



what is missing in our lives?

Purpose, meaning, a reason for living—these are all things we desire and search for in life. Despite steps each one of us takes to find purpose and meaning in life, we still feel empty, unfulfilled. That is because there is a spiritual emptiness in each of our lives. We

each have a hole in our heart, a spiritual vacuum deep within our soul—a “God-shaped blank.” Possessions won’t fill this hole, nor will success. Relationships alone cannot satisfy this emptiness, and morality, in and of itself, falls miserably short of occupying this space. In fact, even religion cannot fill the void in our heart.

There is only one way to effectively fill that void. This way will not only help us to have a life that is full and rich on this earth, but—more important—will give us the absolute hope of spending eternity in the presence of God. Before we can truly appreciate this good news, though, we need to understand the bad news, which is a serious problem we all have.

the problem: sin The Bible clearly identifies our serious problem as sin. Sin is not just an act but the actual nature of our being. In other words, we are not sinners because we sin. Rather, we sin because we are sinners! We are born with a nature to do wrong. King David, an Old Testament Israelite ruler, wrote, “For I was born a sinner—yes, from the moment my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5). Because we are born sinners, sinning comes to all of us

naturally. That is why it is futile to think that the answer to all of life's problems comes from "within." According to the Bible, the *problem* is within! Scripture tells us, "The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

We are not basically good—we are basically sinful. This sinfulness spills out into everything we do. Every problem we experience in our society today can be traced back to our refusal to live God's way. Clear back to the Garden of Eden, Adam made his choice, and he suffered the consequences of it, setting the pattern that all humanity would follow. The Bible explains, "When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. . . . Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone" (Romans 5:12, 18).

"That's not fair!" you may protest. Why should we suffer because of what someone else has done? Yet, given the opportunity, each one of us would have done the same thing as Adam. In fact, not a single day passes that we do not face the same test that was set before Adam. God has given us the freedom to choose between two separate paths: the path that leads to life and the path that leads to death. The Bible says, "Today, I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live!" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

without a leg to stand on Someone may say, "But I live a good life. I try to be kind and considerate to others. I live by the Ten Commandments." But the truth of the matter is that the Ten Commandments, or the law, as they are called in the Bible, were not given to make us good but to show us how bad we are. The Bible tells us, "No one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are" (Romans 3:20). The purpose of the law is to make us realize how sinful we are. You might say that God's law was given to "shut our mouths" and show us that we desperately need his help and forgiveness for our terminal condition as sinners.

Look at the passages below to get a better understanding of the nature and seriousness of sin.

1. We Have All Missed the Mark (see Romans 3:23, page 1006). Romans 3:23 says, we have *all* sinned. For those who would claim to be the sole exception to this eternal truth, verse ten of this chapter plainly says, "No one is righteous—not even one" (Romans 3:10). Another word for *righteous* is *good*. The word *righteous* means, "One who is as he or she ought to be." When the Bible says that no one is righteous, or good, it is not so much referring to behavior but to inner character.

What exactly is “God’s glorious standard” that Romans 3:23 says we have failed to meet? God’s “glorious standard” is absolute perfection. Jesus said, “But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). In other words, anyone who is not as good as God is not acceptable to him.

One definition of *sin*, derived from the Greek word *hamartia*, is to “miss the mark.” As far as the mark of perfection goes, we miss it by a mile. Although our sinful nature makes it impossible for us to live up to God’s standard, we cannot blame sin on our nature alone. Sin is also a deliberate act.

2. Sin Is a Deliberate Act (see Ephesians 2:1-3, page 1064). Another word for *sins* in Ephesians 2:1 is *transgressions* or *trespasses*. This word speaks of a lapse or deviation from truth. In contrast to simply “missing the mark,” this is a deliberate action. Because sin is a deliberate action, we cannot blame our sin on our society or our environment or our mental or physical state. Everyone has chosen to do what was wrong. If we protest this point, “we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth” (1 John 1:8).

3. The Ultimate Penalty for Sin Is Death (see Romans 6:23, page 1011). According to the Bible, we have offended a Holy God. We have not done this once or twice, but so many times that we are unable to keep count. Romans 6:23 says, “The *wages* of sin is death. . . .” *Wages* are something you are paid for work rendered. In other words, you earn your wages. Because we have all repeatedly sinned, we have earned the penalty of death, which is eternal torment and punishment in a place called hell.

Amid all this talk about sin and death, there is some good news. God has given us a way to escape the penalty of our sin. He has made it possible for us to have a relationship with him and enjoy the hope of eternal life without punishment.



the solution: Jesus Christ

God understood our problem and knew that we could do nothing about it. Because God loves us, he sent his own Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to bridge the chasm of sin that separates us from him.

why Jesus can bridge the gap There has never been anyone like Jesus. For starters, Jesus was not conceived in the womb of his mother through natural means. Rather, he was supernaturally conceived in the womb of a young virgin named Mary. Because of his supernatural conception, Jesus, who is wholly God, also became wholly human.

Though Jesus is God, he chose to lay aside the privileges of his deity to live on earth as a man. The Bible, describing the sacrifice Christ made in becoming a man, says that Jesus “gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross” (Philippians 2:7-8). It is extremely important to note that Jesus did not cease to be God when he came to earth. He simply laid aside his divine privileges and walked the earth as a man. In doing so, he was personally able to experience the gamut of human emotions, ranging from happiness to deep sorrow. He felt what it was like to be tired, cold, and hungry.

Moreover, he came to this earth with a clear objective in mind: to bridge that gap between us and God.

When the Israelites of the Old Testament sinned, they would have the high priest go into the Temple and offer an animal sacrifice to God to atone for their sins. In a symbolic sense, this was a way of putting one’s sins on the animal, which stood in the place of the guilty person. The Bible teaches, “Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22).

The sacrificial rituals carried out by the Israelites in the Old Testament foreshadowed what Jesus would do when he came to this earth. He took the sin of the world upon himself when he hung on the cross so many years ago.

Numerous Old Testament prophecies pointed not only to his birth and life but also to his death, including the way in which he would die.

Jesus knew from the beginning that he had come expressly to die for the sins of humanity. He also knew that this sacrifice would be made on a Roman cross. He began his final journey to the cross of Calvary at a place called Caesarea Philippi, and he often spoke of his impending death with his disciples. Scripture records, “From then on Jesus began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead” (Matthew 16:21).

He was eventually arrested on false charges after Judas Iscariot, one of his own disciples, betrayed him. But it was no accident. If humanity was going to be put in touch with God and have the barrier that separated them removed, something drastic had to be done. In essence, with one hand Jesus took hold

of a Holy God, and with the other hand he took hold of the sinful human race. As crude nails were pounded into his hands, he bridged the gap for us!

We must not forget, however, that three days after his crucifixion, Jesus rose from the dead! If it is true that “you can’t keep a good man down,” then it is even truer that you can’t keep the “God-man” down



we put Jesus on the cross

The necessity of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross shows just how radical our situation was as fallen people. It’s been said that you can tell the depth of a well by how much rope is lowered. When we look at “how much rope was lowered” from heaven,

we realize how grave our situation really was.

For that reason, don’t blame the people of that day for putting Jesus on the cross. We are just as guilty as they. In reality, it was not the Roman soldiers who put him on the cross, nor was it the Jewish leaders: it was our sins that made it necessary for Jesus to volunteer for this torturous and humiliating death.

Read the verses and notes below to see exactly what Jesus did for us.

1. *The Greatest Demonstration of Love* (see Romans 5:6-8, page 1009).

Jesus did not die for us while we were his friends but while we were his enemies, opposing him by our sinfulness. Yet, in spite of all of this, God demonstrated his love for us by dying on the cross. In this verse, the apostle Paul explains that Jesus did not simply die for humanity as a whole but that he died for us as individuals. Elsewhere, Paul writes, “[Christ] loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Whenever you are tempted to doubt God’s love for you, take a long look at the cross on which Jesus died. Then realize that, for all practical purposes, it was not nails that held him to the cross, but love.

2. *Forsaken That We Might Be Forgiven* (see Luke 23:32-49, page 935).

Many of us have heard this story at some point in our lives. Yet the significance behind this heart-wrenching scene is often missed or misunderstood. This was not simply some “good teacher” being crucified for his beliefs. It was God in human form who hung on that cross, bridging the gap between sinful people and a holy God.

Matthew's Gospel tells us that when Jesus hung on that cross, he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Matthew 27:46). Many Bible scholars believe that those words marked the precise moment at which God placed the sins of the world upon his Son. The Bible, speaking of God, says, "You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness" (Habakkuk 1:13, NKJV). For that reason, the holy Father had to "turn his face" and pour out his wrath upon his own Son. On the cross, Jesus received the wages that were due us. He was not heard that we might be heard. The ear of God was closed to Jesus for a time that it might never be closed to us.

3. Christ, the Sole Mediator (see 1 Timothy 2:5-6, page 1096). Why is there only one mediator who is qualified to bridge the gap between God and people? Haven't there been other religious leaders who have claimed to have *the* way to God? Haven't some of them also died as a result of their message?

While the answers to these questions may be yes, the truth is that not one of these other leaders was fully God and fully human. That is why Jesus is uniquely qualified to deal with sin. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Acts 4:12 tells us, "There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved." And, most important, Jesus Christ rose from the dead!

Though it is true that you must believe Jesus died on the cross for your sins in order to receive eternal life and be a true Christian, there is still something else you must do.



the response: accept God's offer

To know Jesus Christ personally and have your sins forgiven, you must believe that you are a sinner separated from God and that your only hope is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came and died for your sins. To stop here, however, would be to stop short of salvation.

There are two things you must now do to enter into a relationship with the God from whom you have been separated.

1. Turn From Your Sins. As Jesus began his public ministry, his first message was "Repent of your sins" (Mark 1:15). In essence, Jesus was telling the

people to repent—to acknowledge their sinning, change their minds, and change the direction of their lives.

Look at it this way. In the past, we have been blinded by our sins, causing us to run from God. As we repent, we do a “U-turn” and start running toward him. It is not enough just to be sorry for our sins. We must also change our lifestyle, for the Bible teaches that “The kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin” (2 Corinthians 7:10). In other words, if you are really sorry for something, it will result in a change in your actions.

The apostle Paul summed up this change succinctly when he quoted Jesus, who had said that people must “turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God’s people, who are set apart by faith in me” (Acts 26:18).

You see, there are some things only God can do and some things only you can do. Only God can remove your sins and give you the gift of eternal life, but only you can turn from your sins and receive Jesus as your Savior. That brings up the second thing you must do to respond to God’s offer.

2. Believe in Jesus Christ and Receive Him into Your Life. Having seen the enormity of your sin and decided to turn from it, you then must believe in and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Becoming a Christian, however, is far more than following a creed or trying to live by certain standards. Jesus said that you must be “born again,” or more literally, “born from above” (John 3:3). This spiritual rebirth happens when we personally believe in Jesus Christ, receive him by inviting him into our lives, and turn from our sins. In other words, we ask Jesus to come and take residence in our lives, making the changes he deems necessary. A person must take this all-important step in order to become a child of God.

Notice that this offer is yours for the asking, and it is free. You don’t have to work for it, trying to clean up your life before you make this life-changing decision. The Bible says, “The free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Being a Christian also means having a relationship with the living God. In Revelation 3:20, Jesus said, “Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.” To better understand the meaning of this verse, it is important to understand the culture at the time it was written. Eating together in Bible times was a long, drawn-out affair. People would not sit on chairs behind tables in a formal setting as we do, but they would sit on the floor, reclining on pillows around a low table. The relaxed atmosphere made meals a time when you would not only satisfy your appetite but also receive a gratifying

serving of enjoyable table conversation. You would share your heart and life with those who sat beside you.

Consequently, when Jesus says that he will “share a meal” with us, it implies intimacy, closeness, and friendship. He offers this to us, but we must first “hear him calling” us.

To hear God calling us, we must know how he speaks. One way in which God speaks to us is described in the Bible as a “still, small voice.” This could be described in another way as that tug you might have felt on your heart from the Holy Spirit showing you your need for Jesus. He may even be speaking to you right now! It is at that point that you must “open the door.” Only you can do that. Jesus will not force his way in.

Receiving Jesus Christ into Your Heart. If you are ready to turn from your sins and believe in Jesus Christ so that you can receive the forgiveness of sin and the hope of eternal life, then take a moment to bow your head and pray a prayer like this one right now:

God, I'm sorry for my sin. I turn from it right now. I thank you for sending Jesus Christ to die on the cross for my sin.

Jesus, I ask you to come into my heart and life right now. Be my Lord, Savior, and friend. Help me to follow you all the days of my life as your disciple.

Thank you for forgiving and receiving me right now. Thank you that my sin is forgiven and that I am going to heaven. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

Rededicating Your Life to Jesus Christ. Perhaps you are already a Christian but you have strayed from Jesus Christ. You have been a prodigal son or daughter. God will forgive you right now if you will return to him. He tells us in Scripture, “My wayward children . . . come back to me, and I will heal your wayward hearts” (Jeremiah 3:22). If you would like to return to God and rededicate your life to him right now, you may want to pray something like this:

God, I am sorry for my sin. I am sorry that I have strayed from you. I ask you to forgive me now as I repent of my sin. I don't want to live like a prodigal any longer.

Renew and revive me as I once again follow you as my God. Thank you for your forgiveness. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

Whether you prayed to make a first time commitment or a recommitment, you have made the right decision. God has forgiven and received you if you really meant it. Know that your relationship with Jesus Christ will bring radical and

dramatic changes in your life. Describing this, the Bible says, “Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Now that is good news! But more importantly, God has changed your eternal destiny. Instead of fearing an eternal punishment in a place called hell, you will spend peaceful eternity in his presence in heaven.

Read the next section to see what else God has done for you now that you have taken this step.



what God has done for you

What actually happens when Jesus Christ comes into your life? First, he saves you from your sins and the punishment you deserve as a result of them—eternity in hell. This is called salvation, or regeneration, and has to do with what takes place in your heart: God

gives you new life.

Second, he justifies you. Justification has to do with your standing before God and includes the complete removal and forgiveness of your sins. Think about it! When you receive Jesus Christ into your life, you are completely forgiven. God’s Word tells us, “Brothers, listen! We are here to proclaim that through this man Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins. Everyone who believes in him is declared right with God [justified]—something the law of Moses could never do” (Acts 13:38-39). Speaking of our sins, God says, “I will never again remember [your] sins and lawless deeds” (Hebrews 10:17). What a wonderful promise!

Justification, however, is more than just the forgiveness and removal of the guilt and condemnation that accompany sin. While God has removed your sins and forgiven you of them, he has also placed the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ “into your account,” so to speak. You don’t have to earn it or try to achieve it. It is yours as a gracious gift from the God who loves you. To understand justification more fully, read the following Scripture passages and notes below.

- 1. God Promises Us His Gracious Forgiveness** (see 1 John 1:9, page 1141). The word *confess* means “to say the same thing as another” or “to agree with.” To confess means that we are agreeing with God about our sin. We are seeing it as he does. We know that God hates sin. Therefore, to truly

confess our sin means that we essentially feel the same way God feels about what we have done. After committing that sin, we will be determined to put it out of our lives and never do it again. That is true confession in the biblical sense. The reason many believers are not experiencing the forgiveness and joy they desire is that they have not yet truly confessed! Once we have met God's conditions, however, we will know his gracious forgiveness. We may not "feel" forgiven, but we are. We have his word on it.

2. God Has Balanced Our Moral and Spiritual Budget (see Romans 5:1-2, page 1009). When God makes us right in his sight, he does so by placing all of the righteousness of Christ to our credit. This balances the moral and spiritual budget for us. We now have sufficient "capital of character" to get on with the business of living.

Up to this point, salvation has been God's responsibility. From this point on, it continues to be his responsibility except that we are responsible for the wise investment of our "capital of character"—that is, we are responsible for living as God desires us to. It is as if your checking account were empty, but then someone made a \$100,000 deposit. What you do with that money is up to you.

3. God Calls Us His Children (see Luke 15:11-32, page 922). This incredible story illustrates what happens when a person turns from sin and returns to God. First, notice that the father in the story did not give this prodigal son what he deserved—banishment. In the same way, we do not receive from God what we deserve—punishment for sin. Second, the young man was given what he did not deserve—the rights and privileges of full sonship. Likewise, although we are not worthy to be called children of God, he calls us sons and daughters. In summary, he doesn't give us what we deserve (judgment). He gives us what we don't deserve (forgiveness and justification).

Speaking of sons and daughters, read on to see how God has adopted you into his family.



adopted and assured

We have looked at what happens when we are regenerated (when Christ comes into our lives) and when we are justified (when God forgives our sin and puts his righteousness in its place). Now let us look at another incredible thing God has done for us. He has adopted us into his family as his children!

Adoption means "to be given the rights of a son." In

essence, you have been given the full rights of sonship in the family of God as though you were born that way. The story of the Prodigal Son illustrates this (Luke 15:11-32). The wayward son thought that after leaving home, he would no longer be considered a son but would instead be treated as a hired servant. Much to his surprise, when he made the long journey home, his father welcomed him and smothered him with kisses. He then gave orders to bring out the best robe and to put a ring on his finger, signifying full rights as a son. That is exactly what God has done for you! Take some time now to examine three Scripture passages that assure you of your adoption into God's family.

1. *God Disciplines His Children* (see Hebrews 12:5-9, page 1122).

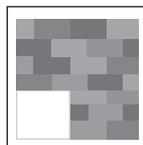
Recognizing you are now a child of God is not some distant hope but a present reality. One of the ways God will remind you of this is by correcting you and bringing you back into line like a loving father when you stray away from him.

Before we were believers, we may have felt no sense of guilt for certain things we did or did not do. But now that we are Christians, God's Holy Spirit shows us the way to live, which includes correcting us. He does this not because he hates us but because he loves us as his own dear children. Understanding this truth should help us in the way we behave.

2. *You Have an Approachable Father* (see Galatians 4:6, page 1060). The Aramaic word translated "dear Father" is *abba*, which is a word of affection that a young child would use endearingly toward his or her father. A western equivalent of that phrase would be "papa" or "daddy." God does not want to be viewed as some distant, uninterested father but as a loving, approachable father to whom you can turn at any time because you are his child.

3. *His Promises Are Not Based upon Your Feelings* (see 1 John 5:11-13, page 1147). There will be times as a Christian when you may not "feel" God's presence. You may even be tempted to doubt that he has come into your life. But 1 John 5:13 does not say, "I write this to you who believe in the Son of God so that you may *feel* you have eternal life." This is because feelings come and go. They fluctuate. Nor does the Bible say, "I write this so that you may *hope*—if God is in a really good mood—that you have eternal life." It says, "so that you may *know*. . . ." Eternal life is yours! Stand on God's promise to you. You are forgiven, justified, adopted into his family, and assured of salvation. Now that is reason to rejoice!

To find out more about God, turn to "Who Is God?" on the next page in the Cornerstones section.



who is God?

Thousands of years ago, Pharaoh, the Egyptian ruler, posed a question people are still asking today: “Who is the LORD that I should listen to him?” That’s a good question, but it is not an easy subject to tackle. It is difficult for our limited minds to grasp the limitless, eternal God. It has been said, “If God were small enough for your minds, he wouldn’t be big enough for your needs.” For that reason, don’t be exasperated if you can’t fully understand who God is or why he does certain things. One day, Scripture promises, everything about God and his character will be made perfectly clear to us (1 Corinthians 13:12). But until then, we will find everything we need to know about him in his Word. Look up the following notes and passages to find out who God is.

- 1. God Is All-Knowing, Ever-Present, and All-Powerful.** The Creator of the Universe knows every intimate detail of his creation (see Psalm 139:1-24, page 536).
- 2. God Is Holy.** God’s incomparable holiness merits our worship (see Isaiah 6:1-8, page 592).
- 3. God Is Loving and Just.** God’s justice is tempered by his love (see 2 Peter 3:3-9, page 1138).
- 4. God Is Personal.** This characteristic of God sets him apart from the so-called “gods” of other religions (see Acts 17:22-33, page 992).
- 5. God Is in Control.** It is important to remember that God is still in control, even if things around us seem to be in chaos (see Habakkuk 3:2-19, page 810).
- 6. The God of the Bible Is the One True God.** While some insist on the existence of many gods, only the God of the Bible is the true, living God, worthy of our devotion (see Isaiah 45:9-23, page 624).

who is Jesus?

Throughout history many people have attempted to answer this question. Some have done so accurately, but many have not. Our best source for answering this question is—once again—God’s own Word. The Bible presents us with some inescapable truths about Jesus that demand a response. Anyone who seriously studies Scripture to learn more about Jesus must answer two probing questions: (1) What do you think of Jesus Christ? and (2) Who is he? The writer C. S. Lewis made this observation: “You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to” (*Mere Christianity*, rev. ed. [New York: Macmillan, 1952], 41).

Jesus was not just a good man. He was—and is—the God-man. Let’s examine what the Bible has to say about Jesus.

- 1. *Jesus Is Human.*** Jesus became our supreme example as God in human form (see Philippians 2:5-11, page 1074).
- 2. *Jesus Is Divine.*** Even though Jesus became human, he still remained God (see Colossians 1:15-20, page 1080).
- 3. *Jesus Had a Specific Mission to Accomplish.*** Jesus came to save humankind from sin (see Luke 4:16-21, page 904).
- 4. *Jesus Made the Ultimate Sacrifice.*** Jesus endured tremendous pain so that we could enjoy eternity with him (see Isaiah 53:1-12, page 632).
- 5. *Jesus Has Great Power to Transform People.*** Jesus can change the most unlikely person into one of the most powerful witnesses on his behalf (see Acts 4:1-13, page 970).
- 6. *Jesus Has an Eternal Dominion.*** Jesus’ Kingdom extends beyond the boundaries of space and time (see Revelation 1:4-8, page 1156).

who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is the most mysterious member of the Trinity, which includes God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Spirit (or the Holy Spirit). Many struggle with the idea of God being three persons, yet one. Quite honestly, we will never fully grasp the concept this side of heaven.

Some, however, have wrongly thought of the Holy Spirit as more of an “it” than a “he.” That is probably due in part to biblical descriptions of him as being like the wind or coming upon Jesus in the form of a dove, among other comparisons.

Yet these descriptions must be balanced with the descriptions of the other members of the Trinity. For instance, Jesus referred to himself as “the bread of life” and “the good shepherd.” In the same way, God the Father is referred to as “a refuge” and “a consuming fire.” Does this mean that Jesus is a loaf of bread or a sheep farmer, or that the Father is a pile of rocks or a blast furnace? Of course not! These are simply metaphors used in Scripture to help communicate God’s character. Likewise, the unique descriptions attributed to the Holy Spirit do not imply that the Holy Spirit is merely some “force” or “power.” Jesus said this about the Holy Spirit: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. . . . He will tell you about the future” (John 16:13). Note the use of the pronoun *he*. The Holy Spirit has a distinct personality, and he also has specific work that he wants to do in our lives as followers of Jesus Christ. Explore what the Bible says about him.

- 1. *Whom the Holy Spirit Helps.*** The Holy Spirit strengthens and empowers followers of Christ (see Acts 2:1-41, page 968).
- 2. *How the Holy Spirit Works with the Father and the Son.*** The Holy Spirit works alongside God the Father and Jesus, God’s Son, to make our lives pleasing to God (see 1 Peter 1:2, page 1132).
- 3. *Why God Gives Us the Holy Spirit.*** The Holy Spirit’s presence in our lives is God’s mark of ownership (see Ephesians 1:13-14, page 1064).
- 4. *How the Holy Spirit Works in Our Lives.*** The Holy Spirit draws us to Christ, enters our lives at conversion, and empowers us as we allow him to work in our lives (see John 14:15-17, page 956).
- 5. *When the Holy Spirit Can Be Sinned Against.*** There are six specific ways we can sin against the Holy Spirit (see Acts 5:1-10, page 974).
- 6. *Why Christians Need the Holy Spirit.*** Living the Christian life is impossible without the Holy Spirit’s help (see Galatians 5:16-26, page 1058).

who is the devil?

What is the devil like? Does he really look like the red-suited, pitchfork-holding cartoon caricature seated on a throne in hell? Or does he roam through the earth disguised as an angel of light?

Unfortunately, far too many people do not have an accurate view of who the devil is. Many underestimate him and his prowess, even going so far as to doubt his very existence. Someone once asked the great evangelist Charles Finney, “Mr. Finney, do you believe in a literal devil?” Finney replied, “You try opposing him for a while, and you see if he’s literal or not.” You will find out how literal the devil is the moment you make a commitment to Jesus Christ.

The Bible clearly shows us just how active and conniving the devil really is. At the same time, Scripture also lets us know about the devil's limitations and ultimate demise. The more we understand the tactics of this intelligent spirit being, the better equipped we will be to ward off his attacks. Below are some key passages of Scripture that answer some of the most commonly asked questions about the devil—who is also referred to as Satan.

- 1. *Where Did Satan Come From?*** Satan's pride led to his fall from heaven (see Ezekiel 28:12-19, page 736).
- 2. *What Are Satan's Abilities?*** Satan does have the power and access to do certain things in this world (see 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, page 1048).
- 3. *What Are Satan's Limitations?*** While we should not underestimate Satan's power, we should realize that it is limited (see Job 1:1–2:10, page 438).
- 4. *How Does Satan Attack People?*** Satan masterfully uses manipulation and distortion to deceive people (see Genesis 3:1-7, page 6).
- 5. *Who Can Thwart Satan's Agenda?*** Those who lay down their lives for Christ will defeat this evil foe (see Revelation 12:10-12, page 1164).

what are angels?



According to recent surveys, most people believe in the existence of angels. A glut of books on the subject fills bookstore shelves. Still, our only reliable source on angels and their activity is the Bible. Just who are these mysterious creatures? What do they look like? Do they wear long, flowing robes and have large birdlike wings? And what is their purpose?

You might call angels “God’s secret agents.” They basically work undercover. Most of the time these secret agents remain invisible—except on those special occasions when God allows people to see them. No doubt God realized that if we were allowed to see them all of the time, they would become an object of our worship, which is to be reserved for God alone. Let’s take some time to see what the Bible has to say about angels and their role in this world.

- 1. *Why Did God Create Angels?*** God created angels as unique spiritual beings who worship Christ and care for his followers (see Hebrews 1:4-14, page 1112).
- 2. *What Do Angels Do in the Life of a Christian?*** God has ordered the angels to protect his followers and keep them from harm (see Psalm 91:1-16, page 512).



first steps

what to do after you
have accepted Christ

study the Bible

You might say that the Bible is the “user’s manual of life” we have all been searching for. Everything we need to know about God and living a life that pleases him is found in its pages.

Tragically, some of us go through life without so much as picking up this amazing book, whose words were inspired by God. Yet success or failure in the Christian life is determined by how much of the Bible we get into our hearts and minds and how obedient we are to the principles and teachings found within it. Just as we need to continually breathe oxygen to survive, we need to regularly study the Bible to grow and flourish spiritually. Here are some important reasons why we need to spend time in this life-changing book.

- 1. Studying the Bible Is Necessary for Our Spiritual Growth.** The Bible performs three functions to help us mature spiritually (see 2 Timothy 3:16-17, page 1103).
- 2. Studying the Bible Keeps Us Spiritually Strong.** The more we get into this book and apply its teachings, the more we will be able to stand our ground in the storms and trials of life (see Psalm 119:9-18, page 527).
- 3. Studying the Bible Makes Scripture a Central Part of Our Lives.** God desires that we make the Bible an integral part of our lives (see Deuteronomy 11:18-20, page 167).
- 4. Studying the Bible Helps Us Apply Its Truth to Our Lives.** We will notice positive changes in our lives as we apply what we read in Scripture (see Psalm 1:1-3, page 469).

pray

The idea of talking to God can be intimidating. But it doesn't have to be. In fact, prayer can be a wonderful experience if we know how to do it God's way. Fortunately, we have God's Word to teach us how to pray. The Bible instructs us to pray at all times, in any posture, in any place, for any reason. In addition, it does not matter whether you pray in King James English or the most contemporary jargon. God only desires that you pray from a pure and sincere heart.

The disciples observed the profound effect prayer had in Jesus' life and ministry. They witnessed how Jesus would often go off by himself to spend time in prayer with his heavenly Father. They saw the power, peace, and tranquility that emanated from his life, giving him the ability to stay calm in troubled circumstances. Jesus' prayer life so impressed these men that they asked him to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1-13). Certainly if the perfect Son of God often took time to pray during his life here on earth, how much more do we, mere men and women, need to pray?

Because prayer is an essential ingredient to walking with Jesus Christ, we need to examine its elements found in God's Word.

- 1. Prayer Was Modeled for Us by Christ.** Jesus took the time to show his followers how to pray (see Matthew 6:5-15, page 843).
- 2. Prayer Is Not a Solitary Experience.** God has given us his Holy Spirit to aid us in prayer, even when we do not know what to pray (see Romans 8:26-27, page 1011).
- 3. Prayer Allows Us to Voice Our Requests to God.** Prayer is God's appointed way for us to relate our concerns and present our needs to him (see James 4:2-3, page 1127).
- 4. Prayer Enables Us to Seek Forgiveness.** When we pray sincerely for forgiveness, God will hear our prayers and restore us (see Hosea 14:1-7, page 781).
- 5. Prayer Helps Us Overcome Worry.** In the midst of troubles, we can receive God's peace through prayer (see Philippians 4:6-7, page 1077).
- 6. Prayer Increases Our Spiritual Knowledge and Maturity.** God will give us greater spiritual understanding through prayer (see Jeremiah 33:3, page 683).

look for and attend the right church

One of the essential building blocks of spiritual growth is fellowship with other believers by becoming part of a local church. The church (meaning the entire body of Christians) is not really an organization so much as an organism. It

thrives by keeping its members spiritually active and well-fed. The church provides you with spiritual instruction from God's Word, allows you to worship God with other believers, enables you to use your God-given gifts and abilities as God intended, and makes you accountable to spiritual leadership.

Some people think they can get enough spiritual input from Christian television, radio programs, and books. While those things do have value, nothing can replace the need to become an active member of a church. Think about it—if joining in fellowship with other believers was not important, why did Jesus establish the church? (See Matthew 16:18.) The Bible has plenty to say about the characteristics of a healthy, vibrant church and the necessity of Christian fellowship. There are four helpful insights from God's Word on looking for and attending the right church.

- 1. What to Look for in a Church.** You should look for a church that has the qualities and characteristics of the first-century church (see Acts 2:42, 44-47, page 969).
- 2. Why We Need Fellowship with Other Believers.** Fellowship with other Christians sharpens our spiritual discernment and prepares us for Christ's return (see Hebrews 10:25, page 1119).
- 3. Why the Church Needs You.** Not only will you benefit from the church, but the church will benefit from you and your God-given abilities (see Ephesians 4:11-16, page 1065).
- 4. You Have a Place in the Church.** God has given each one of us a unique role to play in our place of fellowship (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, page 1041).

obey God

The real evidence of a true Christian is a changed life. The great British preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon once said, "Of what value is the grace I profess to receive if it does not dramatically change the way that I live? If it doesn't change the way that I live, it will never change my eternal destiny."

A changed life begins with obedience to God. This means that you will have to stop doing certain things and start doing others. While God begins to change your heart and desires once you have surrendered your life to him, he still gives you the freedom to decide just how much of your life you will let him control. But know this: Whatever you give up to follow Jesus Christ will pale in comparison to what he will give you in return. For example, when you give up sinful behaviors for God, he will replace your sin with forgiveness and a clear conscience. With this incentive for obedience, look at six specific ways the Bible instructs us to obey God.

- 1. Recognize That You Are a New Creation.** When you understand what God has done in your life, obedience becomes more of a desire than a mere duty (see 2 Corinthians 5:14-17, page 1051).
- 2. Follow God Wholeheartedly.** When you follow God completely, you will finish the race of life well (see Joshua 14:6-14, page 201).
- 3. Offer God More than Lip Service.** God looks at your heart more than your religious actions (see 1 Samuel 15:1-23, page 249).
- 4. Live in God's Love.** Discover the secret of true and lasting joy (see John 15:9-11, page 957).
- 5. Put On God's Armor.** Obedience prepares you for the battles of life (see Romans 13:11-14, page 1019).
- 6. Let God Occupy Your Thoughts.** Your thoughts will affect your actions (see Colossians 3:2-4, page 1081).

resist temptation

Now that you are a follower of Jesus Christ, Satan is going to try to draw you away by tempting you to disobey God's Word. It is not a sin to be tempted—even Jesus was tempted (see Luke 4:1-13). We sin when we give in to that temptation. The good news is that God will never let a temptation become so strong that we can't handle it. In addition, he has given us specific ways to handle temptation. Here are four things to remember when dealing with temptation.

- 1. Realize Who Is Tempting You.** Satan is the mastermind behind all of your temptations (see Ephesians 6:10-12, page 1069).
- 2. Resist the Devil.** The Bible says that if you resist Satan's enticements, he will flee from you (see James 4:7-8, page 1129).
- 3. Rejoice Because Victory Is Yours in Christ Jesus.** God promises that he will always provide a way of escape (see 1 Corinthians 10:13, page 1037).
- 4. Remember That Others Have Successfully Dealt with Temptation.** Joseph's example shows us one of the best ways to resist temptation (see Genesis 39:1-23, page 37).

live in God's power

Some people look at the Christian life and say, "I couldn't begin to live that way and hold to those standards. It is too hard!" This is true. It is not hard to be a Christian—it is impossible (that is, without the help of the Holy Spirit). You see, God has given you power to live the Christian life. The moment you asked Jesus



off and running

how your faith affects the daily aspects of your life

marriage

How many times have you heard the cliché, “They have a marriage made in heaven”? This statement implies that some marriages are destined to be good, while others are destined to be bad. Such thinking assumes that marriage has a life of its own, and the only way to find out if you are to have a “good” one or a “bad” one is to “give it a shot.” What most people don’t seem to understand, though, is that marriage is like a mirror. It reflects what it sees. If a marriage is strong, it is because the husband and wife have put a lot of hard work into it. If a marriage is weak, it is because the husband or wife or both have neglected it.

God never intended for anyone to have a weak marriage. His design for marriage is lifelong, fulfilling companionship. For a couple’s marriage to thrive within his design, the couple must obey God and his Word and lay aside this world’s distorted and perverse concept of marriage. The Bible contains truths that will not only help keep a couple together but will also keep their marriage strong. In fact, the lessons the Bible gives on marriage should serve as the foundation of every Christian couple’s relationship. Whether you are married or single, the following verses will give you a godly perspective on marriage relationships.

- 1. God Created Marriage.** We can learn more about God’s marriage ideal from the world’s first husband and wife (see Genesis 2:15-25, page 4).
- 2. Husbands and Wives Have Distinct Roles in Marriage.** A marriage works when a couple follows God’s specific design for the husband and the wife (see Ephesians 5:21-33, page 1068).
- 3. The Boundaries of Marriage Are to Be Honored and Enjoyed.** Sexual intimacy is meant to be enjoyed only within the bounds of the marriage relationship (see Proverbs 5:15-20, page 546).

Now that you are a Christian, one thing you will want to do on a daily basis is study the Bible. You may, however, have some questions about this. For example, you may ask yourself, *How do I study the Bible?* Or, *Where do I begin reading?* This feature will answer those questions and give you the information you need to develop the basic techniques necessary for effective Bible study.

Pray for Wisdom and Understanding. The most often overlooked and undervalued aspect of Bible study is prayer. Yet prayer is essential to gaining wisdom and understanding when you read God's Word. Through prayer, you can approach God and acknowledge your incomplete knowledge of his Word, as well as your need for him to open your heart to his instruction. Therefore, determine to begin each study with prayer. Only God can give you the wisdom to understand his Word.

Read in an Orderly Manner. If you received a letter and read only a few sentences here and there, the letter would not make much sense to you. But if you read the letter in order, you would understand it. The same holds true when you read the Bible.

Sadly, many Christians do not realize the shallowness of this approach. They read a portion of Matthew, a story from Daniel, a verse or two from Exodus, and then a chapter or so from Revelation and wonder why they do not have a good understanding of God's Word. Furthermore, they end up misinterpreting the meaning of these passages because they have failed to grasp the context from which they came.

To avoid developing this poor habit, you need to discipline yourself to read the Bible in an orderly manner. One way to do this is to use an established reading plan. A reading plan lists Scripture passages to be read in a certain order. Many of the existing plans were created with a goal in mind. Some plans break the whole Bible down into 365 daily readings. Others help you read through the Bible in the order that the events actually happened. For now, you may want to use the following plan as your reading guide. Start with the Gospel of John. This Gospel was written so that we might believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Then, after you have finished reading

John, read the rest of the New Testament. Once you have finished the New Testament, you should read the books of the Old Testament. There you will see the coming of Jesus foreshadowed.

If you prefer a more structured approach, a one-year New Testament reading plan has been included on p. 1177 to help you get started.

Finish What You Start. In life, the benefits of doing anything are often not realized until the task is completed. The same is true when reading a book from the Bible. Once you choose a book to read, read it from beginning to end. Although you may benefit spiritually by reading a verse from one book or a story from another, you will benefit more by reading the entire book from which the verse or story came. Reading the entire book puts each verse and story in its proper context. Thus, you will have a better understanding of what each verse and story means. In addition, by reading books from beginning to end you will become more familiar with the Bible as a whole. You may even discover passages that will one day become your favorites.

Meditate on God's Word and Ask Questions. Thinking about what you have read cannot be overemphasized. Meditating on what you have read helps you to discover the importance of the passage. It also helps you to examine your life in light of what God reveals in his Word.

One of the best ways to begin meditating on God's Word is to ask questions. Here are a few questions to help you get started:

- What is the main subject of the passage?
- To whom is this passage addressed?
- Who is speaking?
- About what or whom is the person speaking?
- What is the key verse?
- What does this passage teach me about God?

To see how the text might apply to you personally, ask yourself these questions:

- Is there any sin mentioned in the passage that I need to confess or forsake?
- Is there a command given that I should obey?
- Is there a promise made that I can apply to my current circumstances?
- Is there a prayer given that I could pray?

Invest in a Few Good Resource Books. The Bible alludes to many ancient customs that are completely unfamiliar to us today. Much of the subtle meaning behind these allusions that would give us greater insight into and appreciation for God's Word is therefore lost. To understand the culture in which the Bible was written, you may want to purchase a few good biblical resource books.

There are two types of resource books you should look into purchasing: (1) a one- or two-volume commentary on the whole Bible and (2) a Bible dictionary. Most one- or two-volume commentaries are concise. They give you the necessary information on important words, phrases, and verses from the Bible. They will not give you commentary on each verse, and they will not go into detailed explanations on any one verse. But they are good resources to help you begin to understand God's Word. The price for such a commentary can range from twenty-five to forty dollars per volume.

Bible dictionaries contain short articles (in alphabetical order) on people, places, and objects found in the Bible. Some Bible dictionaries also contain maps, diagrams, and pictures of biblical cities, regions, and artifacts. Bible dictionaries cost between twenty-five and thirty-five dollars. You can find these resources wherever Christian books are sold.

If you apply these practices to your daily personal Bible study, you are bound to develop habits that will help you grow in your faith.

What does it mean when someone refers to “the flesh”? What is the significance of the phrase “the blood”? And why is it important to “disciple” others? Whether you have just become a Christian or are simply interested in learning more about Christianity, you will soon discover that Christians sometimes seem to speak their own language. This basic glossary of commonly used Christian terms and phrases will help you uncover some of the mystery behind the Christian vocabulary. In addition, some entries will point you to areas of further study so that you can see how these expressions apply to your life. If for some reason you still have trouble comprehending what a Christian term means (or if it is not listed here), do not hesitate to ask a more mature Christian, a Bible study leader, or your pastor. As the saying goes, “There is only one bad question: the question you never ask.” The more you learn about your Christian faith and the God you now serve, the deeper and more meaningful your spiritual walk will be.

Abide: To remain consistently in fellowship with God by maintaining a close relationship with Jesus Christ. Most commonly used in the phrase “abide in Christ.” (For further study, turn to “Live as a Disciple,” page A42.)

Accepting Christ: To receive God’s gift of salvation by believing in Jesus Christ, asking God to forgive you of your sin that you have repented of, and inviting Christ to take up residence in your heart and allowing the Holy Spirit to change your life. (For further study, turn to How You Can Know God, page A11.) See also *Repent*.

Accountability: To be held responsible for your actions. For example, we are accountable to God for what we do with the talents and abilities he gives us. (For further study, turn to “Accountability,” page A35.)

Altar Call: See *Invitation*.

Angels: Spirit messengers who worship God and care for believers. (For further study, turn to “What Are Angels?” page A26.)

Antichrist: Literally means “false Christ” or “instead of” Christ. The Bible says that one great Antichrist, or “false Christ,” will appear in the final days before Christ’s return to earth and will deceive many (see Revelation 13:1-7, page 1164). This term is also used to describe anyone who opposes Jesus Christ and his teachings (see 1 John 2:18, page 1143; 1 John 4:3, page 1146; 2 John 1:7, page 1149).

Atonement: The removal of God's punishment for sin through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ (see Romans 3:25, page 1006). (For further study, turn to "The Solution: Jesus Christ," page A13.)

Backslide: To stop moving forward in the Christian walk; to spiritually regress. (For further study, turn to "What Is Backsliding?" page 933.)

Baptism: 1. Water baptism is an outward display of what has happened in the life of the believer: the death of the old nature (when one is placed under the water), and the birth of a new nature (when one is raised up) (see Colossians 2:12, page 1181). While it is not necessary for salvation, it demonstrates a person's submission to Christ. Baptism is also a demonstration of that person's willingness to live God's way. Jesus himself stressed its importance (see Matthew 28:19, page 874). 2. Spirit baptism occurs when the Holy Spirit enters a person's life. This baptism only occurs after he or she has received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. See also *Filling of the Holy Spirit*.

Burdens: Refers to helping other believers by sharing in their trials, sorrows, and concerns so that they will not feel alone (see Galatians 6:1-3, page 1062).

Believer: Someone who has accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Blood (the): Refers to the blood Christ shed on the cross of Calvary, where he essentially became the sacrifice for our sins.

Body of Christ (the): Another term for the church—all those who call Jesus Christ their Lord. Throughout the New Testament Jesus Christ is often referred to as the "head" of this body (see Ephesians 1:22-23, page 1064). See also *Church*.

Book of Life (the): A record found in heaven that lists the names of every individual who has committed his or her life to Jesus Christ and can be called a follower of God (see Daniel 12:1, page 771; Luke 10:20, page 914; Revelation 3:5, page 1157; Revelation 21:27, page 1172).

Born Again: Describes what takes place when a person accepts Jesus Christ as his or her personal Savior. Essentially, one becomes spiritually "reborn" at that point, escaping spiritual death and receiving eternal life (see John 3:3-7, page 939).

Bride of Christ (the): Another term for the church or Christian believers as a whole (see 2 Corinthians 11:2, page 1054). See also *Church*.

Calling: 1. (Noun) God's invitation to men and women to receive the gift and benefits of salvation (see Ephesians 1:18, page 1063; 1 Thessalonians 2:12, page 1086; 2 Thessalonians 2:14, page 1092). 2. (Noun) God's divinely appointed plan or purpose for a believer, as in "He believes that God's calling is for him to . . ."

(see Ephesians 4:1, page 1066; 2 Timothy 1:9, page 1101). 3. (Verb) When God directs an individual toward a particular vocation or area of service (e.g., “He believes that God is calling him to be a pastor”).

Carnal: To be controlled and motivated by one’s sinful, human nature rather than the Holy Spirit; a failure to live the Christian life as Jesus meant it to be lived.

Christ: Shortened form of the name “Jesus Christ,” the Son of God and Savior of the world; not a name as much as a title. The word *Christ* (or *Christos*) is Greek for “anointed one,” which was often used in the description of Jewish kings and high priests. (For further study, turn to “The Solution: Jesus Christ,” page A13.)

Church (the): 1. (Proper Noun) The collective body of Christian believers around the world and throughout the ages. 2. (Noun) A place where people come together to fellowship with other believers, learn more about the Christian faith through the leadership of a pastor, and use their God-given talents and abilities to glorify God. (For further study, turn to “Look for and Attend the Right Church,” page A38.)

Commitment: 1. The decision to accept Jesus Christ as one’s Savior and Lord (e.g., “The young woman made a commitment to Christ after the pastor’s message”). 2. A person’s willingness to stay true to Christ regardless of the cost.

Communion: 1. A time when fellow believers come together to remember the effects of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross for them by receiving and eating the elements Jesus used in the Lord’s Supper (also known as the “Last Supper”). The bread symbolizes Jesus’ body, broken for us on the cross, while the wine (or juice) represents Jesus’ blood, shed on the cross for our sins (see 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, page 1036). See also *Lord’s Supper*. 2. The deep closeness and fellowship a person can experience with God as a result of entering into a personal relationship with him (see 1 Corinthians 1:9, page 1025).

Confess: 1. To agree with, as in agreeing with God about our sins and sinful condition. To admit your sins to God and ask for his forgiveness (see 1 John 1:9, page 1141). 2. To publicly acknowledge your relationship with and commitment to Jesus Christ (see Romans 10:9-10, page 1016).

Consecration: A dedication to serve God wholeheartedly and to be used for his glory (see 1 Chronicles 29:5, page 371; Romans 12:1, page 1019; 2 Corinthians 8:5, page 1051).

Conversion: When a person makes a decision to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, turning from the darkness and futility of this world to the light and hope found in Christ (see Acts 26:18, page 999).

Conviction: 1. To feel guilt and remorse after committing some wrongdoing.
2. To feel genuine sorrow and concern over one's sinful condition and unworthiness before God. The Holy Spirit is responsible for this conviction in the life of the unbeliever (see John 16:8, page 956).

Cross: 1. Reference to Jesus' death on the cross of Calvary and to what his death represents. (For further study, turn to "The Solution: Jesus Christ," page A13.)
2. Reference to our identification with Jesus Christ; setting aside our personal ambition to follow and serve God (see Matthew 16:24, page 858). See also *Denying Self*.

Demons: Spirit beings who serve Satan. They are essentially fallen angels (approximately one-third of the original angel population), who lost their former position in heaven along with Satan for their rebellion against God (see Revelation 12:4, page 1163). (For further study, turn to "What Are Demons?" page A27.)

Denying Self: To place God's will and desires above your own (see Matthew 16:24, page 858).

Devil: See *Satan*.

Devotions: A personal time of fellowship and communion with God that includes Bible study, prayer, and worship. (For further study, turn to "Study the Bible," page A37, and "Pray," page A38.)

Disciple: 1. One of the twelve original close followers of Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry. 2. One who learns, follows, and lives by the teachings of Jesus Christ; one who imitates Christ. (For further study, turn to "Live as a Disciple," page A42.)

Discipleship: The process of making other disciples; the practice of introducing people to Jesus Christ and then encouraging them to grow in their faith by teaching them about the Lord and showing them how to live as a follower of Christ (see Matthew 28:19-20, page 874).

Divinity: Connotes the self-contained power and holy nature of God.

Doctrine: The fundamental tenets, or cornerstones, of a belief system (in this case, Christianity).

Election: God's choice of an individual or group for a specific purpose or destiny (see Ephesians 1:4-5, page 1063).

End Times: The final days on this earth before the return of Jesus Christ.

Evangelism: Literally means the sharing of the “Good News,” or the gospel of Jesus Christ, with others. (For further study, turn to “Share Your Faith,” page A41.)

Faith: 1. A firm conviction that produces a full acknowledgment of God’s truth; a belief and hope in God and his Word in response to the message of salvation (see John 1:12, page 937). 2. Having a certainty in what you hope for even though you may not be able to see it (see Hebrews 11:1-40, pages 1120–21).

Fall (the): Refers to the first act of disobedience against God, when Adam and Eve ate fruit from the tree that God had forbidden them to touch in the Garden of Eden (see Genesis 3:1-24, page 5; Romans 5:12, page 1009). (For further study, turn to “The Problem: Sin,” page A11.)

Family of God: Those individuals throughout history who have accepted God’s free gift of salvation, which has entitled them to be God’s children (see John 1:12, page 937). (For further study, turn to “Adopted and Assured,” page A20.)

Fasting: When a person voluntarily abstains from food for a given time to devote himself or herself to prayer for a specific need, responsibility, or request (see Matthew 6:17-18, page 858; Acts 14:23, page 985).

Father (the): 1. Reference to God, the Father—the source and giver of life, wisdom, and salvation (see Hebrews 12:9, page 1120; Ephesians 1:17, page 1063; James 1:17, page 1125). 2. Used when speaking of God as the Father of Jesus Christ (see 2 Corinthians 1:3, page 1045). 3. Used to describe God’s relationship to a believer after conversion (see John 1:12-13, page 937). See also *Trinity*.

Fellowship: 1. (Noun) A communion or partnership with other believers. 2. (Verb) To communicate and meet with fellow believers to encourage one another in the Christian faith and to assist those who have special needs (see Acts 2:42, page 967; Romans 1:12, page 1003; Hebrews 10:25, page 1119). (For further study, turn to “Look For and Attend the Right Church,” page A38.)

Filling of the Holy Spirit: 1. The entrance of the Holy Spirit into a person’s life after he or she has accepted Jesus Christ as personal Savior (see Acts 2:38, page 967; Galatians 4:6, page 1060). 2. The empowerment of the Holy Spirit in one’s life to perform a certain task (see Acts 1:8, page 965; Acts 4:31, page 971). (For further study, turn to “Live in God’s Power,” page A40.) See also *Baptism*.

Flesh (the): Speaks of our human, or sinful, nature and tendencies; the weaker element in human nature (see Matthew 26:41, page 871; Romans 6:19, page 1011; Romans 7:5-6, page 1011).

Foundation: The basis upon which we build our lives. According to the Bible, a strong foundation for living is based upon God and his Word (see Isaiah 28:6, page 607; Matthew 7:24, page 846; 2 Timothy 2:19, page 1102).

Freedom in Christ: Describes the spiritual liberty, or freedom, we have as followers of Jesus Christ. We are freed from the controlling power of sin and released from the obligation of meeting God's righteous requirements on our own through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This freedom does not give us the right to disregard God's laws. It simply allows us to obey God out of love rather than obligation (see Romans 6:7, page 1010; Romans 8:2, page 1012; Galatians 5:13, page 1062; Galatians 6:1, page 1062; 1 Peter 2:16, page 1133). (For further study, turn to "Faith and Works," page A32.)

Fruit (of the Spirit): 1. Evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives. This is often displayed through our attitudes and our actions (see Matthew 7:16, page 845). 2. The character traits the Holy Spirit produces in our lives—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (see Galatians 5:22, page 1062).

Gifts: See *Spiritual Gifts*.

Gifts of the Spirit: See *Spiritual Gifts*.

Glorification: The ultimate state of the believer after death, when he or she becomes like Christ (see Romans 8:17, page 1012; Philippians 3:21, page 1076).

Godhead: All that God is (i.e., his person, character, abilities, etc.).

Gospel: 1. The "Good News" of salvation; the explanation of how one can be saved from the eternal punishment of hell and receive forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus Christ. 2. This term in the plural also refers to the first four books of the New Testament (see 1 Corinthians 15:1-5, page 1041).

Grace: The undeserved favor, forgiveness, and acceptance we receive from God through our acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior (see Ephesians 2:8-9, page 1064).

Great Commission: Signifies Christ's command to us to go out into all the world—whether that is across the street or across the ocean—and win people to the Lord so they, too, can become dedicated followers of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 28:19-20, page 874). (For further study, turn to "Share Your Faith," page A41.)

Hardness of Heart: The dulling of one's spiritual perception; a built-up stubbornness or animosity toward the will and ways of God (see 2 Corinthians 4:4, page 1047; Ephesians 4:18, page 1066).

Harvest (the): Describes the “reaping” of souls through the process of sharing the message of the gospel with others and leading them to Jesus Christ (see John 4:35-36, page 941; Galatians 6:9, page 1062).

Holiness: 1. A description of the flawless, sinless character of God. 2. To reflect a devotion to God and his ways in your life; a singlehearted pursuit to become more Christlike in character.

Holy Ghost: See *Holy Spirit*.

Holy Spirit: One of the distinctive, powerful personalities of the three-fold Godhead. His responsibilities include convicting us of our sin, leading us to Christ, and helping us grow in character, faith, and knowledge after conversion. (For further study, turn to “Who Is the Holy Spirit?” page A24.)

Intercession or Interceding: To pray for someone; to make a petition to God on behalf of another (see Psalm 106:23, page 519; Romans 8:26, page 1013; Ephesians 1:16-17, page 1063). (For further study, turn to “Pray,” page A38.)

Invitation: The moment (usually at the end of a gospel presentation) when a pastor or evangelist invites people to accept Jesus Christ into their lives. This is also referred to as an “altar call,” since people are sometimes asked to come forward to a specified location to make a public stand of their newfound faith.

Jesus: Refers to Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the World. See also *Christ*.

Judgment: A reference to God’s divine judgment, reserved for the end of the age. At that time, each person will stand before God and will be found “guilty” or “innocent” based upon his or her rejection or acceptance of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 25:32, page 870; Hebrews 9:27, page 1118; Revelation 20:12, page 1171).

Justification: Being cleansed of our sins. (For a more in-depth description of justification, see “What God Has Done for You,” page A19.)

Laborers: Those who are actively serving the Lord and sharing their faith with others (see Matthew 9:37-38, page 848; 1 Corinthians 3:8-9, page 1028). (For further study, turn to “Share Your Faith,” page A41.)

Lamb (the): A reference to Jesus Christ, who became the “sacrificial lamb” by his death for our sins on the cross of Calvary (see Isaiah 53:7-8, page 632; John 1:29, page 938; 1 Peter 1:19, page 1132).

Last Days: A reference to the last days on earth prior to the return of Jesus Christ. See also *End Times*.

Lord's Supper: Jesus' last supper with his disciples. This is also when fellow believers come together to remember Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for them by receiving and eating the elements Jesus used in the Lord's Supper (also known as the "Last Supper"). The bread symbolizes Jesus' body, broken for us on the cross, while the wine (or juice) represents Jesus' blood, shed on the cross for our sins (see 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, page 1036). See also *Communion*.

Lordship: Signifies the supremacy and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ in the life of the believer and over all the earth (see 1 Corinthians 8:6, page 1034).

Lucifer: Another name for Satan. See *Satan*.

Meditate: To contemplate and reflect upon something. As believers, we are told to ponder such things as the meaning of a passage of Scripture or truths we learn about the Lord through our pastors and teachers (see Joshua 1:8, page 187; Psalm 63:6, page 495; Psalm 143:5, page 537). (For further study, turn to "Study the Bible," page A37.)

Messiah: The Hebrew word for God's "anointed one" (Jesus Christ) who came to save the world by taking the punishment for our sins. See also *Christ*.

Millennium: Refers to the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ on the earth during which there will be no more war (Isaiah 2:4, page 586; Revelation 20:1-6, pages 1170-71).

New Creation: A description of what we become once we allow Jesus Christ to take residence in our lives (see 2 Corinthians 5:17, page 1048). (For further study, turn to "Adopted and Assured," page A20.)

New Nature: That which enables us to live godly lives through the power of the Holy Spirit. It replaces our "old nature" when we accept Jesus Christ into our lives (see Romans 6:8, page 1011). See also *New Creation*.

Old Nature: That which follows our basic, sinful instincts. Before we came to Christ, we were under this nature's control (see Ephesians 4:22, page 1067; 2 Peter 1:9, page 1137).

Original Sin: Refers to the first transgression humankind ever committed, when Adam and Eve took fruit from the tree that God had forbidden them to touch. See also *the Fall*.

Prayer: Conversation with God in which we express praise, needs, thanks, and concerns. (For further study, turn to "Pray," page A38.)

Predestination: The idea that God knew before the beginning of time those who would follow him (see Romans 8:29, page 1013; Ephesians 1:4, page 1063). See also *Election*.

Propitiation: See *Atonement*.

Purify: To cleanse or rid oneself of those things that are not pleasing to God (see 2 Corinthians 7:1, page 1050; James 4:8, page 1129; 1 John 3:3, page 1144). (For further study, turn to “Purity,” page A30.)

Quiet Time: Time spent alone in prayer and in the study of God’s Word. (For further study, turn to “Study the Bible,” page A37, and “Pray,” page A38.)

Rapture: When Christ takes his followers from earth to be with him (1 Thessalonians 4:17, page 1089).

Rebirth: See *Born Again*.

Receiving Christ: See *Accepting Christ*.

Recommitment: When a person returns to the Lord after having abandoned his or her relationship with Christ and gone back to his or her former life. (For further study, turn to “What Is Backsliding?” page 933.)

Redemption: The price Jesus paid for the sins of the world. (For a more in-depth description of redemption, see “The Problem: Sin,” page A11, and “The Solution: Jesus Christ,” page A13.)

Regeneration: See *New Creation*.

Repent: Literally means “to change your direction.” To turn away from those things or activities that displease God and start doing the things that please him. (For further study, turn to “The Response: Accept God’s Offer,” page A16.)

Renewal: A time of soul-searching, confession of sin, and spiritual reawakening that leads one to a deeper walk with God (see Psalm 51:10, page 490; 2 Corinthians 4:16, page 1047; James 4:8-10, page 1129). See also *Revival*.

Resurrection: 1. When Christ rose from the dead the third day after his crucifixion, breaking the power of death and completing the work of salvation (see Acts 2:23-24, page 966; Romans 1:4, page 1003; Romans 4:25, page 1009).
2. When all will rise again at the appearance of Jesus Christ (see Daniel 12:2, page 771; John 5:29, page 942; John 6:40, page 943; Acts 24:15, page 997; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, page 1089).

Revival: Literally “to flourish anew.” A time of spiritual renewal when many come to a committed relationship with Jesus Christ; a time of returning to God (see Psalm 51:12-13, page 490). (For further study, turn to “What Is Revival?” page 379.) See also *Renewal*.

Righteousness: Right standing before God; being right before God.

Salvation: The means by which a person can receive eternal life through accepting Jesus Christ as his or her Lord and Savior (see John 3:16, page 939). See also *Gospel*.

Sanctification: Becoming more and more like Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit (see Philippians 1:6, page 1073; 2 Thessalonians 2:13, page 1092). (For further study, turn to “Live as a Disciple,” page A42.)

Satan: A fallen angel who lost his former position as a high-ranking angel in heaven because of his pride; his chief aim is to foster rebellion against God in the hearts of men and women. (For further study, turn to “Who Is the Devil?” page A25.)

Savior: A reference to Jesus that signifies his role in bringing us the gift of salvation and freedom from the punishment we deserve.

Second Coming: A reference to Jesus Christ’s return to earth to establish his kingdom (see Matthew 26:64, page 872; Acts 1:11, page 965; Hebrews 9:28, page 1118).

Servanthood: 1. A level of commitment that involves a willingness to serve and honor God with your life (see Deuteronomy 10:12, page 165). 2. The act of following Jesus’ humble example toward others by treating them better than yourself and helping to care for their needs (see Philippians 2:3-8, page 1064).

Sinful Nature: See *Old Nature*.

Sin: 1. (verb) To “miss the mark,” or fall short of God’s level of perfection; to break God’s commands. 2. (noun) The one thing that separates us from a relationship with God. (For further study, turn to “The Problem: Sin,” page A11).

Sinner: Word used to describe what we are by nature. We are not sinners because we sin; rather we sin because we are sinners.

Son (the): See *Son of God*.

Son of God: Another reference for Jesus Christ, signifying Jesus’ relationship to God the Father (see Matthew 3:17, page 839; Hebrews 10:29, page 1119; 1 John 4:15, page 1147).

Soul: The vital existence of a human being; the immaterial essence of an individual through which he or she perceives, reflects, feels, and desires.

Soul Winner: A person who actively shares his or her faith with others in order to lead them to Christ. See also *Laborers*.

Sovereignty: A description of God's supreme power and authority.

Spirit (the): See *Holy Spirit*.

Spiritual Gifts: Certain supernatural gifts and abilities given to you by the Holy Spirit in order to build up, edify, and encourage the church (see Romans 12:6, page 1019; Ephesians 4:11, page 1066). (For further study, turn to "What Are Spiritual Gifts?" page 1067.)

Stumble: To spiritually regress, or to commit some sin against God, thus hindering your Christian growth. See also *Backslide*.

Surrender: To yield your personal rights and will to the Lord; to fully give your life to the Lord for his service (see Romans 12:1, page 1019).

Testimony: 1. The story of how you came into a relationship with Jesus Christ.
2. An account of what God has been doing in your life.

Tithe: A portion of your earnings (often considered to be 10 percent of gross income) that you set aside to give to the Lord (see Genesis 28:22, page 26; Malachi 3:10, page 832). (For further study, turn to "Give to God," page A43.)

Trial: Difficult times and circumstances that test your faith. (For further study, turn to "Have Courage in Trials," page A44.)

Tribulation: 1. A time of intense difficulty. 2. A description of the time just prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ when the world will go through unprecedented turmoil (see Matthew 24:6-13, page 867).

Trinity: The three persons who make up the Godhead: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit (see Matthew 28:19, page 874; John 14:26, page 954; 1 Peter 1:2, page 1131).

Walk: 1. A description of your spiritual growth or progress. 2. Your daily relationship with God.

Witness: 1. (Verb) To tell others about the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. (For further study, turn to "Share Your Faith," page A41.) 2. (Noun) The demonstration of God's presence in your life.

Works: Your deeds and actions. (For further study, turn to "Faith and Works," page A32.)

World (the): 1. Signifies the present condition of human affairs on this earth that are in opposition to God and his ways (see Ephesians 2:2, page 1064; James 4:4, page 1129). 2. The temporal possessions of this earth (see Matthew 16:26, page 858; Colossians 3:2, page 1083).

Worldly: See *Carnal*.

Worship: A sincere expression of reverence and devotion toward God. Worship can take place through singing songs of praise, praying, and meditating upon God's Word.

Yield: See *Surrender*.