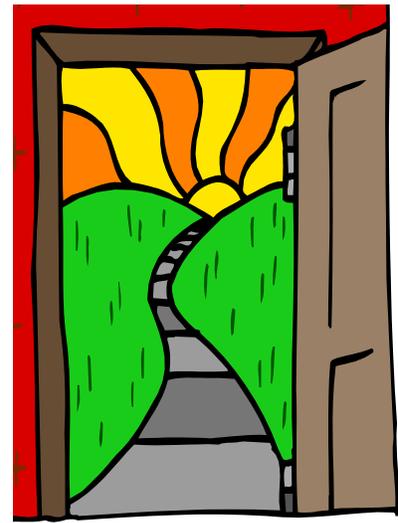


Greetings Friend!

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

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



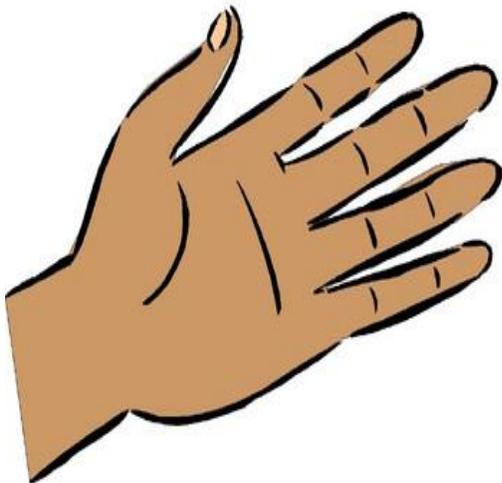
Road Map for the Spiritual Journey – Part 2



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16 – Getting into the Bible

When I first became a Christian, I saw a catchy illustration. It has stayed with me through the years and is called **the hand diagram**. It shows several different ways of getting into the Bible. The illustration comes from a Christian ministry called *The Navigators*. The neat thing is, the illustration is as relevant today as it was when I first saw it.



Picture a hand with a thumb and four fingers. Each finger represents a different way to get into the Bible.

1. **Hearing** – Each of us needs to hear the truth of God’s word. We hear it when we go to church and listen to someone give a sermon. We hear it when we listen to Christian radio or television, or listen to a message on CD.
2. **Reading** – As Christians, we not only need to hear the truth of God’s word, we need to read it for ourselves. This happens when we spend time reading the Bible on our own. We may choose to do this before going to work, at a lunch break, after coming home, or right before going to bed. We may choose to read a few verses, a whole chapter, or spend time reading an extended portion of Scripture.
3. **Studying** – A deeper way of getting into the Bible is to study it. A person who studies seeks to discover the flow of the text. He reads the extra notes in his Bible trying to understand the underlying principles. He may even ask questions like, “How does the truth of this passage apply to me?” He interacts with the text. A Christian can study the Bible on his own or get involved in a group Bible study with others.

4. **Memorizing** – Not only do Christians need to hear, read, and study the Bible, they also should memorize key verses. One of my favorite passages is Philippians 4:6,7, *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”* When I go through tough times, I quote these verses to myself. It helps me refocus on God and receive His peace.

As each of us studies the Bible, there will be verses that stir our hearts. We should memorize them. This locks the truth away for future recall in our own time of need or when we have the opportunity to help others.

There are amazing stories of prisoners of war (POWs) who memorized Bible verses prior to being captured. They then used those verses to help maintain their sanity during captivity. In some countries where the Bible is illegal, people memorize large sections of Scripture in case their Bibles are found and confiscated. Scripture memory is a powerful tool that pays great spiritual dividends.

5. **Meditating** – As good as it is to hear, read, study, and memorize Scripture, it is even more important to meditate on it. This does not mean emptying the mind and chanting strange religious mantras. Instead, Christian meditation means thinking deeply on God’s word. It means chewing it over just like a cow chews its cud. We are to think how God’s truth applies to our lives, and then apply it. For example, we may read a passage like 1 John 4:7,8, *“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”* To meditate on these verses, a person might ask himself, “Am I showing God’s love to others? Do people perceive me as a loving person? Am I loving toward my family and friends? Do I show kindness to co-workers? How can I love people better?”

As a person asks himself these kinds of questions, God may prompt him to change his life. When he makes needed changes, his life becomes more Christ-like, and God is glorified.

A person can meditate on what he hears, reads, studies, or memorizes. Meditation is like the thumb. It works in conjunction with all of the fingers. In fact, almost everything the fingers do is in conjunction with the thumb. The thumb is essential to the proper working of the hand!

Just like fingers are more useful when they work together with the thumb, so, too, hearing, reading, studying, and memorizing are more useful when linked with meditation.

Questions and personal application

1. Explain each part of the hand diagram in your own words. Which part is represented by the thumb? Why is that part so essential?
 - hearing
 - reading
 - studying
 - memorizing
 - meditating
2. Look up Psalm 1:1-6 in the Old Testament. What promises does it make regarding those who meditate on God's law?
3. What promises does Joshua 1:8 make regarding meditating on God's Word?
4. What instruction is given in 2 Timothy 2:15? Why is it important?

17 – How to study the Bible

Studying the Bible is like walking through a diamond mine knowing you'll find priceless gems. Truth abounds in the Bible on relationships, family, finances, work, and a thousand other things. 2 Timothy 3:16,17 states, *“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for **teaching**, for **reproof**, for **correction**, for **training in righteousness**; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work”* (NAS).



These two verses indicate that Scripture is profitable for four things:

- **Teaching** – telling us how to live
- **Reproof** – telling us when we mess up
- **Correction** – showing us how to get back on the right path
- **Training in righteousness** – keeping us on the right path

These benefits equip Christians to do all the good things God has planned for them. Scripture is the “Christian handbook” for successful living. But, the question arises, “How does a person study the Bible?”

Although there are a number of ways to study Scripture, here is one relatively simple way I highly recommend (I use this method myself). I call it the **pray-read-think-apply** method.

If you want to try this method, here are some suggestions. Before beginning, decide where in the Bible you want to start. A great place is in the book of Matthew (the first book in the New Testament). This allows you to jump right into the life and ministry of Jesus. Once you have studied some of the New Testament, you may want to shift to the Old Testament. Actually, you can begin studying the Bible anywhere

you want. Some ambitious folks begin in the first book (Genesis) and plow right through the entire Bible. Start at the place you think is best.

After deciding where to start, begin the **pray-read-think-apply** method. First **pray** and ask God to help you understand what you are about to study. Ask Him to give you understanding, wisdom, and insight. Next **read** the section of Scripture. I recommend reading a relatively short section like a single chapter. As you read, read for understanding. Bible study is not a race to see how much ground you can cover. Instead it is a deliberate attempt to understand and soak up the content of the text. Sometimes a chapter may need to be read twice. Someone rightly said, “It’s not how much you get into the Bible that counts, but how much of the Bible gets into you.” A slow thoughtful reading of the passage helps this process.

If you have a Study Bible, you may want to read the notes at the bottom of each page as you read the Bible text. These notes add important insights and historical context to help you better understand the passage. During the reading process, I recommend having a pen, pencil or colored marker handy to highlight any truth that stands out. After reading the chapter, take time to **think** about what you have just read. As you think, you can ask God questions like:

- What can I learn from what I’ve just read?
- Are there any promises I can claim or sins I need to avoid?
- Are there lessons to learn or truth to apply to my life?

During this thinking process, God will often bring thoughts to mind that you can then **apply**. For example, you might be prompted to show more compassion to those around you. You can then pray, “God I see from this passage, how loving and compassionate Jesus was when He came to earth. Help me have that same love for others.”

As you use the **pray-read-think-apply** method, you will not only learn more of God's truth, you also will have that truth move from your head to your heart, and your life will be changed.

Every time I jump into the pages of the Bible, I am excited about what I will learn or re-learn. Studying the Bible each day is like taking a daily shower. A physical shower washes and refreshes our bodies. God's Word washes and refreshes our souls, and prepares us to meet life's challenges.

Happy studying!

Questions and personal application

1. Describe the **pray-read-think-apply** method of Bible study:

- pray
- read
- think
- apply

2. 2 Timothy 3:16,17 says that Scripture is profitable for four specific things. Describe each one in your own words. Each of these helps people do all the good things God has planned for them.

- teaching
- reproof
- correction
- training in righteousness

3. Turn to Matthew chapter seven and study it using the pray-read-think-apply method. Is there anything from the passage that stands out in your mind? If so, write a brief summary in the space below.

18 – How to pray

You may be pleased to know that call-waiting doesn't exist in God's realm. Whether it's a plain and childlike cry from a new believer or a well-recited prayer from a seasoned pastor, all prayers are endearing to God. Remember that our Heavenly Father loves all His children equally – basic pleas are as important as calls from His most devoted.



Keep in mind that everyone since Adam and Eve has started as a child. No one in history has been exempt, not even Jesus! Your Christian prayer-life is no different, no matter your age or experience. Simply start by telling God what's on your heart. When you talk, He's all ears. God is eager to hear from you, no matter what path you've been traveling. Prayer pleases Him.

Although each person prays a little differently, you may find these suggestions helpful as you begin your relationship with God:

- **Commit** to pray regularly, as it is the most essential part of your journey with God. Prayer draws you closer to Him.
- **Find a quiet place.** Your bedroom, a comfortable chair, or elsewhere; but try to go somewhere alone where you can focus (sometimes the bathroom or a car may be your only escape).
- **Position yourself.** Although there is no approved posture for prayer, you may find it helpful to sit in an upright position, kneel, or bow down (this not only helps keep you awake but puts your body in a respectful position).
- **Close your eyes** and take a few slow, deep breaths to slow down.
- **Focus on a Bible verse** to help you begin to think about God.

- **Praise God.** Contemplate the greatness of the Creator and praise Him for it (His power, majesty, beauty, creation, compassion, justice, mercy).
- **Give thanks** to God for blessings in your life—large or small (clothing, a job, a car, health, two legs to walk on, a place to live, friends, and so on).
- **Ask forgiveness** for your sins, large or small. These can include actions, thoughts, or words.
- **Seek wisdom and discernment.** Ask God to show you what to pray about, where to make changes, and how you need to grow and become a godly example to others.
- **Talk** to God about anything else that’s on your mind.
- **Listen.** Some of us get so consumed with talking, we never stop to listen. In order to grow, we must learn to listen, and to hear God’s voice.

At this point, you may think you need to hear God’s audible voice. In most cases, this doesn’t happen (to the disappointment or relief of some). Most of us “hear” God through inner promptings as we read the Bible, hear a good sermon, pray, talk to others, or go through the events of everyday life. Because it is easy to be led astray by our own interpretations or those of others, it is vital to pray for wisdom and discernment—that you may know what’s true and what’s not. God’s will for us may not always be clear, but we can know for certain that He will never ask us to do anything contrary to His Word, the Bible.

Also, be prepared that God may not answer every one of your prayer requests. There may be long periods when “nothing happens”, or times when things don’t go your way. Just as a child does not get everything he or she asks for, neither will you. At its most basic, prayer simply means communicating with God. Remember, God always hears you unless you have sin in your heart. In Psalm 66:17-20 the writer said, *“I cried to Him with my mouth, and He was extolled with my tongue. If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear; But certainly*

19 – How Jesus taught His followers to pray

It's the most famous prayer in the Bible, and arguably, of all time. The Lord's prayer is what Jesus taught His followers to pray. Isn't it incredible that we don't have to guess how God wants us to communicate with Him? The Son of God gave us a blueprint.



Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. (Matthew 6:9-13)

Reciting The Lord's Prayer is a wonderful way to communicate with God. But don't stop there. Jesus gave it as a model. Think of it as a guide, and try personalizing it. To make it easy, here are five words that will help you remember the prayer's themes:

1. **Praise** – *Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed by Your name.*
Jesus instructs His followers to start their prayers by praising God. He acknowledges God's authority by calling Him "Father" and His control of the universe by addressing Him "in heaven." "Hallowed" means honored. Like Jesus, we should honor God with words of praise. Think of all God's wonderful characteristics -- His majesty, care for you, faithfulness, tenderness, power to change history. You can praise Him for big and little things. Notice how Jesus calls God "our" Father, instead of "my" Father. He's reminding us that we're meant to be in a community of believers.

2. **Progress** – *Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.* Jesus then instructs His followers to pray for God’s kingdom to advance. In other words, He’s asking for the progress of God’s kingdom on earth. Like Him, we should pray that God’s agenda would move forward in our lives, homes, work and church, and in the lives of those around us. Ask Him to show you ways you can help. You may be surprised at all the ways He’ll answer!
3. **Provision** – *Give us this day our daily bread.* Jesus next shows His followers the importance of praying for needs. It’s good to pray for your own needs and the needs of others. Jesus’ prayer shows that God wants to hear your needs and meet them. Notice, however, the request for help comes midway through the prayer, not as its sole focus. Often we want to start our prayers by asking God to give us things. Instead we need to remember first to give Him the praise He deserves and pray for the progress of His kingdom.
4. **Purity** – *And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.* Asking forgiveness is crucial to maintaining a pure, unobstructed walk with God. Jesus tells us to ask God to forgive our wrongdoings, and to forgive others’. The word “as” links these two lines together because forgiving and being forgiven are linked spiritually. In the two verses immediately after The Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:15), Jesus declares, “*If you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive you.*” This is a good reminder that to stay pure, we daily need to ask God’s forgiveness and help to forgive others.
5. **Protection** – *And do not lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil...* Lastly, Jesus stresses the need to pray for protection from temptation and evil. Let’s face it. We’re surrounded by temptation, and Jesus knew we’d need God’s help resisting it. He also knew that evil exists. God has an enemy; his name is Satan. Now that you’re aligned with God, Satan is your enemy too. Don’t let that frighten you. God is far more powerful than Satan. But we

20 – Carving out time to spend with God



“I’m busy.” Haven’t we all heard that a million times? Some of us go at such a fast pace, we become empty, broken shells buffeted by the prevailing wind of the day. It’s just a matter of time before we wash up on shore in pieces, wondering what happened.

Carving out time to spend with God essentially slows us down to concentrate on the most important thing—God. What He desires most from us is devotion to Him. Jesus said, *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment”* (Matthew 22: 37-38).

Consider your Christian journey as establishing and maintaining a relationship with God. At the outset, it’s much like falling head over heels in love with someone. You’ll do whatever it takes to please the person, and to spend time with them. It’s no different with God. What He wants most from you is your devotion, and that means spending time with Him—and from God’s side, that desire never changes. It’s we who tend to fizzle out or get swept away by the latest tide of distraction.

So get out your calendar or personal organizer and **put time with God on your agenda**. Make it a permanent anchor. It’s like a date with a very significant other, something that you don’t plan to cancel.

So, what does a person do on a date? For starters, **find an appropriate setting** (your favorite chair, couch, or table) to get to know the other person, in this case, God. Choose a place that poses no distractions. **Establish a time every day** to devote to God in prayer, study, worship, or contemplation. Some call this their “quiet time.” Start with fifteen minutes, or more! The important thing is to make it a habit. Healthy habits are the best way to keep your body and soul intact.

Next, **do some investigating to find out about your significant other.** When you care about someone, you find out as much as you can. Pull out your Bible and look up some verses or a parable. A great place to start is the New Testament of the Bible. The books of John and Matthew both tell the story of Jesus’ life. Jot down any notes or questions. Consider asking some questions of God in prayer, or of a pastor or Christian friend, or in a Bible Study you attend.

In your quiet time, **tell God what you admire about Him.** Praising your significant other serves to endear you more. God loves to hear your praise. Many people do this in worshipful songs or in prayer.

Beyond your quiet time, any number of other options exist to spend time with God: **church**, a **Bible Study**, a **prayer group**, a **musical worship team**, a **Christian retreat**, or a **service ministry** that helps others. Being in the company of other Christians allows you to learn, grow and see God in action. Jesus said, “*Where two or more are gathered in His name I will be in their midst*” (Matthew 18:20).

The main point of carving out time with God is to grow closer to Him. As a byproduct, it also lets us contemplate what we do, where we are going, and what impact we are making in life. The better we know God, the more we can fulfill our real purpose.



To be clear, carving out time for God does not mean withdrawing from responsibilities around you. It means purposefully setting aside time to connect with God. In the midst of life's demands, it creates a foundation on which to anchor and restore our souls. If we plan on forging deep, healthy relationships, we must set aside the time to do it. And what better friend to invest in than God? He'll be with you for life... and beyond.

Questions and personal application

1. Why is spending consistent time with God important? What specific blessings are to be gained by spending time with Him?
2. In your opinion, how does a person spend meaningful time with God?
3. Since becoming a Christian, have you been able to spend consistent time with God? If so, what have been your greatest challenges?
4. When is or when would be your best time of day to spend with God?
5. Devise a plan to spend consistent time with God. Write your plan below.

21 – The importance of church and Christian friends

A man was sitting in a boat alongside other folks who were going across a lake. People were carrying on all sorts of conversations, reading and enjoying the ride. To one man's



surprise he saw another man take a drill out of his backpack and begin drilling a hole underneath his seat in the bottom of the boat. When he saw this he started pointing out this peculiar and alarming behavior to others in the boat. Finally a woman turned to the man drilling the hole and asked in horror, “What do you think you’re doing?” The man replied, “What’s the problem? I’m only drilling a hole underneath *my* seat!”

The reality is, no person is an island. We all live in community – in relationship with other people. One politician is known for quoting an old African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child.” It may be said in the family of God, “It takes a church to raise God’s children.”

When you made the decision to believe in Jesus and make Him Lord of your life, you became a child of God. “*But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God*” (John 1:12, NLT). You are part of God’s family.

Being part of God’s family carries with it many benefits and responsibilities. The apostle Paul uses the metaphor of “the body” to describe the church and to teach us that we are both to suffer and celebrate with one another. “*If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. Now all of you*

together are Christ's body, and each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it" (1 Corinthians 12:26-27, NLT).

There are going to be difficult times in your life and specifically in your journey with God. During those times it will be important to have "brothers and sisters in Christ" to support and help you. The flip side is, there will be times when other Christians need *your* support. There will also be times to celebrate... to throw a party. When these times come, you will want to invite your spiritual family to celebrate with you.

Surrounding yourself with other Christians encourages you to think, act, and make decisions in accordance with the teachings of Jesus. There are times when discerning God's will is difficult and/or confusing, but the Bible teaches, "*As iron sharpens iron, a friend sharpens a friend*" (Proverbs 27:17, NLT). Our Christian friends will help keep us on life's cutting edge.

Before you devoted your life to Christ, there probably were times when you felt discouraged and lonely. One of the benefits of becoming part of a healthy church is so other Christians can encourage you.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 states, "*So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing*" (NLT). You don't need to face discouragement alone.

You've probably discovered that being a Christian doesn't mean everything in your life will be perfect, including you. The church, in some respects, can be looked at as a "Sinners Anonymous" group. The Bible tells us, "*Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results*" (James 5:16, NLT). These instructions may seem difficult at first, but the spiritual, emotional, psychological, and sometimes even physical healing that takes place by obeying them, can be amazing.

This article only scratches the surface of what it means to live in Christian community. It is a vital part of being a follower of Christ. Take the time to read Jesus' prayer for you in John 17:1-25. It speaks of the importance of being in relationship with other Christians who are part of Christ's body, the church.

Questions and personal application

1. Have you received encouragement from other Christians since coming to Christ? If so, give an example?

2. Based on this article, why is Christian community so important?

3. How do the following verses show the importance of church and Christian friends?
 - 1 Corinthians 12:26,27

 - Proverbs 27:17

 - 1 Thessalonians 5:11

 - James 5:16

4. If you haven't done so already, make plans to find a good local church where you can get involved in Christian community.



22 – How to find a good church

Many new Christians ask, “How does a person find a good church?” That’s a great question. First, it’s important to understand that the church is not a building. The church is people. The word church in the New Testament is the Greek word *ekklesia*. It comes from two words; *ek* meaning *out*, and *kaleo* meaning *to call*.

Hence the church is made up

of those who have been called out of the world to serve God. Thus, every believer in every generation is part of God’s church. But, even though God has His worldwide church, it is also correct to say the church is made up of many local congregations that meet in buildings we call churches.

It is crucial for Christians to get plugged into a local church. If you are looking for a church home, you might consider going to church with the person who introduced you to Christ. If that’s not possible, here are five helpful guidelines:

1. Look for a church where the pastor preaches from the Bible

The Bible is God’s Word and needs to be a key element in a church’s worship service. Unfortunately, some churches have jettisoned biblical preaching for talks on current events or pop-psychology. After attending a church a few times, you will be able to tell if the pastor consistently teaches from the Bible. If so, the church may be the one for you.

2. Look for a church that has a solid doctrinal statement

A doctrinal statement summarizes what a church believes. It can often be found in a church's visitor packet, or you may need to ask for a copy. As a minimum, a church should believe that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God. This means the church should believe the Bible is God's Word and is without error in the original writings. Next, the church should believe that Jesus is the Son of God and part of the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Finally, it should believe salvation is by God's grace through faith alone. If the church falls short in any of these three areas, it is not a solid Christian church.

3. Find a church that ministers to all age groups

Every age group has value. Some churches only have older people. This may be a sign they have not been willing to change with the culture and embrace music or ministries that connect with younger people. Likewise, some churches only have young people. This, too, may be a sign they have rejected ministry elements that connect with older folks. Churches must never change the truth of God's Word, but they may need to change the way they deliver it if they want to reach people in an ever-changing culture. Some churches span the generations by either having blended worship that appeals to both old and young, or by having two services: one more contemporary and one more traditional.

4. Find a friendly church that reaches out to new people

Some churches seem unfriendly when you visit, while others are filled with people who welcome folks with a smile. If you can, choose the latter. The friendliness of a church is often a reflection of a pastoral emphasis on outreach. Friendly churches are a fun place to be and are usually a sign that people are looking beyond their own needs to the needs of others. Every good church should reach out to those inside and outside of its walls.

5. Look for needed ministries and opportunities to serve

If you have children, you'll want to attend a church with good children's ministries. If you have teens, you'll want to find a vibrant youth group. I

especially recommend becoming part of a church that has small group ministries where people meet weekly to study the Bible, fellowship and pray together. A good church provides its congregation opportunities to serve in various church ministries.

There are other elements that mark a good church, but the things mentioned above give you a place to start. Remember, there are no perfect churches, just like there are no perfect people. Every church has strengths and weaknesses. Remember, a church is a “hospital for sinners” (like me and you), not a “hall of saints.” If you go to church long enough, someone will offend you, but that doesn’t mean the church you attend isn’t a good church. Go to church with an open mind realizing that it is full of people who need to grow (along with you) in their Christian faith.

Questions and personal application

1. Why are the following elements important in a church?
 - Biblical preaching
 - Solid doctrine
 - A wide range in the ages of the people
 - Friendliness
 - Opportunities for service
2. What other factors/elements do you think are important when looking for a good church? Why?
3. Have you found a good church? If so, great! Describe it. If not, why not start looking for a good church this week?

23 – What if Christians let me down?

Susan had just become a Christian and was excited to find a church she liked. She made some friends and even joined a Bible study. But when she encountered people who sometimes preached one thing and did another, she became disillusioned and stopped attending.

Sadly, this scenario is not uncommon. New Christians sometimes quit the church, or even the faith entirely, when they discover God's so-called followers don't always follow Him the way they should. We don't want that to happen to you. God created the church and He wants you there worshiping and fellowshiping with other believers. Here's how to protect your faith:



Keep your expectations realistic. Without realizing it, new believers sometimes expect other Christians to be perfect. It's OK to expect Christians to be different than non-believers. Authentic Christianity produces positive change in people's lives. Over time, if a Christian yields to God's Spirit, the Bible promises he or she will bear the characteristics of godliness: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

But keep in mind that churches are full of people just like you who are *in process* of growing spiritually. Everyone is at a different point in their spiritual maturity. Some are spiritual elders, others mere infants. Some people take longer to mature than others, and some are more mature in certain areas.

God doesn't ask us to wear rose-colored glasses and pretend we don't see people's faults. He asks us to see reality but to love anyway. He asks us to love imperfect people. In The Purpose Driven Life, Rick Warren explains, "We must passionately love the church in spite of its imperfections. Longing for the ideal while criticizing the real is evidence of immaturity. On the other hand, settling for the real without striving for the ideal is complacency. Maturity is living with the tension."

That's not to say you should discard discernment when picking a church. It's crucial to find one that preaches the Bible, not a particular philosophy or popular opinion. You should rightly expect church leaders to be spiritually mature and to follow God's principles when it comes to leadership. If a church is following principles contrary to God's Word, it's time to speak up, and perhaps leave altogether.

But don't expect Christians to be perfect. This side of heaven, Christians will never be completely free of sin. As you deal with imperfect people, you might want to remember the bumper sticker, "Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven."

Keep the focus on God, not others. God wants you to focus on your own relationship with Him, not someone else's. Gossip and criticism are among the church's worst internal enemies. Protect your church and yourself by not participating. Before you speak, ask yourself, "Is it true? Is it helpful? Is it kind?" When you catch yourself having a critical spirit, a simple remedy is to think about the sins for which God has forgiven you, or the grace you hope other Christians will extend when you fail. For most of us, it becomes easier to be patient when we realize we require patience, too. In Romans, Paul urges believers to "*accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you.*" How did Christ accept you? Just as you are, with all your shortcomings.

The truth is, it's just a matter of time before Christians will disappoint you. But that's no reason to throw in the towel on your new faith. In



24 – Learning to forgive others and yourself

Learning to forgive others and yourself is powerful and healthy. We need to forgive other people for the things they have done to hurt us. And there are times we need to forgive ourselves for the foolish things we have done. Someone rightly said, “Causing an injury puts

you below your enemy; revenging an injury makes you even with him; forgiving an injury sets you above him.”

Those who fail to forgive others (and themselves) can be consumed by the offense. It can cause them to become angry, harbor a grudge, or develop a root of bitterness toward the offender. More importantly, it can rob them of the joy and blessings God has for them.

The New Testament word for “forgive” is the Greek word *aphiemi*. It comes from two words meaning *to send away*. Hence, forgiveness is, “The sending away, pardon, or cancellation of sin – the release from and dismissal of sin's penalty.” Even Webster's dictionary captures the idea. It defines forgiveness as, “ceasing to feel resentment against an offender - giving up the claim to requital for an insult - granting relief from payment.”

One day, Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, asked Him, “*Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?*” Jesus answered, *‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven’*” (Matthew 18:21,22). The religious teaching of Peter's day stated that a person was to forgive someone three times. Peter offered a higher number – seven. Surely seven times would be sufficient for anyone. Perhaps Peter was thinking if an offender didn't learn his lesson after seven times, he didn't deserve forgiveness.

Christ's answer to Peter was startling. Peter was not told to forgive someone seven times, but instead, seventy times seven – 490 times! Jesus was not telling Peter to get out a pad and pencil and start keeping track of offenses; he was telling Peter that forgiveness must be unlimited.

After answering Peter's question, Jesus told the story of a man who owed a king more than he could ever pay (Matthew 18:23-35). The king planned to put the man into prison until the debt was paid. The man humbled himself and begged the king to be patient. After all, if the king put the man into prison, there would be no way for the man to pay off the debt. Subsequently, the king felt compassion and forgave the entire debt. Unfortunately, the man who had just been forgiven by the king, went to another person who owed him money and refused to forgive his debt until it was paid in full. He had the second man thrown into prison, even though the second man pleaded for mercy. When the king heard what the first man had done, he reprimanded him and turned him over to the torturers until he should pay his entire debt. Why? Because the first man failed to extend the same forgiveness that had been extended to him. Jesus concluded the story by saying, "*My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother **from the heart.***"

Forgiveness is extremely important to God. Just as He extends unlimited forgiveness to every believer, He expects us to extend it to one another. And that forgiveness must be from the heart. If a person says he forgives someone but continues to dredge up past offenses, his forgiveness is not from the heart. If he shuns the offender, his forgiveness is not from the heart.

If we have truly forgiven someone, we will be willing to greet them, talk with them, smile at them, sit next to them, and be kind to them; although this may take time and won't be easy.

Often, forgiveness is extended when a person acknowledges his sin and repents. But what happens if a person who offends us is unwilling to ask for forgiveness? In such cases, we are still obligated to forgive them. Stephen (a follower of Jesus in the New Testament) asked God to forgive those people who were stoning him (Acts 7:59,60). They obviously were not repentant. Jesus asked His Father to forgive those who crucified Him (Luke 23:34). Even the Lord's Prayer tells us to forgive the debts of others as God has forgiven us (Matthew 6:12). This doesn't mean we should stay in abusive relationships. We shouldn't, but we still need to forgive those who wrong us.

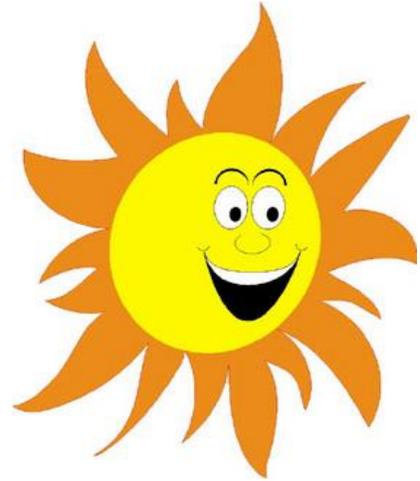
If we choose to forgive others and ourselves, we will be happier, healthier, and more-godly people.

Questions and personal application

1. How many times in Jesus' day were people obligated to forgive someone?
2. In Matthew 18:21 Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive someone. What was Jesus' answer in verse twenty-two?
3. Summarize the story Jesus told in Matthew 18:23-35. At the end of the story, Jesus said that it was critical to forgive others "from the heart." What does this mean?
4. Why, is forgiveness so important to God?
5. Is there anyone you need to forgive? Make plans to do it soon.

25 – Will I always feel happy?

I always thought my problems would be solved when I got a Significant Other. With the snap of a lover my self-esteem would go up, I'd no longer have issues, and I'd live in eternal bliss. Anyone who has been in a relationship knows, when the hero(ine) in shining attire appears, the initial stage is filled with emotional highs. Then the couple rides off into the sunset dreaming of "happily ever after." Unfortunately, reality arrives at sunrise.



Similarly, our relationship with God often starts on a high note. With passion and energy, we eagerly begin the Christian journey. When God comes into our lives, we are cleansed and energized, and it feels good. We have new momentum to turn things around for the better. It stands to reason that we expect to be happy. Doesn't Christianity guarantee it? Let's see what God says. Psalm 90:14 reads, "*Satisfy us in the morning with Your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.*" Psalm 16:11 states: "*You will fill me with joy in Your presence.*" Acts 16:34 says "*He was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family.*" Note in all cases, joy involves God. Unlike happiness, joy is a deep, inner wellspring arising from God's grace and love. It is not a feel-good emotion based on outer circumstances or people. Happiness comes and goes, but the joy of the Lord can fill us even in the toughest times if we stay close to Him.

Like with any relationship, after the Christian honeymoon has passed, all kinds of issues and realities may surface. Initial emotional fervor may keep us from seeing or experiencing them. After a time, unpleasant habits can rear their ugly heads, personal issues can come into play, angry words are sometimes exchanged, and the everyday pressures of life can bog us down. When reality hits, the initial feelings of joy from

becoming a Christian may begin to fade. Many people then become discouraged or disillusioned and move on to something else that promises more ease and happiness. The crux of the problem is not God's absence, but unrealistic expectations or reliance on feelings.

Becoming a Christian does not automatically deliver us from the world's problems. We still have to deal with people and their flaws; we still have to face life's issues and our own shortcomings. The good news is, God is on our side. Through Bible study, church sermons, wise counsel, worship, and fellowship, we gain tools to help us work through problems and find joy. Instead of simply experiencing emotions based on our circumstances, we can learn to **seek God** and to **practice joy** in all situations. "Seek" and "practice" both involve action on our part. If we wish to maintain joy, we must learn to practice it, "*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance*" (James 1: 2-3).

If we want our relationships with God and people to flourish, we must work at it. Knowing Jesus, does not entitle us to carefree, easy lives. What we are entitled to is God's immense love, abiding presence, and forgiveness in this life, and His everlasting kingdom of peace in the next.

To experience joy, we must learn to seek God in all things and give thanks in everything. That means learning to be grateful for even small blessings, and thanking Him for His presence even during the worst of times. Stay involved with Christian fellowship, serve others – even when it's hard and you "feel" otherwise, and read His Word. Seek counsel from pastors, Christian counselors, and wise Christian friends to pinpoint personal or Biblical issues and to get perspective. If you feel discouraged, pray for God to help you. It all requires work. If you put in the effort, you'll find the deep, rich joy of God dwelling in places you never expected. "*With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation*" (Isaiah 12:3). "*Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me*" (Psalm 51:12).

Ah! Knowing the joy of God even in the midst of a fallen world; that's living!

Questions and personal application

1. According to this article, what is the difference between happiness and joy?

2. What do the following verses teach about joy? Why is it accurate to say that joy involves God?
 - Psalm 90:14
 - Psalm 16:11
 - Acts 16:34

3. Have you experienced the joy of the Lord? Explain.

4. What does James 1:2,3 say regarding how to deal with trials when they come into our lives?

26 – Understanding your purpose in life

If you want to live a life that honors God, it is helpful to understand your ultimate purpose – why God created you. The ultimate purpose of every human is found in the Old Testament in Isaiah 43:7, “*Everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made.*” This verse states that God created people *to glorify Him* which means to bring honor to His name. But the question arises, how does a person do this?

One way to honor God is by displaying godly character. For example, if a person claims to be a Christian, yet is selfish, self-centered, mean, argumentative, impatient, hateful, lazy, dishonest, or arrogant... his life certainly will not honor God or attract people to God’s kingdom. Instead he will drive people away. On the other hand, if he displays what the Bible calls *the fruit of the Spirit* – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22) – others will be attracted to God, and God’s name will be glorified.

Jesus confirms that spiritual fruit glorifies God, “*By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples*” (John 15:8). The fruit to which Jesus refers is more than the fruit of the Spirit. It is also the fruit (results) of doing God’s **work**. In John 17:4, Jesus prayed to His Father and said, “*I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished **the work** which Thou hast given Me to do.*” In other words, Jesus brought glory to God the Father by accomplishing the work His Father had given Him to do. What work was that? It was training a group of disciples who would carry the message of salvation to the next generation. If Jesus had died and risen prior to training His disciples, there would not have been anyone to tell others the way of salvation. By training His disciples, Jesus prepared a core of believers who could launch the church and take the Good News to subsequent generations.

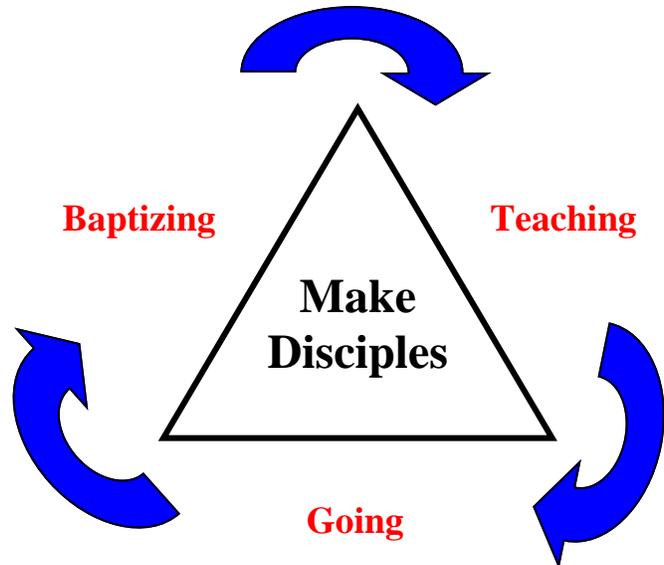
In John 17:6, where Jesus prays to His Father, He further explains the training of His disciples, *“I manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me, and they have kept Thy word.”* In John 17:18, Jesus confirms His plan of sending these men into the world with His good news, *“As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.”*

If Jesus glorified God the Father by accomplishing the work He was given to do, it only makes sense that Christians glorify God by accomplishing the work they have been given to do. Jesus revealed this work after He rose from the dead. He told His disciples to meet Him in Galilee where He delivered these special instructions, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age”* (Matthew 28:19-20). These instructions, known as “The Great Commission,” reveal the work God calls all Christians to do. The central thrust of the passage is embodied in “make disciples.” As Christ’s disciples (those who learn from and follow Him) we are to produce other disciples who will learn from and follow Christ, too. How is this done? It is done through the three concepts mentioned in the Matthew 28:19-20 - **going, baptizing** and **teaching**.

Going implies movement. We are to get moving (busy) for God. **Baptizing** implies evangelism – winning people to Christ. Shortly after coming to Christ, people should be baptized as a public profession of their faith. Baptism doesn’t save a person, but it is the outward sign of the inward change in a person’s life. Christians need to actively share their faith so people can hear the Good News and come to a saving knowledge of Christ. **Teaching** implies building people in the faith. We are to teach others biblical truth so they know how to live according to God’s principles and standards. In short, we are to **go, baptize, and teach**, so that those who have been taught will go and do the same. In this way, the torch of Christianity moves forward.

The “disciple making” process can be illustrated by the following diagram. “Disciple making” is at the center of the Christian mission. This mission is accomplished by going, baptizing, and teaching.

Grammatically, **going**, **baptizing**, and **teaching** are “participles” that explain how a person “makes disciples.” It is similar to a basketball coach telling his team, “Tonight I want you to ‘play basketball by dribbling, shooting and scoring. Dribbling, shooting, and scoring are participles that explain how a person plays basketball. The difference between basketball and “disciple making” is profound. “Disciple making” produces eternal results.



Questions and personal application

1. Based on the above insight, what is a person’s ultimate purpose?
2. How does displaying godly character glorify God?
3. What does it mean to “make disciples”? How does the process of going, baptizing and teaching explain the disciple making process? What does each of these things mean?
4. What can you go to embrace God’s ultimate purpose for your life? Take a moment to pray and ask God to help you.

27 – Fulfilling your purpose by serving God

We all are in search of purpose. We want to feel needed. We want to feel important. We often set our goals based on what the world has to offer. We try hard to dictate our purpose on our own terms; but our real purpose in life can only be found in God's will.

Growing up in Texas, football was a very important part of my life. It became my passion, and I viewed playing football as my ultimate purpose in life. Even though I became a Christian at a young age, I began following my own desires rather than seeking God's. I was looking at what the world offered. In football, I found power, popularity and enjoyment. As a young boy, I already had planned my whole future; I was going to do what I loved for the rest of my life – play professional football! The best part was, through football, I would eventually make a lot of money. I would be rich and famous!

There was only one problem. God had a different plan. In high school, despite much success in sports, I felt God leading me into ministry. I resisted Him, but certain circumstances in my senior year took football out of my life forever. A bit disillusioned, I began searching even harder for purpose by looking to the things of the world. In the process, I grew farther from God and found no real satisfaction. The more I searched, the more discouraged I became.



Eventually I realized I had been looking in all the wrong places. I meant nothing to the worldly things from which I sought acceptance. Football had discarded me, and no other pursuit made me feel complete. That was the whole problem! Nothing I had done in my life up to that point made me feel truly complete. I was beginning to understand, that although I had poured myself into football, I had never really experienced wholeness. I had always felt the need to prove myself, and it made me feel very unsettled.

Finally, for the first time, I realized my only purpose was to seek Jesus Christ, grow in my relationship with Him, and allow Him to use me to do His will. At that point, I began living for Christ and experiencing His wholeness. I knew I had purpose! My only responsibility was to the One who provided the path to righteousness.

I am not perfect, but I strive each day to walk with Christ and seek His will and plan for my life. I now do my best to say “Yes” to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, rather than to my own desires.

In 1 Corinthians 1:28,29, Paul gives instructions regarding what we are to do with our lives. He states, *“We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.”*

I no longer fret over what the world has to offer. Instead, I go into the world in the arms of Jesus. I rest in His awesome power rather than in my very limited strength. He has given me far more opportunities than I ever could have found on my own. I now have purpose, because I walk with Him in the center of His will. He is helping me be more complete, and He allows me to help others find that same wholeness. As I strive each day to grow in Christ, He leads me on His path. It’s a great way to live. And better yet, I know I am fulfilling His purpose for me.

Questions and personal application

1. Before becoming a Christian, did you embrace a particular purpose for your life? If so, what was it?
2. Are you now willing to embrace God's purpose for your life?
3. Summarize in your own words what the apostle Paul said about purpose in 1 Corinthians 1:28,29.
4. What steps can you take today and in the future to follow God more closely?
5. In the space below, write a short letter to God, telling Him your intentions.

28 – The right motivation

I'll never forget liking a certain girl when I was a senior in high school. This may sound silly, but she had what I considered a rather unusual talent. She could whistle really loud by placing two fingers in her mouth and blowing hard. For some juvenile reason, I was motivated to learn the same skill. After trying for several days I, too, became a loud whistler. Today, when I think back on the experience, I chuckle. Girls certainly wield great influence over us guys!

There are many things that motivate people to do what they do. Businessmen may be motivated by financial gain. Athletes are sometimes motivated by thoughts of fame or winning a title. Young children may be motivated by the desire to please a parent. Military members may be motivated by a sense of duty or patriotism. Workers may be motivated by deadlines or desired promotions. The list of “motivating factors” is endless.

For Christians, the question arises, “What should be the motivation to live for God?” Should it be to receive God’s blessing? Should it be out of a sense of duty or fear? Should Christians seek the praise of others so they are seen as super-saints?

The truth is, there is only one proper, overriding motivation for Christians to live for God. That motivation is **love!**

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 states, “*For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.*”



In these verses the apostle Paul encouraged Christians in the early church to be motivated by *the love of Christ*. Since Christ died for them, they should no longer live for themselves, but for Him.

Today, Christ's love is to be our motivation as well. We should serve Him out of an overwhelming sense of gratitude for what He has done for us.

As you think about living for God, consider all He has done for you. Among other countless things, He:

- forgave your sin, made you His child, and gave you eternal life
- gave you the Holy Spirit to comfort and guide you
- gave you His Word, the Bible, so you can learn more about Him
- gave you the church so you would have a spiritual family
- gave you your body and all of its senses – sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell so you could enjoy the world He created
- gave you lots of promises in the Bible like – His constant presence (Mt 28:18-20), answered prayer (Mt 7:7-10), and the assurance of salvation (1 Jn 5:11-13)

John 3:16 tells us that God's motivation for sending Christ to die for us was love, "*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.*"

The story is told of a man who found an injured, abandoned dog along the side of a narrow country road. He stopped, picked up the dog, placed it in the cab of his truck and took it home. For the next several weeks he nursed the dog back to health. The man even took the dog to a veterinarian who treated its broken leg. During the dog's rehabilitation, the man fed and cared for the dog until it fully recovered. Although the dog could not speak, it expressed its gratitude by becoming the man's faithful companion. Wherever the man went, the dog was at his side.

Just like the man who found the injured dog and provided for its healing, so Jesus found us and made a way for our sins to be forgiven. He did for us what we could not do for ourselves. By His sacrifice, He changed our lives forever! What can Christians give back to God for all He has done for them? They can give Him their hearts – hearts devoted to live for Him – motivated not by fear, duty, or a desire to receive His blessing, but by the same amazing love that motivated God to send His Son to die for them.”

Let *love for God* motivate you to live for Him.

Questions and personal application

1. What motivates you to do the things you do?
2. Now that you are a Christian, what should be your primary motivation?
3. Take a moment to thank God for all He has done for you. Ask Him to fill your heart with love for others so you can serve them like He serves you.
4. In the space below, write a brief love letter to God, thanking Him for what He has done for you and expressing your love for Him.

29 -The mark of the Christian—Love

Sometimes it's difficult to determine which of the characteristics of being a follower of Christ is foundational to all the others. Having personal integrity is vital. Cultivating a good marriage, being a good parent, doing good work on your job, are all issues that we must take seriously and do well. But what is the most important mark of the Christian?

One day Jesus said something that should get our attention. He was bringing His teaching ministry to a conclusion when He said, *“Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other”* (John 13:34 The Message). Love distinguished Jesus' life and it should distinguish ours as well. Jesus said people will know we are His followers if we love one another. But what did He mean?



We must remember that love is not an emotion. Anger, sadness, happiness, and fear are emotions – but love, the way God intended it, is a lifestyle that puts others and their best interests ahead of our own. This distinguishing mark should be at the center of every Christian's life. This is what Paul meant when he told the believers in Philippi, *“Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited*

friends. Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand” (Philippians 2:3 The Message).

Wouldn't that be an amazing way to live? Imagine what your life would be like if you *did life* with others who lived that lifestyle. Is this idealism or is it really possible? Look at what John had to say: "*Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is born of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God – for God is love*" (1 John 4:7 The Message).

When people experience the love of God, they become *conduits* of His love. Since God is love, and since His Spirit resides in every believer, all Christians have the potential and power to love others in this remarkable way. A life marked by love really is possible!

Make no mistake, loving others is not easy. The Apostle Paul calls love "labor." Just ask a mom about her "labor" in childbirth. She will often recall the pain involved. Love, too, is often very difficult and sometimes painful. It is not easy, but it brings wonderful things into our lives!

Jesus' words should echo in our hearts: "*People will know that you love Me if you love each other.*" What a great way to be witnesses to our faith – by loving one another.

In Jesus' economy, relationships are the key. And there is no more important ingredient in relationships than genuine love. People may say that other things are also important – honesty, hard work, dependability, etc. – but nothing surpasses the importance of love. We will do well to remember Jesus' words when we think of what should distinguish our own lives, "*Love one another.*"

If we have love at the center of our being, life will improve, and people will see Christ in us.

Questions and personal application

1. Why is loving others so important?
2. What are some practical ways people can show love to others?
3. What do you need to do personally to increase your own love to others?
4. Take a moment to pray and ask God to make you a more loving person.

30 – How do I relate to my non-Christian friends?

If you are *really* asking this question, you are in the minority. After becoming Christians, many people begin to lose their non-Christian friends. Congratulations if you still have some!

When you have a friend who is not exactly like you, it can be an enjoyable challenge. You have to learn about them and enjoy them for who they are. Life becomes dull when we only associate with people who are like us. This is true whether we are talking about different ethnicities or different spiritual journeys.



If you have recently become a follower of Jesus, your life is changing. That may mean some of your friends and their place in your life are changing, too. This is by no means an encouragement to lose your non-Christian friends and replace them with “squeaky-clean” Christian counterparts – unless they are causing you to turn away from the Lord.

In some cases, you may need to pull away from old friends, but in most cases, you probably want to continue those relationships. This is also not an encouragement to take your non-Christian friends on as “projects.” It is not your job to transform their lives. You have a responsibility to share your spiritual journey and to challenge their thinking from time to time. They are on a journey just as you are, and God Himself is working on them just as He worked on you.

So, how should you relate to your non-Christian friends? First, realize that your friends are part of your journey, just as you are part of theirs. A spiritual journey doesn’t begin the day you come to faith in Jesus; it begins the day you are born.

You and your friends are being spiritually formed every day. Part of your responsibility is to be “salt and light” (Matthew 5:13-16). This means you are to add flavor and light to their lives.

In a word, *love* your friends. Jesus related lovingly to people who did not yet express faith in Him. He spent time with them. Story after story in the New Testament tells about Jesus spending time with people who didn’t understand who He was. In fact, He spent so much time with them, some very “religious” people wondered about it (Luke 15:1,2).

Jesus valued people highly. When He was with them, they never felt like projects. He never tried to “sell them something.” He did tell them the truth about Himself, but He did it respectfully. Jesus told three important stories in Luke chapter fifteen: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son. All three have the same point – people are of great value to God. Your non-Christian friends are very important to God and should be important to you as well. God loves them in indiscriminate, marvelous, and merciful ways. So should you.

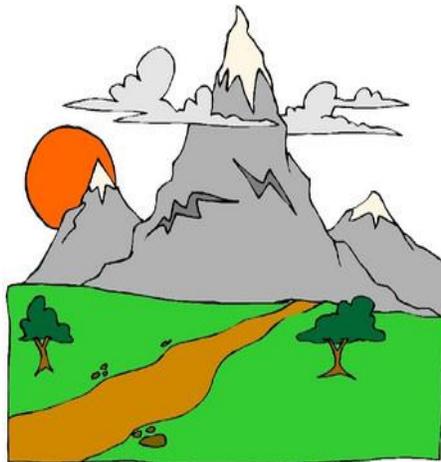
You will be a key signpost on the spiritual journey of some of your friends. So be like Jesus to them. *Be* the Good News (the Gospel). Saint Francis of Assisi said it best, “Spread the Gospel wherever you go and if you have to, use words.”

Questions and personal application

1. Who are your non-Christian friends? List some of their names in the space below.
2. Are any of your non-Christian friends trying to undermine your relationship with God? If so, how?
3. If any of your non-Christian friends are trying to undermine your faith, you may want to pull away from them for awhile so they don't pull you away from God. For those who are neutral or positive about your new faith, what are some ways you can lovingly reach out to them without making them feel like your project?
4. What are some Christian functions you could invite your non-Christian friends to attend?
5. Ask God how He would have you relate to your non-Christian friends.

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*



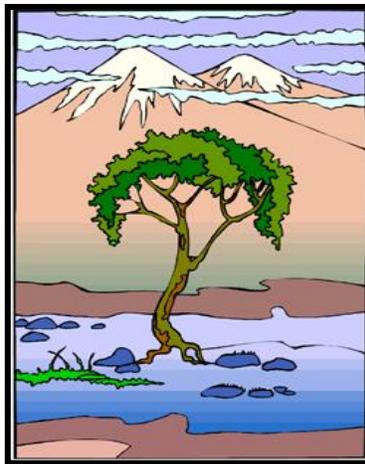
Insights in Part 3

- 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*



Notes