeyed) the truths she learned.

For example, when one is being called, he or she learns that God created the Sabbath and commanded us to rest on it (Genesis 2:1-2; Exodus 20:8-11). That individual not only *believes* it but also heeds it. He or she seeks to learn how to "keep it holy" and begins to do it.

As the parable of the sower shows, when we come to an understanding of God's truth, *we must act on it*. As we proceed through this lesson, you will learn how God expects us to act on His calling.

When people begin responding to God's calling, they often exhibit zeal and excitement for the truth of God.

Read the two parables Jesus gave in Matthew 13:44-46.

How do these parables describe the calling of God and the called person's response to it?

Matthew 13:44	
Matthew 13:45-46	

THE PRIMARY OBSTACLE BETWEEN US AND GOD IS SIN.

Deeper insight

If we ignore God's calling, Satan and this world will quickly distract us, and we'll keep living exactly as we had been living before. When this happens, the spiritual veil of deception will fall back over our eyes.

Now let's look at what happens when we *act* upon that calling from God.

Other than spiritual deception, what other obstacles do we encounter?

Romans 3:23: "For _____ have _____ and fall short of the glory of God."

Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is _____, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 5:12: "Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and _____ through sin, and thus death spread to _____ men, because _____ sinned."

Isaiah 59:2: "But your iniquities have _____ you from your God; and your _____ have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear."

Deeper insight

The primary obstacle between us and God is *sin*. Sin is defined as breaking the law of God (1 John 3:4). For example, the law of God instructs us to not lie (Exodus 20:16). When we break that law and speak a lie, we sin.

What is the consequence of sin?

The above verses reveal that there are two primary consequences:

1. **Separation and estrangement from God.**
2. **Death.**

If we continue to sin, we drift further and further away from God, bringing the penalty of death upon ourselves.

But, as we will see, the conversion process provides us a way to have this death penalty paid on our behalf and our relationship with God reconciled and healed (Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:20-21).



PERSONAL STUDY

How Did Mankind Become Separated From God?

The New Testament talks about our need to be *reconciled* to God. But how did mankind’s relationship with Him become broken in the first place?

The answer is found in the famous account of Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis. As the first man and woman, Adam and Eve had the opportunity to set their future offspring on either the right or the wrong course.

Read Genesis 2-3 and answer the following questions:

What did God instruct Adam that he should and should not do (Genesis 2:16-17)?

What was the penalty if God’s command was disobeyed (verse 17)?

Eve encountered a serpent in the garden. Who was this serpent (Revelation 12:9)?

Summarize the argument the serpent used to influence Eve to eat the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:4-5).

After Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, how did their relationship and interaction with God change (verses 8-13)?

What was the ultimate consequence of Adam and Eve’s decision to sin (verses 23-24)?

When Adam and Eve were first created, they had full access to God. There was no separation. But when they chose to reject God, they were removed from God’s garden and no longer had access to Him or the tree of life (which represented access to God’s Holy Spirit and eternal life).

Interestingly, the Hebrew word that is translated “drove out” is *garash*. This word is sometimes translated in the Bible as “divorced.” So, not only did God forcefully remove Adam and Eve from His presence, their relationship was broken—God was no longer a focal point in their lives.

Sadly, mankind has followed Adam and Eve’s poor choice and today is still separated from God because of sin (Romans 5:12, 18-19). But this lesson is all about how that separation can be bridged and a relationship restored with the Father and Jesus Christ through the conversion process.

PART 2

Repentance

**THOSE WHO
RESPOND TO
GOD'S CALLING
WILL BEGIN TO
UNDERSTAND
SIN AND ITS
DESTRUCTIVE
CONSEQUENCES
AND DESIRE
TO TURN AWAY
FROM IT.**

The second step of the conversion process is to genuinely repent of our personal sins and sinful nature.

When an individual experiences God's calling and has his or her mind spiritually opened to understand God's truth, he or she will begin to grasp the implications of it. He or she will see the need to change.

What is one of the first things God will help those He is calling to understand?

1 John 3:4: "Whoever commits _____ also commits lawlessness, and sin is _____."

Romans 8:7: "Because the _____ mind is _____ against God; for it is not subject to the _____ of God, nor indeed can be."

James 4:1-2, 4: "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You _____ and do not have. You _____ and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask . . . Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an _____ of God."

Deeper insight

Those God is calling will begin to understand that *sin* is the root of all the problems in the world—and their personal problems. It's the problem that keeps them alienated from their Creator and the problem that causes suffering for themselves and others.

Satan enticed Eve to sin by eating the forbidden fruit—which God said would bring heartache and death. Ever since our first parents listened to Satan instead of God, the world has been filled with the consequences of sin.

Suffering. Violence. Greed. Division. And so on.

Those who respond to God's calling will begin to understand sin and its destructive consequences and desire to turn away from it.

**GOD HAS MADE
A WAY FOR US
TO BE SAVED—
TO BE FREED—
FROM THE
DEATH PENALTY.**

What do we need to personally realize about sin and ourselves?

Romans 3:23: “For _____ have sinned and fall _____ of the glory of God.”

Romans 6:20-21: “For when you were _____ of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the _____ of those things is _____.”

1 John 1:8-10: “If we say that we have no _____, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our _____, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not _____, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”

Deeper insight

The uncomfortable truth we all have to realize is that we have sinned—and not only have we sinned, but we continue to sin and are *sinner*s.

That means we must acknowledge that sin isn't just something we do, it is who we are at our core. Our nature doesn't just break God's law—we are hostile to it (Romans 8:7).

Just like the tax collector Jesus described in one of His parables, we have to come to the point where we understand and acknowledge we are sinners (Luke 18:13). A person who is being called by God does not respond to his or her sin like Adam and Eve—by hiding from it and blaming others. We must openly acknowledge our sins and sinfulness (Psalm 51:4; Luke 15:21).

After we acknowledge our personal guilt, we then acknowledge the penalty we deserve as a result of breaking God's law. *We deserve death. We've earned death. And, if we do nothing about it, we will die for all eternity.*

But we must remember that God has made a way for us to be saved—to be freed—from that death penalty. As we covered thoroughly in Lesson 4, Jesus Christ came to earth and died for our sins. He took each and every sin we ever committed (and will commit) on Himself when He was unjustly and brutally murdered.

A person responding to God's call ponders that and comes to a deep understanding of this essential truth: *“I am personally responsible for the death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”*

This goes so much deeper than just knowing that sin, in general, caused the death of God in the flesh. It becomes very personal, because even if no other person had ever sinned, we realize that because of *our personal sins*, Jesus Christ had to come to earth and die an excruciating death to save us from the penalty we have earned.

The apostle Peter taught this truth to the people in Jerusalem on the Feast of Pentecost in Acts 2. He taught them of their personal guilt for Christ's death: “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, *whom you crucified*, both Lord and Christ” (verse 36, emphasis added throughout).

**REPENTANCE
IS A TOTAL
CHANGE IN
THINKING AND
BEHAVIOR.**

What was the response of those God was calling? “They were *cut to the heart*, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we *do?*’” (verse 37).

That is how every person being called by God should feel and respond. We need to be “cut to the heart” (feel and understand the guilt of sin at the deepest level) and humbly ask:

“What shall I do?”

What action must we take when we understand the consequences of our sins?

Mark 1:15: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. _____, and believe in the gospel.”

Acts 2:38: “_____, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Matthew 9:13: “For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to _____.”

Luke 13:3: “Unless you _____ you will all likewise perish.”

Deeper insight

After God calls us and we begin to recognize our personal sins, repentance is the next step in the conversion process. The above scriptures make it absolutely clear: In order to have our sins forgiven and be freed from the death penalty, *we must repent*.

But what is repentance?

The Greek word for repent is *metanoeo*.

Look up the meaning of this Greek word in an online Greek lexicon. (Here are two options: [Blue Letter Bible](#) and [Bible Hub](#).) Summarize the meaning:

Those being called by God realize that the way they live and think needs to change. Repentance is a total change in thinking and behavior. It can also be described as a complete *transformation of life*.

Romans 2:4 tells us that “the goodness of God leads you to repentance.” Part of God’s calling involves His helping to give us a motivation to repent and change. Of course, we still have to follow God’s lead.

The English Standard Version of the Bible renders this verse: “Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?”

IN ORDER TO TRULY REPENT, WE MUST HAVE TOTAL FAITH IN GOD AND THE TRUTHS FOUND IN HIS WORD.

Many in the religious world think of repentance as an emotional experience one has when one feels guilt for doing wrong. As we'll see, sorrow and guilt are a part of the repentance process, but there's much more to repenting than feeling bad and asking forgiveness.

In Mark 1:15 Christ said, "Repent and believe in the gospel." In saying this, He connected repentance and belief (faith) together as two prerequisites for Christian conversion. In order to truly repent, we must have total faith in God and the truths found in His Word.

Does repentance include feeling sadness and guilt for our sins?

2 Corinthians 7:10: "For godly _____ produces _____ leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death."

Deeper insight

Repentance starts with *sorrow*—feeling genuine regret and sadness for what we have done, what we are, what our sins deserve, and what Christ went through because of our sins. The Bible also calls this having a "broken spirit" (Psalm 51:17). This means letting down the wall of pride and self-justification that keeps us from changing and allowing God to help us change.

But notice that the above verse doesn't just say "sorrow." It says we must have "godly sorrow" as opposed to the "sorrow of the world."

Let's contrast the two:

"Godly sorrow"	"Sorrow of the world"
<p><i>"produces repentance leading to salvation"</i></p> <p>Godly sorrow is a genuine sorrow for our sins that arouses a willingness to use our regret and guilt as an impetus to diligently seek God and change. That change will bring good results, with no regrets.</p> <p><i>Example: King David</i></p> <p>After David's sin with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah was exposed, David openly acknowledged it (2 Samuel 12:13). The book of Psalms gives us a glimpse into his repentant mind-set and shows that he exemplified "godly sorrow." He asked for God's forgiveness and help to change (Psalm 51).</p>	<p><i>"produces death"</i></p> <p>The "sorrow of the world" is when a person feels sorry for the immediate consequence of sin, or maybe sorry or embarrassed that he or she got caught, but is not willing to repent or change.</p> <p><i>Example: Judas Iscariot</i></p> <p>After Judas betrayed Jesus and then saw the consequence of his sin, he regretted his actions (Matthew 27:3). But he responded to that sorrow by taking his own life (verse 5). Instead of repenting to God ("godly sorrow") and then turning his life around, he committed the sin of self-murder.</p>

So true repentance as a result of *godly sorrow* involves our having a strong desire to change our behavior—to bring ourselves *in line* with God and His law.

Contrite

Feeling deep remorse and regret for sin.

Does true repentance require obedience to God?

Isaiah 66:2: “On this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a _____ spirit, and who _____ at My word.”

Isaiah 55:7: “Let the wicked _____ his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him _____ to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

Acts 5:32 “And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who _____ Him.”

Romans 6:16: “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of _____ leading to righteousness?”

2 Corinthians 10:5: “Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every _____ into captivity to the _____ of Christ.”

Hebrews 5:9: “And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal _____ to all who _____ Him.”

Deeper insight

Real repentance involves unconditional surrender to God. Instead of living life driven by our own desires and self-interest, we change how we think. We begin to “tremble” at, or deeply respect, God’s Word. We begin to forsake our old selfish ways and live in accordance with God’s law—and the entire way of life He reveals in the Bible. That doesn’t mean only outward obedience. We are to also strive to bring “every thought into captivity”—meaning we are to obey God in our minds as well. God wants both our thoughts and actions to be given to Him in total obedience.

As we consider repentance, we sincerely look at our lives to find all the ways we are not obeying Him—and seek to forsake those ways and replace them with obedience to God.

John the Baptist described this as bearing “fruits worthy of repentance” (Matthew 3:8). In other words, repentance produces fruits—tangible evidence—of change in our lives.

(You may want to review the chart “The Spiritual Intent of God’s 10 Commandments” at the end of Lesson 3 to be reminded of the spiritual intent of the 10 core laws God expects us to obey.)

Yes, true repentance means a mind-set of submission to God and His will, and it means a strong, heartfelt desire to change our bad behavior to godly behavior.

And that repentant attitude leads to the next step in the conversion process.

PART 3

Seeking God's Forgiveness

**IT IS ONLY
THROUGH
CHRIST'S DEATH
THAT THE
FORGIVENESS
OF SIN IS
POSSIBLE.**

Redemption

To be redeemed means to be bought back. Before God forgives us, we are under the death penalty—as good as dead. But through Christ's shed blood, we can be redeemed, or bought back, from that penalty and have a right relationship with God restored.

The third step of the conversion process is to seek forgiveness of our sins so we can move forward with a clean spiritual slate.

We have already seen that our sins have earned us the death penalty. When a person realizes that he or she is under that penalty, he or she seeks to have that penalty removed.

Since the penalty of sin is death, how is it possible for us to be forgiven and have that penalty removed?

Colossians 1:13-14: "He [the Father] has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have _____ through His blood, the _____ of sins."

John 3:16-17: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not _____, but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be _____."

Hebrews 9:22, 28: "And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without _____ of blood there is no remission . . . So Christ was offered once to _____ the _____ of many."

Deeper insight

Because Jesus Christ lived a sinless life and was God in the flesh, His shed blood can pay the penalty of sin (eternal death) on our behalf. It is *only* through His death that the forgiveness of sin is possible. The One through whom God the Father created all things laid down His life so that we can be redeemed from our death sentence and have the opportunity for eternal life.

For a review on how Christ's death makes forgiveness possible, refer back to Lesson 4.

Do we have to confess our sins to God to be forgiven?

Psalm 32:5: "I _____ my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not _____. I said, 'I will _____ my transgressions to the LORD,' and You forgave the iniquity of my sin."

**IN ORDER TO BE
FORGIVEN, WE
MUST CONFESS
OUR SINS TO
GOD, SEEKING
HIS MERCY AND
FORGIVENESS.**

Psalm 51:1-2, 4: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, _____ out my transgressions. _____ me thoroughly from my iniquity, and _____ me from my sin . . . Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight.”

Proverbs 28:13: “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever _____ and forsakes them will have _____.”

1 John 1:9: “If we _____ our sins, He is faithful and just to _____ us our sins and to _____ us from all unrighteousness.”

Deeper insight

A repentant person will understand the seriousness of his or her sins and how his or her selfish motives and actions necessitated the death of Jesus Christ. The repentant person will earnestly seek forgiveness of his or her sins.

In order to be forgiven, we must confess our sins to God, seeking His mercy and forgiveness. But confession of sin isn't something we do only one time. We will continue to strive against sin for the rest of our lives, so confessing and asking forgiveness of those sins is a regular part of a Christian's prayers.

Can we be sure that God will forgive our sins?

Psalm 103:11-12: “For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the _____ is from the _____, so far has He _____ our transgressions from us.”

1 John 1:7: “But if we _____ in the _____ as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son _____ us from all sin.”

Deeper insight

When God forgives our sins, He will no longer hold them against us (Hebrews 8:12)!

As human beings, our forgiveness of one another is usually limited and conditional. But God, in His love, will fully forgive and not hold us accountable for our past transgressions. When God forgives us, we no longer need to carry the guilt of our past sins.

Before Paul was called, he was responsible for persecuting Christians, which led to their imprisonment and even death (Acts 7:58; 8:3). Even years after he repented and was forgiven, it seems he still struggled with the guilt of his past sins: “For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Corinthians 15:9). But he also trusted in God's forgiveness through His grace (verse 10). We must have total faith in God's ability and desire to forgive us of our sins.

Another way the Bible describes forgiveness is being *cleansed* from sin. John emphasizes an important truth in 1 John 1:7. In order to be forgiven, we must be striving to “walk in the light,” which means to live a righteous life. As we’ll see later in this lesson, this doesn’t mean God requires us to be perfect in order to be forgiven, but that we must be trying! God will not forgive us if we completely give up trying and embrace sin (or darkness) as our way of life (Hebrews 10:26).

Knowing that we *can* be forgiven and cleansed of all of our past sins, no matter how awful they may have been, leads one to the next step in the conversion process.

PART 4

Baptism and the Laying On of Hands

BAPTISM IS AN OUTWARD DISPLAY OF WHAT IS HAPPENING INSIDE AN INDIVIDUAL GOD IS CALLING.

The fourth step of the conversion process is to be baptized and receive God's Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands.

When people positively respond to the Father's calling and want to have their sins forgiven, what is the next step they should take?

Acts 2:38: "Repent, and let every one of you be _____ in the name of Jesus Christ for the _____ of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Acts 22:16: "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be _____, and _____ away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

Deeper insight

When God calls us and opens our mind to understand His truth, we have to *act* upon that revealed knowledge. We have already seen that we need to repent—to change our wrong lifestyle and start following Him. But in order to truly change our lives, we need our past sins to be forgiven. No matter how righteously we live our lives going forward, unless our past sins are forgiven, we cannot escape sin's death penalty.

That is where baptism comes into the picture. Baptism is a physical act with a spiritual component. In other words, baptism is an outward display of what is happening inside an individual God is calling and working with. It is a very special ceremony that God commands us to go through after we repent. Both of the above scriptures command those being called to repentance to "be baptized."

What is the proper method of baptism?

John 3:23: "Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was _____ there. And they came and were _____."

Matthew 3:16: "When He had been baptized, Jesus _____ immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him."

Acts 8:38-39: "And both Philip and the eunuch went _____ into the _____, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the _____, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing."

**BAPTISM
BY FULL
IMMERSION
POWERFULLY
SYMBOLIZES
THE SPIRITUAL
REALITIES OF
REPENTANCE
AND
CONVERSION.**

Deeper insight

There are different approaches to baptism in the religious world. Some churches practice immersion, some sprinkle or pour water on the person's head, and some don't baptize people at all.

But the above scriptures show us three important facts:

1. Water is involved.
2. "Much water" is necessary for complete immersion.
3. After the baptism, those being baptized came *up* and *out* of the water—showing us that they were *in* the water before.

These three facts point strongly to immersion in water being the baptism method used in the New Testament. But there's one more piece of evidence that further solidifies this truth.

The Greek word translated "baptize" into English is *baptizō*.

Look up the word *baptizō* in a Bible lexicon and write its meaning. (Here are a few sources you can use: blueletterbible.org, biblehub.com or "[What Do the Symbols of Baptism Mean?](#)")

If we desire to be baptized according to the example found in the New Testament, we will be baptized by full immersion—meaning our entire body will be submerged in water. (When done properly, the one performing the baptism will submerge us quickly and immediately bring us back up out of the water. A person being baptized is only underwater for about a second or two.) There is no biblical basis for baptism by pouring or sprinkling—or for refusing to be baptized.

As we will see in the next section, baptism by full immersion powerfully symbolizes the spiritual realities of repentance and conversion.

What three components of the repentance and conversion process are symbolized by baptism?

Romans 6:3-4: "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were _____ with Him through baptism into _____, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in _____ of life."

Colossians 2:12-13: "[You were] _____ with Him in baptism, in which you also were _____ with Him though faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being _____ in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made _____ together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses."

WATER PICTURES OUR BEING WASHED AND CLEANSED FROM OUR PAST SINS.

Deeper insight

The above scriptures reveal that baptism by full immersion pictures three components of the repentance and conversion process:

1. **Death.** When we repent and are baptized, our old self and sinful way of living symbolically die as we are submerged into the watery grave. We should view ourselves as putting to death the “old self” and its sinful way of living. This marks the end of our life focused solely on ourselves and in opposition to God.
2. **Burial.** The old man and our old sins are *buried* in that watery grave. The past sins are completely gone—dead—and do not come up with us.
3. **Resurrection to a new life.** A person who is completely submerged in water would die if left there. But when that person is brought up out of the water, he or she is symbolically resurrected as a new person. The old person died and remains buried, and the person emerging out of the water is a new person—beginning an entirely new life.

It is especially meaningful that God chose water for this special ceremony. Imagine if He had chosen to use burial into the ground to represent death, burial and resurrection. Burial in the ground could symbolize those three things with one major exception—we would come out of the ground filthy and dirty. Water, on the other hand, pictures our being washed and cleansed from our past sins (1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Peter 1:9). Through Scripture, God continues the ongoing process of cleansing us (Ephesians 5:26).

When people come out of the water, they continue the process of conversion (Acts 3:19). They are now cleansed of sin and spiritually begin an entirely new way of living. They no longer want to live contrary to God’s way, but desire to follow Him wholeheartedly. Yet God understands that real spiritual growth is not possible by our human strength alone. Baptism does not completely remove our human nature and susceptibility to sin.

To fight the continual battle against sin and to truly change, another component is still needed.

What is to occur after one comes out of the baptismal water?

Acts 8:17-18: “Then they laid _____ on them and they _____ the Holy Spirit. And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ _____ the Holy Spirit was _____ . . .”

2 Timothy 1:6: “Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the _____ on of my _____.”

Hebrews 6:2: “[Let us not lay again the foundation] . . . of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of _____, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”

**AFTER HANDS
ARE LAID ON
THOSE WHO
ARE BAPTIZED,
GOD GIVES
THEM HIS
HOLY SPIRIT
TO EMPOWER
THEM TO BEAR
SPIRITUAL
FRUIT.**

Deeper insight

Immersion in water symbolizes the forgiveness of past sins and the beginning of a new converted life, but there's still an additional component of the baptism ceremony that occurs shortly after immersion in water: the laying on of hands.

This occurs when a minister of Jesus Christ lays his hands on the individual after the person has come out of the water. The minister will gently lay his hands on the person's head and say a prayer asking God to give that person His Holy Spirit. God grants the gift of the Holy Spirit through this unique ceremony. After hands are laid on those who are baptized, God gives them His Holy Spirit to empower them to bear spiritual fruit (Galatians 5:22-25). It is having the Holy Spirit in us that makes us a true Christian (Romans 8:14).

God's Spirit enables us to grow spiritually. Before baptism, God's Spirit can *work with us*, but after baptism, God's Spirit literally *dwells in us* (John 14:17; Romans 8:6-11).

In Lesson 3, we studied the nature of God's Holy Spirit and saw that it is the power of God—the way He interacts with the creation to do His will.

Look up the following verses and summarize what they reveal about what the Holy Spirit does in the life of a converted Christian.

John 16:13 (remember, as we learned in Lesson 4, that the pronouns for the Holy Spirit are more accurately translated "it" instead of "He"):

Romans 5:5:

1 Corinthians 2:9-11:

2 Timothy 1:6-7:

But what kind of life will the Holy Spirit enable us to live? In the next section, we'll explore the spiritual growth God expects to see in our lives as a result of giving us His Spirit by which He dwells in us.



A CLOSER LOOK

Should You Be Baptized?

When coming to an understanding of the Bible's teaching about baptism and the laying on of hands, many people ask: *Should I be baptized?*

Since that is an extremely personal decision that only you can answer, we will simply provide five questions a person must answer "yes" to before he or she is ready to be baptized.

1. Are you being called by God?

As we've seen, one can't just decide to become a Christian. We must be drawn by the Father. This Bible study course is designed to educate you in the foundational teachings of the Bible, but just completing it does not mean you are "called." But if you are becoming convicted of the truths of the Bible and feel compelled to act on them—you are likely being called by God.

2. Are you willing to repent of your sins and believe the true gospel?

Jesus summarized the actions steps of His message this way: "Repent, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). Are you willing to repent of your sins and begin living a new life? Do you truly *believe* Christ's gospel, the good news of the Kingdom of God, and all it entails? Do you *believe* God (not just that He exists, but what He says)? Do you *believe* Jesus Christ lived and died for your sins? Do you *believe* the Bible is truly inspired by God? Do you *believe* what the Bible teaches?

3. Do you hate that you have sinned and desire to have your sins forgiven?

All of us have sinned and have our sins on our spiritual record. Those sins have brought the death penalty on us, have separated us from our Creator and have brought suffering on us and others. If we recognize sin and its consequences and wholeheartedly desire to have it removed from our lives, baptism is our only option.

4. Have you gone as far as you can go without God's Holy Spirit within you?

We do have the ability to make behavior changes on our own power. But in order to totally commit your life to God, bring your life into submission to Him and develop His character—you need His power within you. If you have come to the point in your life where you are committed to God's way but realize that by your own power you are limited in how far you can go—you need God's Holy Spirit inside you.

5. Have you "counted the cost"?

In Luke 14:28 Jesus said that those who truly desire to follow Him must "count the cost." What is the cost of being baptized? *Your life*. You have to be willing to give your entire life—your thinking, your behavior, your motivations, your time—to Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul referred to this as making ourselves "a living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1). You have to be willing to fully surrender to Him. Are you willing to do that and commit to never looking back?

If you can answer "yes" to all these questions, you are on the path to being baptized. We do recommend that you counsel with a minister about this decision—since it is literally the most important decision you will make in your life. It is a decision that has eternal ramifications.

If you would like to discuss baptism, the Church of God, a Worldwide Association, has ministers available throughout the world to serve you. We can connect you to a minister in your local area. Simply email us at info@cogwa.org or contact us by the other means provided at the end of this lesson.

PART 5

The Necessity of Spiritual Growth

**WE ARE NOT
PERFECT
PEOPLE
IMMEDIATELY
AFTER BAPTISM
AND RECEIVING
GOD'S HOLY
SPIRIT.**

Overcome

To overcome means to defeat, conquer or prevail over some obstacle. In the context of Christianity, it means to struggle against and eventually prevail over our personal sins with God's help. The Bible tells us we must be an overcomer to be in God's Kingdom.

The fifth step of the conversion process is to grow to become more and more like Jesus Christ every day by developing holy, righteous and godly character.

After one is baptized and receives God's Holy Spirit, what should happen in an individual's life?

Romans 6:4: "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should _____ in _____ of life."

Ephesians 4:22-24: "That you put off, concerning your former _____, the old man which grows corrupt according to deceitful lusts, and be _____ in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the _____ man which was created according to God in true _____ and holiness."

Romans 12:2 "And do not be _____ to this world, but be _____ by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove [discern] what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Deeper insight

We are not perfect people immediately after baptism and receiving God's Holy Spirit. Baptism *begins* the process of developing a deeper relationship with God, which allows Him to begin to build His righteous character in us.

The above scriptures show there are two basic parts of the process of growing in God's character:

- 1. Putting off our old ways.** In other words, we must overcome our sins and bad spiritual habits (Romans 12:21; Revelation 3:21; 21:7).
- 2. Putting on God's character.** God's character is summed up in the word *love*—being oriented toward outgoing concern for others over self.

Spiritual growth and maturity require not only time, but also constantly living and practicing God's way of life. Like a child learning to walk, we need practice and persistence to become converted. We will fall down spiritually at times, but we must get back up, pray to God for forgiveness and try again (Proverbs 24:16).

All of God's greatest servants (other than Jesus Christ) stumbled at times. For example, two of the most prominent apostles in the New Testament, Peter and Paul, had personal weaknesses and sins they fought long after their baptism. In Galatians 2 we read of a situation where Peter showed hypocrisy and misrepresented "the truth of the gospel" (verse 14). This situation probably occurred 15 to 17 years after

**EVERY AREA
OF THE
CHRISTIAN
LIFE SHOULD
INVOLVE
“GOING ON TO
PERFECTION.”**

Perfect

The Greek word translated “perfect” is *teleios*. Its essential meaning is to be perfect, mature, complete. It is derived from the root word *telos*, which describes an end goal, or reaching the conclusion of a goal. It captures the central purpose of a converted Christian—to mature toward the goal of the perfect character of God.

his calling and baptism. In Romans 7:13-24 Paul described his personal struggle with sin. He probably wrote this more than 20 years after his conversion and baptism.

In another place Paul expressed his fight against sin and journey toward growth this way: “I die daily” (1 Corinthians 15:31). Every day he killed off his old ways more and more by replacing them with God’s ways.

Does God expect us to become perfect?

Matthew 5:48: “Therefore you shall be _____, just as your Father in heaven is _____.”

Colossians 3:14: But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of _____.”

Hebrews 6:1: “Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to _____, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.”

Deeper insight

Jesus Christ answered this question very clearly when He said that we are to become “perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” Some may look at this statement and think that Jesus was setting an unreasonable and unattainable standard for His people. But was He?

Instead of thinking of Jesus’ statement as an impossible standard, we should think of it as the ultimate goal. Jesus didn’t say we are to be perfect to discourage us, He said it to encourage us to strive for the highest possible standard.

Think about it this way: If you want to become the best basketball player you can possibly be, who would be the best example to pattern your game after? Someone whose basketball skills are mediocre or poor? Or Michael Jordan—considered one of the greatest basketball players of all time? Obviously, the more you study and pattern your game after the best, the better you will be. Does that mean you will become a better player than Michael Jordan was in his prime? Most likely not. But you will become the best player you can possibly be by learning from the player who mastered the fundamentals of the game at the highest level.

This is how we should view the high goal of being perfect as God is perfect—we learn from and pattern our life after the highest example: God. We strive and aim to be perfect as He is perfect. That doesn’t mean we will achieve total godly perfection in this life, but it does mean we will pursue it by patterning our lives after the supreme example of spiritual perfection, our Father in heaven.

Every area of the Christian life should involve “going on to perfection.” But this must be understood as a lifelong process of diligent work and growth—not something we attain the moment we are baptized and receive God’s Spirit.

**JESUS CHRIST
CAME TO
EARTH TO
DEMONSTRATE
WHAT PERFECT
CHARACTER
LOOKS LIKE IN
A HUMAN LIFE.**

Is there an example of a perfect human being we can pattern our lives after?

1 John 2:6: “He who says he abides in Him [Christ] ought himself also to _____ just as He _____.”

1 Corinthians 11:1: “Imitate me, just as I also _____ Christ.”

Ephesians 4:13: “Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a _____ man, to the _____ of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

1 Peter 2:21: “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an _____, that you should _____ His steps.”

Galatians 4:19: “My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is _____ in you . . .”

Deeper insight

We’ve already seen that the ultimate goal of a Christian is to become perfect as God is perfect. That is not an abstract goal. One of the reasons Jesus Christ came to earth was to demonstrate what perfect godly character looks like in a human life. He came as the perfect representation of God the Father’s will and character (Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3). The above scriptures show us very clearly what it really means to be a Christian. It means to be a follower, or imitator, of Jesus Christ.

The apostles had an up-close-and-personal view of Christ’s life and character during His short 3½-year ministry. Because they understood the importance of His example for future Christians, two of the apostles and two other disciples wrote about His life—preserved for us in the Gospel accounts of the New Testament. The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John show us how Christ lived out perfection in His life. We learn how He interacted with His Father and other people, what He taught, how He served and sacrificed, how He showed love toward others, and many more things.

If we truly want to “walk just as He walked,” “follow His steps,” “imitate Christ” and have Christ “formed” in us, we must regularly study His life and teachings and apply what we learn to our life.

Is a Christian expected to grow and develop?

Psalm 92:12: “The righteous shall _____ like a palm tree, he shall _____ like a cedar in Lebanon.”

Proverbs 4:18: “But the path of the _____ is like the shining sun, that shines ever _____ unto the perfect day.”

Ephesians 4:15: “But, speaking the truth in love, may _____ up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.”

**CHRISTIAN
GROWTH IS
A LIFELONG
ENDEAVOR
THAT SHOULD
CONTINUE
UNTIL THE DAY
WE DIE.**

Colossians 1:10: “That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being _____ in every good work and _____ in the knowledge of God.”

1 Thessalonians 4:1: “Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should _____ more and _____, just as you received from us how you ought to _____ and to please God.”

2 Peter 3:18: “But _____ in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever.”

Deeper insight

These scriptures, and many others, show clearly that God expects Christians to grow in conversion.

Christianity isn’t just accepting Jesus as your Savior. That is the starting point, but genuine Christian conversion is all about striving to grow more and more in God’s character. A converted Christian isn’t to be spiritually stagnant. We are to be continually growing in the characteristics of God’s perfect character described in the Bible. Christian growth is a lifelong endeavor that should continue until the day we die. The apostle Paul often likened the growth process to a spiritual battle. In 1 Timothy 6:12 he instructs us to “fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.”

When someone is contemplating baptism, he or she should look seriously at the above scriptures and ask: Am I ready and willing to commit the rest of my life to the struggle of growth toward spiritual perfection?

When we have been Christians for a long time, we should use these scriptures to evaluate if we are stagnant and satisfied with our spiritual life as it is—or if we are truly zealous and diligent about constant and consistent spiritual growth.

For more insight into the many areas God wants us to grow in, be sure to give time and study to “The Bible’s Growth Lists” found at the end of this lesson. Those lists provide a lifetime of spiritual growth goals!

How can we have the ability to grow spiritually?

1 Corinthians 2:11, 13-14: “For what man _____ the things of a man except for the spirit of man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the _____ of God . . . These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually _____.”

Romans 8:14: “For as many as are led by the _____ of God, these are sons of God.”

**THE HOLY
SPIRIT WORKS
WITH OUR
HUMAN SPIRIT,
HELPING US
TO KNOW AND
DISCERN WHAT
WE SHOULD
BELIEVE AND
HOW WE
SHOULD LIVE.**

Romans 12:2: “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the _____ of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

2 Timothy 1:6-7: “Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a _____ of fear, but of _____ and of love and of a sound mind.”

Deeper insight

When God’s Spirit is working with people, they begin to understand spiritual truths they did not before. That is because God’s Spirit is giving them the ability to understand!

The Spirit of God is powerful. In fact, the Greek word translated “power” in 2 Timothy is *dunamis*, which is where the English words *dynamite* and *dynamo* come from. No matter how physically weak someone may be, the Spirit of God can transform him or her into someone spiritually strong! It is that Spirit of power that helps us stand up to persecution and endure hard trials.

The more God’s Spirit works in us, the more we grow spiritually and understand deeper spiritual truths. Our “old man” is being transformed into a “new man” because of God’s Spirit. Even though we have to do our part, His Spirit “leads us” into understanding and discernment. The Holy Spirit doesn’t force us to act in certain ways, but it works with our human spirit, helping us to know and discern what we should believe and how we should live. But we still have free will to act or not act on those thoughts.

God’s law is simply a reflection of His character. And when we allow God’s Spirit to work in us, His law becomes written on our hearts (2 Corinthians 3:3). The more God’s law becomes part of our character, the more we can spiritually discern right from wrong and good from evil (Hebrews 5:13-14).

To what does God compare spiritual growth?

1 Peter 2:2: “As newborn _____, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may _____ thereby.”

Hebrews 5:13-14: “For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a _____. But solid food belongs to those who are of _____ age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

Deeper insight

The Bible uses many analogies to describe the Christian growth process. One of those analogies likens Christians to newborn babies. Just as newborn babies begin by drinking milk because that is all their stomachs can digest, new Christians begin

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A LIFE OF CONSISTENT AND CONSTANT GROWTH, LEARNING AND MATURING.

by learning basic truths. As they grow and mature, they can spiritually digest more “solid food,” or some of the deeper things of God and more complex elements of Christianity.

Jesus said we have to “live by every word of God” (Luke 4:4). But learning the Word of God takes time. The more we read and study it, the more we learn about God, His character and the way of life He wants us to live. We learn God’s will, and then we strive to apply it—but it is a process. In fact, it’s a lifelong process. Seasoned Christians will tell you that even in their old age, they are still learning and growing.

For instance, a Christian may first learn the basic truth about the seventh-day Sabbath and stop working on that day. But as he or she matures, that Christian will grow in a deeper understanding of the joys of God’s Sabbath and how to observe it in ways that give greater honor to God and help him or her grow closer to Him.

God’s Spirit helps us grow in these areas, but many of these things can only be learned by building a proper relationship with God over time. The Christian life is a life of consistent and constant growth, learning and maturing.

What mind-set must we have in order to grow spiritually?

Isaiah 57:15: “For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and _____ spirit.’”

Micah 6:8: “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk _____ with your God?”

John 5:30: “I can of Myself do _____ . . . I do not seek My own _____ but the will of the _____ who sent Me.”

1 Peter 5:5: “Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with _____, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the _____.’”

Deeper insight

While on earth, Jesus Christ was not consumed with Himself. Rather, He realized He was totally dependent on the Father and set us an example of humility and submitting to the will of the Father.

We need that mind-set of humility as well. Christians should be humbled by the knowledge that our understanding of God’s truth is the result of God’s calling—not our own intellect. Regardless of how much knowledge we have, we should never think of ourselves as better than others. The apostle Paul had this approach: “But by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Humility also helps us stay in a repentant attitude. We will make mistakes; we will still occasionally sin on our journey (see 1 John 1:8-10). But in humility we can go to

**WE MUST
“COUNT THE
COST.” THE
COST OF TRUE
CONVERSION
IS YOUR LIFE.**

God and repent of those sins and be forgiven. Repentance is not a one-time event; it is an attitude that must accompany us on our journey of overcoming.

Read Matthew 18:2-4 and answer the two questions below.

1. What did Christ say a converted Christian should be like?

2. What did Jesus intend for us to learn from this analogy?

Deeper insight

Little children are teachable and eager to learn. They are completely dependent on their parents and others to teach them about life and to provide for their basic needs. They often readily accept what they are taught. We, too, must realize we are totally dependent on God, and appropriately rely on others as well.

Maintaining humility is a must in order for us to grow spiritually.

How long should the process of spiritual growth last in our lives?

Matthew 10:22: “And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who _____ to the _____ will be saved.”

Hebrews 3:14: “For we have become partakers of Christ if we _____ the beginning of our confidence _____ to the _____.”

Hebrews 10:23: “Let us _____ the confession of our hope without _____, for He who promised is faithful.”

Deeper insight

These verses highlight the truth that true Christian conversion is a lifelong process. It is not simply one single experience at a certain point in time. When someone is called by God and responds to that calling through repentance and baptism, he or she begins a lifelong journey toward eternal life in the Kingdom of God. That journey requires faithfulness, consistency, continual growth and endurance.

Understanding this is crucial when we are contemplating baptism. We have to be willing to commit the rest of our lives to doing these things. This is why Jesus said

we must “count the cost” (Luke 14:28). The “cost” of true conversion is *your life*. If you make the decision to pursue baptism, you must be willing to hold fast to that commitment for the remainder of your days and commit to a life of growing in the character of God. When making that decision, we must carefully consider the dangerous consequence of giving up (Hebrews 10:26 and 2 John 1:8).

We’ll end this section with words the apostle Paul wrote as he was approaching the end of his physical life. Paul is an example of a converted Christian who stayed faithful to His calling until the day he died.

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure [death] is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Lesson Wrap-Up

The calling and conversion of the human mind is one of the biggest, and most important, themes of the Bible. Though we’ve covered scores of scriptures on the topic, there are many more we could cover. We encourage you to study this crucial subject further.

If you are being called to repentance and a relationship with God, what will you do now? Will you act on that calling? We hope and pray you will. You may find it helpful to go over the scriptures provided in this lesson again and pray to God about what you are learning. The Church of God, a Worldwide Association, has ministers all over the world who can provide further counseling about repentance and baptism.

In this lesson we’ve explored the necessity of Christian growth and building a relationship with God. But how do we build and strengthen that relationship? How does spiritual growth happen? God has provided us tools, or disciplines, to help us grow. In the next lesson, we’ll explore these tools and how you can put them to work in your life.

Life, Hope & Truth Bible Study Course

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Supplemental Reading

Life, Hope & Truth offers additional resources that can help you better understand God’s inspired Word, the Holy Bible.

- [Change Your Life](#) >
- [God’s Purpose for You: Discovering Why You Were Born](#) >
- [Many Are Called, but Few Are Chosen](#) >
- [Is “Accepting Jesus” All to Becoming a Christian?](#) >
- [What Is Sin?](#) >
- [What Is Conversion?](#) >
- [What Is Repentance?](#) >
- [How to Repent](#) >
- [Godly Sorrow](#) >
- [What Is Forgiveness?](#) >
- [What Is Baptism?](#) >
- [What Do the Symbols of Baptism Mean?](#) >
- [Putting to Death the Old Man: What Does That Mean?](#) >
- [Laying On of Hands](#) >
- [Seven Steps for Overcoming Sin](#) >
- [Measuring Your Spiritual Growth](#) >
- [Following in His Footsteps](#) >
- [Run With Endurance](#) >

The Bible's Growth Lists

In addition to the 10 Commandments, the Bible contains lists of characteristics we are expected to develop in our lives. Converted Christians can use these lists both for guidance on how to live and for checklists to monitor their progress.

Look up the following growth lists and fill in the missing characteristics. As you are reading through these lists, think about what each means and how you can develop it in your life.

The Fruit of the Spirit

Read through the nine fruit (or results) of the Holy Spirit working in a human life found in Galatians 5:22-23 and list them:

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | |

Virtues of Christian Character

Read through 2 Peter 1:5-7 and list the eight virtues of Christian character we're told to "give diligence" to:

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 8. _____ |

Characteristics of Godly Wisdom

Read through James 3:17 and list the eight characteristics of godly wisdom we should develop in our lives:

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 8. _____ |

Practical Living Principles for Christians

Read through the seven principles of living Paul wrote about in Titus 3:1-2 and list them. These seven principles provide a framework for how Christians should live and interact with the world around them.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Elements of Christian Thought and Attitude

Read through the eight things Paul said we should “meditate [or think] on” in Philippians 4:8 and list them below:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Characteristics Christians Must Abound In

Read through the six things Paul encouraged the Corinthians (and us today) to “abound in” (or grow in), found in 2 Corinthians 8:7, and list them below:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

These lists represent some of the core characteristics a Christian should be integrating into his or her life. We recommend you refer back to these lists later and use them for future personal Bible study. Dig into each list in depth—study the concepts, find examples of how Christ and other biblical personalities demonstrated them, and take them to God in prayer, asking for His help in implementing them into your life.

It may have only taken you 10 minutes to look up these lists and write them out, but it will take a lifetime of work and effort to learn the depth of what they mean and how to integrate them into your life.

LESSON 10

Quiz

True or false

Write or type in T if the statement is true and F if the statement is false.

1. ____ The process of conversion begins with a calling from God the Father.
 2. ____ The evidence of God's calling is a tingling throughout the body.
 3. ____ The primary obstacle between us and God is sin.
 4. ____ Even though God forgives our sins, He can never forget them.
 5. ____ The Greek word for baptism means to sprinkle.
-

Multiple choice

Select the correct answer to each question.

6. Those God gives understanding to are _____; those who respond and act are _____.
 - a. baptized; perfect
 - b. privileged; honored
 - c. chosen; called
 - d. called; chosen

7. The ultimate penalty of sin is
 - a. eternal torment in hell fire.
 - b. eternal darkness and separation from God.
 - c. eternal death.
 - d. eternal emotional anguish.

8. Which is *not* a correct description of sin?
 - a. Sin causes suffering.
 - b. Sin results in death.
 - c. Sin separates us from God.
 - d. Sin is unforgivable.

9. Which is the most complete definition of the word *repent*?

- a. to change and transform our mind and behavior
- b. to feel a sense of guilt for our sins

- c. to change our behavior
- d. to apologize to God for our sins

10. We can have our sins forgiven by

- a. changing our behavior.
- b. performing some form of penance for God.

- c. believing in the power of forgiveness.
- d. the death and shed blood of Jesus Christ.

11. Why could Jesus Christ die for the sins of the world?

- a. Because He was the only one to volunteer.
- b. Because He was God in the flesh and never sinned.

- c. Because He experienced sin and learned to overcome it.
- d. Because the Father created Him for that purpose.

12. What is *not* a reason Jesus came to earth?

- a. to demonstrate the Father's character in a human life
- b. to set an example

- c. to condemn the world
- d. to die for the sins of the world

13. What does the Bible say we must do before we are baptized?

- a. Count the cost.
- b. Weigh our options.

- c. Attain moral perfection.
- d. Sow our wild oats.

14. What is the proper method of baptism according to the Bible?

- a. immersion
- b. sprinkling

- c. pouring
- d. only in the Spirit

15. What three components of conversion are represented by baptism?

- a. having faith, hope and love
- b. our calling, death and burial

- c. death, burial and resurrection to a new life
- d. death, resurrection and eternal life

16. What is symbolically put to death at baptism?

- a. our sins and old way of living
- b. our personality
- c. our ability to make free-will choices
- d. our past relationships

17. What is the purpose of the laying on of hands?

- a. to symbolize the forgiveness of sins
- b. to be a handshake that symbolizes Christian brotherhood
- c. to be the method required for a minister to hold someone during baptism
- d. to symbolize being set apart to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit after baptism

18. Which is *not* something the Holy Spirit empowers Christians to do?

- a. Understand God's truth.
- b. Remove all temptation to sin.
- c. Show godly love to others.
- d. Grow in the character of God.

19. Which answer best describes a converted life after baptism?

- a. instant and total perfection
- b. the same as life before baptism
- c. continual and constant growth in God's perfect character
- d. a changed personality and temperament

20. What word best describes Christian conversion?

- a. a feeling
- b. an experience
- c. an event
- d. a process

CHECK YOURSELF

Lesson 10 Quiz

- | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. d | 11. b | 16. a |
| 2. F | 7. c | 12. c | 17. d |
| 3. T | 8. d | 13. a | 18. b |
| 4. F | 9. a | 14. a | 19. c |
| 5. F | 10. d | 15. c | 20. d |