

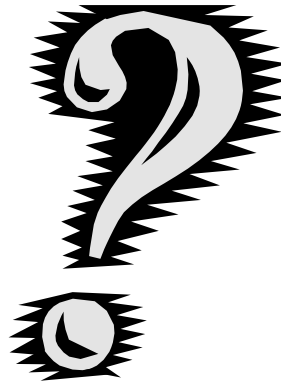
THE STORY That Makes Sense Out of Life



A Four-Lesson Bible Study To Put Your World Into Perspective

- Get your questions answered.
- Find out what makes the Bible so relevant and life-changing.

“THE STORY That Makes Sense Out of Life”



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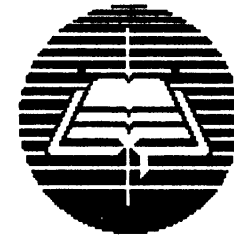
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Welcome to a unique study of the most amazing true story ever printed. It is found in the Bible. Every well-educated person ought to have some knowledge of its content. In these four one-hour lessons, you will learn:

I THE STORY-ITS DOORWAY

How do the first three chapters lay the groundwork for the whole story that follows? Who is God and what is His plan for the human race?

II THE STORY-ITS RECORD

How do we know that the Bible comes from God and accurately reveals The Story?

III THE STORY-ITS THEME

What is the theme around which the plot-line of the Bible's entire story unfolds?

IV THE STORY-ITS MAIN CHARACTER

Who is Jesus Christ and how can you have a personal relationship with God through Him?

V THE STORY-ITS RELEVANCE (Optional fifth lesson)

What difference does faith in Jesus make in daily life?

**“THE STORY THAT MAKES SENSE OUT OF LIFE”
LESSON ONE: THE TRUE STORY—ITS DOORWAY**

Don't you wish there was one story that made life make sense? This lesson begins to present the “plot” of the greatest story ever told—the true story that makes sense out of life! It's in the Bible. This lesson will focus on its first few chapters, that lay the groundwork for the whole story that follows.

I. WHAT KIND OF GOD IT TOOK TO BE CREATOR:

The first verse of the Bible profoundly states, “*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth*”. Genesis 1:1 is the doorway through which one must enter the Bible. If you really believe it, you will not have a problem believing anything else in the Bible.

A. GOD THE CREATOR—What does this first verse say about the kind of God it took to create everything out of nothing? There are some things about God that are a mystery—too great for our minds to comprehend. But, think of some of the things that this does clearly imply...

1. God is *self-existent*. It is His nature to be. He is the living spring of all life.
2. God is *eternal*. The universe had its beginning when He created; but God has always been.
3. God is *personal*. He is self-conscious, self-determining, and speaks (verse 3). Our origins are in a wise and loving Person, not in a “force” or “chance.”
4. God is *free*. He is independent of all else. He did not need anyone or anything to exist. (We are dependent on many outside things for our existence!)

5. God is *transcendent*. He is separate from and greater than His universe, free from any restrictions of space or resources.
6. God is *sovereign*. Since He is the creator of the universe, He is its rightful owner (and that includes us) and ruler.
7. God is *all-powerful*. The God Who can create everything out of nothing has the power to do anything, which is an object of power.
8. God is *all-wise*. The orderliness and wisdom of creation, from the tiniest atom to the largest galaxy, reflect the intellect of its Designer.
9. God is *a judge*. Because He is creator and owner, He has every right to expect us to obey and to punish when we do not.
10. But the verse also implies that God is *gracious*. God did not have to create us. He did so in order to express His love and goodness to those He created.

B. WHAT ABOUT OTHER EXPLANATIONS?

1. If Genesis 1:1 is true, it eliminates:
 - ATHEISM (no god) because it assumes God is real.
 - PANTHEISM (everything is god) since God created the universe and is not equal to it.
 - POLYTHEISM (many gods) since there is only one infinite creator.

- DEISM (God not involved with what He made) since a personal God would interact with His creatures as the rest of the Bible goes on to describe.
- HUMANISM (mankind the authority) since God, not mankind, is the starting point.
- EVOLUTIONISM if indeed God did create.

2. WHAT ABOUT THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION?

Believing in evolution takes a lot of faith too! Evolutionists keep running into problems such as:

- Where did the first matter come from?
- If matter did begin evolving, how did it get from non-life to life?
- Why is macroevolution (from one species to another) never observed today or in the fossil record?
- How do evolutionists explain the law of entropy in physics (Second Law of Thermodynamics) stating that in closed systems, the movement is always from order to disorder? Things do not tend to improve.
- Can the laws of statistical probability really account for the enormous complexity even in a single cell? (Michael Behe, Darwin's Black Box shows scientifically how unlikely this would be.)
- Why do many scientists prefer the creation model as a better explanation of order and complex design?

C. SUMMARY:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Genesis 1:1 is the doorway into the great story that makes sense out of life that is found in the Bible. The only alternative is to believe in an impersonal explanation—that everything came out of nothing or that things have always been. How much more meaningful to believe in the all-powerful, personal Creator! Genesis 1:1 is the doorway, but the rest of the story gets even more wonderful.

II. GOD MADE MANKIND IN GOD'S IMAGE:

Key verse: Genesis 1:26-27

- A. These verses hint at something else about God—the trinity ("Us"). This is clearly taught later in the Bible.
- B. These verses also teach us about our makeup as humans:
 1. The "image of God" does not mean the physical image of God since God is *Spirit* (John 4:24).
 2. It does mean that the immaterial part of humans was created in God's likeness, a reflection of Him. This is the part of mankind that sets us apart from all other earthly creatures. (How different this would be if we and all creatures evolved!) We were made in the image of God in at least three ways:
 - Intellect: God has all knowledge. We have some knowledge and can reason and have a concept of God.

- Emotions: God has perfect emotions of love, hate, anger, joy, compassion, etc. We are emotional beings.
- Will: When God made mankind, He did not want a robot or a machine. He gave man a will that could be exercised in one of two ways—to be obedient to the will of God or to exert self-will and rebel against God.

3. God made mankind male and female and instituted marriage (Genesis 2:18-25).

III. MANKIND SINNED AGAINST GOD

A. PEOPLE NEEDED A CHOICE:

1. In order for mankind's will to be of value, the people needed the right of choice.
2. Every encouragement to live in obedience to God was provided in the Garden of Eden. The choice to obey was theirs.
3. God gave one restriction—a test, if you will (Genesis 2:16-17). God gave them an opportunity to freely use their will.

B. OPPOSITION TO GOD'S REVEALED WILL IS SIN:

1. Sin is "*doing what God forbids or failing to do what He commands*". His commands are based on His perfect, moral character—Who He is!

2. God told the first man that if he exercised his will in disobedience to God that he would have to pay the penalty for sin. The penalty then as always, was death.

C. MANKIND MADE A TRAGIC CHOICE

Adam and Eve used their will to disobey God, sinned, and therefore, died (Genesis 3:1-15). In what sense did they die since they didn't fall over physically dead immediately?

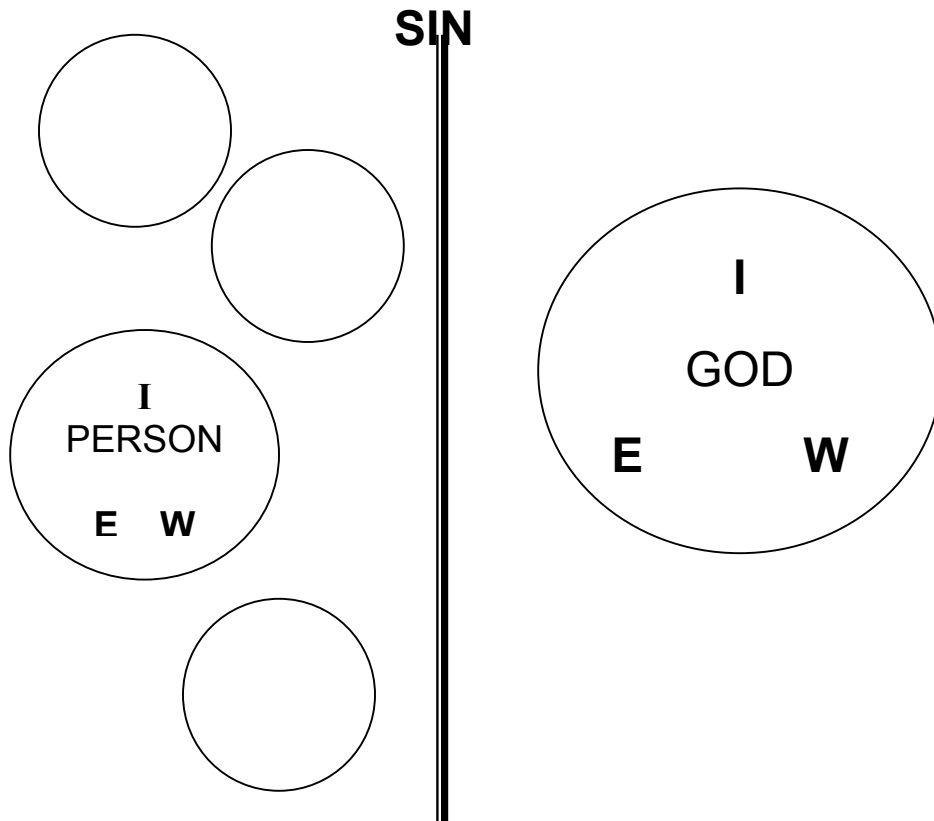
1. Death, in Biblical terms, always means separation. There are different types of death mentioned in the Bible, yet each one means a type of separation (Romans 6:23).
2. Adam and Eve died spiritually. Spiritual death is the separation of a person from God and eternal death is the separation of a person from God forever. Adam and Eve displayed separation by attempting to hide from the God they had enjoyed previously (Genesis 3:8-9).
3. The Bible tells us that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Experience confirms people's inhumanity to others and their selfish approach to life.

IV. GOD HAD A PLAN

- A. The diagram that follows sums up the problem. Spiritual death is the dilemma of every person.

SPIRITUAL DEATH:

PEOPLE AND GOD ARE SEPARATED



TRAPPED IN THE
REALM OF
SPIRITUAL DEATH... People attempt to satisfy
their spiritual void apart from God; but they cannot!

- B. Unless we find and take God's way of escape, we will suffer the full consequences of spiritual death now and eternal death later.
- C. The Bible was written to explain the story of God's wonderful plan for mankind, enabling people to escape separation from God and to once again have the personal relationship with God that we were made to enjoy.
- D. This plan is called the "Plan of *Redemption*". It is the theme around which the plot of the whole Bible unfolds.... Stay tuned for the rest of the story!
- E. In the next lesson, we will explain the origin of the Bible and why it can be trusted to accurately tell us "THE STORY THAT MAKES SENSE OUT OF LIFE."

“THE STORY THAT MAKES SENSE OUT OF LIFE”

LESSON TWO: THE TRUE STORY—ITS RECORD

In our first lesson, we entered the doorway of The Story and were introduced to God the main character, to the people He created, and to the problem of sin and separation from God that their disobedience caused. The plot of our story centers around what God did to take care of this problem and provide a way for people to be redeemed or brought back into a relationship with their Creator.

One of the things that God did was to provide a Book to reveal Himself and His plan of redemption. In Lesson One, we learned that God is personal and He speaks (Genesis 1:1,3). The Bible claims to be the record of His Word to mankind. This lesson investigates that claim.

Welcome to a unique study of the most amazing book ever printed. The Bible continues to be the most enduring and lasting book in the world. Every well-educated individual ought to have some knowledge of its content.

Definition of the Word

The word “Bible” simply means “book.” It is one cohesive book with a grand story to tell. It stands out among other books because of its authority, antiquity, literary style, and popularity.

This lesson about the origin of the Bible will help us understand why the Bible is so extraordinary. It will help us see why no human mind has ever fully exhausted the message of the Bible or measured its value.

I. INTRODUCTORY FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE

A. THE AGE OF THE BIBLE

It is older than any other complete book. Its earliest portions were written more than 3,300 years ago. However, its message has been fresh and relevant to people in every age and generation. Those who study it often comment that its message is as up-to-date as today’s newspaper.

B. THE DEMAND FOR THE BIBLE

It is by far the most widely circulated book in the world. Since 1804, more than 800 million Bibles and Scripture portions have been issued (according to the *British and Foreign Bible Societies*). Every year, more than 22 million copies of the complete Bible and New Testament are circulated around the globe.

It has been translated more than any other book. Each year, there is an increase in the number of translations. The following figures reflect this steady growth:

In 1500 AD, it had been printed in 14 languages

In 1600—about 40 languages

In 1800—about 72 languages

In 1900—about 567 languages

In 1937—about 1000 languages

In 1977—1603 languages

In 1997—2167 languages

C. INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE

1. It has set a standard for law and morality. The Ten Commandments were the basis of civil law for Western Civilization.
2. It has the power to transform the lives of people.
3. It claims authority: "Thus says the Lord."
4. It remains indestructible and living despite the many violent attacks that have been waged against it.

3. God used human authors to write down the words He wanted. He watched over them as they wrote so that no errors were recorded. According to 2 Peter 1:19-21 the men who penned the Scriptures spoke from God. God chose them from different cultures, classes, ages, and professions.

It is interesting to note how varied were the professions of the men. Among them were prophets, kings, officials, ministers, shepherds, priests, fishermen, theologians, judges, and a tax collector.

Consider some of the individual writers and notice how well suited their lives and personalities were for their writings:

- David was a shepherd boy, who wrote most of the Psalms. Perhaps the most beloved Psalm David wrote was Psalm 23, the Shepherd Psalm.
- Moses was a man raised in the courts of the Egyptian leaders. He later became the leader of his own nation, Israel.
- Solomon was a wise and worldly king of Israel. He wrote the book of wisdom, Proverbs.
- Daniel was a prophet, who was prepared in the courts of a Gentile king. He wrote on international history and prophecy.
- Paul was a brilliant man, who was trained in law. He wrote concerning the legal aspects of justification (God declaring someone "not guilty") in the book of Romans.

4. The Scriptures were written by forty different men during a 1500-year period, yet there is not one contradiction in their writing. Discrepancies alleged by critics of the Bible

II. THE BIBLE'S CLAIM TO SUPERNATURAL ORIGIN

We will now proceed to study the Bible's own claims about its origin. It makes two claims that intertwine to make the Bible such an amazing book. *Inspiration* and *revelation* sum up the two claims about its own origin.

A. INSPIRATION

Key verse: 2 Timothy 3:16

1. The word "inspiration" means "God-breathed." So, the Bible is saying that all Scripture is God-breathed. On the original parchments every sentence, every word, every line was placed there in complete agreement with the will of God. The veritable author of the Bible is God.
2. Inspiration is the process by which human authors were used by God to write accurately that which is revealed and recalled.

have proven to be misinterpretations caused by taking statements out of context. How did these men know what to write? Where did they get the material? The answer to these questions is found by studying the meaning of the Bible's claim to be "revelation."

Natural World. The universe which God created declared Him (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:19-23).

Historic Events. God used the events of mankind's history to reveal His will. For example, in the Old Testament there are many historical books: Genesis through Esther.

B. REVELATION

1. "Revelation" is the Bible's term for the activity of God in communicating truth to the mind of the Bible writer.
2. The key verse is 2 Peter 1:20. A clear translation of this verse reads: *"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture comes forth from one's own ideas."* God revealed His ideas to each writer.
3. God used various methods and instruments to reveal the Scriptures to His chosen authors:

Direct Voice. God Himself spoke certain truths audibly (Exodus 33:11).

Direct Writing. God wrote out the Ten Commandments word for word (Exodus 31:18).

Dreams. God used men's dreams as a channel through which He revealed prophetic truth (Daniel 2:1-49).

People. The personal experiences and spiritual lives of individuals were used by God (Psalm 51).

C. SUMMARY OF TERMS (Also, see diagram on next page.)

Revelation is God's activity in giving truth to the human mind.

Inspiration is God's activity in producing a record of His revealed and recalled truth.

REVELATION

(God gives truth to the writer)



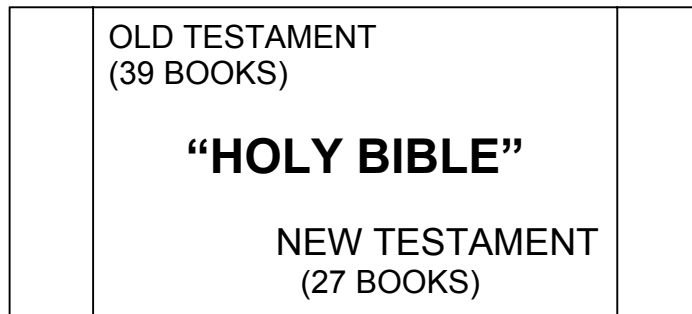
↓
TRUTH (revealing truth)



↓
TRUTH (recording truth)

INSPIRATION

(God oversees as divine truth goes out of author into accurate record)



III. EVIDENCE OF THE SUPERNATURAL ORIGIN OF SCRIPTURE

A. UNITY OF SCRIPTURE

The Bible is one book even though there are sixty-six books within it. The first book was written approximately 1425 BC and the last around 95 AD. This in itself would be a tremendous obstacle to the unity of any book. Yet the Bible is an orderly and harmonious account of the whole history of God's dealings with mankind.

B. AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

If there is the kind of God that is described in the Bible (as we learned about Him in Lesson One) and if He has spoken, then we would expect Him to say what He says with authority. The Bible does indeed claim that God is the source of all authority and that His authority is expressed in the Bible, His revelation.

1. The whole tone of Scripture is that of final authority (Isaiah 8:20).
2. Jesus said that that authority is indestructible (Matthew 24:35).

C. FULFILLED PROPHECY

Only God knows and can perfectly predict the future. There are numerous instances in Scripture where God predicts the future precisely.

1. Isaiah prophesied the virgin birth of Jesus (Isaiah 7:14). This prophecy was fulfilled 700 years later (Matthew 1:18, 22, 23).

2. Micah predicted the exact birthplace of the Messiah (Micah 5:2). This prophecy was fulfilled 500 years later (Luke 2:4, 6, 7).
3. David predicted Christ's crucifixion in detail hundreds of years before this form of execution was ever popularized (Psalm 22).

D. THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CONCERNING THE SCRIPTURES

This is one of the most important evidences of the inspiration of the Bible. Jesus Christ believed in:

- The Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17-18)
- Solomon (Matt. 6:29)
- Moses (Matt. 8:4)
- Abraham (Matt. 8:11)
- The record of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt. 10:15)
- The Old Testament Scriptures, quoted as His authority (Matt. 21:13, 16, 42; 22:28-33; 22:36-40)

E. LOGICAL WORLDVIEW

The worldview that emerges from the writings of the Bible makes sense out of reality more than any other worldview. As you go through these lessons and study the Bible for yourself, see if its message doesn't have a suitability to reality as we experience it on our journey through life.

F. The Scriptures are "SELF-AUTHENTICATING."

God is very able to reveal Himself through His inspired Word and thus to speak to people who want to hear His voice. Select a book like the Gospel of John, ask God to speak to you through it, and then begin to read with a desire to hear His voice. Are you serious enough to begin your own search?

CONCLUSION:

Stick with this course as we move to Lesson Three and continue to consider The Story of this book that claims to be *revealed* by God and even to be *inspired* so that what the chosen authors penned was word for word what God wanted to be written.

Please ask any questions you have at this point.

You may not be convinced that the Bible is what it claims to be. However, you are to be commended for being open minded enough to investigate its Story and let it speak for itself before you make a final decision. As you search, listen for the voice of God and ask Him to truly reveal Himself to you.

“THE STORY THAT MAKES SENSE OUT OF LIFE”

LESSON THREE: THE TRUE STORY—ITS THEME

Lesson One took us through the doorway of the Bible, introducing us to our Creator, to the first two people, and to the spiritual death that separated the human race from God as soon as they disobeyed Him.

Lesson Two explained how the Bible was written to explain The Story of God’s wonderful plan for mankind, enabling people to once again have a personal relationship with God. The theme of the Bible is “*The Plan of Redemption*”—the theme around which the plot of Bible’s Story unfolds. If you understand this theme, the individual parts of the Bible can make better sense to you. If you understand This Story, it makes sense out of life!

I. THE THEME UNFOLDED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

A. MANKIND DIED SPIRITUALLY

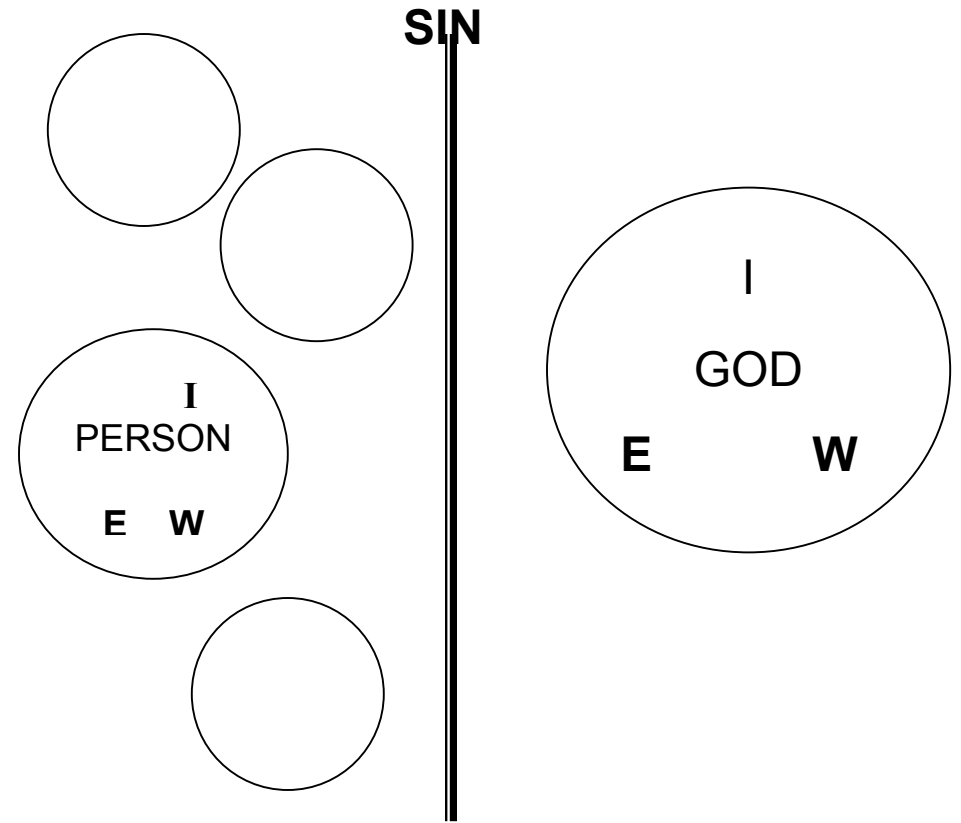
The moment Adam and Eve sinned, they died spiritually. (Review the diagram that we studied at end of Lesson One, shown again here.)

This spiritual death effected all of their offspring as well (Romans 5:12). But, God arranged a way for justice to be fully satisfied—a way for people to return to Him in a complete and fulfilling relationship.

Immediately after they sinned, God stepped in and declared His intention to buy mankind back, to pay the price required to set people free (*redeem* them). This was declared in the prophetic verse of Genesis 3:15. (God promised to send Someone to crush Satan and defeat the sin that he caused.)

SPIRITUAL DEATH:

PEOPLE AND GOD ARE SEPARATED



TRAPPED IN THE REALM OF SPIRITUAL DEATH... People attempt to satisfy their spiritual void apart from God; but they cannot!

B. THE PROMISED COMING ONE

This Promised One would come into the world at the right moment in God's perfect time (Galatians 4:4). The Old Testament is the story of how God prepared a people group and nurtured a lineage (family tree) for this One who would *redeem* ("buy back") mankind.

1. The lineage began with Seth (Genesis 4:25, 26)
2. It continued with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3).
3. Isaac, Abraham's son, was in the lineage (Genesis 17:19).
4. God selected Jacob to continue the lineage (Genesis 32:24-28).
5. Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, had twelve sons who fathered the twelve tribes of Israel through whom the *Redeemer* was to come. The specific tribe from which He would come was Judah (Genesis 49:10).

C. STORY LINE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. The nation of Israel

Most of the Old Testament is concerned with the nation of Israel. It tells how they grew from a family of 70 people at the end of Genesis into a nation of 2+ million people while in Egypt. It tells how God delivered them from bondage in Egypt, formed them into a nation, and gave them their own land.

2. The Ten Commandments

God entered into a covenant (testament, agreement, or contract) with the Israelites when He formed them into a nation. An important part of this covenant agreement was the "Ten Commandments", given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. These rules are moral commands, based on the character of God. They are God's holy nature expressed in imperatives. They are not the means of salvation. They are a mirror to show us that we fall short and need a Savior or *Redeemer*.

TEN RULES: EXODUS 20: 1-17—

#1 You shall have no other gods before Me.

#2 You shall not make idols or worship them.

#3 You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

#4 Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy (a rule unique to Israel and not repeated in the NT).

#5 Honor your father and mother.

#6 You shall not murder.

#7 You shall not commit adultery.

#8 You shall not steal.

#9 You shall not give false testimony.

#10 You shall not covet.

3. The sacrifices

From the first Book of the Bible on, God asked that those who worshipped Him would offer animal sacrifices. When He formed Israel into a nation, He gave them directions for an elaborate system of sacrifices, a family of priests to offer the sacrifices, and a tabernacle (later a temple) as a place where these sacrifices were offered.

The sacrifices were a vivid object lesson that the wages of sin is death. They foreshadowed the Lamb of God, the *Coming Redeemer* who would one day be sacrificed for the sins of all people (John 1:29).

D. DIVISIONS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. History—of the world and mankind, especially the nation of Israel is found in Genesis through Esther.
2. Poetry—mostly written by the people of Israel showing their heart for God includes the Books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.
3. Prophecy—concerning the future of Israel and other nations includes many predictions about the *Coming Redeemer*. These Books have historical settings and include Isaiah through Malachi.

II. THE THEME UNFOLDED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The first verse of the New Testament, Matthew 1:1, provides a link to the Old. The OT said, “He’s coming”. The NT says, “He’s here. His name is Jesus”.

A. THE GOSPELS

1. Matthew presents Jesus as a King.
2. Mark presents Jesus as God’s Servant.
3. Luke presents Jesus as a Perfect Man.
4. John presents Jesus as God.

B. HISTORY

The Book of Acts is a history of the work and faith of the followers of Jesus after He ascended to heaven. It explains how they were first called Christians and how they started local churches throughout the Roman Empire.

C. LETTERS

From Romans through Jude, these letters were written to individual Christians and churches to instruct Christians how *redeemed* people are to live.

D. PROPHECY

The Book of Revelation foretells where the *redeemed* ones will live forever and also the final judgment of all that reject *the Redeemer*.

III. THE THEME IN THE OLD FULFILLED IN THE NEW

Old Testament prophecy about the Redeemer:	New Testament fulfillment of that prophecy through Jesus Christ:
He would come from the nation of Israel (Gen. 12:3)	Matthew 1:1-17
He would come from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10)	Luke 1:31-33
He would come from the family of David (Is. 11:1,10)	Luke 1:31-33
He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)	Luke 2:1-7
He would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14)	Matthew 1:18-23
He would suffer and pay for sins (Is. 53:4-6)	2 Corinthians 5:21
He would be crucified (Psalm 22)	Matthew 27
He would be resurrected from the dead (Ps. 16: 9-10)	Acts 2:31

The theme of The Story of the Bible is “buying man back” or God’s Plan of *Redemption*. Just as this is the central theme, so Jesus Christ is the central character, because He is the One who paid the price (death). Review the diagram at the beginning of this lesson one more time to be reminded of mankind’s dilemma that the *Redeemer* came to solve.

In the Old Testament, God was preparing to buy man back by preparing a people group through whom Christ would come. In the New Testament, Jesus came to pay that price and to fulfill all that God had in mind. As someone has said, “The NT is concealed in the OT and the OT is revealed in the NT”.

In the next lesson, we will study the life of Jesus, the main character of The Story of the Bible and the One who fulfilled all of these prophecies.

REVIEW:

“THE STORY THAT MAKES SENSE OUT OF LIFE”

LESSON FOUR—THE TRUE STORY: ITS MAIN CHARACTER

We have learned that the theme of The Story revealed in the Bible is the *redemption* of man, "buying man back." Romans 6:23 says that every man is a sinner and is spiritually dead. Everyone is under the condemnation of death, and the penalty must be paid. The gospel or "Good News" is that God, in the person of Jesus Christ, paid the price for man. In dying, Christ took the penalty upon Himself in order that we might have life for time and eternity.

In the last lesson, we learned that the story line of the Old Testament predicted a coming *Redeemer* to pay for sin and that the New Testament said that He came and He was Jesus. Let's proceed to study about Jesus Christ, the main character of this true story—the One who paid the price for the sins of mankind.

I. THE ETERNAL EXISTENCE OF CHRIST

The Bible teaches that the birth of Jesus Christ was not His beginning.

A. HE WAS BEFORE JOHN THE BAPTIST

John the Baptist said Christ had always existed (John 1:15). Jesus was born six months after John, yet John said, "He that comes after me . . . was before me." He was stating that God the Son had existence in eternity.

B. CHRIST TAUGHT HIS ETERNAL EXISTENCE

1. John 8:58
2. John 17:5
3. John 6:61-62

C. THE APOSTLES TAUGHT HIS ETERNAL EXISTENCE

1. John 1: 1, 2
2. Colossians 1:17
3. Hebrews 1:1-3

II. CHRIST CAME TO EARTH

A. HIS BIRTH PROPHESED

Isaiah spoke of His birth 700 years before, saying that He would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14).

B. DETAILS OF HIS BIRTH

1. His mother was a virgin (Matthew 1:18).
2. Mary was espoused to Joseph (Matthew 1: 18). Jewish weddings had two stages, separated by the espousal period (i.e., betrothal, engagement).
3. Mary was with child after her espousal to Joseph and before their marriage was consummated (Matthew 1:18-20).
4. Joseph assumed she had been unfaithful to him and planned to divorce her (Matthew 1:19).
5. Luke 1:35 gives the angel's explanation to Mary and further details about the virgin birth.

III. CHRIST BECAME A MAN

A. THE BEGINNING OF HIS HUMAN NATURE

Christ was always a person as God the Son in heaven, but not always a man. His birth was the beginning of His human nature (Philippians 2:5-8).

B. HUMAN NATURE AND VIRGIN BIRTH

The doctrine of the virgin birth is extremely important.

1. The normal procreative process of human parents forms a new personality. Christ was a personality before His birth. Had he received a second personality through conception, He would have been two persons living in one body.
2. The virgin birth protects our Lord from a blasphemous alternative. Since Joseph disclaims any procreative responsibility for the baby, whose child was He?
3. The virgin birth gave Christ a human body and a human nature without the weakness of human nature. He had no sin.

C. A PERFECT LIFE

1. Jesus grew up and went through the kinds of experiences we go through as human beings except that He never sinned (Hebrews 4:15).
2. At age thirty, Jesus began three years of public ministry, described in detail in the four Gospels. Peter, one of His closest followers summed up these

three years by saying that “He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil” (Acts 10:38).

3. The religious leaders of Israel rejected Jesus’ claim to be the Messiah, the Son of God. They determined to have Him killed (Mark 11:18).

IV. WHY CHRIST BECAME A MAN

Jesus’ death at the hands of men was no unexpected accident (from God’s point of view). Christ came to earth to ransom mankind from sin. The price was death. The reason He could pay the price and no one else could, was because He was not guilty of the same crime, namely sin, that afflicted mankind. But as God, He could not die; therefore, He became a man so that He could die.

A. DECLARATION OF HIS DEATH

1. The OT predicted it. (Isaiah 52:12-53:12)
2. Jesus predicted it. (Matthew 16:21, John 12:27 .. "for this very reason I came to this hour".)

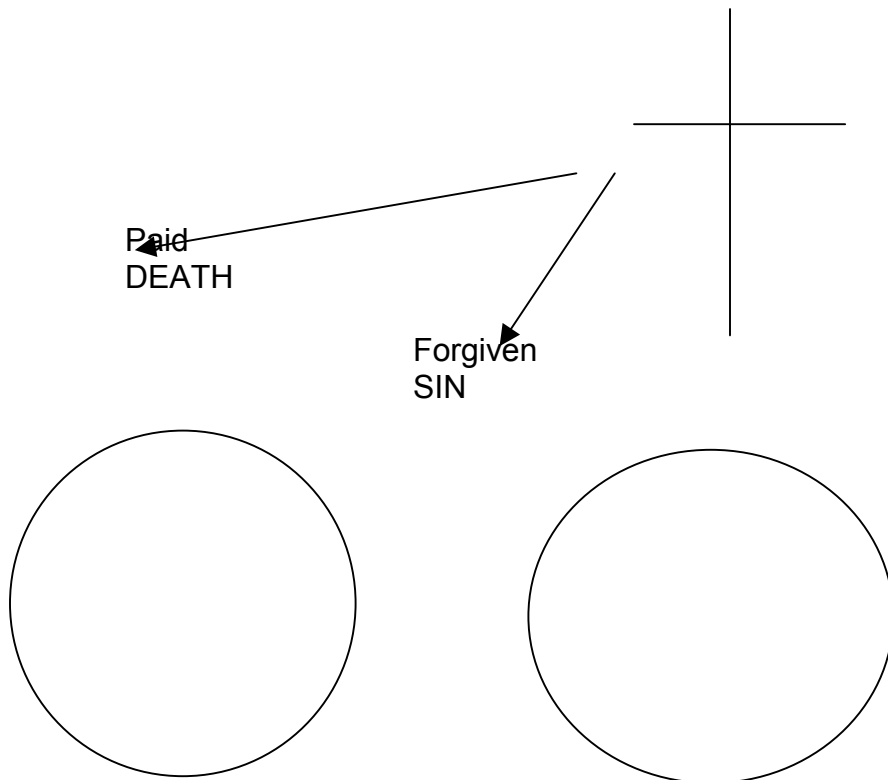
B. REASON FOR HIS DEATH

1. Man's sin made Christ's death necessary (Romans 6:2 3).
2. Christ died for man because of His great love (John 3:16, 1 John 4:10).
3. Christ died that He might share His eternal life (I Peter 2:24).

C. RESULTS OF HIS DEATH

1. God saw His death as payment for the sins of all men (I Peter 2:22-24).
2. Christ is our substitute; He died in our place (I Peter 3:18).
3. His death displays the love of God for sinners (Romans 5:8).

Substitution (Romans 5:8, 1 Peter 3:18)



D. FOLLOWING HIS DEATH

1. God the Father accepted His sacrifice so that He came out of the grave alive and was seen by many witnesses. (1 Corinthians 15:3-8).
2. Jesus ascended to His Father in heaven and will return to set up His Kingdom (Acts 1:6-11)

V. HOW CHRIST'S WORK IS APPROPRIATED

A. FALSE IDEAS

1. Try and do good
2. Keep the Ten Commandments
3. Join a church.

B. APPROPRIATED BY FAITH

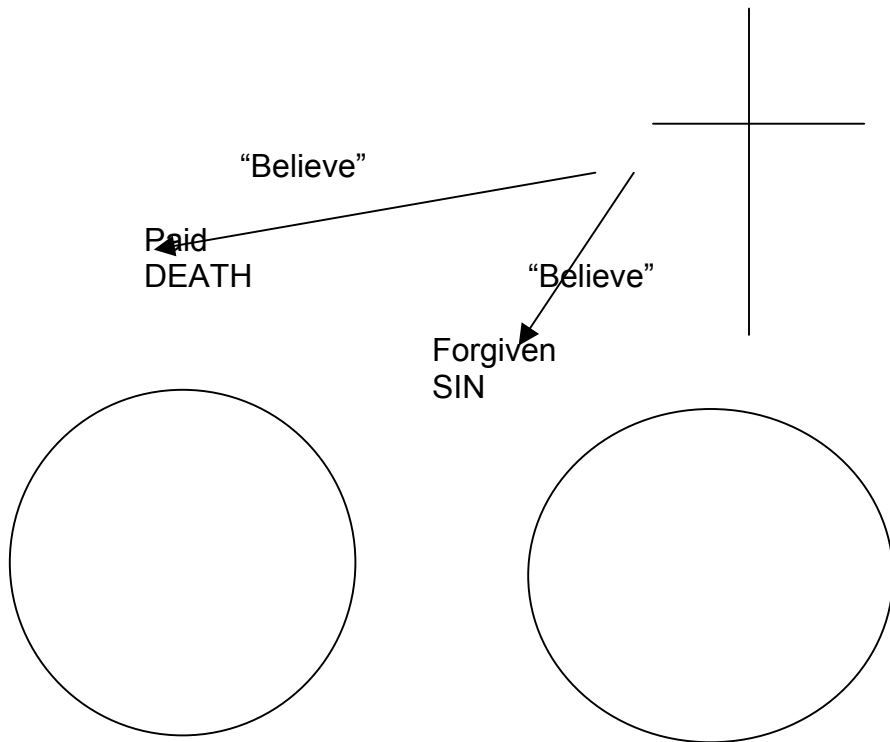
The key word is "believe." Look up and read the following verses, taking note of the word "believe"...

1. John 3:16
2. John 3:36
3. John 5:24
4. Acts 16:25-31
5. John 1: 12 (to believe = to receive)

6. Romans 10:9.

- This is a key verse to show how to appropriate the work of Christ personally.
- The word "believe" in these verses denotes a heart belief, not just a head belief. There are two types of belief. One is an intellectual assent, while the other is a heart appropriation. You can believe many things with your mind without believing them in your heart.

APPROPRIATION (JOHN 1:12, ROM. 10:9)



D. MAKING IT PERSONAL—YOUR ENCOUNTER WITH GOD HIMSELF

The Bible was written to tell The Story of how God has provided a way for each person to have the sin barrier removed and to begin a personal relationship with God Himself by placing his or her faith in Jesus Christ, the *Redeemer* that God provided.

The “Plot” of the Bible becomes very, very personal since it is God’s love letter to you inviting you to begin a personal relationship with Him. The one and only God is inviting you to accept His Son and experience by faith His forgiveness and a real relationship with Him.

Do you see any reason why you should not decide to trust Christ right now for your forgiveness and an eternal personal relationship with God? If you are ready to do so, here is a suggested prayer that can help you talk to God tell Him this:

Dear God,

I am sorry for all of the ways that I have sinned against You, disobeyed your commands, and offended You.

I do believe that Your Son Jesus Christ is both God and man . I believe that He died for my sins and that He rose up from the dead. I trust in Him for forgiveness. Please give me a personal relationship with You forever through Your Son Jesus. I invite Him into my life to be my personal Lord and Savior.

Thank You for saving me through Christ. Amen.

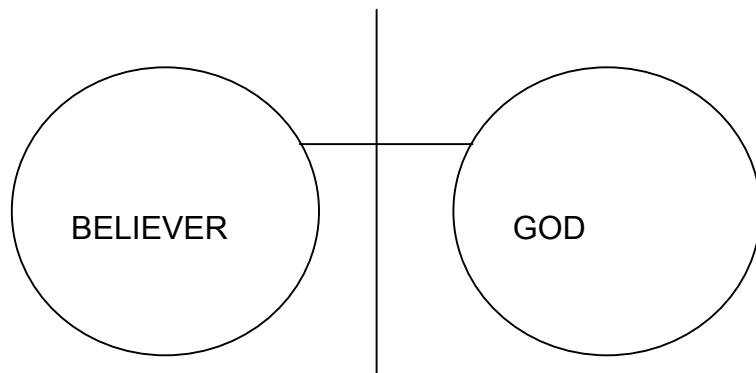
The final lesson will explain how those who receive the *Redeemer*, Jesus Christ, should live their new life in Him.

LESSON FIVE: THE STORY—ITS RELEVANCE

Before beginning this final lesson, let's briefly review the studies we've already had. The important points to keep in mind are:

1. Mankind's sin separates him from God.
2. Sin carries a penalty of spiritual death.
3. Spiritual death is the eternal separation of man from God.
4. The Bible tells how God provided a unique plan for people to again know and have fellowship with God.
5. God's plan is centered in the Person of Jesus Christ.
6. Christ came to earth to die on behalf of all men.
7. He is mankind's substitute.
8. What Christ accomplished on the cross of Calvary may be appropriated to the heart and life of every person.
9. This appropriation is accomplished by faith.

The God/Man Jesus Christ



PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP!

We now know that the entire theme of the Bible is "buying man back", or *redemption*. People have sinned, and in so doing severed relationship with the God they so desperately need. In order to *redeem* mankind, God had to pay the price of *redemption*. The *redeemed* ones are those who have accepted Christ as the personal substitute for themselves. **The question we try to answer in this lesson is, now that we are redeemed. how are we to live?**

I. YOU ARE NOW SPIRITUALLY ALIVE

A. YOU WERE SPIRITUALLY DEAD (Ephesians 2: 1).

B. BY FAITH YOU ARE SPIRITUALLY ALIVE

1. When you invited Christ into your life to be your Savior, the power of God began to flow and you came alive spiritually (Ephesians 2:1).
2. The Bible says you were born again (John 3:3-7).
3. You are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).
4. You have a new nature (Ephesians 4:23, 24).

II. YOU ARE TO GROW AND MATURE

A. YOU BEGIN AS A BABE

The Bible compares new Christians with human babies. Infants in Christ have to feed on things that are easily digested (1 Peter 2:2).

B. NOT TO REMAIN BABES

However, we are not to remain as babies but to grow and become strong and mature in the faith (Heb. 5:11-14).

C. COMMANDED TO GROW

God expects us to grow, and commands us to do so (2 Peter 3:18).

D. INDICATIONS OF GROWTH

1. Spiritual knowledge will increase (2 Peter 3:18)
2. There will be a delight in spiritual things (Phil. 3:7)
3. Personal faith will be strengthened and enlarged (Galatians 2:20)
4. The fruit of the Spirit will be manifested (Galatians 5:22, 23)

III. GROWTH AND THE BATTLE WITHIN

Every Christian has two tendencies - the old and the new. Everyone is born a "natural man" with the tendency to sin and the interest in things material and temporal. Even when we become Christians this 'flesh' constantly tries to take control of our life. But a Christian became a new man the moment Christ was accepted into his life. Still his 'flesh' wants to be in control. When it is in control, it's called carnality. When the new man is in control, it's called spirituality.

A. CARNALITY - - This is a wrong behavior pattern that a Christian can slip into for a time.

1. "Flesh" is in control (Romans 7:14, Galatians 5:16-18).
2. Act like babes (I Corinthians 3:1).
3. Ignore the Word (Hebrews 5:11).
4. Commit sins (Galatians 5:19-21).
5. Broken fellowship with the Lord (I John 1:7-10).

B. SPIRITUALITY

1. Walking according to the Spirit (Galatians 5: 16).
2. Discerning (understanding) spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:15).
3. Filled (influenced, controlled) with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

C. ROMANS 7:12-25 - describes the battle with the flesh that a Christian fights. Christ can give us the power to "put off the old man" (former conduct) and "put on the new man" (Ephesians 4:20-24).

IV. MEANS OF GROWTH

A. MISTAKEN NOTIONS ABOUT MEANS OF GROWTH

1. **Time just by** itself is no index of growth
2. **Knowledge** alone does not mean growth. It must be spiritual knowledge.
3. **Service** can become mechanical with no stimulus for growth if it is done out of duty or wrong motive
4. **Feelings** change with people and do not indicate growth. Growth is not gauged by the inward comfort and happiness we feel, but rather by the substantial qualities of faith, obedience, love, and humility.

B. POSITIVE MEANS OF GROWTH

(See "The Wheel" Illustration)

1. The Word of God (1 Peter 2:2) and Gifted Teachers (Eph. 4:11-12).

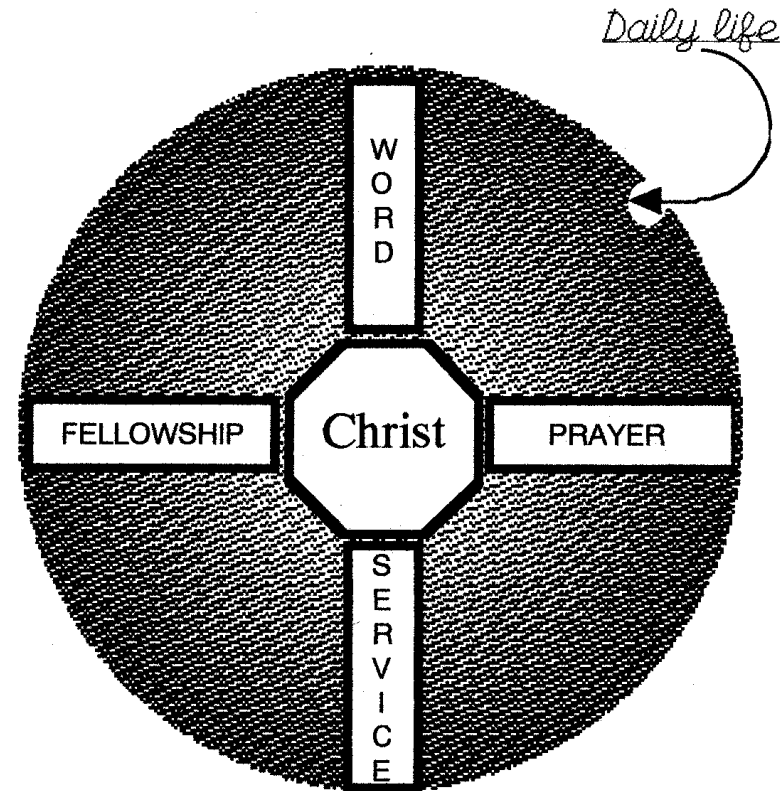
(See "How To Get A Grip On Your Bible" on next page)

2. The Church (1 Timothy 3:15) and Christian Fellowship (Hebrews 10:24-25).

3. Service (Acts 1:8).

4. Prayer (1 Peter 5:7, 1 Thessalonians 5:17).

(See "Prayer Is Talking To God" on next page.)



**Christ, the hub,
is the power
of our daily life!**

Getting a grip
on your Bible.

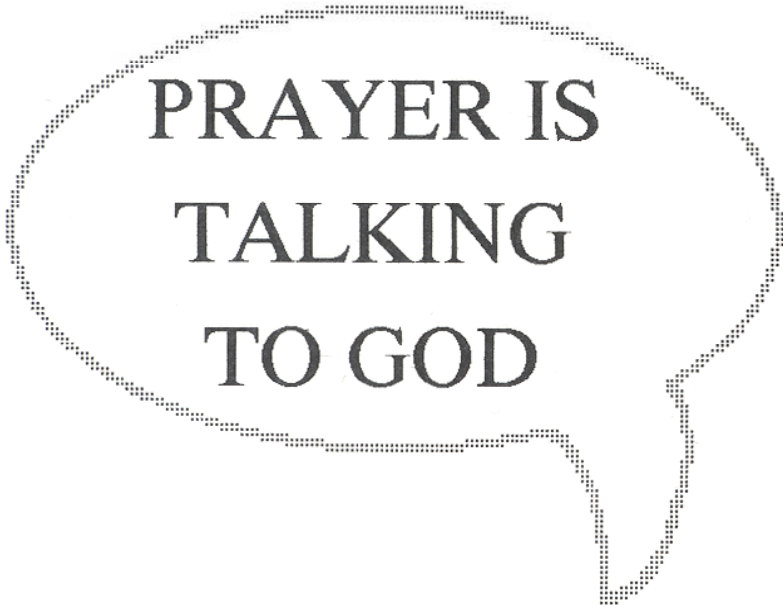


Meditate
Hear
Read
Study
Memorize



Live
it!

Share
it!



PRAYER IS
TALKING
TO GOD

About what?

A-doration

C-onfession

T-hanksgiving

S-upplication

V. THE CONDUCT OF A GROWING CHRISTIAN

How do I decide what God wants me to do in an area where the Bible does not give a clear "thou shalt" or "thou shalt not"?

A. THE PRINCIPLE OF LOVE

We should desire to please our Lord, not from legalistic pressure but because we love Him. Since we know how much He loves us, we should try to live our lives as He would have us live (1 John 3:1, 2; 4:19, 20).

B. PRINCIPLE OF FREEDOM

If the Scriptures are not explicit about some activity, we are not authorized to criticize or condemn another brother (Romans 14:3).

C. PRINCIPLE OF CONVICTION

We are not to copy the convictions of other Christians without making sure those convictions are ours. Often the convictions of a mature Christian were arrived at after going through difficult stages of development. All Christians are in different stages of growth. Allow the Holy Spirit to teach and direct you to form valid convictions. When the Holy Spirit brings actions, habits, and thoughts to mind that need correction, it's imperative to bring our life into conformity. Those willing to be led of the Spirit will be directed by Him day by day. Never be critical of those behind you in spiritual development or envious of those who are ahead of you (Romans 14:7-12).

D. PRINCIPLE OF SACRIFICE

There should ever be anything so great and overpowering in my life that I cannot willingly lay it aside for the benefit of others (Romans 14:13-15, 1 Cor. 8:9-13, 6:12).

VI. MISCONDUCT OF A CHRISTIAN

If we have accepted Jesus Christ, we are God's children. He loved us and will not forsake us. We have this assurance, even if we wander from Him (John 10:28-30).

If we are truly born again, we are in the family of God. However, our Heavenly Father will chasten children who are rebellious and disobedient, in the same way a loving father disciplines his children.

A. DISCIPLINE, A MARK OF LOVE (Hebrews 12:6)

B. DISCIPLINE CERTAIN

God will chasten any of His children who continue to sin.

1. David sinned and God disciplined him. His prayer of repentance is found in Psalm 51.
2. The church at Corinth had many Christians who were living ungodly lives. God brought discipline upon them. "For this cause, many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (1 Cor. 11:30).
3. Some Christians will not listen to the loving call of the Lord to return to a place of fellowship and usefulness. God may use His ultimate form of earthly discipline (1John 5:16).

VII. THE VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE

A. POWER COMES FROM GOD (I John 5:4).

Remember we have no power in and of our selves to gain victory over sin. We receive that power from God.

B. VICTORY COMES THRU THE INDWELLING CHRIST

Victory comes when we realize that our help comes from Christ, who is living within every believer. (Remember "The Wheel" Illustration.)

1. Colossians 1:27
2. Colossians 3:3, 4
3. Philippians 1:21
4. 1 John 4:4
5. Galatians 2:20

