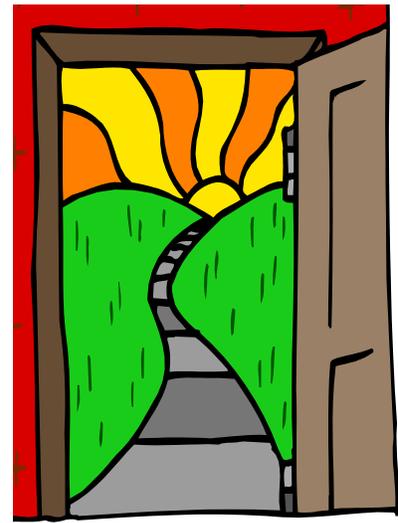


## Greetings Friend!

You are embarking on an exciting spiritual journey. To help you, we've put together sixty short insights (articles) in four booklets (Part 1, Part 2, Part 3, and Part 4). Each insight is one important piece of a spiritual road map designed to encourage you and to help you grow in your relationship with God.

Although the “insights” flow in logical order, you may read them any way you choose – one a day, several in one sitting, or by going to the ones that interest you most. By reading and re-reading each “insight” you’ll soak up the truth it contains. The author of each one is identified in the table of contents by his or her initials. The name of each person and church affiliation is also listed in the front of the book in case you want to contact them personally.



We hope you have as much fun reading “Road Map for the Spiritual Journey” as we had in writing it. It doesn’t answer every question about growing in the Christian faith, but it gives an abundance of solid information.

Blessings on your journey!

Sincerely in Christ’s love,

*Chris, Jack, Sibylla, Mary, Matt, Jim, Joe, Stephen, and Bill*

## Editors

Chris Losey, Mary Enbom, Sibylla Ortiz and Sharon Losey

### Contributors – In order of when their insights appear

- **Chris Losey** (CL) – Senior Pastor, Valley Baptist Church, San Rafael, CA. (415) 479-3390 [www.vbcسانrafael.com](http://www.vbcسانrafael.com)
- **Jack Donahue** (JD) – Retired Chaplain and Pastor, Florence OR. (541) 999-0540
- **Sibylla Ortiz** (SO) – Managing Editor, World Trade Press, member of Marin Covenant Church, San Rafael, CA. (415) 479-1360. [www.marincovenant.org](http://www.marincovenant.org)
- **Mary Enbom** (ME) – City Editor for the Vallejo Times-Herald, attends Valley Baptist Church, San Rafael, CA. (415) 479-3390. [www.vbcسانrafael.com](http://www.vbcسانrafael.com)
- **Matt Berry** (MB) – Lead Pastor, New Life Christian Church, Mountain House, CA. (209) 640-2326 [www.nulifecc.com](http://www.nulifecc.com)
- **Jim Baylor** (JB) – Associate Pastor, Valley Baptist Church, San Rafael, CA. (415) 479-3390. [www.vbcسانrafael.com](http://www.vbcسانrafael.com)
- **Joe Everly** (JE) – Pastor, The Quest, Novato, CA. 415-798-0517. [www.questnovato.com](http://www.questnovato.com)
- **Stephen Ventura** (SV) – Youth Pastor, Valley Baptist Church, San Rafael, CA. (415) 479-3390. [www.vbcسانrafael.com](http://www.vbcسانrafael.com)
- **Bill Berry** (BB) – Senior Pastor, The Christian Church, San Rafael, CA. (415) 479-4700. [www.ccsr.com](http://www.ccsr.com)

---

### Copyright © 2007 – Clear View Books

(A Ministry of Valley Baptist Church, 3. N. San Pedro Rd, San Rafael, CA 94903)

### Scripture Quotes

**Unless otherwise noted,** *Scripture quotes are taken from The New American Standard Bible (NASB), copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved.*

**Other quotes taken from the following Bibles as noted:**

**The Message** – *The Message Remix: The Bible in Contemporary Language, copyright © 2003 by Eugene H. Peterson. All rights reserved.*

**KJV** – *King James Version of the Bible*

**NLT** – *The Open Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1998 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. All rights reserved.*

**NIV** – *The New International Version, copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. All rights reserved.*

### Artwork

*All art original or from clipart.com – used by permission*

Dedicated to those who desire to grow  
in their relationship with God





# Road Map for the Spiritual Journey – Part 1



- 1 – God loves you! – *CL* ..... pg 7
- 2 – A brief overview of the Bible – *CL* ..... pg 10
- 3 – Reviewing the salvation message – *CL* ..... pg 13
- 4 – You have infinite value – *JD* ..... pg 16
- 5 – A clean slate – *CL* ..... pg 19
- 6 – What happened when you received Christ? – *CL* ..... pg 22
- 7 – What God can do for you – *CL* ..... pg 25
- 8 – Jesus and day-to-day life – *CL* .....pg 28
- 9 – What God expects – *CL* ..... pg 31
- 10 – Understanding Jesus’ true identity – *CL* ..... pg 34
- 11 – Understanding the Trinity – *CL* ..... pg 37
- 12 – How the Bible came to be – *CL* ..... pg 40
- 13 – Is the Bible God’s Word? – *CL* ..... pg 43
- 14 – Why study the Bible? – *CL* ..... pg 46
- 15 – Getting a good Bible – *CL* ..... pg 49



# 1 – God loves you!

In a world that often seems impersonal, it's comforting to know you are loved. And you are! God loves you more than you know. In fact, God's immeasurable love for you is the most important thing you'll learn about Him.

No matter what you have done or not done. No matter what sins you have or haven't committed. No matter how good or bad you think you are. No matter what... God loves YOU! And, as amazing as it sounds, God's love comes with no strings attached. His love is unconditional.



The Bible teaches much about love. For example, there are three specific Greek words in the Bible for love – *eros*, *philia*, and *agape* – but only one, *agape*, refers to God's love (Greek is the main language used in the New Testament).

*Eros* refers to the sensual, physical love that men and women share. We get our English word “erotic” from *eros*. *Philia* means brotherly love. The word Philadelphia “the city of brotherly love”, comes from *philia*. The highest form of love is *agape*, God's love. We have no English word for *agape*. Agape love is unselfish. It seeks the best for others. It is eager to forgive. This is the type of love God has for you.

Many verses in the Bible refer to this amazing *agape* love. Here are a few of them:

*“For God so loved the world, He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16). Agape love is so incredible it caused God to send His Son, Jesus, into the world to die for sin – yours and mine.

*“But God demonstrates His own **love** toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). Not only did God send Christ to die for us, He did it while we were sinning (rebellious) against Him. Even on the cross while dying, Jesus said, *“Father, forgive them, they don’t know what they are doing”* (Luke 23:34).

As humans, we tend to love only those who love us. If people are rude to us, we often turn a cold shoulder. But God loves us even if we rebel against Him or are indifferent toward Him.

*“In this is **love**, not that we **loved** God, but that He **loved** us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so **loved** us, we also ought to **love** one another”* (1 John 4:10-11). In the love relationship between you and God, it was God who took the first step. He sent Jesus to be the sacrifice that takes away your sin. Since God loves us so much, we also ought to love one another.

Picture a father talking to his child who has just misbehaved. Even though the father corrects his child, the father still opens his arms, embraces his child and says, “I love you no matter what.” That’s the kind of love God has for you. There may be times He needs to discipline you as His child, but His love for you never changes. It is always there.

You are loved. Soak it in. Nothing you can do will ever change that. Bask in God’s love! Enjoy it to the fullest!

Your Creator adores you. He’s devoted to you. He will never stop loving you. Once you grasp that fact, you will experience the most profound sense of freedom. God’s unconditional love for you is the bedrock of Christianity. It is something you can return to again and again. In your worst hours, God’s love will bring you hope.

God’s love should motivate us to live for Him. He loved us first and we get to spend the rest of our lives loving Him back. God fills our cup to

overflowing and we get to share that love with a world in need. God's love is nothing short of amazing.

Never, never, never forget – you are loved!

## **Questions and personal application**

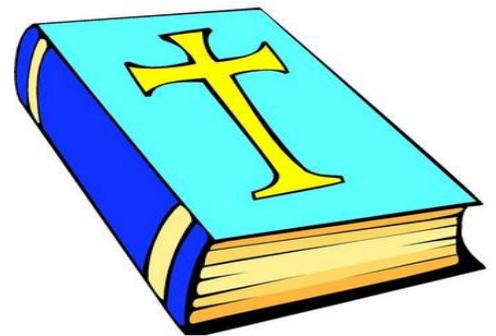
1. Explain unconditional love in your own words. Why is unconditional love so amazing?
2. How does the fact that God loves you unconditionally make you feel?
3. Outside of God's love, what is the closest thing you have experienced in this life to unconditional love? Explain.
4. How has God's unconditional love changed your life, and how can it continue to change you in the future?
5. Review the Bible verses shared in this devotional. After reading them, take a moment to thank God for His great love for you. Thank Him in prayer, or write Him a brief note.

## 2 – A brief overview of the Bible

As you grow in your Christian life, you will need to gain a better understanding of the Bible. The Bible is an amazing book. It is also God’s handbook for Christian living. Even so, it can be quite intimidating to those who have never read or studied its pages. This “insight” will give you a brief overview of the Bible and a basic understanding of the categories of the books in the Bible. It will also help you become familiar with the numbering system for chapters and verses.

The Bible is divided into two major parts – the Old and New Testaments. The **Old Testament** comes first and is by far the longest section. It is comprised of thirty nine books that can be divided as follows:

<b>History</b>	<b>Wisdom and Poetry</b>	<b>Prophecy</b>
Genesis	Job	Isaiah
Exodus	Psalms	Jeremiah
Leviticus	Proverbs	Lamentations
Numbers	Ecclesiastes	Ezekiel
Deuteronomy	Song of Solomon	Daniel
Joshua		Hosea
Judges		Joel
Ruth		Amos
1 Samuel		Obadiah
2 Samuel		Jonah
1 Kings		Micah
2 Kings		Nahum
1 Chronicles		Habakkuk
2 Chronicles		Zephaniah
Ezra		Haggai
Nehemiah		Zechariah
Esther		Malachi



The **history** books start with the creation of the world and tell the history of the Jewish people up until 400 years before the time Jesus was born. The **wisdom and poetry** books do not give more history but instead tell

the inner thoughts of some of those who lived during the time of the historical writings. The **prophecy** books recount the words of the prophets of the Old Testament. These men prophesied to the Jews and other people.

The **New Testament** is the second section of the Bible and includes twenty-seven books. Together, the Old and New Testaments contain sixty six books. The New Testament may be divided as follows:

<b>History</b>	<b>Church Letters</b>	<b>Pastoral Letters</b>	<b>Other Letters</b>	<b>Prophecy</b>
Matthew	Romans	1 Timothy	Philemon	Revelation
Mark	1 Corinthians	2 Timothy	Hebrews	
Luke	2 Corinthians	Titus	James	
John	Galatians	1 Peter		
Acts	Ephesians	2 Peter		
	Philippians	1 John		
	Colossians	2 John		
	1 Thessalonians	3 John		
	2 Thessalonians	Jude		

The New Testament’s **history books** cover the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the actions of the Apostles. The **church letters** are letters from the Apostle Paul to early Christian churches. The **pastoral letters** are Paul’s or other people’s letters to specific Christians. The **other letters** are letters from various writers to other individuals and groups. There is only one **prophetic book** in the New Testament – “Revelation.” It addresses the end of the world, and the glories of heaven.

Some people don’t understand the numbering system for chapters and verses in the Bible. This system was put there to make it easier to locate specific passages. For example, if you have a Bible, open to the first book, Genesis. If you don’t have a Bible yet, it’s OK. You may want to read the devotional entitled, “Getting a good Bible.” You can make plans to get a Bible in the near future. If you have a Bible turn to Genesis and flip through the book. You will notice it is divided into fifty chapters. Each chapter is further divided into verses. Genesis 2:3 means,

the second chapter of Genesis, the third verse. Genesis 50:10-14 means, the fiftieth chapter, verses ten through fourteen. Genesis 8:11,12 means, the eighth chapter, verses eleven and twelve.

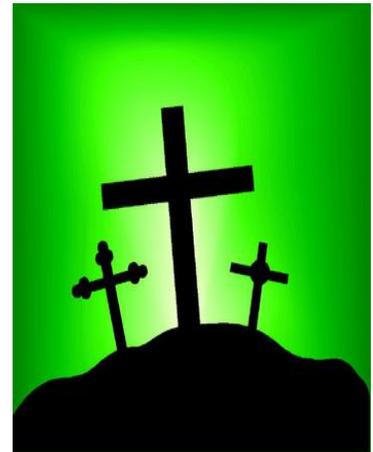
If you are new to the Bible, don't be intimidated. It is God's special gift to you. It is full of fascinating stories, intriguing characters and life-changing truth. Spending time in its pages will help you on your special journey as a follower of Christ. There are devotionals further on in this book that will help you learn how to study the Bible for yourself.

## **Questions and personal application**

1. How has this overview helped you better understand how the Bible is put together?
2. What are the two major sections of the Bible?
3. What are the different kinds of books found in the Old Testament?
4. How many books are in the Old Testament?
5. What are the major divisions of the New Testament?
6. How many books are in the New Testament.
7. If you have a Bible, take some time today and flip through it and see if you can find the beginning of the New Testament. Next see if you can find John 3:16. What does it say?

### 3 – Reviewing the salvation message

Some people have amazing conversion stories. One woman came to Christ after renting a car. The radio of the rental car was set on a Christian station and she didn't bother to change it. After listening to various messages over a period of several days, the lady was overcome by her need of salvation. She subsequently pulled the car to the side of the road and asked Jesus to be her Lord and Savior.



I don't know how you came to Christ, but everyone's story is special. I heard the salvation message at a retreat during my junior year of college. My wife heard about Christianity at a church Vacation Bible School when she was seven. Many people come to Christ at the invitation of a pastor on Sunday morning. Others find Jesus by reading the Bible on their own. Some become Christians through the sharing of a family member or friend. There are those who hear the salvation message on television, radio, or at a Christian gathering like a Billy Graham Crusade or concert. Still others come to Christ after reading a Christian book or a salvation tract.

Not everyone's conversion is a major emotional event. Although some people experience great elation, others have little emotional response. For them there were no bells or whistles, but simply a quiet commitment to serve the Lord.

No matter how you came to know Jesus, and no matter what emotions you experienced, it is crucial for you to fully grasp what it means to "be saved." This will not only help you better understand your decision to follow Christ, it will also help you share the "good news" (*gospel*) with others.

Here then is what the Bible teaches about salvation:

- Sin separates people from God – **Isaiah 59:2**
- All people have sinned – **Romans 3:23**
- The wage (consequence) of sin is spiritual death – **Romans 6:23**
- All people will die physically and be judged – **Hebrews 9:27**
- Doing good things (good works) won't save a person – **Eph. 2:8,9**
- Morality (living a moral life) won't save anyone because even one sin makes a person guilty before a holy God – **James 2:10**
- Philosophy won't save a person – **Colossians 2:8,9**
- Intellectual belief won't save a person – **James 2:19**
- God proved His love for us in that while we were still sinning against Him, He sent Christ to die for us – **Romans 5:8**
- After Jesus died, He rose from the dead – **1 Peter 3:18**
- A person must believe in Christ in order to be saved – **John 3:16**
- Jesus stands at the door of each person's heart and knocks, hoping the person will invite Him to come in – **Revelation 3:20**
- To believe in Christ (to have faith in Him) a person needs to receive Him into his or her heart – **John 1:12**
- A person receives Christ through prayer – **Romans 10:9,10**
- If a person places his faith in Christ, he can know for sure he is saved – **1 John 5:11-13**

There is perhaps no more concise explanation of what Christ did for us than 1 Corinthians 15:3-5, “... *that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.*” Christ **died**, was **buried**, and **rose** from the dead. This is not wishful thinking, but was confirmed by many eyewitnesses including Peter (*Cephas*) and the rest of Jesus' disciples who saw Him after His resurrection. The wonderful news is, all who respond to this message and place their faith in Christ will be saved. They will find everlasting love and meaning in this lifetime, and spend eternity with God in heaven after they die!

Aren't you glad you're one of these people?!

## Questions and personal application

1. Are there any parts of the salvation message that are unfamiliar to you or that you don't fully understand? If so, which ones?
2. Are there any parts of the gospel message that stand out in your mind as especially amazing? If so, which ones? Why?
3. In the space below, write a brief summary of the gospel message in your own words.
4. Take some time to thank God in prayer for the various aspects of the gospel message. For example you might thank Him for His great love. As you pray, feel free to refer to the list in this booklet or to your own notes from #3.

## 4 – You have infinite value



Having spent most of my ministry helping street people and those addicted to drugs or alcohol, I've found a common reason why many of them put off asking Jesus into their lives; they have very low self-esteem. They think, **"I am insignificant, shameful, and surely God has no use for me."**

Granted, to the non-addicted or to the successful and thriving, this belief may seem little more than a pity party, but to the unsuccessful, hopeless and addicted, it has a ring of truth that often permeates their lives.

Many of these people have shattered relationships with parents, spouses, friends and employers, and believe they have nowhere to turn. They have become slaves to their addictions, and many have sacrificed their dignity to feed a destructive habit.

When told about the saving grace of Jesus, most people easily recognize His majesty and holiness, and their own unworthiness. They hit a roadblock because they feel they need to get cleaned up before asking Jesus to be their Lord and Savior.

I find the following illustration helpful in reflecting God's opinion of their misconception. Perhaps it will encourage you as well. I use the illustration often in ministry. It was especially effective when I worked with groups of recovering addicts at a rehab center.

Holding up a crisp \$20 bill, I ask the group how many would raise their hand if I promised to give \$20 for doing so. At this point, usually every

hand goes up. I then crumple the \$20 into a small ball and ask how many would still take it. Again, every hand goes up. I then tell them to use their imagination as I describe how the \$20 is soiled from being dropped on the floor and trampled underfoot. When I ask how many people would still want the bill, the same hands go up. They have no difficulty recognizing that a crumpled, dirty \$20 bill never loses its value.

I then explain that this is the same way Jesus looks at us. Although our lives may be hurting and covered with stains, we never lose our value in His eyes. We have infinite value to God because He created us in His image (Genesis 1:26-31). To be created in God's image means that we have a spirit and the ability to make moral choices. It does not mean that God has arms and legs like we do. He is a Spirit (John 4:24).

When the Romans crucified Jesus, there were two thieves on either side of Him. They, too, were crucified. As they died, one thief hurled verbal abuse at Jesus, but the other one asked Jesus to remember him when He came in His Kingdom. To the second thief, Jesus said, *"Today you shall be with Me in Paradise"* (Luke 23:32-43). Just like the second thief who reached out to Jesus, we merely have to call on His name. There is no getting ready to receive Him or cleaning up our act. All it takes is turning to Christ and asking Him to save us.

Romans 10:12,13 encourages us with these words, *"for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for 'whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.'"*

When Jesus comes into our lives, He doesn't just clean up the mess we have made of our lives, He gives us the ability to embrace the purpose for which we are created – to honor Him.

Jesus cherishes each of us and He paid a king's ransom so you and I can call on His name and become part of His family.

He invites us to come as we are.

## Questions and personal application

1. Explain the illustration of the \$20 bill in your own words.
2. Why do many people feel they need to clean up their lives before coming to Christ? What are some of the things they think they need to do? Why is this wrong thinking?
3. Was there something in your own life you felt you needed to change before coming to Christ? Explain.
4. Why are we of infinite value to God? How does Genesis 1:26-31 apply?
5. The criminal who died with Christ on a cross did not have the opportunity to right his own wrongs. What did he say to Christ while he was dying on the cross and what did Christ say to him? What can we learn from this encounter? (See Luke 23:32-43 and Romans 10:10-13)
6. Take time right now to thank God in prayer for His infinite love for you.

## 5 – A clean slate

Before becoming a Christian, one woman said, “My life was like a blackboard that everyone, including myself, had scribbled on with some pretty bad stuff. It wasn’t a pleasant sight – I did and said hurtful things. I participated in foolish activities. I even managed to get pregnant by a guy who said he loved me, only to see him leave when he got the news. I then aborted my baby. All my poor choices made me feel dirty inside. I often wished I could turn back the clock and start over. Finally someone invited me to church where I heard the salvation message and placed my faith in Christ as Lord and Savior. Within a short time I learned that Jesus had forgiven *all* my sins. This realization made me feel clean inside. It was like Jesus took His big eraser, cleaned my filthy blackboard, and gave me a fresh start!” That is exactly what He did.



All of us make poor choices. Sometimes the consequences are minor, but other times they shake us to the core. I remember as a teenager taking my dad’s company car to a quiet two-lane road to see how fast it would go. At 107 miles per hour, the car began to shake. A rush of fear gripped me and I backed off the accelerator. Although the car didn’t crash, I had courted death. In a split second, I could have lost control and ended my own life or someone else’s. Even though I dodged that bullet, there have been other times when I paid an unpleasant price for my foolishness.

Shortly after becoming a Christian, I heard a message on God’s love and forgiveness from Psalm 103:11,12. The truth of the verses made a lasting impression on me.

*For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is*

*from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions (sins)  
from us.*

How high are the heavens (which contain all the stars) above the earth? They stretch farther than the most powerful telescope can see. The distance appears to be infinite. That's how great God's love is toward those who fear Him. To fear God means to have a reverent respect for Him. Based on God's infinite love, He did something quite wonderful; He removed our transgressions as far as the east is from the west. How far is that? It is infinite. Let me explain. If a person goes north around the earth, when he hits the North Pole and crosses over the top of our planet, he begins heading south. The same thing happens when he crosses the South Pole and heads north. The distance between north and south is finite, about 12,500 miles. Not so with east and west. There are no East or West Poles. Thus, if a person heads east, he will always go east. Likewise, if he heads west, he will always go west. Hence, the distance between east and west is infinite.

I'm glad God didn't say, "I have removed your sins as far as north is from south." Instead, He used an illustration that let's me know that my sins are completely gone. They're *outta here!* Isaiah 38:17 indicates that God takes the sins of believers and casts them behind His back. In other words He chooses not to look on those sins again. Micah 7:19 says that God casts our sins into the depths of the sea. As far as God is concerned, our sins are gone. Someone put it this way:

*All my sins are gone from me,  
God cast them in the deepest sea.  
As far as east is from the west,  
My sins are gone, my soul can rest.*

Praise God! He has given every Christian a clean slate. He has cleaned us off and said, "Now that you're clean, live for Me." Although all of us will return to our old ways from time to time, we need to realize that

God is there, ready to pick us up and dust us off. May this truth bring you great joy and encouragement!

## **Questions and personal application**

1. Even though people come to Christ, sometimes they still carry guilt from their past. What sins might people have difficulty believing that God could forgive? Why?
  
2. Are there any areas in your life in which you have not accepted God's forgiveness? Why?
  
3. What do the following verses teach about God's forgiveness, and what are the implications regarding any past sin in your life?
  - Psalm 103:11,12
  
  - Isaiah 38:17
  
  - Micah 7:19
  
4. Deep in your heart, do you realize you have a clean slate before God? If so, take a moment and thank Him in prayer for what He has done for you. If you still struggle with guilt from your past, take time each day to thank God for His forgiveness. The truth of what He has done will eventually become clear.



## 6 – What happened when you received Christ?

When you became a Christian, many amazing things happened to you. I clearly remember the day I asked Jesus into my life to be *my* Lord and Savior. At that moment a weight was lifted from my soul. I felt clean and had a new joy in my heart.

Whether or not you had a similar experience, there are many things that happened in the spiritual realm when you became a Christian. At first they may sound strange or complicated; but when understood, they are truly amazing.

### **You were born again, saved and received eternal life**

Jesus said that unless a person is “born again” he cannot see the Kingdom of God (John 3:3). In other words, if a person is not “born again” he won’t go to heaven when he dies. In John chapter three Jesus addressed a man named Nicodemus and explained what it meant to be born again. It meant “spiritual birth”. All of us undergo physical birth; but, to enter God’s Kingdom, we need to be born spiritually. This happens when we place our faith in Christ. We are then born into God’s family. 1 Peter 1:3 states, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy has caused us to be born again...*” When you placed your faith in Christ, you were born again. You were saved and received eternal life. John 3:16,17 states, “*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.*”

### **You became a child of God**

John 1:12,13 states, “*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of*

*man, but of God.”* When you asked Jesus to come into your life, you became God’s child. You are now part of His family.

**You were redeemed, adopted, received God’s Spirit, and made an heir with Christ** - Galatians 4:4-7 states, *“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.”* These verses are packed with what happened to you when you received Christ. First you were redeemed. To be redeemed means to be bought back. God bought you back from the pit of Hell. He bought you with the precious blood of Christ and adopted you as His son. He placed His Spirit in your heart so you would call Him “Abba” which means Daddy. And, He made you an heir to all of His blessings in Heaven. Colossians 1:14,15 puts it this way, *“For He (God) delivered us from the domain of darkness (Satan’s domain), and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*

### **You were justified and saved from God’s wrath**

Romans 5:8-9 states, *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.”* To be justified means to be declared “not guilty.” Someone said to be **justified** is **just-as-if-I’d** never sinned. In essence, when God the Father looks at us, He sees us through the blood of Christ. It’s Jesus’ sacrifice that makes us clean. Through Christ’s blood we are saved from God’s wrath. Jesus paid the penalty for our sin so that we could have eternal life in heaven rather than suffer eternity separated from God in Hell. Not only did God justify us when we asked Christ into our lives, He also “imputed to us” (gave to us) Christ’s righteousness. Because of what Christ did for us, God now sees us as righteous (Romans 4:5).

## **You became a new creature in Christ**

2 Corinthians 5:17 states, “*Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*”

When you asked Christ into your life, you became new. No, you didn’t change your physical appearance (although you may smile a lot more), you were changed on the inside. You changed from a person bound for Hell, to a person bound for heaven. How great is that!

God has certainly blessed Christians with many spiritual blessings. As you grow in your faith, you will learn more about just how wonderful those blessings are.

## **Questions and personal application**

1. Explain how you felt when you asked Jesus into your life?
2. In your own words, briefly explain the blessings (listed below) you received when you became a Christian.
  - You were born again – (John 3:3, 1 Peter 1:3)
  - You received eternal life – (John 3:16)
  - You became a child of God (you were adopted) – (John 1:12,13)
  - You were redeemed – (Galatians 4:4-7, Colossians 1:14,15)
  - You received God’s Spirit – (Galatians 4:4-7)
  - You were made an heir with Christ – (Galatians 4:4-7)
  - You were justified and given Christ’s righteousness – (Romans 5:8,9, Romans 4:5)
  - You were saved from God’s wrath – (Romans 5:8,9)
  - You became a new creature – (2 Corinthians 5:17)
3. Do any of God’s blessings stand out to you as especially amazing? Why?
4. Spend a little time thanking God for what He has done for you.

## 7 – What God can do for you

Several years ago a new Christian asked me, “Now that I’m a Christian, what can God do for me?” At first his question sounded selfish, but the more I talked to him, I realized he sincerely wanted to know how God could help him. We searched the Bible together, and here is some of what we found. God wants to:



### **Be a best friend**

In an impersonal world it is nice to have a good friend, and Jesus is the best! In John 15:12-15 Jesus addressed His disciples, *“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends, if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.”* In these verses Jesus taught His disciples the importance of loving one another. He proved His love and friendship by dying for them. He now hoped they would live for Him. As a Christian, God wants you to love others and to show your commitment by obeying His teachings. As you do, your friendship with Christ will grow.

### **Make you part of His family, and provide for you**

Although you will always be part of your biological family, when you asked Christ into your life, you became part of God’s family (John 1:12). Sometimes a person’s biological family rejoices when one of its members comes to Christ. Sometimes family members feel threatened. This can lead to strained or broken relationships. If this happens, God wants us to do all we can to mend those relationships. Sometimes this is successful and sometimes it isn’t. Jesus assured His followers that even if they had to leave certain things or people behind in order to follow Him, He would provide for them. Jesus said, *“And everyone who has left*

*houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life” (Matthew 19:29).* As part of God’s family, we can always count on Him.

### **Give you rest for your soul**

One of my favorite passages in the Bible is Matthew 11:28-30 where Jesus says, *“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.”* Life can be hard, and it is easy to get weary along the way. Finding inner peace is often illusive. That’s where Jesus comes in! He invites all who want to find rest for their souls (inner peace) to come to Him. He invites them to take His yoke upon them. A yoke is a frame for harnessing oxen together, so they can plow a field or pull a cart. In the spiritual realm, Jesus’ yoke is a spiritual harness that joins us to Him. He walks beside us and helps pull life’s load. Christ tells us that His yoke is easy and His load is light. With Him at our side, life becomes easier; and we can accomplish anything!

### **Guide you**

In Psalm 119:105 the writer states, *“Thy Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.”* In these verses the Psalmist states that God’s Word provides guidance. It is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. What an incredible illustration. Each time I read this verse I picture someone walking through the woods on a dark night. To keep from stumbling, the person needs light around his feet and on the path ahead. In life, God’s Word (the Bible) provides that light. It gives us truth about hope, love, peace, marriage, family, forgiveness, joy, financial success and a thousand other things. As we read and heed, our lives are blessed.

### **Help you overcome temptation and sin**

Life is full of temptations. If temptation is acted upon it can destroy a person’s life. Now that you are a Christian, God wants to help you win this battle. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, the writer (the Apostle Paul) states,

*“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.”* In this verse Paul informs us that every temptation we face is common to humans. The good news is, God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to endure, and He will provide a way of escape. If you are tempted to do something you shouldn't do, ask God to give you strength to endure. Ask Him to show you the way out of the situation. Once He does, take it, and you will be an overcomer.

### **Give you an abundant life**

In John 10:10 Jesus said to His disciples, *“The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.”* Jesus wants His followers to have abundant lives. This doesn't mean being trouble-free. Instead it means having Christ with you each step of the way. As you choose obedience to His Word, He pours out His blessings in your life; blessings of friendship, provision, inner peace, guidance, and power to overcome temptation. These things are the ingredients in the abundant life.

### **Questions and personal application**

1. What has God done for you since you became a Christian? What do you hope He will do for you in the future?
2. Which of the things mentioned in this lesson are especially meaningful to you? Why?
3. Look up the following verses to discover other things God wants to do for you: Matthew 7:7-11, Philippians 4:4-7, and Philippians 4:13.
4. In the space below, write a brief “thank you note” to God for all He has done and will do in your life.



## 8 – Jesus in day-to-day life

When people come to Christ, they often want to know what difference Jesus can make in their day-to-day lives. Are they supposed to change their routine, attend church, pray, or read their Bible?

The easiest way to understand how Christ impacts our day-to-day lives is to understand that He changes us from the inside out. When a person receives Christ as Lord and Savior, he is indwelt by God's Holy Spirit (John 14:17,18). God gives His followers His Spirit to help them live the Christian life. The Spirit helps in many different ways. Here are a few of them. He gives...

### **A new sensitivity to sin**

After a person comes to Christ, he begins to have a new sensitivity to sin. Crude jokes that once made him laugh are now distasteful. Swearing loses its appeal. Sins that didn't bother him, now do. Why this new sensitivity? It happens because of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Romans 8:29 states that God created us to be conformed to the image of Christ. In other words, God wants us to become more like Christ each day: more loving, kind, thoughtful, and pure...

### **A new love for people**

Christ also changes believers by giving them a new love for people. They start to view people differently. Those whom they saw as reprobates are now seen as sinners needing God. Enemies are viewed as people needing prayer. Jesus said, "*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you*" (Matthew 5:43,44). As new Christians realize how much God loves and forgives them, they see the need to love and forgive others. Christ doesn't make Christians naïve or foolish in their relationships. Instead, He helps them see others through His eyes. All

people are part of God's creation and need to find Christ in order to be saved. Christians join God in lovingly reaching the world for Him.

### **A new hunger for the Word**

It is not uncommon for new Christians to find they have an increased desire to study God's Word, the Bible. New Christians begin to view the Bible as God's "love letter" to them, and they want to learn more about Him. Soon after asking Christ into my life, I began spending time reading the Bible. No one told me to do it, I wanted to! I know of one new Christian who spends a few hours each day studying her Bible. When asked about her new habit, she said she can't help herself. She wants to learn more. Not every new Christian will have an insatiable appetite for Bible study, but they will definitely want to learn more. It's all part of God's Holy Spirit changing us from the inside out.

### **A new desire to share the good news of salvation**

The good news of "salvation by grace through faith" is something new Christians can hardly keep to themselves. I remember returning home from college after asking Christ into my life. I couldn't wait to tell my family the good news. Looking back, I know I was a bit overbearing, but I just had to tell someone what Christ had done for me. Don't be surprised if you have this same desire.

### **More joy and peace**

When I asked my wife what difference God makes in her day-to-day life, she informed me that He gives her "joy and peace." Knowing that Christ is always with her, allows her to smile, relax and enjoy life. She knows God watches over her. Nothing can harm her life unless He allows it. As a new Christian, get ready for more joy and peace.

### **Help in decision-making**

Another way God helps people is in the area of decision-making. When faced with choices, Christians can pray and ask for God's guidance. The more they learn and apply His truth, the wiser their decisions will be. If

a choice violates biblical teaching, the choice is wrong. If a choice does not go against biblical truth, it is a viable option.

### **A new desire to live for God**

When people come to Christ, they often have a growing desire to live for God. Again, it is the Holy Spirit who gives this desire. New Christians often find themselves wanting to go to church on Sunday before heading off to other activities. During the week they want to get up earlier to study the Bible before going to work. They want to pray before meals and throughout the day. These are all good things, and indicate a growing desire to live for God. Christ impacts new Christians in myriads of ways. Be sure to thank Him for His positive influence in your life.

### **Questions and personal application**

1. Since becoming a Christian, how has God affected, impacted, or influenced your day-to-day life?
  
2. Which of the following things have you experienced since coming to Christ?
  - a new sensitivity to sin
  - a new love for people
  - a new hunger for the Word
  - a new desire to share the good news of salvation
  - more joy and peace
  - help in decision-making
  - a new desire to live for God
  
3. Spend a little time in prayer thanking God for how He influences your life through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Thank Him for specific ways He has helped you.

## 9 – What God expects

One day I asked a friend, “Is there anything you now know about the Christian faith that you wish you had known when you first came to Christ?” Without hesitation he said, “I wish I had known what God expected of me. When I became a Christian, I was told there was nothing I could do to earn my salvation and nothing I could do to keep it. My salvation was not based on my good works but on God’s grace, His unmerited favor. From those comments I concluded there was nothing I needed to do, period. It wasn’t until later that I heard God expected certain things of me as a Christian. These things weren’t meant to burden me, but to help me grow in my faith and have an abundant life.”

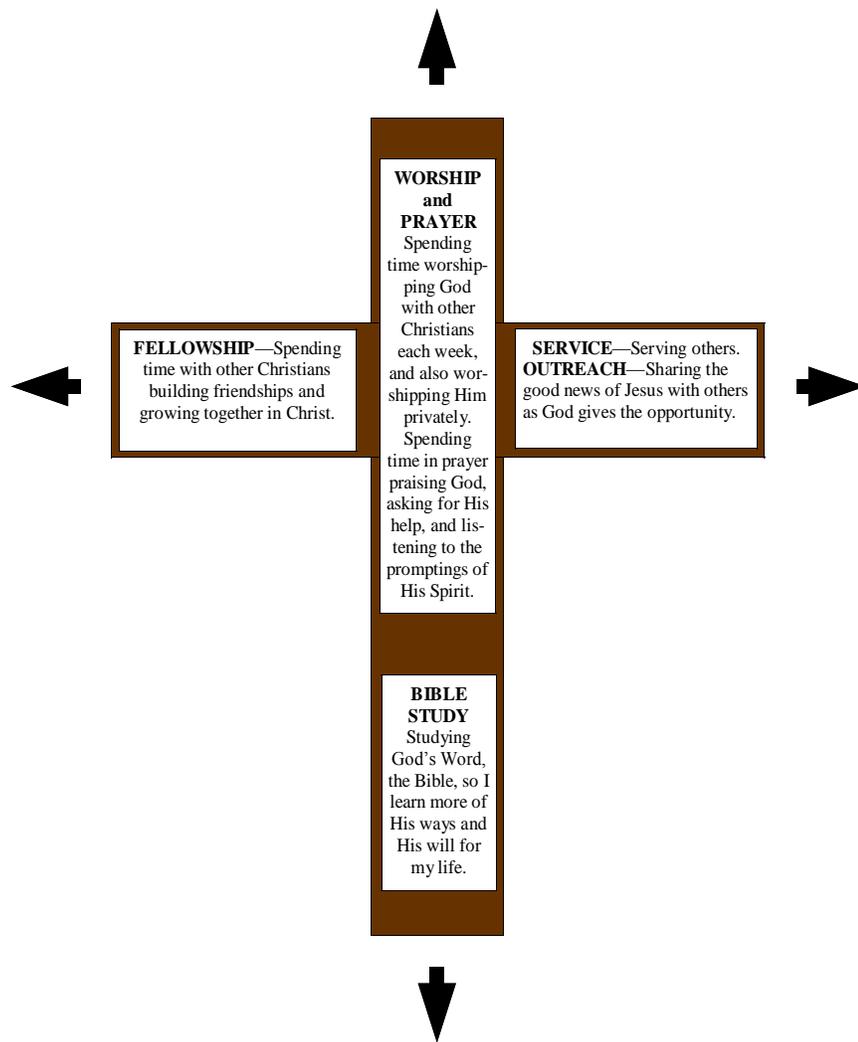
Exactly what does God expect of His children? Micah 6:8 in the Old Testament lists three things, “*He (God) has told you O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require (expect) of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*”

1. **To do justice** – Doing justice means to treat others fairly by doing the right thing. It means not taking advantage of people, but treating them with honesty, respect, and integrity.
2. **To love kindness** – This means showing kindness toward others through compassion and unconditional love. It means treating them the way you want to be treated.
3. **To walk humbly with your God** – This means living a life of humility that lays aside arrogance and pride. It means not demanding your own way but considering the feelings and needs of others. It means putting others ahead of oneself and serving them.

Along with these three expectations, God expects other things of His children as well. These may be illustrated in a “cross diagram.” A cross

has a vertical axis representing our vertical relationship with God. It also has a horizontal axis representing our relationship with one another. We reach up to God and out to one another. The vertical axis includes our **worship** (Psalm 2:11, Hebrews 10:25) and **prayers** (Philippians 4:6,7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17) up to God, and His **Word** (2 Timothy 2:15, Psalm 119:11) and **answers to prayer** down to us. We need to come together with other Christians on a regular basis to worship God. We need to make prayer an important part of our lives. We also need to study God's Word in order to apply it to our lives. On the horizontal plane we need to reach out to other Christians in **fellowship** (Hebrews 10:25, Acts 2:42) and **service** (Galatians 5:13). We also need to **reach out** (Matthew 28:18-20) to non-Christians with the good news of salvation in Christ so they can be saved.

When we **worship, pray, and study the Bible** (on the vertical plane); and participate in **fellowship, service and outreach** (on the horizontal plane), our lives please God. The cross diagram is really a blueprint for the Christian life. Every believer needs to be involved in worship, prayer, Bible study, fellowship, service



Some things God expects of Christians

and outreach. As we choose to make these things part of our lives, we experience God's blessing resulting in a positive impact on ourselves and others.

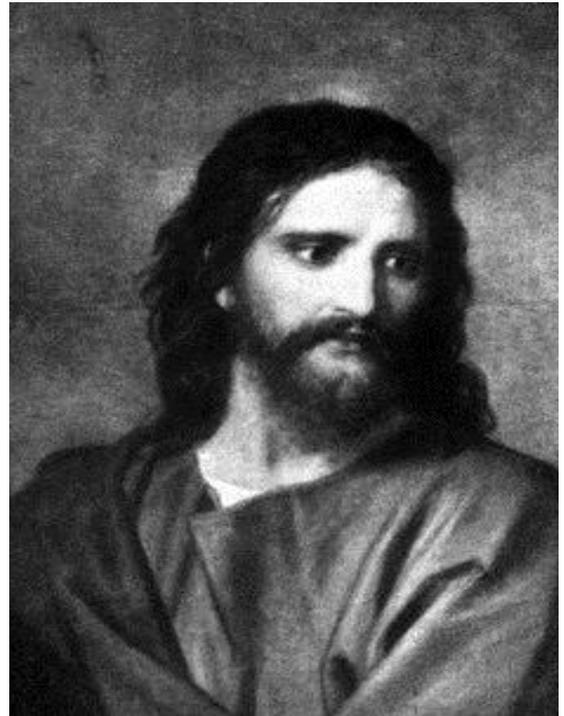
Since Jesus died for us on the cross, we can live for Him by fulfilling His expectations. Some of these may seem burdensome at first; but with a little effort, they bring joy to us and honor to God.

## **Questions and personal application**

1. Summarize the following concepts from Micah 6:8. Give at least one real-life example of how these truths can be applied to your life.
  - do justice
  - love kindness
  - walk humbly with God
2. Is there anything you need to change in order to make Micah 6:8 a reality in your life? Explain.
3. Take a few minutes to study the cross diagram from this lesson. On a separate sheet of paper, draw and label the cross. Explain it to someone.
4. Look up the verses mentioned in this lesson to see how they support the following concepts on the vertical and horizontal axis of the cross. Summarize the verses in your own words.
  - Worship (Psalm 2:11, Hebrews 10:25)
  - Prayer (Philippians 4:6,7, 1 Thessalonians 5:17)
  - Bible Study (2 Timothy 2:15)
  - Fellowship (Acts 2:42)
  - Service (Galatians 5:13)
  - Outreach (Matthew 28:18-20)
5. What aspects of the cross are part of your life? What aspects do you need to work on? How can you do this?

## 10 – Understanding Jesus’ true identity

One of the most important things for Christians to understand is the true identity of Jesus. Some groups say He was only a good man, a prophet, a learned teacher, a lesser god, or something else. The real question is, “What does the Bible teach?” Scripture reveals that Jesus was and is none other than God, Himself – God in human flesh.



One day Jesus asked His disciples, “*‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ And Simon Peter answered and said, ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God’*” (Matthew 16:13-16). Peter was right. Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah), God’s Son.

But Jesus is even more than God’s Son. He is God, Himself. Before Jesus’ birth, an angel came to Joseph, Jesus’ future stepfather. Joseph discovered that Mary (Jesus’ mother and Joseph’s future wife) was pregnant. Joseph loved Mary but wanted to call off their engagement because of her mysterious pregnancy. The angel informed Joseph that Mary had not been unfaithful, but instead was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. This account is found in Matthew 1:18-25. It further reveals Jesus’ true identity. “*Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed (engaged) to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying,*

*‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.’ Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which translated means, ‘God with us.’’ And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took her (Mary) as his wife, and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.”*

The passage reveals that Mary had become pregnant through the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. It also states that her child was to be called Jesus. The word “Jesus” literally means “The LORD saves.” Not only would the child’s name be **Jesus**, but He would also be called **Immanuel** which means “God with us.” Jesus was not just God’s Son, He was “God with us”; God come to earth.

In the Old Testament there were many prophecies about Christ’s coming. Jesus was the fulfillment of all of those prophecies. For example, Isaiah 9:6 states, *“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”* Among other things, Jesus was and is **Mighty God**, i.e. God, Himself. He is also **Eternal Father**, another reference to God.

We know that Jesus is God for many other reasons. Colossians 2:9 states that all the fullness of Deity (God) dwells in Christ in bodily form. In other words, all the fullness of God dwelt in Jesus when Jesus walked the earth in human form. Philippians 2:5-7 states that although Jesus existed in the form of God (in heaven), He did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped, but He emptied Himself and became a servant. In other words, Jesus who was equal with God, willingly left heaven, came to earth, and took on the form of a man. He did it so we could be saved.

When Jesus walked the earth, He was the God-man; fully God and fully human. He is now back in heaven with God the Father. In short, Jesus is God.

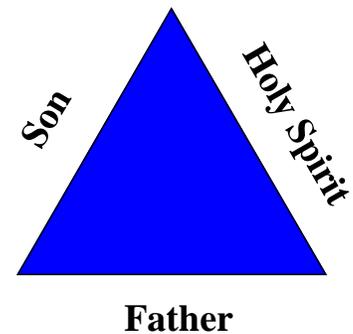
We'll learn even more about Jesus and His relationship with "God the Father" and "God the Holy Spirit" in the next "insight" entitled, "Understanding the Trinity."

## **Questions and personal application**

1. What are some of the identities that religious groups ascribe to Jesus?
2. Up until now, what has been your understanding of Jesus' true identity? How has this "insight" changed or expanded your understanding?
3. What does the word "Jesus" mean? What does the word "Immanuel" mean?
4. List some of the Bible verses mentioned in this study that reveal Jesus' true identity.
5. In your opinion, what difference does it make that Jesus is God?

## 11 – Understanding the Trinity

The word **Trinity** is used by Christians to express God's triune nature. He is *three in one* – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Simply stated, the Bible teaches there is only one God, yet three persons are called God. Thus, those three are the one God.



In the Old Testament, Isaiah 43:10,11 makes it clear there is only one God. *“You are My witnesses,” declares the Lord, “And My servant whom I have chosen, in order that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me. I, even I, am the Lord.”* These verses reveal that there were no “Gods” formed before the one, true God, nor will there be any after Him. This does not insinuate that God Himself was formed. He is eternal. It simply means there are no other Gods, besides Him, period! Yet, three persons in the Bible are called God. God the Father is called God. Passages in the New Testament emphasize that Jesus, the Son, is also God. And the Holy Spirit is called God. These three – Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the one, true God.

Here are some of the passages indicating Jesus' deity:

- In John 10:30-33 Jesus claimed equality with God.
- John 1:1 states, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* John 1:14 reveals that Jesus is the Word, *“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us...”* If the Word is God, and Jesus is the Word, then Jesus is God.
- John 1:1-3 indicates that God created everything, and yet Colossians 1:16,17 makes it clear that Jesus is the Creator. If God created everything, yet Jesus created everything, then Jesus is God.
- In Luke 5:20-24 Jesus forgives sins, yet only God can forgive sins. If Jesus forgives sins, then Jesus is God.

- Exodus 20:1-5 makes it clear that only God is to be worshipped, yet Hebrews 1:5,6 instructs angels to worship Jesus. In the book of Revelation, the Father and the Son are worshipped together (Rev 5:11-14). If only God is to be worshipped, and yet Jesus is worshipped, Jesus must be God.
- In John 20:24-29 Thomas calls Jesus “*Lord and God.*” Jesus did not correct Thomas. Why? Because Thomas spoke the truth.
- In John 8:58,59 Jesus said, “*Before Abraham was, I AM.*” Jesus was saying that He existed before Abraham, even though Abraham lived long before Jesus was born on earth. I AM is also the name that God ascribed to Himself in Exodus 3:14. If “I AM” is God, and Jesus is “I AM” then Jesus is God.

In like manner Acts 5:1-4 refers to the Holy Spirit as God. In Matthew 28:19 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are **all** referred to as God together. The passage states, “*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the **name** of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.*” Notice the verse does not say in **the names** (plural) but in **the name** (singular). Why? Because all three – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – are the one God. They have **one** name, God!

Even though the idea of “three in one” is difficult for the human mind to grasp, God has placed trinities all around us to help us better understand His nature. For example, time is made up of past, present and future, yet time is all one continuum. We live in a universe of time, space and matter, yet it is a single universe. Water can be liquid, steam or ice, and yet it is all one molecular substance, H<sub>2</sub>O. To give the exact location of something in a room, the three dimensions of length, width and depth are needed, yet they give a single location. An egg has a shell, an egg white and a yoke, yet it is one egg.

In relation to God, it is not that God changes from one form to another (from Father to Son to Spirit and back again). This would be modalism.

Instead, He is three in one at the same time. This may be hard to grasp in our finite minds, but it must be remembered that God is infinite!

Why is it important for Christians to understand the doctrine of the Trinity? Because, every cult twists Jesus' identity and tries to make Him something less than God. The fact is, Jesus came to earth as God in human flesh to die for our sin. He was the God-man.

## **Questions and personal application**

1. Explain the Trinity in your own words. How does Isaiah 43:10,11 apply?
  
2. How do the following verses help us understand Jesus' deity?
  - John 10:30-33
  - John 1:1,14
  - John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:16,17
  - Luke 5:20-24
  - Exodus 20:1-5, Hebrews 1:16,17, Revelation 5:11-14
  - John 20:24-29\
  - John 8:58,59, Exodus 3:14
  
3. How does Acts 5:1-4 indicate that the Holy Spirit is God?
  
4. According to this "insight", what are some things in the world around us that help us understand God's triune nature?



## 12 – How the Bible came to be

Many new Christians ask, “Where did the Bible come from?” This is a great question. Here’s a brief answer.

Approximately forty different people wrote the Bible over a period of 1,500 years. Even though men wrote it, God superintended the writing. 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 states, “*All Scripture is inspired by God...*” The word *inspired* means “God-breathed.” The Scriptures (the writings in the Bible) are literally God’s Words written down through the fingers of man. God revealed His truth and inspired certain men to record it in writing. If this sounds miraculous, indeed it is. Someone put it this way, “If God could speak the universe into existence (Genesis 1:1-27), He could work through humans to write the Bible. 2 Peter 1:20,21 states, “*But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*” The word *interpretation* means “unloosing.” The verse might be translated, “... *no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own unloosing...*” In other words, the things written in the Bible did not come from the writers alone, but from God as the Holy Spirit (the third person in the Trinity) revealed God’s truth and superintended the writers as they wrote it down. The Bible is thus the result of the Holy Spirit working through humans.

The question arises, “How did people (besides the writers) know which writings were truly from God?” They knew through a process called canonization. The word *canon* comes from the Greek word *kanon*, meaning *ruler, staff or measuring rod*. Canonization thus may be defined as the process men used to discover which writings were God’s Word by whether or not those writings measured up to a certain standard.

Before, during, and after the time of Christ, there was a proliferation of religious writing. The Jews accepted the Old Testament as the Word of God before the time of Christ, probably between 400 and 200 BC. Regarding writings after the time of Christ, church leaders became increasingly concerned about how to identify which ones were truly from God rather than

the work of men. This search led to much discussion, debate, and some disagreement. Through a process spanning the first four centuries AD, the books of the canon were identified. This process included not only the discussion and interactions of the apostles and other church leaders, but also four important councils: the Council of Nicea (AD 325-340), the Council of Hippo (AD 393), and two Councils of Carthage (AD 397 and AD 419). By the end of the councils, the books in our current Bible had been identified and confirmed.

In the canonization process, five principles were used to recognize Scripture. The principles may be summarized by the following words: **authoritative**, **apostolic**, **authentic**, **active**, and **accepted**.

**Authoritative** meant that a writing had the authority of God. For example did the writer use a phrase like, “Thus saith the Lord”? **Apostolic** meant that a writing was written by a man of God - an apostle or a close associate of an apostle. **Authentic** meant that a writing told the truth about God and man by remaining consistent with writings that were already recognized as God’s Word. **Active** meant a writing had the power of God to change lives. If a person followed its teachings, his life would be transformed. **Accepted** meant that the writing or book had been generally accepted by God’s people. Jesus stated that His sheep (His followers) recognize His voice.

Other stimuli also contributed to the canonization of Scripture. One was the need of the first century church to know what books could provide an authoritative norm for faith and practice. Another stimulus was heresy. There were people like Marcion, who rejected certain sections of the New Testament that most others considered to be God’s Word. Without an approved canon, it was hard for early church members to know whom to believe. A third stimulus was missions. As Christian missionaries spread the gospel, they needed to know which writings were God’s Word so that they could confidently give them to new converts. Persecution was also a clear incentive for canonization. The Roman emperor Diocletian ordered the burning of Scriptures and the persecution of Christians in approximately AD 302. Christians who hid religious writings wanted to know which writings were worth protecting with their lives.

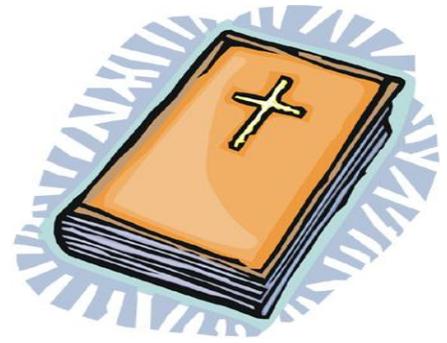
The original writings were copied and those copies were passed down through the centuries. New copies were made as old copies wore out. Eventually, the copies were translated from Hebrew (the primary language of the Old Testament) and Greek (the primary language of the New Testament) to become the many Bible translations we have today. Although we do not have the original copies, there is great evidence that today's Bibles are the inspired (God breathed) and inerrant (without error) Word of God.

This is just a very brief overview of how the Bible came to be. For a more in-depth study you are encouraged to read "A General Introduction to the Bible" by Geisler and Nix. Much of this "insight" is a summary of parts of that book.

## **Questions and personal application**

1. Before you read this "insight", what was your understanding of the Bible's origin? How has your understanding changed? What questions do you still have?
2. What does the word *canon* mean?
3. What were the five principles used to help determine which writings were God's inspired Word?
4. What were some of the other stimuli that helped move the canonization process forward?

# 13 – Is the Bible God’s Word?



Not only do Christians want to know where the Bible came from, they want some assurance that the Bible *really* is God’s Word.

Does it matter whether or not the Bible came from God? Absolutely! If it is not God’s Word, it can be ignored or at best be referred to for the history of the Jewish people. If, however, the Bible is God’s Word, it needs to be given the honor and attention it deserves. Here is a brief overview of some of the key reasons/evidences that the Bible is God’s inspired Word.

## 1. **The Bible claims to be the Word of God**

There are many places in the Bible where the claim is made (2 Timothy 3:16,17) that it is God’s Word. Although this is not conclusive evidence, it certainly indicates the position of the writers on the subject.

## 2. **Christ endorsed the Bible as God’s Word**

In Matthew 21:42, Jesus asked the Jewish religious leaders, “*Did you never read the Scriptures?*” By using the word *Scriptures*, Jesus referred to the contents of the Old Testament as God’s Word. If Jesus (as God) referred to the Scriptures as the Word of God, they must be what He claimed them to be.

## 3. **The complete unity of the Bible**

A unique characteristic of the Bible is its complete unity. Although it was written over a period of 1,500 years by forty different authors from various backgrounds, it has a single theme – God’s wonderful plan of salvation. It was written without error or contradiction. The only thing that can account for this amazing unity is the fact that the Bible truly is God’s Word.

## 4. **The copying accuracy of Old Testament documents**

The copying process and accuracy by which the Old Testament documents were transmitted is nothing short of amazing and indicates a divine plan.

To illustrate this fact, consider the following. It was the job of scribes to copy the sacred writings of the Jews. They had meticulous rules governing their task. Writings could only be done on special animal skins. Every skin had to be marked off with a certain number of columns that had to stay consistent throughout the entire document. Each column consisted of exactly thirty letters. Each skin had to be between forty-eight and sixty lines. The ink had to be black, and the scribe could write nothing from memory. He had to meticulously copy each stroke after he looked back at the original. A precise distance of one hair's breadth between every consonant and a specific distance between sections and books also had to occur. If while writing the name of God, the scribe was interrupted by even a king, he was to ignore that person until after he had completely written the name. Scribes methodically counted lines and letters, and if even one error was found, the new manuscript was destroyed and the whole process restarted.<sup>i</sup>

#### **5. The correlation of New Testament documents**

The vast number and precise correlation of ancient New Testament documents is amazing and can only be adequately accounted for by divine intervention and protection.

#### **6. The concise prophecies in the Bible and their fulfillment**

The Bible contains many amazing prophecies that have been fulfilled to the letter. Some prophecies have to do with the Jewish people, some with Jesus, and others with various nations and cities. For example, Isaiah 11:11,12 predicted the return of the Jews to their homeland. To many people through the centuries this sounded impossible. Then in 1948 after a 2000 year exile, Israel again became a nation.

#### **7. The capacity of the Bible to survive**

Throughout history, there have been violent attacks against the Bible. One attack occurred in AD 302-303, when the Roman emperor, Diocletian, issued an imperial letter ordering the burning of churches and the destruction by fire of any Scriptures. Obviously, the Bible has withstood this and other attacks.

## **8. Concise scientific data that was ahead of its time**

Another evidence for the Bible being God's Word is its concise scientific data. Although the Bible is not primarily a science book, when it speaks about scientific things it does so with amazing accuracy. For example, Jeremiah 33:22 states, "*The host of heaven cannot be counted.*" This statement refers to the number of stars. For many years the scientific community belittled this statement because they believed the stars could be numbered. But with the advent of telescopes, scientists realize that the number of stars is essentially infinite. The Bible was right.

## **9. The confirmation of Historic Data by Archeology**

A ninth evidence for the Bible being God's Word is the confirmation of its historic data by archeology. All of the archeological evidence that has been uncovered has only added credibility to the accuracy of the people and places in the Bible.

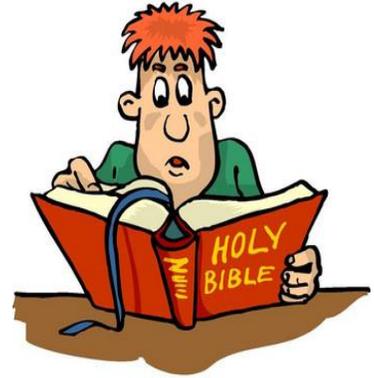
There are many other lines of evidence to support the claim that the Bible is the Word of God. They include: the primary languages (Greek and Hebrew) of the Bible, the climate conditions in Israel, the changeless truth contained in the Bible, the capability of the Bible truth to change lives, the code of moral standards in the Bible, the common appeal and circulation of the Bible, the Church's success, the comforting and convicting power of the Bible, and the conclusion of Alternate Appeal. All of these evidences are covered in detail in "The Answers Course" booklets by Chris Losey.

## **Questions and personal application**

1. Summarize the various lines of evidence presented in this article for why the Bible is the Word of God.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Which lines of evidence stand out as either strong or weak? Why?

## 14 – Why Study the Bible

Why should people study the Bible? There are several reasons. First, it is God’s Word. Second, it is His love letter to humans. It speaks clearly about God’s great love for mankind and His redemption of the human race after the fall of Adam and Eve. Third, the Bible is God’s instruction manual for life. The third reason will be the focus of this “insight”.



When car companies make cars, they sell them with an owners manual. If the owner reads the manual and follows the instructions, his vehicle will run well. So it is with the Bible. God has given us biblical truth to keep our lives in good running condition. If Christians learn the truth (on subjects like marriage, finances, children, forgiveness, work, etc.), and apply it to life, they will experience God’s blessings and the abundant life He wants for them.

There are any number of verses in the Bible that show the benefits of learning and applying God’s truth. Here are a few of them.

### **It brings prosperity and success**

Joshua 1:8 states, *“This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.”* Following God’s Word bring success. For example, if a person follows the financial principles in the Bible on saving, investing, giving, and avoiding gambling and surety, he will have a solid financial footing.

### **It helps us stay pure and avoid sin**

Psalms 119:9-11 states, *“How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your Word. With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your Word I have*

*treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You.*” When a person learns what sin is and avoids it, his life pleases God and he stays out of trouble.

### **It keeps us from being ashamed**

Psalm 119:5-6 states, “*Oh that my ways may be established to keep Your statutes! Then I shall not be ashamed when I look upon all Your commandments.*” As a person learns God’s commandments and keeps them, he feels good about his life and avoids feeling ashamed.

### **It gives us greater respect (reverence) for God**

Psalm 119:38 states, “*Establish Your Word to Your servant, as that which produces reverence for You.*” God’s Word is amazing. The more we learn, the more it causes us to respect God for His wisdom and love.

### **It revives us and brings comfort during tough times**

Psalm 119:50 states, “*This is my comfort in my affliction, that Your Word has revived me.*” The promises in God’s Word comfort us during hard times. For example, the Bible promises that God will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb 13:5). When we feel alone, we can draw upon the fact that God is always with us.

### **It restores our souls and gives wisdom, insight, and understanding**

Psalm 19:7 states, “*The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.*” Psalm 119:97-100 states, “*O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever mine. I have more insight than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, because I have observed Your precepts.*” God’s Word makes us wise. Whether it involves truth about marriage or the right work-ethic, God’s truth gives great wisdom and insight for life. It restores us in the depth of our souls.

### **It brings joy to our hearts, and enlightenment to our eyes**

Psalm 19:8 states, “*The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.” God’s truth brings joy to our hearts and light to our eyes.*

### **It gives understanding, and makes us despise falsehood**

Psalm 119:104 states, “*From Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.” The more of God’s truth we learn, the more we despise falsehood and evil.*

### **It helps guide us**

Psalm 119:105 states, “*Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*” Sometimes life is like walking through a dark forest. God’s Word is the light we need to pierce the darkness. It not only lights up the area around our feet, it illumines the path ahead.

The benefits of studying and applying the Bible are incredible!

## **Questions and personal application**

1. In your own words, answer the following question, “Why should a person study God’s Word, the Bible?”
2. According to the following verses, what are some of the benefits of studying and applying biblical truth?
  - Joshua 1:8
  - Psalm 119:9-11
  - Psalm 119:5-6
  - Psalm 119:38
  - Psalm 119:97-100
3. Have you received any benefits from studying the Bible?

## 15 – Getting a good Bible



Just as a runner needs a good pair of running shoes, a Christian needs a good Bible. All Bibles, however, are not the same.

There are two basic kinds of Bibles – *translations* and *paraphrases*. A *translation* is just what its name implies – a translation into English from the original biblical languages (Hebrew for the Old Testament, and Greek and Aramaic for the New Testament). A *translation* tries as much as possible to translate biblical languages *word for word*. Because sentence structure often varies between languages, translations can be a bit clunky and difficult to understand.

A *paraphrase*, on the other hand, takes an already existing translation and makes it more understandable by putting it in modern terms. Rather than going *word for word*, paraphrases tend to go *thought for thought* to capture the essence of meaning.

Translations and paraphrases both have advantages and disadvantages. Translations are quite accurate but a little harder to understand. Paraphrases are not as true to the original text, but usually easier to understand. Many new Christians often find a paraphrase Bible easier at first, but then want a good translation as they grow in their faith.

Although you'll find many different Bible translations on the market, there are four that are fairly easy to understand; "The New American Standard Bible – Update – NASB-U", "The New International Version - NIV", "The New King James Version" – NKJV, and "The New Living Translation – NLT". All four come in "Study" or "Life Application" formats. "Study Bibles" and "Life Application Bibles" both contain helpful notes, outlines, maps, charts, and information to assist the reader.

“Study Bibles” give notes that explain the biblical text. “Life Application Bibles” take the truth and apply it to life. Both kinds of Bibles provide excellent help for understanding the text.

I personally recommend that new Christians start by getting a good “Study Bible” or “Life Application Bible”. For the average person, these Bibles are understandable.

It is also interesting that most Bibles come in various bindings; soft cover, hardcover, bonded leather, or top grain leather. They also come in many colors. The Bible that I personally use is “The New American Standard Study Bible - Update” in bonded leather. Bonded leather is less expensive than top grain leather, but wears fairly well.

Bibles also come in different sizes. Women sometime like a smaller size, but remember, the smaller the size, the smaller the print. If your Bible is too small you may have difficulty reading it, or you may find that it lacks study notes. Personally, I would rather carry a little bit bigger Bible in order to get the extra resources.

If a person is ready to buy a new Bible, he can find one at a local Christian bookstore. There are various Christian bookstores. Some are locally owned and some are chain stores. In my area we have Family Christian Stores. They are part of a chain and have a good variety of Bibles and other Christian resources. Their website is [www.familychristian.com](http://www.familychristian.com). On their home page you can search for a store near you. Another Christian bookstore chain in my area is Western Christian Bookstores. Their home page is [www.wcbook.com](http://www.wcbook.com). Costco stores also carry leather-bound “Study Bibles” at a reasonable price (last time I checked). In addition, Bibles can be ordered online from Christian Book Distributors (CBD). Their website is [www.Christianbook.com](http://www.Christianbook.com). CBD has a nominal annual membership fee, but the discounts make membership worthwhile.

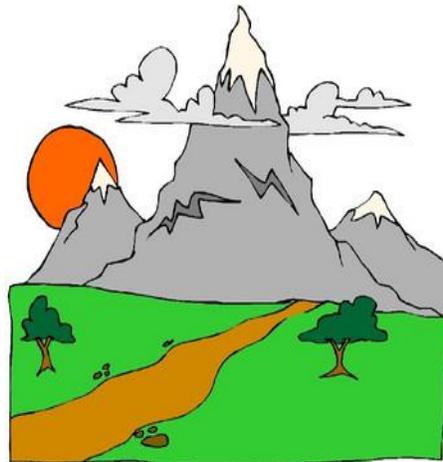
If you are serious about growing in Christ, I highly recommend getting a good Bible. The great news is, a Bible probably will cost you less than a good pair of shoes, and it will last a whole lot longer! In addition, if you study it, your life will be changed forever!

### **Questions and personal application**

1. Do you currently have a good Bible? If so, great! If not, why not make plans to get one soon?
  
2. Do you have a Christian bookstore in your area? Perhaps check out the yellow pages or search online to see if there is a Family Christian Bookstore near you. You can search at [www.familychristian.com](http://www.familychristian.com).
  
3. If you have a Christian bookstore in your area, take time to visit it in the near future.
  
4. Once you get a good Bible, you will want to start reading it. A great place to start is in the New Testament beginning with the book of Matthew.

# Insights in Part 1

- 1 – God loves you! – *CL*
- 2 – A brief overview of the Bible – *CL*
- 3 – Reviewing the salvation message – *CL*
- 4 – You have infinite value – *JD*
- 5 – A clean slate – *CL*
- 6 – What happened when you received Christ? – *CL*
- 7 – What God can do for you – *CL*
- 8 – Jesus and day-to-day life – *CL*
- 9 – What God expects – *CL*
- 10 – Understanding Jesus' true identity – *CL*
- 11 – Understanding the Trinity – *CL*
- 12 – How the Bible came to be – *CL*
- 13 – Is the Bible God's Word? – *CL*
- 14 – Why study the Bible? – *CL*
- 15 – Getting a good Bible – *CL*



## Insights in Part 2

- 16 – Getting into the Bible – *CL*
- 17 – How to study the Bible – *CL*
- 18 – How to pray – *SO*
- 19 – How Jesus taught His followers to pray – *ME, CL*
- 20 – Carving out time to spend with God – *SO*
- 21 – The importance of church/Christian friends – *MB*
- 22 – How to find a good church – *CL*
- 23 – What if Christians let me down? – *ME*
- 24 – Learning to forgive others and yourself – *CL*
- 25 – Will I always feel happy? – *SO*
- 26 – Understanding your purpose in life – *CL*
- 27 – Fulfilling your purpose by serving God – *JB*
- 28 – The right motivation – *CL*
- 29 – The mark of the Christian – Love – *JE*
- 30 – How do I relate to my non-Christian friends? – *JE*



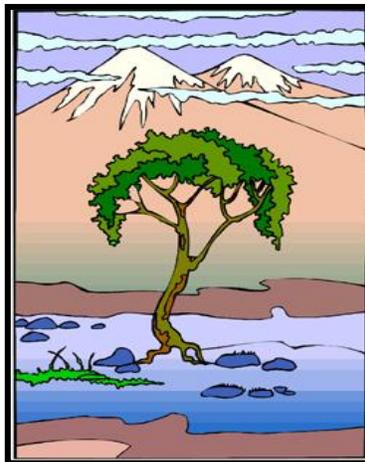
## Insights in Part 3

- 31 – Four ways people treat each other – *CL*
- 32 – Living wisely – The Proverbial habit – *CL*
- 33 – Making wise choices – *SO*
- 34 – You will make mistakes – *ME*
- 35 – Understand Satan and his plan – *CL*
- 36 – Temptation and how it works – *CL*
- 37 – What to do when you're tempted – *ME*
- 38 – Becoming a new creation – *CL*
- 39 – How God changes lives – *SV*
- 40 – Understanding baptism – *CL*
- 41 – The Holy Spirit and how He can help you – *CL*
- 42 – The fruit of the Spirit – *CL*
- 43 – Spiritual gifts – *BB*
- 44 – Can Christians lose their salvation? – *CL*
- 45 – The power of words – *CL*



## Insights in Part 4

- 46 – The Ten, Great, and New Commandments – *CL*
- 47 – Working as a Christian – *CL*
- 48 – Why is there evil in the world? – *CL*
- 49 – How to care for your mind – *CL*
- 50 – Having your life transformed – *CL*
- 51 – The importance of obedience – *CL*
- 52 – Obeying governmental authority - *CL*
- 53 – Understanding communion – *CL*
- 54 – The Great Commission – *CL*
- 55 – Sharing your faith – *CL*
- 56 – Freedom in Christ – *CL*
- 57 – Personal holiness – *CL*
- 58 – The Timothy principle – *CL*
- 59 – Numbering your days – *CL*
- 60 – The promise of Heaven – *CL*



# End Notes

---

<sup>i</sup> Geisler and Nix, A General Introduction to the Bible (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1968), p 127.