

Foundations: Bible Truths For Christian Growth

Chapter 1: Salvation

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Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations are taken from the *New American Standard Bible* : 1995 Update. LaHabra, CA : The Lockman Foundation, 1995.



DISCIPLESHIP SERIES

Foundations: Bible Truths for Christian Growth

Chapter 1 – Salvation

God's Gift to You

Chapter 2 – Eternal Security

Your Relationship with God

Chapter 3 – Confession

Your Fellowship with God

Chapter 4 – Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Your Remembrance of Christ

Chapter 5 – The Word of God

God's Communication to You

Chapter 6 – Prayer

Your Communication to God

Chapter 7 – The Local Church

Your Place of Ministry

Chapter 8 – Temptation

Your Struggle with Sin

Chapter 9 – The Holy Spirit

God's Presence in You

Chapter 10 – Progressive Sanctification

God's Work in You

Chapter 11 – Stewardship

Your Gift to God

Chapter 12 – Evangelism

Your Ministry to the World

Do you know that the Bible has a lot to say about you? It does! Although it doesn't mention you by name, it does have something to say about every member of the human race, including you. It contains some good news, some bad news, and some great news. Let's start with the good.

You and God

Scripture is unlike any other book. It is not primarily a history book. Nor is it a rulebook. It is far more than a “roadmap” for life. Scripture is first and foremost the *self-revelation* of God. It is God's autobiography—His communication to mankind about Himself. Therefore, it is appropriate to begin this series of Bible studies with several foundational truths about God:

- God is eternal—without start or end (**Psalm 90:2**).
- God is absolutely holy—He is set apart from everything that exists; there is no other like Him (**Isaiah 6:3**).
- God is completely sinless and cannot allow sin in His presence (**Habakkuk 1:13**).
- God is all-powerful (**Psalm 86:10**).
- Thankfully, God is also good (**Psalm 86:5**).
- God is absolutely just—everything He does is right (**Psalm 145:17**).
- God is love (**1 John 4:8**).

Scripture assumes God's existence and reveals Him to be the Creator of everything that exists. Acknowledging God as the Creator of all is essential to everything else Scripture teaches. Read **Genesis 1:1**. This is the first verse of the Bible. What does it say?

According to **Genesis 1:27**, from where did you come?

Although it is commonly taught today that mankind is the result of countless years of evolution, Scripture teaches clearly and repeatedly that *“all things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being”* (**John 1:3**).

Psalm 19:1 tells us that the heavens and all of creation “are telling of the glory of God.” **Romans 1:20** concurs, saying that creation teaches two key lessons about God: that He exists and that He is powerful. It concludes by saying that those who reject God and His creative power are *“without _____.”*

The Bible’s teaching that you are created by God is not intended merely to solve the question of man’s origin. Rather, it has two implications that are very great for you personally:

❶ **Because God made you, you are accountable to Him.**

If you were merely the product of “chance” as evolution teaches, you would be your own master. You

Principle:

Because God created you, you will one day appear before Him as your Judge.

would be answerable to no one. But because you are a creature, you must give an account of your life to your Creator. The Bible records that time of judgment in **Revelation 20:11–15** and refers to it as *the Great White Throne*.

According to verse 12, both “the great and the small” will appear before God to be judged. Who does that indicate will give answer to God? _____

What does **Hebrews 9:27** say to reinforce this fact?

❷ **Because God made you, He owns You.**

Colossians 1:16 again teaches that *“by Him (Christ) all things were created, both in the heavens and the earth.”* It concludes by saying that *“all things have been created _____ him and _____ him.”*

Read **Revelation 4:11**, a record of the worship of Christ in heaven. Why is God worthy to receive worship—“glory and honor and power”? _____

From this verse why do you think God created you?

“The chief end of man...”

The Shorter Westminster Catechism—a statement of Bible doctrine that has been especially useful for the instruction of new believers since the 17th century—asks students the purpose of God in creation: *“What is the chief end of man?”* The pupils respond with an answer that is biblically accurate and personally challenging: *“Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.”* Not only did God make you, but He made you for Himself!

God wants to have fellowship with you and know you. Read the Bible’s account of creation in **Genesis 1–3**. As far back as the

Principle:

God loves you and created you to glorify Him.

Garden of Eden, God's pleasure was to walk and talk with His creatures (**Genesis 3:8**). Just as God was with Adam and Eve in the garden, He wants you to be with Him in Heaven forever...that's the **good news**. Sadly, Adam and Eve broke their fellowship with God when they sinned (**Genesis 3:6**). Because of their sin, you are now *born* a sinner (**Romans 5:12; Psalm 51:5**). That's the **bad news**.

You and Sin

You are not only a sinner by birth—you are a sinner by *choice*. Explain **Romans 3:10–11** in your own words. _____

Now read **Romans 3:23**. How many people have sinned? _____

1 **John 3:4** defines sin as “breaking God’s law.” What is God’s law? _____

Give some examples of sin (1 **Corinthians 6:9–11**). _____

It is popular today to say that man is basically good. Yet, Scripture teaches that every man, woman and child is a sinner. How does **Jeremiah 17:9** describe the heart? _____

Principle:
You are a sinner,
both by birth
and by choice.

Isaiah 53:6 summarizes the sinfulness of all men as intentional and determined *rebellion against God*.

Like sheep, we have each “gone astray” from God and chosen our “own way” rather than His way. The fact that you’ve sinned is bad news, but it gets worse. Read the following verses and explain what they teach about the effects of sin:

Isaiah 59:2 _____

Revelation 21:27 (this verse is talking about heaven)

Romans 6:23 is a very important verse regarding you and your sin. It says that “the wages of sin is death.” What is a wage? _____

According to **Romans 6:23**, because you sin, what do you deserve? _____

The Bible speaks of two deaths. The first is *physical* death. God promised Adam and Eve that if they sinned, they would “surely die” (**Genesis 2:17**). However, there is a far worse death than physical death, and that is *spiritual* death. Because of Adam and Eve’s sin they were immediately dead *spiritually* and would eventually die *physically* (see **Ephesians 2:1**). Before salvation, a person is spiritually dead—even though they are physically alive. When an unbeliever dies physically, he is condemned permanently. How does the Bible describe permanent, eternal condemnation in **Revelation 20:14–15** and **21:8**? _____

Hell is temporary, but...

Revelation 20:14 says that *hell* will one day be cast into the lake of fire. Hell is a terrible but *temporary* place of judgment where sinners await *the Great White Throne*. It could be compared to a county jail where criminals await trial. However, following the “trial” of sinners at the *Great White Throne*, they will be cast with hell into the lake of fire—a place of *eternal* torment. Those who go to hell at their death will be punished in the lake of fire for eternity.

The truth of eternal damnation is hard for most people to swallow, but *the Bible teaches that everyone who has sinned deserves to be punished for that sin forever in the lake of fire.*

Principle:

Sin separates you from God and makes you deserving of the lake of fire.

Many people think that hell and the lake of fire are just for men like Hitler or Charles Manson. But the Bible says that hell is not just for murderers; it is for *sinners!* The fact is, because you sin, you deserve to be punished for eternity in the lake of fire. That is not just bad news—it is terrible.

Many people try to compensate for their sin by doing good works. They reason that if they do more good things than bad, they’ll go to heaven. The problem is that Scripture teaches that no one can earn heaven. **Romans 6:23** teaches that eternal life (*with God in heaven*) is a “gift.” Can you earn a gift? _____

Read **Ephesians 2:8–9**. The Bible teaches that salvation is by grace (*undeserved kindness*) through faith (*trust in God*). What does verse 9 say? What does it mean? _____

What are some things that people do to try to earn heaven?

So far the news has been very bad. We all have sinned. Because of that sin, we deserve judgment. Further, there is *nothing* we can do to earn salvation. If that were all that Scripture said, it would be a tragic book. Thankfully, it goes on. The Bible says that God made a way for you and all other sinners to avoid the lake of fire. You *deserve* hell, but you don’t have to go there... that’s the **great news!**

You and Jesus

The Bible has much to say about who Jesus is:

- He is eternal (**John 1:1, 2**).
- He is God (**John 1:1**).
- He is the _____ (**John 1:3**).
- He became “flesh” (**John 1:14**). What do you think that means? _____
- He is absolutely sinless (**Hebrews 4:15**).

Romans 5:8 teaches something else about Jesus. It says that He loves us, His creatures. How did He demonstrate His love for us? _____

Most people know that Jesus died, but very few understand *why* He died. **1 Peter 3:18** answers that question:

- It says that “Christ died for sins once.” When did He do that? _____

Since Scripture teaches that Jesus never sinned, for whose sins did He die? _____

- **1 Peter 3:18** teaches that Christ died, “the just for the unjust.” Who is the “just” (*righteous*) One? _____

Who are the “unjust” (*unrighteous*) ones? _____

Don’t miss this important point: Jesus (*The Righteous One*) died for you (*the unrighteous one*).

He was your *substitute*. He paid the penalty that you deserve! Remember **Romans 6:23**. Because of sin, you deserve *death*. Jesus paid that penalty by dying on the cross! Instead of *you* paying for your sins in the lake of fire, Jesus suffered death one time on Calvary. He paid for your sins!

Principle:

Because of His great love, God sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross as your substitute.

Now look back at **1 Peter 3:18**. “*For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust,* _____

_____.”

What great news! Jesus died to pay for your sins so that you can avoid hell and enjoy heaven with Him!

Guilty...yet free!

The story is told of two brothers who immigrated to the U.S. from China in the early 1900’s. The older began his new life by getting a job and a house. The younger, however, was determined to “enjoy” his new freedom. He spent his days and nights drinking and gambling. One fateful night he began fighting with a man who had accused him of cheating. In his drunken state, the younger brother drew a knife and murdered the man. He knew that if he were caught he would be hung. He fled to his brother’s home.

The police began to search from house to house, looking for the murderer. As the older brother entered his home, he found a pile of blood–stained clothes. Immediately he knew what his brother had done. A few moments later, the police approached the home, only to find the older brother wearing the bloody clothes. Throughout his questioning and trial he remained silent. He eventually died for a crime he didn’t commit, motivated by love for his brother. He died as a *substitute*, the innocent for the guilty, a very small picture of the death which Christ suffered for you.

Though innocent, Christ died for the sins of others. Though guilty, the sinner may be free, ransomed by his Substitute’s blood.

You and Salvation

The Bible teaches that you will live somewhere forever—either in heaven or the lake of fire. Jesus died to allow you to go to heaven. Although people teach that there are many ways to heaven, the Bible teaches that there is only *one way*. Read **John 14:6** to find out what it is. _____

Jesus is offering a tremendous gift: freedom from hell and eternity in heaven. Sadly, many people reject Jesus and His offer of salvation. Instead of

rejecting Christ, **John 1:12** instructs you to “receive” Him. The key question is this: *How can you receive Jesus Christ and His gift of salvation?* There are two simultaneous aspects to receiving Christ:

1. You must repent of your sins.

You have offended God by sinning. You now need to turn *from* that sin and *to* God—that is what Scripture calls **repentance**. It is not cleaning up or reforming yourself. Remember, you cannot earn heaven. Instead, repentance is *changing your mind* about God and sin. It is desiring God instead of your sin. C. S. Lewis puts it this way: *“Fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who must lay down his arms ... This process of surrender...is what Christians call repentance.”*¹

What does **Acts 3:19** require for your sins to be forgiven? _____

1 Thessalonians 1:9 defines repentance and conversion as *“turning to _____, from _____.”*

Indeed, the very move toward Christ demands a move away from sin and idols. Christ *replaces* your way. He will not be merely added to it.

According to **Matthew 1:21**, from what does Jesus save you? _____

There are some people who believe they are forgiven, yet have never turned from sin. They believe that they have the best of both worlds: they can “bear-

¹ *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1952), p. 59.

hug” their sin and refuse to let it go, then they can go to heaven. Yet, according to **Matthew 1:21**, Christ saves His people from **sin**, not just hell. Anyone who has not repented of his sin has not been saved! That is not to say that a saved man will not struggle with sin. However, a saved man has *“changed his mind”* about sin. He may struggle with it, but he won’t relish it.

Isaiah 55:7 gives a clear picture of repentance.

Explain it in your own words. _____

If you have not yet turned from your wicked way, you have not yet been saved!

2. You must trust in Jesus Christ alone.

John 3:16 is probably the most well known verse of the Bible. It teaches that you must believe in Jesus. That means more than just acknowledging that He lived and died. The Bible word *believe* means to *be convinced*, to *trust* or to *place your faith in someone*. You must realize that

Principle:

Your only hope of salvation is to repent of your sins and trust Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.

Jesus is your only hope of going to heaven and place your faith completely in Him. Not Jesus and good works...not Jesus and baptism...not Jesus and church...Jesus alone.

Two sides of the same coin...

Faith and repentance cannot be separated. Genuine faith includes repentance, and genuine repentance includes faith. Think of it this way...

Your Way ← God's Way

Isaiah 55:7 pictures you as a rebel who insists on going your own way, the exact opposite of God's way. It then instructs you to "forsake" your way (repentance) and "return" to the Lord (faith).

Your Way → God's Way

In order to be saved, you must turn *to God* and *from sin*.
If you have not turned from your own way,
you have not turned to Christ.

In **Acts 16:30**, a sinful man asks the Apostle Paul and Silas a vital question: "What must I do to be saved?" What was their simple answer in **Acts 16:31**? _____

Read **John 3:36**. Notice that the Bible divides all of humanity into two groups—there is no middle ground. How do the two groups respond to Christ?

What happens to each of these groups? _____

You obviously don't want to be the object of God's wrath. What do **Romans 10:9, 13** require of you to be saved? _____

The only way to "call upon the name of the Lord" is to speak to Him in prayer. Many have asked Jesus Christ to be their Savior. According to **1 John 5:13**, those people *know* that they have eternal life. Do you have that assurance? If you have never trusted Jesus as your Savior, you can do it now, right where you are.

Principle:
God promises eternal life to all who receive Jesus Christ as Savior.

In a simple prayer, acknowledge to God that you are a sinner. Tell Him of your desire to turn from that sin, and ask for His forgiveness. Thank Him for sending Jesus to die for your sins, and ask Jesus to be your personal Savior and to give you the gift of eternal life.

Once you have trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are a Christian! Now it is essential that you mature in your relationship with Christ.

Here are some key steps in that direction:

1) Although you are a Christian, you will still struggle with sin. Sin will not remove you from God's family, but it will remove you from fellowship with God. Fellowship must be restored by confessing sin directly to God as soon as you are aware of it. This matter will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 3, so keep going!

2) Begin reading your Bible. Start with the book of John. Make notes of who Jesus is, what He did, and what He has done for you. The importance of immersing yourself in the Word of God will be addressed in Chapter 5.

3) Get involved in a church that faithfully preaches the Bible. The importance of being committed to a godly church will be covered in Chapter 7.

4) Begin memorizing God’s Word on your own. Memorizing Scripture will help you to better understand it, will prepare you to share it with others, and will help protect you from error and sin. Here are some verses to start on:

Scripture Memory

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Check Your Progress

What are the three most significant lessons that you have learned in this Bible study? Why are they important?

Answer the following questions to measure your understanding of salvation:

1. Two important implications arise from the fact that God created you. What are they? (pp. 5–6)

2. How many people have sinned? (p. 7) _____

3. Because of your sin, what do you deserve? Be specific. (p. 8) _____

4. What is the difference between hell and the lake of fire? (p. 9) _____

5. Is it possible to *earn* eternal life? Why/why not?
(p. 9) _____

6. In what sense was Jesus your Substitute? (p. 10)

7. Why is Jesus the only way to get to the Father?
(p. 11, 14–15) _____

8. What is repentance? (p. 13) _____

9. What must you do to be saved? (p. 15–16) _____

10. Check off the following verses only when you can say them from memory:

- John 3:16 Ephesians 2:8–9
- Romans 6:23

Do you believe that you know this material well enough to teach it to someone else? _____ If not, review it until you do!