



# Just Christians

*The Lord's Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

**By Gary Witcher**

*and the church of Christ at McPherson, KS*

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Jonathan Gallagher. February 14, 2013

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To those who have never heard the gospel of Jesus  
Christ in its purity and simplicity

and to  
Amy Schaefer Carnagey  
(1982-2015)

There is no way to measure the influence she had as she  
strived to be  
a Christian daughter  
a Christian sister  
a Christian friend  
a Christian wife  
a Christian mother  
just a Christian

Husbands, you should love your wives in the same way  
as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. He  
made it holy, he made it clean by washing in the water of  
the word, so that he could make the church his own, with  
no flaw or blemish or any kind of fault, but holy and  
blameless.

Ephesians 5:25-27 (FBV)

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## Preface

The Bible is the story of the Messiah. Even before the words, “In the beginning” in Genesis 1:1, God has in place a plan to redeem mankind from sin through Jesus (Ephesians 3:11). In fulfillment of God’s eternal plan, He institutes the church as the pure bride of Christ. The Book of Revelation ends with the Groom and bride reunited for eternity.

Unfortunately, the words of the New Testament have not even been completed before false teaching begins to tarnish the pure bride.

Throughout the centuries, though, countless individuals have sought to return to the pure, simple doctrines and practices of the early church. The list includes John Wycliffe, John Huss and Myles Coverdale.

Most of the western world is familiar with the names of Martin Luther and John Calvin. Huldrych (Ulrich) Zwingli is a slightly less-known Reformation figure. When Zwingli dies his position is filled by his colleague Heinrich Bullinger. Today the latter is emerging as one of the most influential reformation figures. Unfortunately, the Reformation fails in its attempt to return to the pure bride of Christ. The result is more division, not less.

About 225 years after Bullinger’s death, some of his descendants walk across the frozen Mississippi River on January 1, 1800 to settle the area now known as Cape Girardeau, Missouri. (One of the counties in that area is named “Bollinger.”)

In the following year a revival meeting is held at Cane Ridge, Kentucky. Part of the Second Great Awakening, the Cane Ridge experience motivates people from various religious backgrounds to abandon man-made doctrines and

practices and become “just Christians.” Among those present at Cane Ridge are members of the Witcher family.

Samuel C. Royal is born in Fordsville, Kentucky in 1818. He adopts and passes on to his descendants a desire to return to the pure simplicity of New Testament Christianity.

George Witcher marries Robbie Snider (a descendant of Heinrich Bullinger) in 1924. Their first son Gale marries Loraine Royal and their first son is the author of this short book.

I have no agenda and no ax to grind. My simple prayer is that we can return to the pure bride of Christ and be just Christians.

Gary Witcher

## Introduction

Why is there so much division in the religious world? Is it because God is a poor communicator? Surely, there must be another explanation for the lack of unity.

Why is being a Christian so confusing? Is it really that complicated? Why would we want to be just Christians? Is it really that big a deal?

God creates a man and a woman. All He wants is someone to walk with Him and talk with Him in the garden. How must God feel when the first couple decides to reject His kindness?

God calls Abraham to leave his home in Mesopotamia and migrate to the Land of Canaan. All God wants is a family to be His own. God eventually changes Abraham's grandson's name from Jacob to "Israel." As Jacob is returning to his family home with his two wives, Rachel steals a household idol from her father. How must God feel about the wife of Israel being so attached to an idol?

After leading the Israelites into the Promised Land, Joshua addresses the Israelites as he prepares for his death. He urges the people to put away the gods of Mesopotamia, Egypt and Canaan (Joshua 24:14,55). Are these people really still worshipping the gods of Mesopotamia and Egypt? Have they really picked up the gods of the Amorites? How must God feel?

The Philistines capture the Ark of the Covenant in battle but are quickly persuaded to send it back. In preparation for the Ark's return, Samuel orders the people to put away the Baals and the Ashtaroath (1 Samuel 7:3,4). Are the people really seeking the return of God's Ark while they are worshipping the idols of their neighbors? How must God feel?

King David's wife Michal wants to protect him from an attempt to take his life. She places a household idol in the bed to make it appear that David is there. Really? David's wife has an idol readily available? How must God feel?

How must God feel when Solomon ignores His instructions about not marrying foreign women? How must God feel when the wives influence Solomon to worship idols (1 Kings 11:4-8)? Sure, 1 Kings 11:9 says God is angry with Solomon. But should we be more concerned about making God angry or about disappointing Him?

After the kingdom is divided, there are no good kings over the ten northern tribes. Many of the kings of Judah are evil, too, but there are some good ones. What does it tell us, though, when one king puts an end to idol worship and another king a few steps down the line has to repeat the project (2 Chronicles 15:16, 17:6, 21:11, 23:17, 24:18, 25:14, 28:2, 28:23-25)? How must God feel?

How must God feel when the Jews of Jesus' day are divided into Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots (Luke 6:15) and Essenes? How must God feel as He sees Judaizing teachers trying to force the Old Law on Gentile Christians? How must God feel as He sees the state of many of the churches addressed in Revelation chapters two and three?

Why do we care about being just Christians? Is it really that big a deal? It is what God wants. It is what pleases Him. It is because I don't want to disappoint God any more.



## Chapter 1 - Just Christians

How does Satan distract me from being what God wants?

God creates a perfect world. There is no sickness, no sorrow, no death. Most important, there is no sin. Then Satan enters the picture to change everything.

Read the account in Genesis 3:1-7. The serpent suggests that God has forbidden Adam and Eve from eating from any tree in the garden. Eve is quick to pick up on the tempter's error and explains that God has allowed eating from every tree except one. Of course, this is not a mistake on Satan's part. He takes a simple, small prohibition and explodes it into a capital case. God is gracious; Satan paints Him as a tyrant.

Eve adds that they will die only if they eat the fruit from the single forbidden tree. The deceiver responds that they will not die. One of his favorite tools is wrapping a grain of truth around a mountain of lie. The couple will not fall dead the instant they eat the fruit. This is true. But it hides the fact that they will become mortal and be subject to death from that moment. Then Satan shifts the blame to God. The only reason the Creator does not want them to eat the fruit, the serpent claims, is because He doesn't want the humans to rise to His level. He doesn't want humans in heaven with Him. There is no longer any pretense of the truth. Satan has manipulated Eve to the point where she will accept a blatant lie. (Note the difference one word can make.) God said, "You will die." Satan changed it to "You will not die."

God will eventually send His Son so we can be adopted as His children and spend eternity with Him (Romans 8:14-17). He does not want to keep humans out of heaven; He wants them to be there.

“He was a murderer from the beginning,” Jesus says of the devil in John 8:44. “He never stood for the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies he reveals his true character, for he’s a liar and the father of lies.” (FBV)

Satan’s method is to mix a tiny bit of truth with a lie. We would do well to remember this fact whenever we evaluate the words of a politician or a theologian. Truth and lies are mutually exclusive (1 John 2:21). God never lies (Titus 1:2, Hebrews 6:18). Satan always lies. Consider the following:

*There are six things which the Lord hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers.*

- Proverbs 6:16-19 (NASB)

*But anyone who is a coward, who doesn’t trust me, who does disgusting things, who is a murderer, who is sexually immoral, who practices witchcraft, who worships idols, who tells lies—their chosen place is in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur. This is the second death.*

- Revelation 21:8 (FBV)

Satan uses lies to manipulate Eve’s view of reality. Then he tempts her with his three favorite tools. We learn from 1 John 2:21 that three things are not from the Father but from the world. They are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life. Satan uses the same three tools to tempt Jesus in Matthew chapter four. Playing on Jesus’ hunger, he instructs Him to turn stones to bread (lust of the flesh). He says, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down” and see if God will save You (boastful pride of life). He offers “all the kingdoms of the world” if Jesus will bow down and worship him (lust of the eyes).

Notice what Eve says in response to the temptation. The tree is good for food (lust of the flesh). It is a delight to the eyes (lust of the eyes). It is desirable to make one wise (boastful pride of life).

Sadly, this story becomes the pattern of the Old Testament. God blesses His people. His people respond by turning their backs on him. At the same time as God is delivering the Old Law to Moses, Aaron is at the bottom of the mountain making a golden calf. Balaam is hired by the Moabites to curse the Israelites but he is only able to bless them (Numbers chapters 22-24). So he influences the Israelites to compromise with the Moabites (Numbers 25:1-3 with Numbers 31:16). As the Israelites complete the conquest of the Promised Land, they are still worshipping the gods of the Mesopotamians, the Egyptians and the Amorites (Joshua 24:14,15). This theme marches through the book of Judges.

In spite of humanity's rejection of Him (and for reasons that only He could possibly know), God still wants to bless and save us. Jesus voluntarily surrenders His position in heaven and comes down to earth (Philippians 2:5-8). Then He humbles Himself even lower by allowing His body to be nailed to a cross. As He is being scorned, abused and beaten, He is thinking about me. He is thinking about you. As the nails are being driven into His hands and His feet, He is thinking about me. He is thinking about you. As He exhales His last breath, He is thinking about me. He is thinking about you. And then as He walks triumphantly from the tomb, He is thinking about me. He is thinking about you.

Jesus requests so little in response to His great sacrifice. All He asks is that we be just Christians.



## Chapter 2 - Who?

### Who matters?

There is a simple little sentence that has the power to change the entire religious world. The sentence is, “It’s about Him.”

God made the world. God made us. God makes the rules. The Bible is about God. It records what He made, what He did and what He will do. I benefit eternally from what He has done and will do, but it is not about me.

You see, one of the main problems in the religious world is that people are too busy telling God what He is like, what He wants, what He will accept. What they are actually doing, of course, is molding God after their own image. God must be... because that is what I want Him to be. God wants... because that is what I want. God will accept... because that is what I want Him to accept. Our society is becoming increasingly efficient at replacing God’s instructions with its own relativism. There are no absolute truths. All that matters is what I want.

Friends, we need to realize that it is not about me. Too many of us are suffering from “I” trouble.

“Why can I not...?”

“Why should I...?”

“Why should I have to...?”

Perhaps you have seen how the titles of popular magazines reflect the evolving attitudes of society:

People - 1974

Us - 1977

Me - 2004

Take a look at the church in Corinth. They are the most immature congregation in the New Testament. They are spiritual babies because they have "I" trouble.

I am of Paul

I am of Apollos

I am of Peter

I, I, I

Jesus tells the Christians of Laodicea that they need to buy eye salve to anoint their eyes so they may see (Revelation 3:18). What they really need is surgery. Most eye problems can be corrected with glasses. "I" problems require surgery. We need to remove our egotistical wants and needs and humbly submit to God's Will.

Read what the Bible says. God requires three things: humility, submission, obedience.

We need to get rid of the "I" and replace it with God. It's not about me. It's about Him. Until we realize this fact, we will never be able to be just Christians.

## Chapter 3 – History

How did we get to where we are today?

As Jesus faces His immense suffering and crucifixion, He prays for one thing. Although the words recorded in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4 are commonly referred to as the Lord's Prayer, they actually represent the disciples' prayer. The Lord's prayer is found in the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel. Jesus prays that His disciples will be unified through God's truth. Perhaps the Savior prays that His followers will be "one" (John 17:21-23) because He already knows that a lack of unity will plague His body, the church, almost from the beginning.

In Acts 20:29,30 Paul warns the elders of the church in Ephesus that "savage wolves" will come in among them and that from among themselves false teachers will arise.

Christianity had long been split into several pieces by the fifteenth century. One centered in Rome, while a second looked to Constantinople as its head. Others existed in Africa and in the Orient. The fall of Constantinople to the Muslims in 1453 sent scholars fleeing to the west. With them they took what remained of the knowledge of ancient empires. It is not by accident that the following century saw an outburst of exploration, scientific discovery and artistic creation.

The scholars took with them not only copies of the Bible in the original languages, but also the knowledge to read them. For the first time, people in Western Europe could see what the Bible really said.

In about 1520, Zwingli broke away from the Catholic Church. In 1522 the "Swiss Brethren" or Anabaptist group was formed. From this group came the Mennonites, started by Menno Simons

in 1525, and the Hutterites, founded by Jacob Hutter in 1529.

Meanwhile, in 1521, Martin Luther established his group. John Calvin left the Catholic Church to found the Presbyterian Church in 1533. Le Fevre split from them to create the Huguenots.

In 1534 the Anglican Church broke away from Rome. From them came Robert Brown and the Puritans in 1566, as well as John Wesley and the Methodists in 1744. From the Puritans came John Smyth and the Baptists in 1609. George Fox and James Nailer left the same denomination to become Quakers.

Founding of these new groups has continued until the present time. In 1830 Joseph Smith established the Mormon Church. 1863 saw the Whites and the 7th Day Adventists. The Salvation Army was born two years later. Mary Baker Eddy started the Christian Science group in 1879. Charles Russell began the Jehovah's Witness movement in 1884. The Nazarenes started in 1908; the Assemblies of God in 1914, and the Foursquare Gospel church in 1917.

The problem, though, is that changing a change always results in a change. In other words, what we need is not a reformation but a restoration. We don't need to change what exists. We need to abandon it and return to the simplicity of New Testament Christianity.

And what happened to that simple religion? Actually, it never quite went away. Dr. Hans Grimm has an interesting story to tell about the history of the church.

There were those, Grimm notes, who insisted on holding to the New Testament pattern while the majority followed man-made changes during the early centuries. Many were burned to death along with the heretics of the day. They were, after all, a threat to the powers that were. The survivors concealed themselves in

remote areas of Arabia, in the Sinai Peninsula and in northern Africa. By the middle of the fourth century they had established missions in Western France and Spain. There are traces of their efforts in Britain as early as 422.

In the seventh century a Byzantine monk reported on a debate with a group incorrectly identified as "Paulicians."

"Only the New Testament," he noted, "was accepted among them as rule for faith and church practice; they rejected the worship of the Mother of God and of the saints, even of the great martyrs George and Sergius; they do not consecrate a special worship to the Archangels or to Elias, have no church feasts at all; each Sunday they assembled in places of prayer which are not worthy to be named thus, since they have neither altar nor wall for pictures of the saints, nor a place for keeping the holy vessels; they use neither incense nor chrism oil. They despise and scorn the baptism of the church and say that infants have no faith. They recognize neither the jurisdiction of the Patriarch at Constantinople nor of the Patriarch of Antioch and Jerusalem and have no respect for the schismatic church of the Armenians. They are proud of the fact that their churches are small and poor and that their evangelists live only from what sheltering believers give them voluntarily. They do not accept the false accusation that the heretic Paulus is said to have founded their sect, and say that they are not Paulicians, but Christians, and chosen of God" (Grimm, n.d., p. 21).

These followers of New Testament Christianity continued to be burned and beheaded for their beliefs. They were forced into coexistence with many heretical groups, which sometimes resulted in what Grimm describes as, "apostasy, division and weakening of the transmitted faith of the Apostles" (Grimm, n.d., p. 22).

Still, New Testament Christianity survived. It even thrived in

many areas, including Bosnia, Herzegovina, Albania and Dalmatia. The last congregations in Herzegovina were destroyed in 1942 by the Nazis.

Some were labeled as followers of "Bogomilism\*." Others were branded as Catharists. This latter title was not entirely without compliment, since it meant "the Pure." Finally, in 1927, the *Dictionary of Catholic Theology* admitted that, "The accusations against the Catharists of the 11th century are precisely the same as those that were raised against the Christians throughout the Roman Empire in the second century: immorality (and) ritual murder" (Grimm, n.d., p. 25).

New Testament Christianity also returned to Italy, where congregations of several thousand members existed in Milan, Florence and Ferrara.

A 200-year-old book proudly records the burning of some Italian heretics in 1147. What was their crime? They suggested that infants should not be baptized, since they were not able to believe. They said that ornate buildings were not needed to worship God. They taught that images should not be worshiped. They negated the liturgy and other traditions (Locatelli, 1779, p. 236).

Opposition took its toll, and the congregations began to disappear little by little. Hitler all but completed the job in the 1930s. Many New Testament Christians, including Hans Grimm, were herded into concentration camps for preaching the Gospel. Deaf in one ear and with crushed kidneys, Grimm survived to attempt a rebuilding of the brotherhood. In 1948 he was arrested by the Communists and imprisoned for four years. He moved to Western Germany following his release in 1952. Three years later he learned of American Christians who were following only the purity of the New Testament.

"The torch did not die out," Grimm wrote. "God had kindled it again and put it on a lamp-stand and it gives light for everybody in the house. This was the fulfillment of Christ's promise: "I am going to build my church, and the powers of death will never prevail against it" (Grimm, n.d., p. 42).

\*The Bogomils denied the doctrine of the incarnation of Jesus and rejected baptism and the Lord's Supper. Believing that the physical world was created by Satan, they condemned anything that placed people into contact with matter (i.e. marriage, eating of meat). They were in many ways the opposite of simple New Testament Christians. The fact that enemies of plain Christianity lumped the two groups together indicates the desperate extremes of those who oppose being "just Christians."

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## Chapter 4 - Unity

What does Jesus really want?

*There are six things which the Lord hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers.*

- Proverbs 6:16-19 (NASB)

How does God feel about strife among brothers? What condition does He long to see in the religious world? Should we be at all concerned about being just Christians?

Let's join Jesus in the upper room just before His arrest and crucifixion. He takes a towel and a basin of water and proceeds to wash His apostles' feet. Peter objects and initially refuses the gesture. The Master informs Peter, though, that he must accept this action if he is going to have any part in what is to come. In typical Peter fashion, the apostle suggests that Jesus wash his entire body. Jesus indicates that Peter is missing the point. The lesson is not about bathing.

As Jesus explains in the following verses, the lesson is about humility. As we will see later, pride is one of the major contributing factors to division. Being just Christians requires that we learn to be humble.

John devotes chapters 13 through 16 to various instructions from Jesus to His disciples. Then in chapter 17 he records the real "Lord's Prayer." One of the main things that Jesus prays for is unity among His followers.

*"I'm not only praying for them, I'm also praying for those who trust in me because of their message. I pray that they all may*

*be one, just as you, Father, live in me, and I live in you, so that they too may live in us so that the world will believe you did send me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, so that they may be one, just as we are one. I live in them, and you live in me. May they be completely one, so the whole world will know that you did send me, and that you love them, just as you love me.*

-John 17:20-23 (FBV)

What would it be like to be united just as the Son and the Father are united? Would it look anything like the current religious world?

Obviously, Jesus does not abandon His desire for unity once He returns to Heaven. He passes this priority on to His disciples.

Paul instructs in Ephesians 4:2 that Christians should not be proud of themselves. Instead, they should be gentle and patient. They should have a tolerance of one another that is motivated by love. Then comes the well-known list of "ones."

*Make every effort to remain one in the Spirit through the peace that binds you together. For there's one body, and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope. The Lord is one, our trust in him is one, and there's one baptism; there's one God and Father of everyone. He is over all and through all and in all.*

- Ephesians 4:3-6 (FBV)

We can hardly make the claim that today's religious world really consists of one body. Some may pretend that the "Christian" body is made up of hundreds and even thousands of different denominations, but God is not mocked.

The only way to achieve the unity that God seeks is by being of the same mind. In spite of claims to the contrary, we cannot

agree to disagree.

Paul states in Romans 12:16 that we must be of the same mind toward one another. He continues that same teaching in chapter 15.

*May the God who gives patience and encouragement help you to be in full agreement among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that you can with one mind and with one voice together glorify God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!*

- Romans 15:5 (FBV)

The same apostle writes in Philippians 2:1-4 that his joy is made complete when Christians have the same mind ("think the same way" in the Free Bible Version). They have to be spiritually united and have one purpose. They must not be preoccupied with their own things, he adds in verse four, but rather be concerned with the interests of others.

James addresses the fights and quarrels among church members (James 4:1-6). He notes that conflicts arise from selfish desires. Then he explains that God jealously desires the Spirit that He has made to dwell in us. Just what does this Spirit look like? Is it one big Spirit made up of a lot of little Spirits? If God "jealously desires" something, how must He feel when we refuse to be a part of it?

Peter says that we should all have the same attitude (1 Peter 3:8).

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!*

*It is like the precious oil upon the head, coming down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, coming down upon the edge of his robes.*

*It is like the dew of Hermon, coming down upon the mountains of Zion; for there the LORD commanded the blessing—life forever.*

- Psalm 133 (NASB)

## Chapter 5 – Humility

What is my biggest problem?

Acts chapter eight mentions a few of the evangelistic efforts of a man named Philip. This is probably not the apostle by the same name but rather one of the seven men listed in Acts 6:5 in connection with taking care of widows in the Jerusalem church.

Due to the severe persecution that follows the killing of Stephen in Acts chapter seven, Philip goes to the city of Samaria. One of the people Philip encounters is a man named Simon who uses his magic tricks to astonish the people. They refer to Simon as "the Great Power of God."

Simon accepts what Philip is teaching, though, and obeys the instruction to be baptized (Acts 8:9-13). There is no reason to question the sincerity of Simon's conversion.

Philip does not have the power to give to others miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, so he calls for apostles to travel to Samaria from Jerusalem. (Verse 18 states clearly that only apostles had the authority to transmit those gifts. It was not given spontaneously at baptism. Philip could not give it. When the last apostle died, then, the power to transmit miraculous gifts of the Spirit died with him.)

Seeing that the apostles have this ability, Simon tries to purchase it from them. According to Peter's words in verses 20-23, Simon's motives are not good. It appears that his ego is returning and he wants to regain his previous position over the people.

Division is the result of heresy, and heresy is often the result of pride. Division rarely happens without someone being proud.

The church in Corinth is probably the most immature

congregation in the New Testament. Their major problem is that they are divided. The division is the result of their pride.

*Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you.*

*Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."*

*Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*

- 1 Corinthians 1:10-13

You see, division results when we elevate the person above the message. Unity can only be the result of obedience. Division results when we refuse to obey God's instructions. We must be humble enough to let go of self and open our hearts and minds to God's will. Humility and unity are tied together.

In the last chapter we mentioned James' instructions about unity.

*Where do the fights and quarrels you're having come from? Aren't they due to the sensual passions that are in conflict within you? You burn with desire, but don't get what you want. You kill for what you lust after, but don't get what you're looking for. You argue and you fight, but you don't get anything, because you don't pray for it. You pray, but don't receive anything, because you ask with a wrong motive, wanting to spend what you'd receive on your selfish pleasures.*

*You adulterous people! Don't you realize that friendship*

*with the world is hatred towards God? Those who want to be friends of the world make themselves enemies of God. Do you think Scripture doesn't mean what it says: that the spirit that he put in us is very jealous? But God gives us even more grace, as Scripture says: "God is against those who are arrogant, but gives grace to those who are humble."*

- James 4:1-6 (FBV)

James tells us in the first chapter of his epistle that we must humbly receive the implanted Word if we want to be saved. We must make no mistake. Pride will keep us out of the kingdom (the church).

At the beginning of Matthew chapter 18, someone asks Jesus who is greatest in the kingdom. The Lord responds by standing a child in their midst and explaining that a person must have the humility of a child to be part of the kingdom.

Is pride getting in our way today? Are we too proudly bound to man-made doctrines and practices to simply become just Christians?



## Chapter 6 – Extra baggage

### What are my options?

Why can't we be just Christians? Could it be that we are carrying too much extra baggage? Are we too weighed down by centuries of human theology?

The New Testament ends with a warning against adding to God's words (Revelation 22:18). Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 4:6 that we must not go beyond what is written. Read what Paul says to the Christians in Galatia:

*I'm shocked at how quickly you're abandoning the God who by the grace of Christ called you. You are turning to a different kind of good news (or Gospel) that isn't good news at all! Some people there are confusing you, wanting to pervert the good news of Christ. But if anyone, even we ourselves, or even an angel from heaven, should promote any other kind of good news than what we have already told you, let them be condemned! I repeat what we've told you before: if anyone promotes any other kind of good news than what you've already accepted, let them be condemned!*

*Whose approval do you think I want-that of people or of God? Do you think I'm trying to please people? If I wanted to please people I wouldn't be a servant of Christ! Let me make it clear, my friends, regarding the good news I'm declaring-it did not come from any human being. I didn't receive it from anyone, and nobody taught it to me-it was Jesus Christ who revealed it to me.*

- Galatians 1:6-12 (FBV)

Here is the apostle John's instruction about those who would add to or take away from the simple New Testament teaching:

*Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.*

- 2 John 9-11 (NASB)

We can either take the Bible or leave it, but we cannot choose to stand somewhere in-between. God does not allow the option of adding to or taking away from His Word. 2 Peter 1:19-21 explains that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, noting that the writers of the Bible were moved by the Holy Spirit to speak the words of God. The apostle warns in 2 Peter 3:16 that the "untaught and unstable" distort the writings of Paul "to their own destruction." Paul states in 1 Corinthians 14:37 that his writings are the Lord's commandments.

Why do people not stick to the simple teaching of the New Testament? Why do they feel they have to supplement it with man-made doctrines and practices?

We must not be ashamed of the Gospel (Romans 1:16). Only the Gospel contains the power of God for salvation. Some may see the Bible as foolishness, but God has chosen the "foolishness" of the preached Gospel to save the lost (1 Corinthians 1:21).

Paul encourages Timothy to not be ashamed of him or of the Gospel message (2 Timothy 1:8-13). Paul explains in verse 12 that he is not ashamed. He knows that God will take good care of what has been entrusted to Him (our souls). Timothy is instructed to "retain the standard of sound words."

*"Watch out that nobody enslaves you through their philosophy and worthless delusions," Paul warns in*

Colossians 2:8, *"following human traditions and concepts of this world, and not following Christ."* (FBV)

*"This is what he called you to through the good news we shared with you,"* Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 2:14,15, *"so that you could participate in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, brothers and sisters, stand firm, and hold on to what you've been taught, whether by what you were told, or through a letter from us."* (FBV)

Notice from these two passages that there are two kinds of traditions: human and inspired. We are ordered to follow the inspired traditions found in the New Testament. We are commanded to reject man-made traditions.

Jewish leaders attack Jesus for not observing their traditions (Matthew 15:1-14). The Master responds in verse nine that their worship is vain when they are following man-made rules.

We need to be just Christians. We need to return to pure religion. Sadly, few people have ever chosen this path.

*Even though they claimed to be wise, they became foolish. They exchanged the glory of the immortal God for idols, images of mortal human beings, birds, animals, and reptiles. So God abandoned them to the evil desires of their depraved minds, and they did shameful, degrading things to each other. They exchanged God's truth for a lie, worshiping and serving creatures instead of the Creator, who deserves praise forever. Amen*

- Romans 1:22-25 (FBV)

Since the day of Pentecost, however, there have been people who have followed the simple New Testament pattern of Christianity. What is nondenominational Christianity? Much of what is referred to as "nondenominational" is actually

"interdenominational." What's the difference?

Interdenominational" accepts all beliefs; "nondenominational" rejects man-made doctrines and strives to follow only what the Bible teaches.

Does it really matter? Jesus says it does. Notice what He has to say in passages such as Matthew 7:21-23 and Mark 7:6-9.

What things are important? What doctrinal matters are important? Here are four of the important categories.

- Authority: How do we arrive at decisions about religious questions? Where do we find the authority for what we do?
- Salvation: How is a person saved? The correct answer to this question should be important to everyone.
- Organization: The church of the New Testament is organized in a certain way. How does a religious group compare with this example?
- Worship: The New Testament prescribes a certain form for worship. How does a religious group compare with this pattern?

New Testament passages that warn about false teaching include:

- Matthew 7:13-23
- Matthew 24:11,24
- Acts 20:29,30
- Romans 1:21-25
- Romans 16:17,18
- 1 Corinthians 4:6
- 2 Corinthians 11:2,3
- Galatians 1:8,9
- Ephesians 5:6
- Philippians 3:1-3
- Colossians 2:4,8
- 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10
- 1 Timothy 1:5-7
- 1 Timothy 4:1-3
- 1 Timothy 6:3-5
- 2 Peter 2:1-22
- 1 John 4:1
- 2 John 9-11
- Jude 4-16
- Revelation 22:18,19

## Chapter 7 – Seed

How do the weeds get into my spiritual garden?

In A.D. 73, Romans strike against the Jewish rebels who have taken refuge in the fortress of Masada high above the shore of the Dead Sea. Rather than surrender, the stronghold occupants choose mass suicide.

Archaeologists excavating at Masada in the 1960s discover a number of date palm seeds. One of the seeds is planted, germinates and grows. Guess what kind of plant it turns into? Surprise! It becomes a date palm.

We all know that apple seeds produce apple trees. Corn produces corn, wheat produces, wheat, watermelons produce watermelons. No farmer loads a planter with wheat expecting to harvest corn.

Why, then do we have such a variety of spiritual vegetables, fruits and grains? The seed is God's Word (Luke 8:11). It just stands to reason that the same seed will always produce the same plant. So what is happening?

Weeds often make their way into the field. Consider a parable Jesus tells in Matthew 13.

*Then he told them another illustrated story: "The kingdom of heaven is like a farmer who sowed good seeds in his field. But while his workers were sleeping, an enemy came and sowed weed seeds on top of the wheat. Then they left. So when the wheat grew and produced ears of grain, the weeds also grew up. The farmer's workers came and asked him, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seeds in your field? Where did the weeds come from?'*

*"Some enemy has done this,' he replied. 'Do you want us*

*to go and pull up the weeds?’ they asked him. ‘No,’ he answered, ‘as you pull up the weeds, you may uproot the wheat too. Let them both grow until harvest, and then at harvest-time I’ll tell the reapers, “First gather the weeds, tie them up into bundles and burn them. Then gather the wheat and store it in my barn.”’”*

- Matthew 13:24-30 (FBV)

Some translations refer to the weed in this parable as “tares.” This is actually a plant called “darnel” that resembles wheat. Notice that this false wheat is planted by God’s enemy. It resembles wheat superficially, but it is not wheat. It takes good seed to produce real wheat.

The parable of the tares follows another parable that Matthew 13:18 identifies as the parable of the sower. As the seeds are scattered, some falls beside the road, some falls on rocky soil, some falls among thorns and some falls on good ground. The first is not able to sprout because of the hard ground. The second cannot put down good roots. The third becomes choked out. Only the seed on good ground grows to maturity and produces a crop.

God’s Word remains the same. It is the soil that determines the outcome of the planting.

Note that:

- God’s word is truth – John 17:17
- Grace and truth come through Jesus - John 1:17
- We can know the truth and the truth will set us free – John 8:32

Pure religion results when God’s Word finds its place in honest and open hearts and minds. It takes the truth to produce the kind of plant we are seeking.

*This letter comes from the elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in the truth. Not just from me, but from everyone who knows the truth, because the truth lives in us and will be with us forever. May grace, mercy and peace continue to be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and in love. I was delighted to discover that some of your children are following the truth, just as the Father commanded us.*

- 2 John 1-3 (FBV)

If we want to be just Christians, the seed we plant must be the simple, pure Word of God. Anything else will produce weeds. We may be able to fool ourselves, but we can never fool God.

*“Don’t be fooled,” Paul cautions in Galatians 6:7, God can’t be treated with contempt: whatever you sow, that’s what you reap.” (FBV)*

Pay close attention to Jesus’ warning in Matthew 7:

*“Watch out for false prophets who come wearing sheep’s clothing, but who on the inside are vicious wolves. You can recognize them by their fruits. Do people harvest grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? So every good tree produces good fruit, while a bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit. Every tree that doesn’t produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. So you’ll recognize them by their fruits.*

*“Not everyone who calls me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven—only those who do the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me at the day of judgment, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in your name and drive out demons in your name, and perform many miracles in your name?’ Then I will tell them, ‘I never knew you. Leave me, you people who practice wickedness!’*

*“Everyone that hears the words I say, and follows them, is like a wise man who built his house on solid rock. The rain poured down, and the floods rose, and the winds blew hard against the house, but it didn’t fall down, because its foundations were on solid rock. Everyone that hears the words I say, and doesn’t follow them, is like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain poured down, and the floods rose, and the winds blew hard against the house, and it fell down—it totally collapsed.”*

- Matthew 7:15-27 (FBV)

## Chapter 8 – Body

How do you feel about this statement: “I can be a Christian without being part of any church”?

"So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" Paul admonishes in Romans 12:5 (NASB).

All too often there is the mistaken idea that a person can decide to be a Christian without having anything to do with the church. Nothing could be farther from the clear teaching of the Bible.

From the beginning, God has sought a group to consider His "family." It starts with a single husband and wife, and that one couple disappoints Him by giving in to Satan's lies. God selects the families of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to be His. He leads the Israelites out of slavery and places them in a special land. He gives them special rules to maintain their morality, integrity and faithfulness to Him. But they choose to join themselves to countless false gods. God sends the prophets to turn His family back to Him, but they continue to opt out of their relationship with God. How must God feel as those who should be His family insist on turning their backs on that relationship?

God then extends His family to include all Gentiles and Jews who will submit to forming a proper relationship with Him. He even pays the price of sacrificing His own Son to make this new family possible.

In the New Testament, as in the Old, God's people are referred to as a "flock" or a "body" or a "family."

If Jesus is the good shepherd (John 10:1-18), what does that make us? If the shepherd searches for a single stray lamb so it

can be returned to the fold (Luke 15:4-7), where should we be?

John 17 contains the real "Lord's Prayer." In this chapter, Jesus opens His heart as He appeals to the Father for unity among His followers. Is there any way to read John 17:20-23 and conclude that Jesus wants us to be anything other than members of a unified body?

The church is the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:22-33). Christians are the adopted children of God (Romans 8:14-17).

What constitutes a real, functioning family? How do we look at someone who shares a last name but never shows up for a visit or a meal, even on special occasions?

Being a Christian means more than simply claiming to wear the name. If we are part of the family, we need to be involved. If we are part of the body, we need to carry out our function.

If we are God's sheep, we need to be part of His flock.

Some people labor under the illusion that "just Christian" means to not have anything to do with "organized religion." They believe they can be Christians without being part of any church.

In spite of what many claim, there is no salvation outside the body.

Here are the simple facts:

- God automatically adds the saved to the church - Acts 2:47
- God purchased the church with His own blood - Acts 20:28
- The church is the body of Christ - Ephesians 1:22,23
- Jesus is the head of the church - Ephesians 5:23
- Jesus is the savior of the church - Ephesians 5:23
- Jesus died for the church - Ephesians 5:26

- Jesus sanctified (set apart) the church - Ephesians 5:26
- Jesus loves the church so He nourishes and cherishes it - Ephesians 5:28,29

Let's take another look at Paul's letter to the Ephesians:

*For there's one body, and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope. The Lord is one, our trust in him is one, and there's one baptism; there's one God and Father of everyone. He is over all and through all and in all.*

- Ephesians 4:4-6 (FBV)

How many Gods are there? How many Spirits are there? How many Lords are there? How many bodies are there?

If we are going to be just Christians, we need to be active parts of the body of Christ. There is simply no salvation outside the body. But being a Christian does not involve just occupying a pew on Sunday morning, although God does place great importance on our worship and fellowship.

If we want to be part of the body we need to do two things. We need to identify the talents (gifts) that God has given us. Take a careful look at this verse:

*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

- Ephesians 2:10 (NASB)

Paul points out that we all have gifts. This verse does not list any exceptions. God prepares our good works beforehand. That means God has also equipped us to carry out the tasks He has assigned us.

Then, if we want to be part of the body we need to devote ourselves to using our gifts in service to the King.

Romans chapter 12 and 1 Corinthians chapter 12 contain extensive discussions about the critical importance of being active parts of the body. Take time to check out those two chapters.

Just how large is the body? Many claim that it is huge. Every person who makes any claim to being a Christian is part of the body of Christ. Really?

*Enter by the narrow entrance. For the entrance is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many travel that way. But the entrance is narrow, and the way is leads to life, and only a few find it.*

- Matthew 7:13,14 (FBV)

Someone asked him, "Lord, will only a few be saved?"

*Jesus replied, "Try very hard to enter the narrow doorway, because I tell you that many try go in, and won't succeed. Once the house owner gets up and closes the door, you'll be standing outside knocking on the door, saying, 'Master, please open the door for us.' But he'll reply, 'I don't know you or where you're from.' Then you'll say, 'But we ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets!' He'll reply, 'I tell you, don't know you or where you're from. Get away from me, all of you who don't do what is right!'*

*There will be crying and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you are thrown out.*

- Luke 13:23-28 (FBV)

*Not everyone who calls me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven-only those who do the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me at the day of judgment, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name*

*and drive out demons in your name, and perform many miracles in your name?' Then I will tell them, 'I never knew you. Leave me, you people who practice wickedness!'*

- Matthew 7:21,22 (FBV)



## Chapter 9 - How

### Is baptism really necessary?

Any discussion about being just Christians must include how we become Christians in the first place.

How do we become Christians? To the surprise of many, we do not become Christians by “accepting Jesus as our personal Savior” or by “praying the sinner’s prayer.” Neither one of these is found in the Bible.

But let’s start at the beginning. God creates a perfect world with no suffering or death. Then Adam and Eve spoil that world by opening the door to sin. We learn from Isaiah 59:2 that sin separates us from God. As Paul points out in Romans 3:23, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

According to James 1:13-15, sin occurs when we allow our temptations to give birth to lust. (Notice that this eliminates the possibility for children to have sins.) 1 John 2:16 describes sin as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life. In verse four of the next chapter, John defines sin as lawlessness.

Paul notes in Romans 6:23 that the consequence of sin is death. So what can we do about sin?

The path to salvation begins with the Gospel (Romans 1:16). Hearing God’s Word must precede everything else, including faith. Faith comes from hearing (Romans 10:17). So anyone who is seeking salvation through emotions or family traditions or man-made doctrines will be very disappointed.

The second step is faith. Jesus says in Mark 16:16 that a person must believe and be baptized in order to be saved.

But faith by itself is worthless (James 2:14-26). The devil and his followers believe in God, but that fact is not going to get them to heaven. Faith, then, must motivate to repentance. Peter says in Acts 2:38 that a person must repent and be baptized in order to be saved. Repentance means to turn from heading in the wrong direction and start going in the right direction.

A person who hears, believes and repents must then be willing to confess Jesus as Lord (Romans 10:8-10). There is much more to this than just repeating a few words. “Lord” means absolute master. By recognizing Jesus as our Lord, we are committing ourselves to doing everything He says, whether we like or not. Don’t call me Lord, Jesus warns in Luke 6:46, and then not do what I say. Many of the Jewish leaders believed in Jesus but they were not willing to confess Him (John 12:42,43).

Hearing motivates a person to faith. The faith causes a person to repent. To walk in the right direction, a person must recognize Jesus as Master.

Hearing, believing, repenting and confessing bring us to the point of salvation, but they do not finish the job. We cannot be saved by anything we do. We can only be saved by the blood of Jesus. And we come in contact with that blood when we are united with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus by being immersed in water.

### Baptism

There are few biblical words that are as misused and misunderstood. This is even more amazing in light of the fact that the Bible and history are both very clear about baptism. All of the confusion in the religious world today is the result of mankind’s refusal to accept God’s simple pattern.

This confusion often centers on three areas. Who should be baptized? How should they be baptized? Why should they be

baptized? If you encounter a religious leader who does not know what the Bible clearly says about these three questions, then you might want to ask somewhere else. If you encounter a religious leader who claims that these answers do not matter, demand proof from the Bible. If that person cannot demonstrate from the Bible that these answers are not important, then look somewhere else.

*My friends, not many of you should become teachers, because you know that we who teach will have a heavier responsibility in the judgment.*

- James 3:1 (FBV)

### Who?

Who should be baptized? This question actually consists of two others. The first is, “Can infants be baptized?”

Jesus instructs in Mark 16:16 that the one who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved. Baptism must follow faith. If an infant cannot have faith, then that infant cannot be baptized.

Paul points out in Romans 10:17 that faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ. Not only must baptism follow faith, but faith must follow hearing and understanding the Bible. If an infant cannot hear and understand the Bible, then that infant cannot believe.

Peter tells the crowd in Acts 2:38 that they must repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Baptism must follow repentance. If an infant cannot repent, then that infant cannot be baptized. Doing something “in the name of” someone requires appealing to the power or authority of that individual. An infant cannot fulfill that prerequisite, either.

Paul notes in Romans 10:10 that salvation results from confessing with the mouth. We will see later that baptism is

associated with salvation. But this verse says that salvation requires verbal confession of Jesus as Lord. If an infant cannot confess Jesus, then that infant cannot participate in other steps of salvation, including baptism.

Scriptural baptism requires that a person hear, believe, repent and confess. Can an infant hear and understand the Gospel? Can an infant believe? Can an infant repent? Can an infant verbally confess Jesus? What makes us think, then, that an infant can be baptized? There is no magical power in water that allows it to operate outside of the boundaries established by God (1 Peter 3:21).

Who should be baptized? The second aspect of this question is, “Do infants need to be baptized?”

Jesus states in Matthew 18:3 that we must be converted and become like children in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. What does this verse tell us? One of Jesus’ points here is that we must have the humility of a child to be receptive to salvation. (See verse four.) Notice, though, that Jesus says we must be converted and become like children, not that we must become like children in order to be converted. So what else does this verse tell us? It tells us that we become like children when we are converted. In other words, children do not have sins. There is no biblical support for the doctrine of original sin. This concept was invented to support other practices. Its roots are in Augustine and Dante, not the Bible.

How?

Another fundamental question about baptism is, “How must it be done?” The answer should be quite simple, since the Greek word means “immersion.” There was no English word “baptism” until translators coined it to avoid using “immersion.” After all, they were practicing forms which did not agree with what they found in

the Bible. The simple solution was to invent a new word and stretch its meaning. These translators were not able, though, to change passages which clearly describe the correct form of baptism.

*Through baptism we were buried with him in death so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father we too can live a new life.*

*If we've become one with him in dying like he did, then we'll be raised like him too.*

*We know that our old self was crucified with him to dispose of the dead body of sin so that we wouldn't be enslaved by sin any longer.*

*Anyone who has died has been set free from sin.*

- Romans 6:4-7 (FBV)

*You were buried with him in baptism, and you were raised with him through your trust in what God did by raising him from the dead.*

- Colossians 2:12 (FBV)

The Bible requires that baptism be a burial.

Why?

Who can be baptized? Who needs to be baptized? Baptism is for adult believers. How must baptism be done? Baptism is a burial. It is an immersion.

The third fundamental question is, "Why is a person baptized?" Let's look back at some of the passages we have already mentioned.

*Anyone who trusts in me and is baptized will be saved, but anyone who chooses not to trust will be condemned.*

- Mark 16:16 (FBV)

Baptism results in salvation.

*“Repent!” Peter told them. “All of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

- Acts 2:38 (FBV)

Baptism results in salvation.

Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

*Through baptism we were buried with him in death so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father we too can live a new life. If we've become one with him in dying like he did, then we'll be raised like him too. We know that our old self was crucified with him to dispose of the dead body of sin so that we wouldn't be enslaved by sin any longer. Anyone who has died has been set free from sin.*

*Since we died with Christ, we have confidence that we will also live with him, for we know that because Christ has been raised from the dead he won't ever die, because death has no longer any power over him. In dying, he died to sin once and for all, but now he lives, and he lives for God! In just the same way you should consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God through Christ Jesus.*

- Romans 6:3-11 (FBV)

Baptism results in salvation.

*This water symbolizes baptism that now saves you, not by washing off dirt from your body, but as a positive response to*

*God that comes from a clear conscience. It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that makes your salvation possible.*

- 1 Peter 3:21 (FBV)

Baptism results in salvation.

Who can be baptized? Who needs to be baptized? Baptism is for adult believers. How must baptism be done? Baptism is a burial. It is an immersion. What is the purpose of baptism? It is for the forgiveness of sins.

What happens?

There are other important questions that we might ask about baptism. What happens at baptism?

*Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?*

- Romans 6:3 (FBV)

We are baptized into Jesus and into His death.

*In just the same way you should consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God through Christ Jesus.*

- Romans 6:11 (FBV)

Through baptism, we are made dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus.

*For it was through one Spirit that we were all baptized into one body. It doesn't matter whether we are Jews or Greeks, slave or free—we all were given the one Spirit to drink.*

- 1 Corinthians 12:13 (FBV)

Through baptism, we are placed into the body, the church.

*"All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ,"* Paul notes in Galatians 3:27.

Through baptism, we are clothed with Christ.

*“And even though you were dead because of your sins and being physically ‘uncircumcised,’”* Colossians 2:13 states after mentioning baptism, *“He brought you to life together with him. He has forgiven us all our sins.”*

Through baptism, our transgressions are forgiven.

## Chapter 10 – Either/Or?

How do you feel about this statement: “We are saved by faith only”?

### Baptism vs. Faith?

Here’s another important question. Can we separate baptism and faith?

*“For you are all God’s children through your trust in Christ Jesus,”* Galatians 3:26,27 informs us. *“All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”*

This passage links faith and baptism.

*“Trust in the Lord Jesus,”* Paul and Silas tell the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:31, *“and you will be saved—you and your whole household,”*

*“Then they shared the word of the Lord with him and everyone who lived in his house,”* the passage continues in verses 32-34. *“Even though it was late at night he bathed their wounds, and he was baptized right away, along with all his family. He took them home and had a meal prepared for them. The jailer and his whole family were full of joy because they trusted in God.”*

The jailer is told to believe. Verse 34 says that he rejoices after believing. What does he actually do? He is baptized. We cannot separate faith and baptism.

*“(H)aving been buried with Him in baptism,”* Paul states in Colossians 2:12, *“in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”* (NASB)

Notice that faith and baptism are inseparable. It is in baptism that God raises us up with Christ through faith.

## Faith and Works

“For by grace you have been saved through faith,” Paul notes in Ephesians 2:8,9, “and that not of yourselves, {it is} the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”

The role of works in Christianity has presented one of the greatest puzzles faced by religious scholars throughout the centuries. Most students of the Bible have struggled with the question of works. But is the biblical teaching really so obscure or difficult? What does the Bible reveal about works?

First of all, we must establish that no one is saved by works. No one can earn his or her own salvation. Those who lived under the Law of Moses were mistaken if they thought they could earn their salvation by their works:

- Romans 3:27,28
- Galatians 2:16
- Galatians 3:2,5,10

No one is saved by works. No one can earn his or her own salvation. Those who lived under the Law of Moses were mistaken if they thought they could earn their salvation by their works. The point of most of these passages we have read is that those who live under the New Testament are likewise misguided if they believe that they can earn their salvation by their own efforts:

- 2 Timothy 1:8,9
- Titus 3:5

## Earned

No one is saved by works. No one can earn his or her own salvation. No one has ever earned salvation, and no one ever will. Aside from the fact that no human has the power to earn salvation, what is wrong with works? Earning my own salvation would certainly lead to boasting on my part (Acts 7:41, Ephesians

2:8,9).

There may be many potential dangers of works, but the most obvious is the risk of being proud of what we have done. We quickly forget that our meager accomplishments are worthless when it comes to paying the tremendous price of salvation.

*“For if Abraham was justified by works,”* Paul observes in Romans 4:2, *“he has something to boast about; but not before God.”* (NASB)

We must be humble enough to recognize that we can never earn our salvation through works.

We are not saved by works. We can never earn salvation. Nothing can change this fact. But we would be dishonest if we were to stop here. This is not the whole picture. In fact, the impression that we would leave by stopping here would be a false one. You see, the Bible actually speaks of different kinds of works.

Romans 3:28 refers specifically to works of Law. This implies trying to be saved by keeping a set of rules. This kind of works can certainly never save us. But there are other kinds of works.

In Romans 13:12 we read about deeds or works of darkness. It is obvious that these works can bring us only condemnation. But there are still other works.

“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven,” Jesus instructs in Matthew 5:16.

Jesus speaks of good works. He does not say that these works will save us. But He does command us to practice them.

Paul writes in 2 Thessalonians 1:11 about works of faith. What role does this kind of work play in salvation? Read James 2:14-26 to find out.

James seems to feel that works of faith are vital for salvation. But is he running counter to other New Testament teaching? Of course, no New Testament writer is contradicting any other. But can we check James' words against other Scriptures?

Paul tells King Agrippa that he has instructed people to repent and perform deeds appropriate to repentance (Acts 26:19,20).

Is this the same Paul who wrote the passages we read earlier? Does he really demand that those who want to be saved must perform deeds appropriate to repentance?

"They profess to know God," Paul expresses in Titus 1:16, "but by {their} deeds they deny {Him}, being detestable and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed."

Paul says that we acknowledge or deny God by our deeds. There seems to be perfect harmony between James and Paul. No, works still won't save us. But we're lost without them.

How does the New Testament feel about good works, works of faith? The list is rather long, but here are a few of the passages that mention these works.

We read in 1 Corinthians 15:58 that we must abound in the work of the Lord.

Paul tells the church in Corinth that both he and Timothy are doing the Lord's work (1 Corinthians 16:10). Paul hopes the same Christians will engage in every good deed (2 Corinthians 9:8). He has the same hope for the church in Colossae (Colossians 1:9,10).

Works will never save us. But we're lost without them. And we had better be careful about the attention we give to our works:

- 2 Timothy 4:14
- 1 Peter 1:17
- Matthew 16:27
- Revelation 20:12,13
- 2 Corinthians 11:14,15

We had better be careful about the attention we give to our works. God certainly will.



## Chapter 11 – Mirror

What do I see when I look in the mirror?

What does a Christian look like? What does a Christian see when he or she looks into a mirror?

The New Testament indicates that the life of a Christian involves four things. Christianity is a life of obedience. It is a life as a functioning part of a body and a family. It is a life of using God-given gifts. It is a life of love and service. We took a look at the body in a previous chapter. What about the others?

### Christianity: A Life of Obedience

What is a Christian? We know what is required to become a Christian, but what does a Christian do? What does a Christian look like? Does the existence of a Christian merely consist of “don’t do this” and “don’t do that”?

The New Testament indicates that the life of a Christian involves four things. Christianity is a life of obedience. It is a life as a functioning part of a body and a family. It is a life of using God-given gifts. It is a life of love and service.

God expects obedience. He always has. He expects Adam and Eve to obey one simple rule. Even before He delivers His Law through Moses, He expects obedience from the Israelites.

*“Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant,”* God instructs in Exodus 19:5,6, *“then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”* (NASB)

Sadly, though, humans seem to have trouble following God's instructions.

*“But this is what I commanded them, saying, ‘Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people; and you will walk in all the way which I command you, that it may be well with you,’”* God laments through the prophet in Jeremiah 7:23,24. *“Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward.”*

God's expectations are no different in the New Testament. Although we are not under a system of law-keeping, God still requires His people to be obedient. Jesus says in John 3:36 that those who do not obey the Son will not see life. When the Jewish leaders order the apostles to stop teaching in the name of Jesus, the disciples reply that they must obey God rather than men.

Romans 2:8 promises wrath and indignation for those who do not obey the truth. Paul notes in chapter six that we all obey one of two things: sin or God's teaching. Those who obey sin receive death. Those who obey God receive righteousness, sanctification and eternal life.

Paul writes in 2 Thessalonians 1:8 that those who do not obey the Gospel will receive retribution. Hebrews 5:9 says eternal salvation comes from obedience. Similar admonitions are found in 1 Peter 1:2 and 1 Peter 4:17.

Contrary to what much of the religious world teaches, it is not enough to call Jesus, “Lord.” The Master instructs in Matthew 7:21 that we must do the will of His Father in heaven. We must obey Him. Notice in Matthew 25:44 that people are trying to call Jesus “Lord” even though they are not obeying Him. Notice, too, that it doesn't work.

As is always the case, Jesus sets the perfect example. It seems a little puzzling that a part of the Godhead would represent Himself as carrying out the instructions of another part of the Godhead (John 8:28). Could it be that Jesus is showing the importance of obedience to God? And the obedience of Jesus is no half-hearted effort. His obedience extends to allowing Himself to die on the cross (Philippians 2:8).

Do we want to enjoy the benefits of being able to call Jesus our brother? If so, we must do the will of His Father who is in heaven (Matthew 12:50).

There is one thing we do not want to do. We do not want to follow in the footsteps of Pharaoh.

“Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?” the king demands.

Is this to be our response, too?

### Christianity: A Life of Gifts

The New Testament indicates that the life of a Christian involves four things. Christianity is a life of obedience. It is a life as a functioning part of a body and a family. It is a life of using God-given gifts. It is a life of love and service.

As we have seen, God expects obedience. As we have seen, God expects Christians to be part of a body and a family. Hand-in-hand with being part of a family is the expectation that we use the gifts that God has given us. Paul notes in 1 Corinthians 12 that different parts of a body serve different functions. The assumption in that passage is that each member will carry out its purpose.

Carrying out this purpose requires three things. We must identify our gifts. We must acknowledge our gifts. We must put our gifts to use.

Sadly, many people fail at the first step. How many people simply say, “Oh, I can’t really do anything special. I’m just an ordinary person.”

There are two things wrong with this attitude. First, God does not make “ordinary.” Second, there is no question that everyone has a gift or gifts from God.

*“However, each man has his own gift from God,”* Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 7:7, *“one in this manner, and another in that.”* (NASB) Unless the Holy Spirit is mistaken, every person has at least one gift from God.

We must identify our gifts. By the way, no one else can do this for us. God expects each individual to identify his or her gifts. Once we have done this, we still need to acknowledge our gifts. We cannot just say, “Yep, that’s my gift” without embracing its potential. This is MY gift. God gave it to ME for a specific purpose. In turn, this should lead us to put our gifts to use.

How can we do this? Romans 12:1 explains that we must start by offering ourselves as living and holy sacrifices. Verse two adds that we must not be conformed to this world, but rather transformed by the renewing of our minds. The next verse notes that we must approach our gifts with humility. We did not create them. God gave them to us.

This chapter goes on in verses four and five to point out what should be obvious. We have different gifts. I cannot do what you can do. You cannot do what I can do.

Verses six through eight list some spiritual gifts and indicate how we can use them. First, Paul says that a person who has the gift of prophecy should exercise it according to the proportion of his faith. Remember that prophecy does not necessarily involve the supernatural ability to foretell the future. It means to reveal God’s will.

Then Paul matches three gifts with what they do: service in serving, teaching in teaching, exhorting in exhortation.

Finally, he pairs three more gifts with the attitudes associated with putting them to use: give with liberality, lead with diligence, show mercy with cheerfulness.

The rest of the chapter is full of wonderful instruction, but perhaps it can be summed up with the observation what we are to “be of the same mind.”

Is all of this just a suggestion, or does God really expect us to do anything? Ephesians 2:10 says that God has already prepared works for us to do. He has equipped us with the gifts to carry out those works, so it does not appear to be optional.

God has given us gifts for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7). God has given us gifts for the edification of the church (1 Corinthians 14:12). God has given us gifts for the building up of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12). Who are we to say, “No”?

#### Christianity: A Life of Love and Service

Paul’s epistle to the church in Ephesus can be divided into two parts. The first section (chapters 1-3) describes what God has done for us. The key concept in this part of the letter is our “calling” or “election.”

What has God done for us, according to the first fourteen verses of the first chapter of Ephesians? He has chosen us. He has adopted us. He has freely bestowed His grace on us. He has redeemed us. He has given us an inheritance. He has sealed us with the Holy Spirit. As verse three points out, He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing.

Chapter two tells us that, while we were dead in our trespasses and sins, God made us alive with Christ and raised us up with Him. He has made us His workmanship. He has broken

down the barrier that divided Jews from Gentiles and mankind from Him. He has built us up into His dwelling place.

Paul points out in chapter three that God has revealed His mystery through us. He strengthens us with power through the Spirit. The love of Christ fills us up to all the fulness of God. God does more than we can ever ask or think.

The second portion of the letter focuses on what we do because of what God has done. Why do Christians do what they do? They do it because of what God has done.

According to chapter four we are to be spiritually mature, not tossed around by every false doctrine that comes our way. We are to speak the truth in love as we do our part to cause the body to grow. We are to walk the way God wants us to. The next chapter urges us to imitate God, to walk in love, to walk as children of light. Paul concludes the letter with instructions to put on the full armor of God.

What do we do because of what God has done for us? We love. Are we ever guilty of standing on certain portions of God's instructions but regarding others are mere "suggestions"?

*"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another,"* Jesus instructs in John 13:34,35. *"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* (NASB)

*"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you,"* Jesus says in John 15:16,17. *"This I command you, that you love one another."* (NASB)

Is "commandment" the same as "suggestion"? Paul's letters contain at least eight verses instructing us about our love for one

another. There is another in Hebrews and three more in Peter's epistles. John's epistles include six.

*"And this is His commandment," we read in 1 John 3:23, "that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us." (NASB) Is love for one another really on the level with believing in Jesus?*

What do we do because of what God has done for us? We serve. Are we ever guilty of standing on certain portions of God's instructions but regarding others are mere "suggestions"?

At the beginning of Jesus' last evening with His apostles before His arrest, He takes a towel and a bowl of water and washes their feet, instructing them to follow His example (John 13).

When the mother of James and John asks Jesus to place her sons beside Him on His throne, the Master has to explain something very important.

*Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came with her two sons to Jesus. She knelt down before him to make a request.*

*"What is it you are asking me for?" Jesus said to her.*

*"Please appoint my sons to sit beside you in your kingdom, one on your right and the other on your left," she asked.*

*"You don't know what you're asking," Jesus told them. "Are you able to drink the cup I'm about to drink?"*

*"Yes we are able to do that," they told him.*

*"You will certainly drink from my cup," he said to them, "but the privilege to sit on my right or on my left isn't mine to give. My Father is the one who has decided who that will be."*

*When the other ten disciples heard what they had asked, they were annoyed with the two brothers. Jesus called them together and told them, "You know that foreign rulers lord it*

*over their people, and powerful leaders oppress them. It shall not be like that for you. Whoever among you wants to be the most important will be your servant. Whoever among you wants to be first will be like a slave. In the same way the Son of man didn't come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

- Matthew 20:20-28 (FBV)

Does Jesus really mention service in the same sentence with His sacrifice for us?

The love of God and Jesus motivates us to love one another. The ultimate act of service through death on the cross motivates us to serve each other.

Notice through all of this that God always goes first. It is up to us to follow or get out of the way.

## Chapter 12 – Praise God

How do you feel about this statement: “God doesn’t care how we worship Him as long as we are sincere”?

Many people today would affirm that it doesn’t matter how we worship God, as long as we love each other and try to do what is right. This may be an appealing theory, but it is rejected by the Bible.

Nadab and Abihu know that God has commanded the use of a certain kind of fire in the temple. But they decide it didn’t matter. If you believe that God doesn’t care how we worship Him, read the fate of Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10:1-3.

Korah knows that God has chosen to lead the Israelites through Moses. But Korah thinks that doesn’t matter. Take a look at Numbers chapter 16 if you agree with Korah.

Achan knows that God has given specific instructions about the spoils from Jericho. But he decides it doesn’t matter. Read his story in Joshua chapter seven.

David knows that God has forbidden the taking of a census. But he decides it doesn’t matter. He learns differently in the last chapter of 2 Samuel.

The Jews decide they can change their religion to suit themselves. It doesn’t matter what God has instructed.

*“Why do your disciples break the tradition of our forefathers by not washing their hands before they eat a meal?”* Jewish leaders ask Jesus in Matthew 15:1-3 (FBV).

*“Why do you break God’s commandment because of your tradition?”* Jesus replies.

*“You hypocrites!” Jesus cries in verses 7-9. “How well Isaiah described you when he prophesied: ‘These people say they honor me but in their minds they don’t care about me. Their worship of me is pointless. What they teach are just man-made requirements.’”*

Perhaps someone has forgotten to tell Jesus that it doesn’t matter.

Some of the early Christians think it doesn’t matter. Read what Paul has to say to the churches in places such as Corinth and Galatia. Read what John relays to them in the second and third chapters of Revelation. He tells the church in Corinth that they “despise the church” by the way they have modified worship to suit themselves (1 Corinthians 11:22).

Many “modern” church services are designed to entertain or to impress or to attract a certain generation. They are often guided by what is popular or “correct” for the current culture.

Have you ever heard any of the following regarding worship:

- it makes me feel good
- I know the Bible says (something different) but God must like...
- they are meeting my needs
- this isn’t your grandparents’ church
- we have traditional and contemporary services

Guess what? It is not about us. It is about Him. Yes, worship should be edifying for us (1 Corinthians 14:26). But the main reasons for worship are to honor God and to remember the sacrifice of Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). “We have traditional and contemporary services? The main point of Paul’s condemnation in 1 Corinthians 11 is that the church was split into factions instead of joining together as a single body.

What does worship look like in the New Testament? It involves:

- praying – 1 Corinthians 14:15,16
- preaching – Acts 20:7
- singing – Colossians 3:16
- taking the Lord's Supper – Acts 20:7
- giving – 1 Corinthians 16:2

Our task is not to bring the church into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Our task is to return the church to the 1<sup>st</sup> century.



## Chapter 13 – Not Different; Different

How are Christians the same as everyone else? How are they different?

Christians are not different from anyone else around you. They might be your relatives, your friends, your neighbors, your co-workers. Christians live real lives.

In some ways, Christians are not any better than anyone else. One common saying states that "Christians are not perfect; they are just forgiven." Another defines church as "a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints."

In another sense, though, Christians are different. They do their best to live a certain lifestyle.

The King James Version describes Christians as a "peculiar people" (1 Peter 2:9). The Free Bible version says:

*In complete contrast, you are a specially-chosen family, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God. Consequently you can reveal the wonderful things he's done, pulling you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

Christians aren't normal. This is not because they are more talented or intelligent than other people. It because they have turned themselves over to a special task. They shine because they are reflecting the light of Jesus.

There is no sin that some Christian has not committed in the past. But Christians have devoted themselves to putting off the former person and putting on a new one.

Do you want to know how a Christian acts? Take time to check out the following passages. Notice that several of them mention the fact that the Christians who are being addressed

once engaged in the sins being addressed, but they have abandoned their old lifestyle.

- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
- Romans 1:18-32
- Galatians 5:16-26
- Ephesians 2:1-3
- Ephesians 4:17–32
- Colossians 3:1-17
- 1 Timothy 1:8-10
- Titus 3:1-3
- 1 Peter 4:1-5

God expects His people to be different. He calls His people out of the world.

What compromise could the temple of God make with idols? For we are a temple of the God, just as God said:

*"I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people. So leave them, and separate yourselves from them, says the Lord. Don't touch anything that is unclean, and I will accept you. I will be like a Father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."*

- 2 Corinthians 6:16-18 (FBV)

*This is the message we received from him and that we declare to you: God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in him at all. If we claim to share this friendship with him and yet go on living in darkness, we're lying, and not living in the truth. But if we are living in the light, as he's in the light, then we share in this friendship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, makes us clean from every sin. - 1 John 1:5-7 (FBV)*

## Chapter 14 – But

What happens when I learn something from the Bible and then respond with “But...”?

Sometimes it is the smallest words that are the most powerful. Take for example the little word "but."

What keeps many people from being just Christians? Sometimes it is this three-letter word.

"Yes, the Bible says that, but..."

Have you ever heard anyone say this? Have you ever said it yourself? There is no room for "Yes, but..." in the life of someone who is just a Christian. If Christ is our absolute Master, the only response we can give is "Yes."

Sometimes the word "but" works in our favor, though.

Paul points out in Philippians 3 that he was once a zealous Jew, a fervent persecutor of the church.

*"But in whatever way such things gained me anything, I count them as a loss for Christ,"* he offers in verse seven (FBV).

Paul fought against Jesus, but he surrendered.

Christians used to live a worldly lifestyle, but they have put on a new self.

*Don't lie to each other, since you've discarded your old self and what you used to do, and put on your new self that is always being made more like your Creator, understanding better who he really is. In this new situation there's no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, foreigner, barbarian, slave or free, for Christ is everything, and he lives in all of us.*

- Colossians 3:9-11 (FBV)

Why the change? It is entirely because of the word "but."

The Jews killed Jesus, but God raised Him from the dead (Acts 13:30).

We were sinners, but God demonstrated His love for us through the death of Jesus (Romans 5:8).

*So you who are "foreigners" humanly-speaking, called "uncircumcised" by those who are circumcised" (which is only a procedure carried out by human beings), you need to remember that once you had no relationship to Christ. You were barred as foreigners from being citizens of Israel, strangers to the covenant God had promised. You had no hope and you lived in the world without God. But now, in Christ Jesus, you who were once a long way off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

- Ephesians 2:11-13 (FBV)

*And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*

*But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

- Ephesians 2:1-7 (NASB)

We were helpless, hopeless and lost. But God...

All He asks in return is that we be just Christians.



## Epilogue

Can we not be just Christians? With unity as one of Jesus' most critical messages, can we not simply abandon man-made doctrines and practices and just follow the simple New Testament teaching?

Do we have to use our feelings as our guide? Do we have to do what we have done all our lives? Do we have to "go to the church that meets our needs"?

Can we not surrender what we want for what God wants?

We don't say we are better. We don't say others are not good people. We're just trying to be Christians.

We're just Christians following just the Bible. We're just sinners just forgiven.

Let's not make it too hard or too simple. Let's just do what it says.

We're just strange people trying to enter the narrow gate and walk the narrow road.

Let's do it out of love for each other and love for Jesus.

*I am giving you a new command: Love one another. Love one another in the same way I have loved you. If you love one another you will prove to everyone that you are my disciples.*

- John 13:34,35 (FBV)

## **A Little About the church in McPherson...**

We believe that you will find us to be a warm and friendly congregation of God's people who really care about others. We are followers of Christ, our resurrected Lord.

As Christians, we are committed to following the Bible as our only source of religious authority and seek to restore New Testament Christianity in the twenty-first century. Our mission is *"To seek and save the lost"* (Luke 19:10).

### **How We Serve...**

#### Worship:

Our worship services are simple and biblical. Our primary objective is to honor God by worshiping Him as He has directed us in His Word.

#### Bible Classes:

We offer Bible classes for all ages each Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. We strive to instill within each student a love for God and an appreciation for His Word as our source of spiritual guidance for daily life.

#### Family Ministry:

We are committed to strengthen our families and provide periodic classes and programs designed to help marriages and improve family life.

#### Ladies' Class:

Our ladies meet for Bible study on Wednesday mornings except when they meet for breakfast on the 2nd Tuesday of each month.

Making teddy bears for children who visit the emergency room at the hospital is an ongoing service project for our ladies' class.

#### Retreats:

Our annual ladies' retreat in January, our men's retreat in June and our semi-annual family retreat in August are great opportunities for spiritual growth and fellowship.

### Leadership Training for Christ:

Our 3rd through 12th graders participate in a year-round program that instills leadership qualities in young people. These Bible-based activities provide training for Christian service in the church. Activities culminate each year with a trip to Arkansas where an annual *Leadership Training for Christ* convention is held.

### Youth Program:

Our youth program offers a wide variety of opportunities to encourage growth as Christians. Through participation in activities the young people are encouraged to develop their faith in ways that put to use the talents they have been given. The youth are involved with service projects, camps, retreats, devotionals and activities with youth groups in surrounding areas. We provide many opportunities to get together in Christian fellowship with each other.

### Local Outreach:

We offer free home Bible studies and correspondence courses to anyone interested in furthering their knowledge of the Bible.

### Foreign Missions:

We have made world missions an important priority. In addition to various short-term commitments, we have, for many years, supported mission work in Honduras, Brazil, South Africa and Nigeria.

We have replaced roofs damaged by Hurricane Katrina. We replaced roofs at the Manuelito Navajo Children's Home in Gallup, New Mexico. We have provided roofs for Habitat for Humanity homes.

## **Our Vision...**

- *To be a group of believers knit together in our love for God and one another.*
- *To be a group of believers whose members feel accepted and led into useful paths of service in the kingdom.*
- *To be a body determined to closely follow the teachings of Christ, prayerfully leaning upon the guidance and provision of the Lord.*
- *To be a people whose consuming passion is that souls be led to the Savior.*

## **OUR SCHEDULE OF SERVICES:**

### Sunday

Bible Class	9:30 a.m.
Worship	10:30 a.m.

### Sunday Evening

Worship	5:30 p.m.
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### Wednesday

Ladies' Class	10:00 a.m.
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### Wednesday

Bible Class	7:00 p.m.
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**Acts 2:38 – Peter *said* to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (NASB)**

Yeomen Press exists to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the lost in order to save souls from sin, death, and hell.

